

Civilian Toll 1,000 Per Month

SAIAGON, South Vietnam (AP) — How many civilians are becoming casualties in South Vietnam.

The exact number of victims in two decades of fighting may never be known. Even today no accurate record is kept of battle-connected deaths and injuries among the 16 million civilians.

Figures from Vietnamese and American public and private sources indicate this year's civilian toll has averaged about 1,000 a month, with at least three times that many wounded.

If the figure on deaths is correct, the loss of 12,000 civilian lives this year would nearly parallel the battle deaths of American and Vietnamese military personnel.

This total, based on figures available through Dec. 10 for the Americans and through November for the Vietnamese, is 13,270.

The guesses on civilian deaths, the best available from official sources here, are far below an estimate published today in the U.S. magazine Ramparts. It has an article by William F. Pepper saying that "conservative estimates" put civilian deaths currently at 100,000 a year.

Pepper is executive director of the New Rochelle (N.Y.) Commission on Human Rights and instructor in political science at Mercy college, Dobbs Ferry, N.Y. He spent several weeks in Vietnam last spring.

"The horror of what we are doing to the children of Vietnam — 'we,' because napalm and white phosphorus are the weapons of America — is staggering," his article says.

"Nearly two years ago Hugh Campbell, former Canadian member of the international control commission

in Vietnam, said that from 1962 through 1963, 160,000 Vietnamese civilians died in the war. This figure was borne out by officials in Saigon.

"According to conservative estimates, another 55,000 died during 1964 and 100,000 in each of the two escalated years since, or at least 415,000 civilians have been killed since 1961.

"Since the males over 16 are away fighting — on one side or the other — it's clear that in the rural villages which bear the brunt of the napalm raids, at least 70 percent and probably more of the residents are children.

"In other words, at least a quarter of a million of the children of Vietnam have been killed in the war.

"If there are that many dead, using the military rule of thumb, there must be three times that many wounded — or at least a million child casualties since 1961."

Here in Saigon a U.S. adviser with the Vietnamese health service called these figures "very high."

"We do not have the statistics to disprove such an estimate but observations in the hospitals and streets will show there just aren't that many children who have been wounded," he said.

Campbell, now a magistrate in British Columbia, denied he had ever made any such estimate and said he had never had occasion to prepare such an estimate, either as a member of the ICC or for articles he has written.

He said a similar figure was given in an article written by the World Federalist Organization in Victoria, B.C., several years ago for which he supplied a foreword.

William F Pepper - Ramparts article

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