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Jan. 17, 1955

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Weekly Situation Report - Week Ending Jan. 8

During the week ending 8 January 3157 escapees from the Vietminh occupied provinces of North Vietnam arrived at the Haiphong embarkation camp. No significant changes in escapee operations were reported during the week.

Officials in North Vietnam continue to concentrate on escapee plans to be used after the complete withdrawal from the Haiphong perimeter. Consideration is now being given to a plan to direct escapee operations from a base headquarters in Hue.

Speculation continues as to the final number of evacuees expected to leave the perimeter before the May withdrawal date. Estimates now vary between 70,000 and 100,000. The Field Representative in Haiphong considered 70,000 a reasonable estimate at this time. Reports from Haiphong indicate that the actual number of evacuees will depend upon the evacuation of the coal mining equipment at Hon Gay and Campha Port. A considerable number of workers and other persons who earn a living directly or indirectly from the coal mines will remain or leave with this equipment. It is considered likely that these people will interpret the failure to evacuate the equipment as a sign of "business as usual" at the mines after the complete withdrawal of the perimeter.

The Secretary General of the Vietnamese Confederation of Christian Workers returned to Haiphong during the week to intensify the campaign to encourage workers in the north to evacuate southward. It is to be noted that the majority of these workers are Buddhists. The evacuation of a large number of non-Catholic working class people is being pressed in the north to counteract current Vietminh propaganda stating that only Catholics and white-collar groups have chosen to leave for Free Vietnam.

11,304 escapees were reported to be in the Haiphong embarkation camps awaiting eventual transportation southward. This approaches the maximum number of refugees that can be accommodated in the camps. The continued influx of escapees at the rate of 3000-3500 per week plus the anticipated marked increase in requests for evacuation from the perimeter after the Tet holidays may probably result in a need for additional shipping for refugees. The U. S. Navy has at present one transport, the USNS General Howe. This vessel is to be relieved by another transport to arrive this month. Both vessels will remain in service between Haiphong and Saigon until 15 February, when the USNS Howe is scheduled to depart. The president of the Evacuation Committee during a visit to Saigon expressed concern regarding the availability of shipping facilities for refugees during the next four months. He specifically requested an additional U. S. transport for this service.

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In this connection, it is to be noted that Admiral Sabine is scheduled to arrive later this month on board the USS Estes to observe the progress of the evacuation and to review the possible need for additional transports during the final stages of the evacuation operation.

The evacuation of AEA materiel and equipment is progressing satisfactorily. Pressure by the Government Delegate, Mr. Luat, has resulted in the surrender of a number of vehicles used by the provincial services for immediate evacuation. No action has been taken to evacuate French or other non-American manufactured equipment which may have been purchased locally with aid program counterpart funds. Although this equipment is unquestionably American-aid financed, it is considered almost impossible to identify such equipment within the time available for the completion of the evacuation. However, all equipment of American manufacture which is property of the Vietnamese government is scheduled for evacuation regardless of origin.

A report has been received in Haiphong indicating that the French Navy will charge 400 piasters per cubic meter for the transportation of privately owned industrial equipment and material from Haiphong to Saigon. The French are reported to be planning to reimburse the U. S. Navy for the transportation of privately owned cargo at the same rate. The Field Representative in Haiphong has been requested to report in detail in regard to this matter.

The question of payment for the transportation of privately owned equipment has been the subject of discussion by the U. S. Navy for some time. To date the Navy has not hauled private cargo other than a limited quantity of equipment for charitable institutions. The position taken by Admiral Sabine in regard to this matter several months ago was that any private industrial cargo hauling by the U. S. Navy or the Military Sea Transport Service would be on a reimbursable basis at existing MSTB rates.

At least one private contractor is known to have attempted to sell used construction equipment to Laos at prices described as "new prices" with the expectation that the equipment sold would be transported by the U. S. Navy at no cost.

No word has been received from Haiphong regarding the evacuation of the coal mining equipment from Hon Gay or the cement plant from Haiphong. Opinion expressed in Haiphong is that unless action is taken to evacuate this equipment immediately it will not be possible to accomplish the operation before the withdrawal from the Haiphong perimeter. Concern is expressed particularly in regard to the coal mine equipment in Hon Gay, where Communist infiltration, obviously designed to prevent the evacuation of the equipment, is increasing daily.

As of 9 January a total of 591,229 refugees and military personnel of all classes crossed the 17th parallel from the north, an increase of 9,690 during the week.

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	FRENCH & OTHER TRANSPORTATION			US NAVY	TOTAL
	Air	Surface	Self-Evacuated	Surface	
French Military	20,484	44,418			64,902
VN Military	6,068	35,262		13,657	54,987
French Civilians	10,418	18,659			29,073
VN Civilians	143,404	64,896		175,307	383,900
Others	363	11,941	41,328	4,805	17,109
	<u>180,737</u>	<u>175,465</u>	<u>41,328</u>	<u>193,769</u>	<u>591,299</u>

* * *

The Commissioner General for Refugees reported a total of 229,608 refugees now actually located in the resettlement villages of South Vietnam as of 11 January. This represents an increase of 3,839 persons in the resettlement areas during the week. An increase of 274 housing units was reported, bringing the total number of dwelling units completed to 17,158. A total of 34,800 tents or temporary barracks are reported to be still in use in the southern provinces to provide shelter in the resettlement villages.

The office of the Commissioner General finally produced a statistical report on the progress of the resettlement program in Central Vietnam. The report, which was transmitted to the Mission on 12 January, was prepared by the Government Delegate in Hue on 23 December. The data for certain of the provinces contained in the report were collected during the month of October. The totals given in the report--52,332 civilians and 23,447 military dependents--are not considered to reflect the current situation within any reasonable limitations. Figures for resettlement in some of the provinces received from the Field Representatives in Central Vietnam during the week showed little relationship to the report submitted by the Commission.

The data reported by the Field Representatives will be made available to the Office of the Commissioner for Refugees. The Field Representatives in Central Vietnam will receive copies of the Commissioner's report with a request to determine the reasons for the wide discrepancies in the reports and the reasons for the delay in government reporting. This technique may point up the inadequacies of government reporting to both the Commission and provincial officials.

Material for the Ben Tre Resettlement Area work file has been collected and made available to the committee appointed to survey and evaluate the resettlement possibilities and requirements of the province.

cc: P & E PW Educ Gen. O'Daniel, MAAG
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