RAILROAD HEROES TO BE AWARDED

The presentation of awards to a number of outstanding railroad workers, whose dedication and fortitude have instrumentally helped keep the Vietnamese railroad network operating despite persistent Communist attempts to paralyze it, will highlight a ceremony to be held under the chairmanship of Prime Minister Nguyen Khanh at the Saigon railroad station Friday morning, Oct. 23.

Thirty-one railroad workers, mostly train personnel, were killed and 383 wounded by the end of September 1964 as a result of Communist sabotage. These casualties do not include those suffered by the military escort personnel.

Over 630 million piastres worth of railroad rolling stock and rail equipment were damaged by Viet Cong saboteurs from 1952 to 1963. Estimates of the 1964 damage are in the neighborhood of 160 million piastres.

Other highlights of the ceremony will include speeches by many top-ranking Vietnamese and American officials, namely Prime Minister Nguyen Khanh, Public Works Minister Tran Ngoc Oanh, Vietnam Railway System (VRS) Board of Directors Chairman Pham Minh Duong and USOM Director James S. Killen.

The occasion will also feature the formal reception by the VRS from USOM of 200 knocked down but locally assembled 30-ton freight boxcars, maintenance machinery and machine tools, and inter-station communications equipment, worth a total of over US$ 3.8 million.

The boxcars are valued at US$ 2,504,000, while the machinery and communications equipment are worth approximately US$ 1 million and US$ 300,000, respectively. The assembling of these boxcars by Vietnamese technicians and workers at the Di An workshop has saved approximately US$ 3 million in commodity cost, in addition to providing the VRS Mechanical Department's staff with an opportunity to further improve its skill.

While the communications equipment is supplied as a direct grant under the counter-insurgency program, the boxcars and machinery are provided out of a DLF loan of US$ 7.8 million. The same loan had procured 23 Road Haul diesel electric locomotives and 21 completely built boxcars delivered to the VRS in January, 1964. In addition, a contract was signed last month to supply 25 switcher-type locomotives to the System under the counter-insurgency program.

The DLF loan has brought to US$ 14.1 million the total of American money accorded the VRS under either loan or grant terms since 1956, when the United States, through USOM, started to help Vietnam restore her war-torn 1,337-km railroad network and keep it in working conditions.