

15 July 1971

Mr. Ralph J. Chodes
Letters Desk
New York Times
229 West 43rd Street
New York, N.Y. 10036

Dear Sir:

We believe that the article 'Agent Blue in Vietnam' (N.Y.T. July 12) by Professor A. Westing requires emendation.

The author states that in Quang-Ngai province fifteen crop destruction missions were approved for 1970 totalling 182,000 acres which would represent 85% of the croplands of the province. Last summer in South Vietnam, we made a particular analysis of the crop destruction program in Quang-Ngai and Quang-Tin.

According to official GVN-US figures, crop destruction plans approved for these two adjacent provinces (not Quang-Ngai alone) in 1970 estimated a food loss of about 14,000 tons, enough for some 70,000 people. Food to be destroyed is a more appropriate measure of the extent of this program than is total acreage potentially exposed; this represents, using GVN crop production figures, the spraying of about 7% of the total rice crop of the two provinces, rather than 85%.

The extensively cultivated coastal plain being under GVN control and not subject to anti-crop spraying, these plans call for the destruction of a much higher percentage of crops in the mountain valley land cultivated by Montagnards, for whom the loss of 14,000 tons would be the loss of most of their normal livelihood. The limited objectives of the projected crop destruction in Quang-Ngai in 1970 does not change the fact that official sources agree that the diets of more than half a million civilians have been chemically destroyed in the years 1962 to 1970.

Professor Westing states that the crop destruction program continues, even though, in March, the Secretary of State told Congress that it had been stopped. We are unaware of any evidence of continued chemical crop destruction in Vietnam, although herbicides are still being used by the US-GVN for defoliation. More alarming than this continued use are substantial reports of chemical crop destruction by Portuguese forces in Angola. It is urgent that the U.S. join other nations in abjuring the military use of chemical herbicides.

Very truly yours,

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