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ACTION AID-28

INFO OCT-01 EA-15 PM-05 NSC-10 SS-20 RSC-01 L-04 H-02
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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (TEXT)

JOINT STATE/AID MESSAGE

SUBJECT: KENNEDY SUBCOMMITTEE STAFF REPORT ON REFUGEE AND CIVILIAN
WAR CASUALTY PROBLEMS IN INDOCHINA

REF: A) STATE 159165; B) STATE 159167; C) STATE 159183

1. WE BELIEVE WASHINGTON AGENCIES HAVE AMPLE MATERIAL PREPARED
IN CONNECTION WITH KENNEDY SUBCOMMITTEE HEARINGS AND INVESTIGATION
OF LAOS REFUGEES TO RESPOND TO QUESTIONS ARISING FROM THE SUB-
COMMITTEE REPORT. WE WILL NOT, THEREFORE, REPEAT DETAILED
INFORMATION ALREADY SUBMITTED ON THE SCOPE AND ACTIVITIES OF
OUR REFUGEE PROGRAM OR ON THE GENESIS OF THE REFUGEE PROBLEM
ITSELF AND ITS DEVELOPMENT DURING THE PAST YEAR. IN GENERAL WE
BELIEVE THAT THE SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT CONSPICUOUSLY IGNORES THE
ROLE OF NORTH VIETNAMESE AGGRESSION IN FIRST CREATING AND
THEN AGGRAVATING THE REFUGEE PROBLEM, ATTRIBUTES TOO MUCH
RESPONSIBILITY TO AERIAL BOMBARDMENT FOR THE GENERATION OF
REFUGEES, AND UNDERESTIMATES THE EFFECTIVENESS OF OUR CURRENT
PROGRAMS OF REFUGEE RELIEF AND RESETTLEMENT. IN THE LATTER
CONNECTION THE REPORT TENDS TO DISREGARD ANY FORM OF
ASSISTANCE TO REFUGEES UNLESS IT IS PART OF A FORMAL PROGRAM

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SPECIFICALLY LABELED "REFUGEE ASSISTANCE". NO MENTION WHATEVER IS MADE OF THE OUTSTANDINGLY SUCCESSFUL EFFORTS OF THE LAO GOVERNMENT TO HANDLE THE REFUGEE PROBLEM. ONLY BY APPRAISING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF LAO EFFORTS, WHICH WE ARE ASSISTING, AS WELL AS USAID ASSISTANCE TO THE REFUGEES WHICH IS EXTENDED IN A VARIETY OF FORMS, IS IT POSSIBLE TO GAIN AN ACCURATE PICTURE OF THE TOTAL REFUGEE PROGRAM IN LAOS. ABOUT ONE-THIRD OF OUR TOTAL AID BUDGET IS DEVOTED TO REFUGEE REQUIREMENTS.

2. OUR SPECIFIC COMMENTS FOLLOW ON THE POINTS ADVANCED IN THE PREFACE TO THE REPORT (REF B) AND THE SUMMARY OF FINDINGS (REF C).

3. PREFACE QUOTED "INTERNAL MEMORANDUM" IS ADMINISTRATIVELY CLASSIFIED LIMITED OFFICIAL USE. IT WAS TAKEN FROM USAID CENTRAL FILES BY GAO AUDITORS DURING THEIR JULY/AUGUST REVIEW HERE REFUGEE/HEALTH PROGRAMS. MEMO, DATED MARCH 27, 1970, WAS WRITTEN BY SENIOR USAID OFFICER JUST FOLLOWING LOSS SAM THONG TO NVA/PL FORCES AT PERIOD LOWEST EBB IN FEELINGS BOTH US AND LAO AUTHORITIES TOWARD SITUATION NORTHERN LAOS. IT WAS PERSONAL ANALYSIS SITUATION THAT TIME AND FEELINGS MEO PEOPLE MOST DIRECTLY AFFECTED NVA/PL MILITARY ACTIONS AND SUCCESSES. MEMO HEAVILY WEIGHTED MILITARY/STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS BECAUSE THESE WERE PARTICULAR ASPECTS SITUATION OFFICER/AUTHOR CONCENTRATING ON THAT MOMENT. IT WAS ONE EXTREMELY USEFUL ANALYSIS OF THE SITUATION RATHER THAN A FINAL MISSION JUDGMENT. IT IS HOWEVER AN ADDITIONAL EXPLANATION OF THE HIGH PRIORITY WE ATTACH TO REFUGEE RELIEF AND RESETTLEMENT IN NORTHERN LAOS IN THE WAKE OF REPEATED NORTH VIETNAMESE AGGRESSION IN THE AREA OF THE PLAIN OF JARS DURING THE PAST SIX YEARS.

