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HEREWITH ARTICLE FROM C.S. MONITOR OF 12/24. "U.S.-SAIGON REFUGEE PROGRAM CRITICIZED" BY DANIEL SOUTHERLAND:

SAIGON -- THERE ARE SIGNS OF DISILLUSIONMENT AMONG AMERICAN AID OFFICIALS HERE OVER THE WAY THE U.S. AND SAIGON GOVERNMENTS ARE HANDLING THE VIETNAM REFUGEE PROBLEM.

AMONG THE CRITICISMS VOICED ARE THESE:

REFUGEES ARE BEING "RESETTLED" ON LAND WHICH IS TOO POOR TO LEAD TO ECONOMIC SELF-SUFFICIENCY. IN CASES WHERE FORESTS ARE AVAILABLE, THEY ARE OFTEN DENIED TO THE REFUGEES BECAUSE (IT IS ALLEGED) GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS CAN REAP SIZABLE PROFITS BY LETTING PRIVATE CONTRACTORS SELL THE TIMBER.

THE SAIGON GOVERNMENT, WITH U.S. SUPPORT, IS MOVING REFUGEES TO INSECURE AREAS IN AN EFFORT TO CONSOLIDATE AND EXPAND ITS TERRITORIAL CONTROL.

THESE WERE TWO OF THE MAIN OBJECTIONS VOICED BY ONE OF TWO FORMER ASSISTANT RELIEF AND REHABILITATION OFFICIERS OF THE U.S. AGENCY FOR THE INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (AID), EDWARD L. BLOCK, WHO RECENTLY RESIGNED BECAUSE OF THEIR MISGIVINGS OVER THE HANDLING OF THE REFUGEE PROGRAM. THE OTHER IS LEON J. VAN WAGONER. BOTH HAVE CONSIDERABLE BACKGROUND AND EXPERIENCE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA.

MR. BLOCK INDICATES THERE ARE OTHERS WHO SHARE THEIR CRITICISMS AND HAVE EITHER QUIT OR DECIDED AGAINST ANOTHER TOUR OF DUTY HERE.

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FOR THE PAST FIVE OR SIX MONTHS, MR. BLOCK'S JOB HAS BEEN TO WORK WITH THE SAIGON OFFICIALS RESPONSIBLE FOR LAND DEVELOPMENT AND FOR DRAWING UP RESETTLEMENT GUIDELINES. HIS WORK HAS TAKEN HIM ON NUMBER OF TRIPS TO THE PROVINCES.

MR. BLOCK DESCRIBED DR. PHAN QUANG DAN, THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR LAND DEVELOPMENT AND HAMLET BUILDING, AS A HARD-WORKING OFFICIAL. BUT HE SAID THAT DR. DAN HAD TAKEN SO MUCH RESPONSIBILITY INTO HIS OWN HANDS THAT HE COULD NOT POSSIBLY PROVIDE CAREFUL COORDINATION AND PLANNING.

DR. DAN HAS MADE AN EFFORT TO CUT DOWN ON THE THOUSANDS OF NONEXISTENT REFUGEES, CALLED "GHOST REFUGEES," WHO HAD SWOLLEN THE AID ROLLS. BUT MUCH TOO LITTLE WAS DONE TO LATE, SAID MR. BLOCK.

HE SAID HE WAS CONVINCED THAT VERY HIGH-LEVEL VIETNAMESE OFFICIALS WERE PROFITING FROM THE AID SUPPOSEDLY GOING TO "GHOST REFUGEES."

THE REFUGEE RELIEF AND REHABILITATION PROGRAM IS A BIG ONE, INVOLVING CLOSE TO A MILLION REFUGEES. IT IS ALMOST ENTIRELY U.S. FUNDED.

BUT ACCORDING TO MR. BLOCK, U.S. OFFICIALS REFUSED TO USE THE LEVERAGE WHICH THEY POSSESSED TO BRING SIGNIFICANT CHANGES IN SAIGON'S HANDLING OF THE REFUGEE PROBLEM. HIGHER-LEVEL U.S. OFFICIALS ROUTINELY SUPPRESSED CRITICAL REPORTS COMING FROM AMERICANS WORKING IN THE FIELD, HE SAID.

MR. BLOCK EXPLAINED THAT HE HAD NOT MADE KNOWN HIS VIEWS TO U.S. AID INVESTIGATORS WHO QUESTIONED HIM ABOUT HIS RESIGNATION BECAUSE HE FEARED THAT THEY MIGHT DISTORT WHAT HE HAD TO SAY IN THEIR REPORTS.

HE BELIEVES THAT THE CHANNELLING OF AMERICAN AID TO REFUGEES THROUGH PRIVATE VOLUNTARY OR INTERNATIONAL AGENCIES WOULD BE MORE EFFECTIVE THAN CONTINUING TO PUMP IT THROUGH AID AND THE SAIGON GOVERNMENT.

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IN A RECENT LETTER TO A STAFF MEMBER OF THE U.S. SENATE SUB-COMMITTEE INVESTIGATING REFUGEE PROBLEMS, MR. BLOCK DESCRIBED THE U.S. AID-FUNDED RELIEF AND REHABILITATION PROGRAM HERE AS A "MASSIVE BONANZA FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF VIETNAM, A DISASTER FOR THE REFUGEES, AND AN INSULT" TO THE AMERICAN PEOPLE.

"MANY OF THE NEW REFUGEES SITES (EVEN THE HIGHLY PRAISED SUOI NGHE PROJECT) ARE IN DANGER OF EVENTUALLY COLLAPSING OR ARE ALREADY COLLAPSING DUE TO INSUFFICIENT LAND AND LACK OF REQUIRED SUPPORT FROM THE GOVERNMENT OF VIETNAM," WROTE MR. BLOCK.

"WE HAVE COME TO DISCOVER IN SOUTH VIETNAM THAT IF AN AREA HAD GOOD SOIL, PLENTIFUL WATER, AND IS SAFE, THERE IS INEVITABLY SOMEBODY FARMING OR CLAIMING IT," MR. BLOCK SAID IN HIS LETTER.

IF AN AREA HAS POOR SOIL, FEW WATER RESOURCES, AND THE GOVERNMENT OF VIETNAM WOULD LIKE TO MAKE IT A BUFFER ZONE, THEN THE LAND IS AVAILABLE FOR REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT," HE SAID.

"RETURN-TO-VILLAGE AND RESETTLEMENT SITE-DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS ARE USUALLY BOGGED DOWN IN 'ADMINISTRATIVE DELAYS' WHILE THE 'ADMINISTRATORS' DECIDE ON THEIR OWN CUT....

TO MAKE MATTERS WORSE, CONTROLS OVER THE EXPENDITURE OF AID-PROVIDED FUNDS ARE PRACTICALLY NONEXISTENT, AND THIS HAS LED TO INEXCUSABLE FISCAL IRRESPONSIBILITY.

"AID-PROVIDED REFUGEE RELIEF FUNDS ARE BEING SPENT FOR SUCH UNAUTHORIZED ITEMS AS GOVERNMENT OF VIETNAM SOCIAL EVENTS, ADDITIONAL ALLOWANCES TO MILITARY DEPENDENTS, THE INSTALLATION OF TELEPHONES, LAND RENTALS, AND EVEN ROOFING FOR CHURCHES."

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