

Gold Strike In Pentagon

By Art Buchwald

It received hardly a mention in the newspapers, but the Pentagon last week just happened to "find" \$266 million it didn't know it had.

It seems that the Defense Department had asked for \$1.6 billion for aid to South Vietnam, but Congress had voted only \$1.2 billion. Instead of the Pentagon getting upset by the cut in funds it announced that it had "found" \$266 million which could make up the difference.

How did the Pentagon find the money? It's a very interesting story.

Two weeks ago two cleaning women in the Pentagon were working late at night in the basement of the building. One of the ladies was a new employee and she opened what she thought was a broom closet. Instead of brooms and mops she saw neatly piled stacks of brand-new \$100 bills.

"Henrietta," she said to the lady she was working with, "there ain't no brooms or mops in that closet. How am I supposed to get my work done when all they keep in there is money?"

Henrietta came over and looked in. "Heavens to Betsy, you're right. They expect us to clean the floors, mop the halls and dust the furniture, and they don't even give us the tools to do it with. Let's find the supervisor."

They brought the supervisor back. He peered into the closet and became angry. "If I told them once I told them a 100 times the only thing I want to see in broom closets is brooms. I'm going to get the duty officer."

The duty officer, a colonel, was asked to come to the basement. When he showed up he couldn't believe his eyes. "How much money do you think there is in that closet?"

"'Bout \$266 million," Henrietta said. "Now what about our mops?"

The colonel rushed off to call his supervisor at home. "General, the cleaning women just found \$266 million in a broom closet in the basement."

The general was furious. "Why are you bothering me at home at this hour about \$266 million? Turn it over to lost-and-found."

"Yes, sir," the colonel said.

The next day the lost-and-found officer put out notices on all the bulletin boards in the Pentagon which read: "If anyone has lost \$266 million in new \$100 bills, kindly pick it up as soon as possible at lost-and-found. If the money is not claimed within the week, it will be turned over to the South Vietnamese Government."

Although there are thousands of people working at the Pentagon, no one admitted to owning the money. This caused some wild speculation. The Army said the Navy had hidden the cash in the broom closet so they could buy an extra submarine when no one was looking. The Navy said the Air Force had stashed it away for the next overrun on a new Lockheed cargo plane.

In any case, no one claimed the cash and it was turned over to six cadets of the South Vietnamese Marine Corps who were returning to Saigon after a visit to Parris Island.

But the discovery of the money caused a storm at the Pentagon. The Secretary of Defense, in a very tough memo to all personnel, said, "There will be no more storing of unaccounted funds in broom closets.

"These closets will be used in the future solely for cleaning utensils. If there is one thing I will not stand for as long as I am Secretary it's a dirty Pentagon."