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October 13, 1965

SAIGON--More and more Vietnamese women are volunteering to join the Women's Armed Forces Corps (WAFC--pronounced wafsee)--a job paying the equivalent of \$10 a month.

"Hundreds of women are trying to get into the WAFCs; the first day of recruiting 1000 women applied to join," explained Maj. Kathleen Wilkes of Cobbtown, Georgia, the advisor to the Vietnamese commander. <sup>by women</sup>  
"There was a constant stream ~~of traffic~~ all day coming in ao dai's (the lovely flowing Vietnamese dress.")  
Recruiting is no problem. We have 10 volunteers to one position. We had to cut off recruiting after two or three weeks we were so swamped."



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Maj. Tran Cam <sup>Huong</sup> ~~Huong~~ (which means Perfume), a cherub-faced widow and mother of four, is both director of the WAFCs and commandant of the Women's Training Center, an austere row of buildings where 120 of the new recruits are <sup>ed</sup> ~~training~~ in five-week cycles in basic military <sup>Regulations</sup> ~~and~~ and courtesies, weapons familiar<sup>ization</sup> ~~ization~~ (four<sup>s</sup> hours of instruction), and first aid techniques. Maj. Huong spoke in fluent English; she had studied in the psychological warfare school in Fort Bragg, North Carolina, in 1963.

She explained that from 1952 until 1965, 650 Vietnamese women were formed into the Women's Auxiliary Corps, composed mostly of highly trained medics and social workers. But, at the beginning of this year, the program was changed and enlarged in scope to include women such as interpreters and clerk typists who could substitute for male Vietnamese non-commissioned officers. Some incoming recruits for example, will be specialized <sup>as</sup> ~~or~~ interpreters and security control forces to supplement Vietnamese police around Saigon <sup>is</sup> Tan Son Nhut Airport.



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"We now have 1103 WAFCs," she explained. "Before this year we had only 650. We would have 2000 by now if we had the training facilities, but at this time we have the capabilities of training only 120 women in one cycle. By January, 1966, we will be training 200 women every five weeks." Construction of additional training facilities is being planned for later this year.

The WAFCs operate on the same pay, promotion and allowances scale as the male side of the Vietnamese armed forces.

The lowest-ranking private makes a basic pay of 1100 piastres a month--\$10, a captain makes a basic pay of 5569 piastres (\$55). WAFCs in all ranks are also eligible for a series of allowances such as family allowance, technical supplement allowance, high cost of living allowance--or personal soap allowance--in which the monthly take-home pay can be almost doubled.

Educational requirement to join the WAFCs are high by Vietnamese standards--a minimum of junior high school study, plus some civilian skill such as typing. An officer's candidate course for the WAFCs is planned, in which the equivalent of a high school degree would be required. However, priority selections are given to the widows or daughters of Vietnamese soldiers. Beginning next year married women will not be accepted.

"The whole Vietnamese economy is geared for war and this is an honorable profession for educated women from good families," Maj. Wilkes explained. "There's not that much money in salary to attract them."



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Following the five-week basic training at this center the recruits are sent for advanced specialized training in such areas as interpreters or clerk typists. They are then funneled out into the provinces where they substitute for male Vietnamese trooper in non-combattant posts.

The 650 WAFCs in social and medical work operate a maternity clinic near the 17th parallel bordering North Vietnam, assist the families of the irregular Vietnamese forces, called regional and popular forces--which the WAFCs call "Ruffs and Puffs." among their assignments are to offer guidance and professional orientation for the families of the war dead and wounded, to visit and comfort the wounded Vietnamese soldiers, to help organize dependents' quarters, kindergardens, maternity clinics and primary schools for irregular soldiers' families, to assist wounded children and orphans, and to distribute food and clothing to poor families, widows and orphans.

First sergeant of the training school is Vo Thi Vui,

*The* a 27 year old paratrooper medic, and mother of small daughter *Mr. C.*  
who is a qualified senior jump instructor ~~and American general~~  
has frequently parachuted with the highest ranking Vietnamese and American generals. Her American advisor-counterpart is M/Sgt. Betty L. Adams of Woodside, New York *WAC* one of the two Americans *WAC* women advisors to the WAFCs.



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Reliable sources indicate that in isolated <sup>GOVERNMENT</sup> towns Vietnamese peasant women are trained militarily to defend their own villages, but this is not a nation-wide program.

In another field of female endeavor, several hundred Saigon housewives, including some of the best educated professional women in the city, have formed the Vietnamese Women's Association of Good Will. The wives of lawyers, judges, and doctors along with <sup>WOMEN</sup> ~~female~~ university professors of sociology have combined their talents to establish a "shelter" for war-torn families coming into Saigon.

"One family that came into the center this morning was brought here by the U.S. Marines from Danang," explained Mrs. Phung Ngoc ~~Dung~~, a professional pharmacist and President of the Women's Association. "The small baby in the family has a hairlip and the Marines brought him to Saigon to have the hairlip operated on at the American hospital. The mother and the rest of the small children will stay here until they can go back to Danang."



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"In another case, one soldier was killed in the battle of Dong Xoai ( a multi-battalion sized Viet Cong attack north of Saigon in June) and his wife with her five children came here after they were released from the hospital," Mrs. Duy continued.

"In one hospital, after that battle, I saw a six-year old boy crying and he told me "my mother left this morning to bury my father and two sisters and she didn't take me with her." The next day I saw his mother and she was crying and told me her home was destroyed, her husband was killed and she didn't know what to do when she left the hospital. So she came here with her three children.

"Later, we try to find the mothers some kind of work so they can support themselves and ~~a~~ their families."

Currently, six women and 79 children live in the shelter, which is also a kindergarden for the young children.

As the youngsters played in the fenced-in compound of the shelter, one distressed woman, still in a state of emotional shock, watched.

"This woman was holding one of ~~her~~ her babies when a grenade exploded killing her child and wounding her in the breasts," Mrs. Duy said. "The mother is in need of rehabilitation now; she will stay here awhile."



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The Vietnamese Women's Association was the first and only major women's organization that sprang up following the overthrow in November 1963, of the nine-year-old regime of President Ngo Dinh Diem, his famous sister-in-law Madame Ngo Dinh Nhu and her one-million-strong Woman's Solidarity Movement, which reached from Saigon into the villages and the lower-class echelons of female Vietnamese society. Since the demise of the Diem regime, any organizing of low-schelon, poorer class women has been either by religious organizations--the Catholics or the Buddhists--or by the Communist Party. When the Diem regime was toppled, one 30-year-old woman who had been a village leader in Madame Nhu's organization explained she simply sided with the Communists and helped them organize the peasant women into Viet Cong associations.