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Saigon

Draft--1

Sent
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Saigon--American advisors have been ordered--for the first time in the war--to watch carefully the recruitment of Vietnamese draftees in the provinces.

The problem of recruitment is crucial; General Maxwell D. Taylor, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, ~~has~~ delved into it during his mid-May visit. While American Defense ~~Sec~~ Secretary Robert S. McNamara authorized in March a ~~50,000~~ ^{50,000} 50-man ~~inc~~ increase for the understrength Vietnamese armed forces, the government is having difficulty filling the quota.

During a recent month, the government issued a draft call for 20,000 man--but only ~~for~~ 1,500 (repeat 1,500) showed up, according to reliable sources. Training centers lack the necessary number of recruits to train at full capacity.

Yet, according to American advisors in the provinces, "The Communists are so popular they're running out of recruitment forms."

the government ~~discus~~ discovered the armed forces were understrength only recently when they found a number of non-existent persons listed on the military payrolls, according to prime minister, ~~General~~ General Nguyen Khanh.

"A lot of people were drawing pay who were not members of the armed forces," General Khanh said in an interview with New York Herald-Tribune. "When the government re-checked the payrolls, we found we were ~~und~~ understrength. Under (ex-President Ngo Dinh) Diem, every statistic was phony."

While the goateed general would not estimate the number ~~at~~ on the padded payrolls, which are primarily paid indirectly by U. S. funding, some estimates run ~~as high as~~ ^{as high as} 50,000 men. If ~~td~~ true, the ~~in~~ 50,000-man ~~increased~~ authorized by McNamara would, in fact, only restore the actual ~~fighting~~ ~~armed forces strength~~ which Washington and the Vietnamese government presumed they had in ~~the~~ armed forces several months ago.

(More)

General Khanh said he expects the quota to be filled in June.

The order to American advisors stationed in Vietnam's 43 provinces and 100 districts (provincial subdivisions), was issued in a directive dated May 9 and signed by Brig. Gen. Ben Sternberg, assistant chief of staff, J-1 (personnel). Parts of the ^{unclassified} directive, headed "Selective Service System," reads as follows:

"1. Decreasing RVNAF (Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces)

strength continues to be the major problem facing the GVN (Government of Viet Nam) and is therefore of primary concern to U. S. advisors. The success of the Pacification Plan and the ultimate winning of the war is tied directly to GVN ability to maintain the fighting units at authorized strength.

"2. Conscription is the primary means of securing the manpower

resources needed. ~~Many~~ Many problems are being encountered particularly in issuing draft notices, insuring draftees report for induction and apprehending draft evaders.

"3. Your assistance in monitoring GVN ~~xxx~~ conscription

efforts and procedures...is essential...."

American advisors are also issued a five-point checklist which attempts to expedite and tighten recruiting procedures at the lowest levels.

The Vietnamese selective service system operates similar to that in the United States, except ³responsibilities are divided between two ministries--Defense and Interior. At 18, the male individual reports to his nearest administrative office. Two years later, if he is found fit and is not deferred, he is scheduled to be drafted.

or father does not have (More) funds to buy him out,

"But the Viet Cong ~~was~~ take young men much ~~before~~ ^{below the age of} 18 ~~years of age,~~"

one American provincial representative groaned. "By the time he's ready to go into the Army, he's already taken off with the Viet Cong or has gone into hiding."

The current authorized strength of ~~regus~~ regular army, navy, marine and airforce units is 200,000. The actual strength, however, is classified, according to General Khanh. Almost all units, however, are known to be operating understrength, some as much as 50 per cent.

~~to~~ Paramilitary forces add another 200,000 to the armed forces.

The problem of recruitment is not so much a single problem but a visible index of many ~~many~~ underlying difficulties, according to military sources. It indicates the ~~success~~ ^{successful} successfulness of Communist terror, of intimidation ~~and~~ or high-powered persuasion tactics among an uneducated population—and the government's incapability to either counter them or to offer a meaningful alternative.

A corollary to the recruitment problem is that the government ^{completely} is unable to hold or appeal to its own armed forces, thus indicating low ~~more~~ morale and the Communists' skill in infiltrating the military organization.

An estimated seven per cent of the armed forces total are communist viet cong agents or sympathizers, according to reliable sources, with the figure running as high as 20 percent in some units. In one known case, ^{over} 100 percent

~~of the unit defected~~ ^{an elite special} an entire elite unit defected the night before their graduation. ^{its} U. S. Army Special Forces ^{OFFICERS} estimate ^{PERCENT} 15% of the

~~lower~~ low echelon paramilitary units they train are Viet Cong agents or sympathizers. (More)

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~~2~~ In a special training course teaching Vietnamese soldiers to handle military sentry and scouting dogs, some soldiers are known to have defected after conclusion of the course--taking their \$1000 German shepherd dogs with them. Several Vietnamese Air Force pilots, almost all of whom have been trained in either France or the United States, are suspected by American pilots of landing their T-28 fighter planes on red-clay stripes in Viet Cong territory and ~~dumping~~ ^{TRANSFERRING} their 100-bombs into enemy hands. While American military sources in Saigon deny this transfer of ordinance, American officers in ~~provin~~ ^{THE} field have told correspondents of one specific suspected ^{VIETNAMESE} case. DEFECTION FIGURES ARE CLASSIFIED.

~~These figures are classified in accordance with the provisions of Executive Order 11652, dated 11/20/64, and are not to be disseminated outside the Department of Defense.~~

Sizeable quantities of U. S. aid goods distributed through the government's civilian strategic hamlet administration has also slipped into Viet Cong hands, according to reliable sources, (Informatively a USAID official) including chemical ~~fertiz~~ ^{fertiz} fertilizer which the Viet Cong ~~can~~ use in making ammunition.

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(Note to Editor: Most of these ~~incidents~~ ^{CASES} ~~about~~ defections were ~~not~~ picked up from ~~trax~~ talking to provincial advisors; the ~~Sources~~ Americans of higher rank may ~~h~~ deny them, but I'm sure they're accurate, since the provincial advisors were talking about ~~the~~ instances based on their own experiences in their areas.) I'm enclosing the recruitment directive; could you return it to me at your convenience.)