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April 14, 1975

VIETNAM: April, 1975

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Preliminary Report to the Committee
on Foreign Relations of Richard M. Moose
and Charles F. Meissner.

Introduction:

The following is an overview of the basic findings and commentary resulting from our travel to Vietnam and Cambodia during the period April 2-13, 1975 and from our consultations with the Departments of State and Defense, the Central Intelligence Agency and at the Headquarters of U.S. Forces in the Pacific. While in Indochina we had numerous interviews and meetings including those with Vietnamese and Cambodian officials in Saigon and Phnom Penh, including the then interim President of Cambodia, South Vietnamese political leaders, foreign diplomats and experienced observers of the Indochina scene. While in Saigon we also met with the head of the Provisional Revolutionary Government delegation to the Four Party Joint Military Team talks.

* * * * *

The North Vietnamese offensive in Military Region 3 around Saigon directly threatens the survival of the Saigon government and the physical security of the 5,000 Americans who remain in

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By KR NLF Date 5/11/87

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South Vietnam. As of Saturday, April 12, the military situation was as follows:

The equivalent of four ARVN (South Vietnamese Army) divisions, (including reserves) are defending Saigon and the surrounding area against six NVA (North Vietnamese Army) divisions. ARVN's line of defense lies in an arc about 25 to 35 miles outside the city. Given ARVN's larger divisions, the man-to-man ratio is considered even. Interior lines of supply, defensive positions and airpower are also considered to be to Saigon's advantage. Thus, despite Saigon's bleak mid-and long-term prospects, no one expects the end to come this week although a sudden local disaster could threaten the entire defense.

Current intelligence indicates that the North Vietnamese wish to consolidate their hold over the area around Saigon by May 1. By that time four or possibly five additional NVA divisions from North Vietnam and the occupied territories are expected to arrive in the Saigon area. Upon their arrival, U.S. analysts expect the North Vietnamese to launch major attacks toward Saigon along Route 1 from the east, down Route 13 from the north and up Route 4 from the southern delta.

Intelligence analysts cannot decide whether the North Vietnamese will attack the city directly, or seek to cut its land and sea routes thereby strangling the city. The objective of either strategy would be the same - to force the South Vietnamese Government into a negotiated settlement on Hanoi's terms.

A week ago a growing number of observers felt that the North Vietnamese would delay the opening of the battle for Saigon and that they would prefer to take the city without a direct military assault. They reasoned that Hanoi needed time to move additional forces, that the North Vietnamese would like to avoid the possible approbrium which would follow such an assault, and that Hanoi would prefer instead to create the appearance of having come to power by political or diplomatic means. Subsequent tactical and psychological warfare moves suggest that the climactic moves could come sooner than expected and before the ARVN can reconstitute its shattered forces and consolidate a defensive strategy. At this time the military initiative lies almost completely with the North Vietnamese.

Intelligence analysts in Vietnam, both military and civilian, agree that the balance of military force has now shifted decisively in their favor. These same experts consider the military situation of the Saigon government to be irretrievable. In their view, only decisive military action by the United States could reverse the current situation.

Given what most observers considered to be the critical nature of the military situation, we encountered almost universal feeling that most of the approximate 5,000 U.S. personnel remaining in South Vietnam should be removed as rapidly as possible. Indeed,

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most observers felt that such reductions are dangerously overdue. This view was reinforced by the following related considerations:

- Tension with Saigon is extremely high. Wealthy and middle class Vietnamese are said to be almost totally absorbed in planning for their escape or survival. The poor are equally frightened but have no place to go. Communist propaganda operators are enjoying a field day for even the wildest rumor finds ready credence among an anxious populace. The intelligence services report the presence of a number of Communist sapper units in the city. Large scale panic could easily be induced by bombs or rockets (the Communists could soon be in range for either), the collapse and flight of a nearby ARVN unit or a sudden influx of refugees. The city's propensity to panic was demonstrated by its instant, frantic reaction to last week's bombing of the Presidential Palace.

- Confidence in Thieu's leadership has totally collapsed. Virtually all Vietnamese military and civilian leaders agree that Thieu must go if the armed forces are to be rallied to Saigon's defense and the nation readied for what they regard as the inevitable political showdown with Hanoi. But Thieu refuses to go and the others are reluctant to have him go by extra-legal means. A near paralysis in the government is the result. The insecurity which the Vietnamese feel as a result of their loss of confidence in their own leaders is compounded by a sense of having been abandoned by the Americans.

- Hostility toward Americans is on the increase. The most

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disturbing evidence of this are the grim warnings which have been conveyed to some Americans by long time Vietnamese friends. The publicity attendant to the "baby lift" and some aspects of the public debate within the United States do not sit well with the Vietnamese. These issues are being skillfully exploited by the Communists and the forthcoming Congressional debate on evacuating Vietnamese and continued military aid could further exacerbate the situation.

