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Weekly Situation Report - Week Ending Dec. 25

Dec. 31, 1954

The holiday season has resulted in a disruption in communications from Haiphong, and therefore it is not possible to include the statistical summary of evacuation of refugees from Haiphong in this week's report. A personal visit to Haiphong indicated that the numbers of refugees awaiting transportation southward had increased to almost 13,000, saturating embarkation camp facilities. The U. S. transport General Howze was delayed for repairs in the Philippines, and it was not expected to lead at Haiphong until the 27th of December. To meet this situation, French military authorities have stepped up the airlift to relieve some of the congestion in the camps. This is in line with the agreement to use the airlift whenever sea transport facilities are unable to meet the evacuation demands.

Escapee operations have continued at the rate of approximately 500 per day through the usual escape channels from the southern delta provinces. In addition, approximately 3,000 persons have escaped from Vinh, an area which has been under Communist domination for many years. The escape from Vinh is considered to be of especial significance by Catholic officials in the north. These escapees have had long association with Communist domination and were found to be ready and eager to accept the first opportunity to escape. Local authorities in Haiphong stated that a request had been forwarded to Saigon for some special reception for these persons, who will be arriving on the U. S. N. S. General Howze.

Both French and Vietnamese authorities estimate that at least 30,000 persons will leave the Haiphong maritime zone within the next few months. These will be evacuees from the area still under French control, and the figure does not include potential escapees during the same period. The situation in the Hon Gai and Campha Port sectors of the zone is reported to be critical. The Vietminh are reported to have completely infiltrated this sector of the zone in which the Charbonnage du Tonkin mines and processing plants are located. Vietminh domination of the area has been such that at least one local priest responsible for the evacuation of refugees in Hon Gai has asked to be relieved because it is impossible for him to operate in the area. If this situation continues, evacuation from an area supposedly still under French control will take a form more nearly that of an escape program than an evacuation program. The French military authorities in Haiphong are aware of this situation and are attempting to provide adequate security until the final handover.

There are no changes in the evacuation of American-aid supplies from the area. The French military authorities responsible for this evacuation stated positively that all American-aid equipment, including

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that used by Hanoi Haiphong, would be evacuated without question. In addition, it has been decided locally to consider material and equipment property of the Vietnamese government which is of American manufacture to be of American-aid origin and therefore eligible for evacuation with further review. This is merely a device to insure the evacuation of a maximum of the best public works and other equipment in the hands of the Vietnamese services in the north.

Vietnamese Delegate Luat reported that Madame Ngai, directress of the An Lac Vien Orphanage, will depart for Saigon on 2 January to discuss the evacuation and reestablishment of her orphanage in the south. Madame Ngai will discuss this project with the Commissioner for Refugees and representatives of the Vietnamese Red Cross who will assist in the project.

The office of the Commissioner for Refugees and Resettlement reported an increase of 4,359 persons in the resettlement areas, bringing the total to 217,412 on the 28th of December, for South Vietnam.

The Commissioner's office was again unable to provide any statistics on resettlement in central Vietnam. During this week the newly appointed field representative at Whatrang began an investigation of the reporting methods used by the resettlement services in southern central Vietnam. His preliminary findings indicate a breakdown between the provincial levels and the office of the Delegate for central Vietnam in Hue. A specific recommendation for the correction of this situation will be forthcoming in the near future.

In addition to the problem of reporting progress in this area, it appears that provincial officials in Khanh Hoa province are not receiving the full benefits of the program administered by the Commissioner's office. This again appears to be a problem of poor administrative communications between Saigon and the provincial areas of central Vietnam. The lack of security in the area is such that local officials are unable to fulfill their duties and responsibilities for fear of physical attack. Separate reports on this situation are being prepared for submission to you.

In the southwest provinces of southern Vietnam security conditions appear to be deteriorating to a point at which the possibilities for any civil administration are now questionable. The Chiefs of the Provinces of Vinh Leng, Can Tho and Soc Trang all described the Hoa Hao elements within their areas as vandals and terrorists. They stated unanimously that they were unable to arrest free Hoa Hao terrorism in their provinces.

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Gen. O'Daniel, MAAG

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