4. OUR COMMENTS ON REPORT'S "SUMMARY OF FINDINGS" ARE GEARED TO SPECIFIC NUMBERED PARAGRAPHS OF SECTION II, REF C.

5. (RE PARA 1) ON FEBRUARY 1, 1970, OUR RECORDS SHOW SUPPORTED REFUGEE POPULATION (INCLUDING PARAMILITARY DEPENDENTS) OF 180,000. AS OF SEPTEMBER 25, OUR RECORDS SHOW 270,000. SINCE JULY 30, 1970. 754 REFUGEES HAVE BEEN REPORTED SOUTHERN PANHANDLE.

6. (RE PARA 2) A MORE ACCURATE STATEMENT WOULD BE THAT RATE OF REFUGEE MOVEMENT IN LAOS COINCIDES WITH NVA/PL ATTACKS CIVILIAN VILLAGES. RLAF AND US AIR OPERATIONS ARE THEMSELVES ALMOST ALWAYS

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7. (PARAS 3 AND 4) IT IMPORTANT SPECIFY WHAT PRECISE MOMENT STATEMENT ATTRIBUTED USAID, "SERIOUS AND GETTING WORSE", WAS MADE. IN MIDST LAST NVA/PL DRY SEASON OFFENSIVE (WHEN STATEMENT ACTUALLY MADE) SITUATION WAS CERTAINLY "SERIOUS AND GETTING WORSE." SITUATION AT ANY TIME HOSTILITIES INCREASE GETS WORSE. CIVILIAN WAR CASUALTIES DURING MAY/JUNE 1970, AS REPORTED BY U.S.-SUPPORTED FACILITIES, AMOUNTED TO 641; WHEREAS DURING JULY/AUGUST CIVILIAN WAR CASUALTIES IN SAME FACILITIES WERE 35. WE QUESTION WHETHER ANYTHING APPROACHING 50 PERCENT OF MEO POPULATION HAVE BECOME WAR CASUALTIES, IF THIS IS WHAT IS MEANT BY PHRASE "LOST TO TIDES OF WAR."

. (PARA 5) BASIC AND IMPORTANT ELEMENT EXCLUDED FROM SUBCOMMITTEE FINDINGS: NVA/PL ATTACKS AND DESTRUCTION MANY MEDICAL FACILITIES (200-BED FACILITY AT SAM THONG, 100-BED AT SARAVANE, 50-BED AT ATTOPEU, TOTAL OF 250 BED FACILITIES AT OTHER REFUGEE SITES) HAD MUCH TO DO WITH CAUSING TEMPORARY CROWDING REMAINING RLG FACILITIES.

9. (PARA 6) EXTENT USG CAPABILITIES MEET NEEDS OF MANY REFUGEES REPORTED PREVIOUSLY IN DEPTH. USG CONCERN/ACTIVE EFFORTS INCREASE RESOURCES AND CAPABILITIES PRE-DATED SUBCOMMITTEE'S INVESTIGATIONS AND RESULTED INCREASED FUNDING AND PERSONNEL, AS DESCRIBED IN GENERAL SECTION ABOVE. FIGURES USED RE BOMBING COSTS AND SORTIES ARE, TO PUT IT MILDLY, MISLEADING.

10. RE SUBCOMMITTEE'S PLAYING DOWN "FORMAL REFUGEE PROGRAM, MIGHT BE WORTHWHILE CITE BRIEFLY REQUIREMENTS VERSUS ORGANIZATIONAL HISTORY REFUGEE PROGRAM DURING PAST 18 MONTHS. IN EARLY SPRING 1969, FY -0 USAID IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM WAS PLANNED AND "FORMAL" REFUGEE RELIEF AND REHABILITATION PROJECT ORGANIZED AND FUNDED COMMENSURATE THEN EXISTING AND EXPECTED REQUIREMENTS FY 70. MILITARY ACTIVITIES DURING SUMMER/FALL 1969 BEGAN CHANGING WHOLE PICTURE INVOLVING CONSIDERABLE INCREASE REQUIREMENTS MEET INCREASED REFUGEE NEEDS. ENSUING DRY SEASON BROUGHT FORTH EVEN GREATER ESCALATION NVA/PL OFFENSIVES INCREASING AGAIN REFUGEE PRESSURES AND REQUIREMENTS. IN EFFECT, WHOLE PERIOD FROM LATE AUGUST 1969/JUNE 1970 WAS PERIOD RECURRING CRISES REFUGEE AREAS. EXEMPT

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