The seriousness and sensitivity of the evacuation issue should not be underrated or ignored. Everyone with whom we spoke acknowledged the difficulty of maintaining the delicate balance between the rapid reductions required to achieve a residual American presence of manageable proportions in a short time and the risk that such a move could trigger Vietnamese panic or hostility. The consensus view of the most knowledgeable and responsible observers is that the magnitude of the evacuation problem is so great and the risk so serious that urgent action is required.

The U.S. military who have studied the evacuation problem most closely are of the strong opinion that conditions will never be more favorable for evacuation than they are now. As time passes, they expect all of the above problems to grow more serious. The CIA station chief in Saigon is of a similar view and is making arrangements to evacuate his staff, both Vietnamese and American, under conditions of extreme duress, if necessary.

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This sense of urgency is not shared, and indeed is being actively resisted, by Ambassador Martin and a few of his senior officers. Commentary on the Ambassador's personal attitude toward the evacuation question is relevant here because he is responsible for having held back the pace of American personnel reductions and for not having expedited evacuation planning. The Ambassador does not regard the military or security situation as critical, and therefore he does not perceive or acknowledge the risks seen by others. He deplores what he regards as "panic" on the part of others. Instead he stresses the need to avoid taking action which would convey to the Vietnamese government signs of American uneasiness. Among the courses of action which have been suggested to him and which he has thus far rejected is intervention with the Vietnamese government to break the administrative logjam in the issuance of passports and visas which now impedes the exodus of Vietnamese dependents of Americans.

Serious Embassy planning for full-scale evacuation of Americans and Vietnamese began only last week. By week's end, it had not progressed beyond the preliminary stage. Coordination between the various elements of the Mission has been minimal primarily because discussion of the problem seems to have been discouraged. As a result, at least two major elements of the Mission, the CIA, as noted earlier, and the Defense Attache Office, are proceeding independently with plans of their own. The anxiety of the American community - official and semi-official and private - is compounded by the absence of a cohesive well

understood evacuation procedure and by what outsiders perceive as an air of unreality pervading the highest level of the Embassy. Examples of expressed concern and dismay within the American community are numerous.

The Embassy's estimates of the number of potential evacuees as of the beginning and end of last week are shown on the chart attached at the back of this report. Most of these figures are subject to upward revision. Lists are still being compiled in Saigon as more resident Americans register at the Embassy or as more information concerning the Vietnamese dependents of American and Vietnamese employees becomes known.

Suggestions

There are a number of actions, some legislative and others informal, which the Committee might wish to consider as a means of speeding the evacuation of Americans from Vietnam, protecting the security of those who remain and maximizing the evacuation of Vietnamese. Some of these suggested actions and related considerations are as follows:

1. Exert pressure on Embassy Saigon to accelerate evacuation.

Although Washington has begun to press Embassy Saigon to reduce drastically its American personnel, many concerned officials believe discreet Congressional pressure would be helpful. In this connection, if the President's supplemental aid request is likely to be refused, it would be important to get as many Americans as possible out of Saigon before this occurs.

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2. Delay debate on use of force. Similar considerations of timing would apply to the possible debate over whether U.S. military force should be used to evacuate Vietnamese or whether its use should be confined to the extraction of Americans. Already nervous and irritated elements of the Vietnamese public may take considerable offense at such debate. It would be better if most Americans were out of the country before it begins.

3. Waive or expedite U.S. documentation of Vietnamese Evacuees.

In order to speed the evacuation process the Embassy, the State Department and the Immigration and Naturalization Service might be encouraged to waive as many U.S. formalities as possible so as to facilitate the admission of Vietnamese dependents to U.S. territory. Legislation will presumably be required in some instances.

4. Move evacuees to U.S. territory. An increasing number of Vietnamese are ending up at Clark Air Force Base in the Philippines without proper papers for onward travel. The Filipinos were already sensitive over the sovereignty implications of international arrivals at Clark Air Force Base before the evacuation began and mass arrivals of Vietnamese at Clark are straining our working relationship. Arrangements should be made to take these people directly to U.S. territories such as Guam or the Trust Territories.

5. Military aid. Supplemental military assistance would enable Saigon to prolong its survival. But no one, including the Vietnamese military, believes that more aid could reverse the flow of events. Obviously, the situation is even further beyond retrieval in Cambodia. It might be noted in passing, however, that the Cambodian resistance has been remarkable. The only conceivable rationale for more military aid to either country would be to hold the government together long enough to enable the non-communist elements to put themselves in as good a negotiating position as possible.

The Vietnamese military incidentally does not consider supplemental military aid to be as critical in the short run as a change in national leadership, i.e. the removal of Thieu. If the Saigon government should survive the current crisis, more arms aid would be required, particularly to outfit and equip reconstituted and newly created units. In this connection, however, many experienced observers express strong doubt whether Saigon's ambitious plans for creating new units will prove feasible.

6. Efforts to encourage negotiations. Whether supplemental military aid is voted or denied, a fresh U.S. effort at negotiations is in order. It is important that we have a realistic concept of the limits of what can be presented in such negotiations. At worst, they would

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amount to surrender talks and at best a deck stacked heavily against the present governments. But, as noted above and as will be discussed below, the prospect of meaningful negotiations might forestall an attack on Saigon, and it may prove to be the only means of extracting Americans.

