



UNITED STATES OF AMERICA OPERATIONS MISSION
(Special Technical and Economic Mission)
TO CAMBODIA, LAOS AND VIETNAM

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AMERICAN EMBASSY
SAIGON, VIETNAM
Haiphong, January 25, 1955.

Weekly Report - Haiphong

General:

Commadore Frank has departed from Haiphong and Commadore Saint Angelo has come with the USS Cook. He is slated to remain until March 7 when the APD has other commitments. From that time on it is not anticipated that a flagship will be located in this port. The French have agreed to make their communications available for the Navy purposes. It may be that one officer will be left on the beach to supervise the utilization of the two cargo vessels that will be left and the two passenger refugee ships. We believe that the new Commadore will be excellent. To date he has been very cooperative in all matters.

Tet in Haiphong is being celebrated in a rather subdued way, but it is difficult to conduct business as usual. An increasing sense of evacuation is being felt on every hand, and the post Tet period should see heavy movement. A rumor, unfounded, is going around that the Viet Minh will move into the Haiphong area on the 27th of February. The cause of this rumor is that a division of VM troops have recently taken up positions around the perimeter of the enclave. Many shops are holding sales prior to closing out, and the waiting list for movement south of Haiphong citizens was so heavy that the air lift was reinstated for a five day period taking five hundred persons per day. This is in addition to the fact that we currently have two ships working on personnel evacuation.

In a meeting held on the Estes with Admiral Sabin last Sunday, it was agreed that the French shipping could handle the cargo left after the LSTs made their final scheduled loads. There are three or four loads left within the time limit of the LSTs. The Gunston Hall will also be released, but the request was made by General Congy and Admiral Querville for four LSTs at the closure of the period - May 1. I also requested two ships that could tie up at the docks here to take late comers from Haiphong and behind the curtain. The thought being that if we had such, the tents could be removed, the vehicles shipped, and refugees would go through an inspection line, a dusting line and baggage check, and onto the ship direct. When fully loaded, the ship would pull out for the south, and the second ship take its place.

The two cargo ships are being held here after the French say they require them in the event we decide to do some ~~procurement~~ procurement as recommended in a recent ~~message~~ message. It is also difficult to determine how much need there will be for assistance in civilian shipping. Many industries are awaiting word on the conferences in Hanoi in regards to the coal to decide if it is wise to ride along on the efforts of the large interests.

Materials;

The plan to take an entire ship for AEA and American made equipment ran into two snags. The first was that the Port Commission would not agree to that much equipment of civilian government going out at one time due to possible riots, and second, by taking an entire ship, we would be compelled

to pay all charges such as port fee, stevedore,

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pilot fees, etc. By adding some to French loadings, we are not billed for such items. Therefore we will continue to put limited amounts on each ship. It is anticipated that the Gunston Hall will load about thirty AEA vehicles on the 28th. All the asphalt has been shipped that is in shipping condition. As it was, there was up to six inches of asphalt in the bottom of the hold from the last shipment. We can expect a bill for cleaning the Sword Knot either at Saigon, or up in Japan when the ship finishes her work in Indo-Chinese waters.

I have sent you word that the cement plant will close on March 31 if the report to me is correct. I was told that the plant would work through the Tet holidays, and that has been verified. All the readily handled spares have been sent south, as have most of the barges, but four barges will be left to the end, and probably abandoned, as well as bulky spare parts. It is the contention of the company that once the plant closes down it will take six months to get the plant back in operation again as no cleaning has taken place for four months, and no repairs have been made to the equipment. This week I am scheduled to go through the plant, and have asked Major Walker who has a certain amount of experience in cement production to come with me to reassure ourselves that the plant is adequately stripped to ensure reasonable non-utilization by the Viet Minh.

Other private industries are closing, but leaving obsolete but utilizable equipment behind. This will form the basis of a separate report.

Refugees:

There are about 14,000 refugees in camp. Detailed figures will not be sent you this week as the local authorities are not working, nor is my secretary. I have a means of sending this to you in the morning and will take advantage of that. A two week report on refugee figures will be sent next week on the regular pouch.

We are making every effort to get two trips in with the Howzie before she returns to Japan on the 6th of next month. Providing you can unload her at the Cap, this can be done. It is highly desirable to drop the numbers in the camp population in order to permit an influx after Tet. The Howzie will have carried over 50,000 refugees herself and deserves our appreciation for a job well done.

The weather is beginning to break a bit here, and as I reported, we have an adequate supply of blankets on hand to see us through. On the off chance there is excess, I will assure you they will be shipped south.

I reported a growing feeling here that a change should be effected in the Evacuation committee. I would appreciate your urgent action on this matter. There is no question but what it is long overdue.

Two new tanks for water have arrived from Japan on the Cook and are now in operation in Cement and Shall camps. Dr. Dooley is taking over the responsibility for making water again as one of the forward steps effected with the change of Commandores. The impact of his work on the refugees is, by far, the most significant piece of American propaganda and winning of friends that this entire operation has. This is now fully recognized by the Navy. We are looking forward to the arrival of Dr. Peterson to look the entire medical situation over.

As this is only a partial week, I think this will be adequate with the exception of a few special reports that are not made a part of this document.

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