

Pacification Aides Complain

Widespread Looting, Robbery Are Laid to Saigon's Troops

By Iver Peterson

SAIGON, Sept. 7 (N.Y. Times)—South Vietnamese pacification forces are underpaid and underarmed, and are turning increasingly to murder, looting and highway robbery of other South Vietnamese, according to American pacification workers in all parts of the country.

These workers fear that the crimes, much more serious than the petty robbery that has long existed here, will undermine the people's confidence in the government and in some cases harm local economies, which are tied to road transportation.

"It is worse, it is definitely very much worse," said Henry B. Cushing, the senior American provincial adviser in Quang Ngai, on South Vietnam's northern coast.

He continued: "It's the ordinary soldier who sees the local official doing well, or sees an army officer getting rich from U.S. supplies, and he says, 'I've never gotten my chance,' so he grabs his rifle and he takes it."

Mr. Cushing and other officials also attributed the rise in military crime to the general lull in the fighting, which has given the soldier more time to waste and made him need more money to spend.

Two weeks ago, in the Mekong Delta province of Bao Lieu, an intercity bus was stopped by a group of militiamen. They took the passengers' watches, wallets and rings—and a television set—and then sprayed the bus with rifle fire. Five persons were killed and as many more wounded, according to American officials in the provincial capital.

In Da Nang last month, a group of South Vietnamese paratroopers similarly stopped a U.S. Army bus carrying a troupe of South Korean entertainers and robbed them of their valuables, a U.S. official there said.

And in Quang Ngai, in Mr. Cushing's province, an American de-

velopment officer expressed fears that security on Route One north to Da Nang would worsen with the pullout of the American 23d Division, not because the enemy would have a freer hand, he said, but because the South Vietnamese Second Division would be on the vital highway.

They say that most cases of highway robbery and murder are blamed by commanders on the Viet Cong. to avoid embarrassment and investigations.

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10 Pigs Get to Market

"A guy will start out for Da Nang with 20 pigs," he said, "and hell, he'd make 10 stops on the way, and get there with 10 pigs left."

The lawlessness of South Vietnamese soldiers in its minor forms is a daily occurrence for many shopkeepers and businessmen.

Restaurant owners in Saigon have endless tales of soldiers who ate a meal, then left without paying. Cyclo-cab drivers who pedal South Vietnam's most common form of urban transportation say they do not like to pick up soldiers because they frequently refuse to pay at the end of the trip.

The problem is most pronounced in Cambodia, where the South Vietnamese Army's presence has already precipitated a crisis between the two uneasy allies.

"They are looting that country—just looting it," said Peter E. Brownback, the second highest ranking pacification official for Military Region II.

"When they've loaded their armored personnel carriers, they head for home and unload, and turn around and go back," Mr. Brownback said.

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