

TO: Mr. Janka, as per your request --

January 20, 1975

By-Line Report from Dennis Troute

While another battle seems to be shaping in Congress over additional military aid to South Viet Nam some American officials in Saigon are of the opinion that the aid is not really needed. Graham Martin, US Ambassador to South Viet-Nam, is a strong proponent of increased aid. He views the Government's recent loss of Pouch Long Province (sp) as positive evidence that American cut-backs have crippled the Thieu regime. But some other members of the Embassy staff are skeptical. They say privately that the South Vietnamese armed forces have enough ammunition stockpiled to carry it through three to six months of heavy fighting. The same Embassy sources say the South Vietnamese would not benefit now from replacement of older planes with more advanced models. Many aircraft already cannot be used because of a shortage of maintenance men. The C-130 transport plane is a good example, only eight out of the 30 in the country are normally flying at the same time. The rest are held up in slow moving repair centers. There are some signs that the flow of war material into Indo China is being accelerated in response to military gains made by the communists. There are reports that ammunition stockpiled in Thailand is being brought to South Viet-Nam. Off South Viet-Nam's coast a convoy of five barges is being loaded for a trip up the Mekong river to the besieged Cambodian capital of Phnom Penh. In the past these convoys carried petroleum, rice and other food stuffs as well as weaponry, but this convoy is only carrying ammunition according to several people who have been loading it. Despite these outward signs American officials deny that arms shipments are being stepped-up to any appreciable extent, though question of American aid to its allies in Indo China may have taken on psychological undertones. Increase in aid probably would not have immediate impact on the battle field but it would restore confidence in continuing American support - something that is lacking right now.