Playing an End Game

If the Executive Branch were to accept the view of the intelligence communities that very little can be salvaged in Vietnam, we might reconcile ourselves to that fact and begin playing an "end game" designed to minimize the damage resulting from the failure of our present policy; to maximize the number of evacuees; and to increase the United States potential for arriving at constructive relations with the successor governments.

Avoiding the Cambodian Mistake

We saw Ambassador John Dean four days before he was evacuated from Phnom Penh and we found him deeply disappointed that Washington had not supported his efforts to bring about a controlled solution to the Cambodian conflict. Dean believes that the Cambodians might have found a way out had we committed ourselves to a negotiated settlement - even if it were tantamount to a Phnom Penh surrender.

Oddly enough many Vietnamese, including senior commanders of the armed forces, now see negotiations as the only realistic objective. General Ky, for example, expressed this view to us when we saw him. We are beginning to appear, both to the Vietnamese

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and Cambodians, more hung up on negotiations than the people whom we are supposed to be helping.

In Vietnam, negotiations may ultimately be the only way to stop an attack which would threaten our residual presence, particularly if we do not drastically reduce our personnel soon. Moreover, if we want to evacuate really large numbers of Vietnamese such as those already cited in the Embassy's planning we can only do so in a non-hostile environment and possibly only in accordance with terms agreed upon as part of a negotiating package.

If we do not move rapidly on evacuation and if we do not seek to support Vietnamese negotiating efforts, we may well end up with our personnel held hostage by the Vietnamese - either the North Vietnamese or our Saigon allies.

Refugees and Humanitarian Aid

The need for refugee relief and other humanitarian assistance in Cambodia and Vietnam remains great. Continued conflict in Vietnam will expand the problem. Whether and how the United States responds to these problems, especially in the "liberated" areas of both countries will represent one of the first steps in the definition of U.S. relations with the new governments of Indochina.

Cambodia

At the time of our visit, five days before it closed, the Embassy in Phnom Penh estimated that four million Cambodians -

two million in Phnom Penh and two million in other enclaves - representing 50 percent of the country - were dependent upon American rice. The nutritional needs of these people will not end with the fighting. The next rice harvest in Cambodia, assuming it can be planted in May, will not be gathered until this coming November or December. Even with present levels of aid, officials at Embassy Phnom Penh told us that 70 percent of the population in the city was suffering from malnutrition.

The transition between governments in Cambodia is expected to cause severe humanitarian problems as the social services break down. At present, the American voluntary agencies do not know whether they will be allowed to operate after a Communist take over. U.N. agencies have not been deeply involved in Cambodia. The only hopeful aspect of the anticipated end to hostilities would be the reopening of the Mekong to shipping thus allowing the inexpensive movement of bulk commodities such as rice.

Anticipated Cambodian relief needs through the end of the year as roughly estimated by the Embassy were as follows:

- a) 400 metric tons of rice (about \$200 million),
- b) 50 metric tons of high protein food supplements to include K mix and dry milk for children,
- c) sufficient rice seed to plant 2 million hectares,
- d) medical supplies, prosthetic devices and surgical teams (about \$8 million),

- e) 100 thousand temporary living units (about \$20 million),
- f) equipment for construction and provision of water (\$10 million).

These items combine for a rough total of about \$300 million.

Vietnam

The magnitude and extent of the refugee question in Vietnam is still unclear. There may be roughly 400,000 refugees in GVN controlled areas of which 325,000 are the product of the NVA offensive which began in March. These refugees are concentrated in the towns on the east coast of South Vietnam and on Phu Quoc Island. Other refugees are known to be located outside government receiving centers and, therefore, are not counted nor do they receive aid. The collapse of humanitarian programs in the northern part of the country has released both personnel and funds in adequate quantities to handle the present flow of refugees

Rice supplies are adequate in GVN controlled areas but there are periodic shortages of some goods - presently tents. The voluntary agencies are able, even with reduced American staffs, to handle the present refugee load. Their only request is the provision of an occasional plane from the states to reduce time and cost of shipping supplies.

While almost all the voluntary agencies expressed a desire to work in Communist held areas, none of the large agencies felt that it would be acceptable to a Communist government. If true, this would mean that any aid to areas controlled by Communists would have to be funneled through international agencies. Both

North Vietnam and the Provisional Revolutionary Government have worked with UNICEF and the U.N. High Commissioner on Refugees. In anticipation of an expanded role in the Communist held areas the U.N. is already assembling a staff of experts experienced in handling humanitarian aid. A common trust fund has been established to receive aid for Indochina.

Two major problems must be overcome in administering aid through the U.N. or other international agencies. First, the U.N. insists upon end-use checking of the aid that it provides. In the past Communist nations have resisted such efforts. Secondly, the U.N. has traditionally worked through established government agencies of the host country. In the P.R.G. area these institutions are not expected to be functioning well for sometime, thereby inhibiting the flow of assistance.

No one knows the size of the refugee problem in the P.R.G. controlled areas. These areas had a population of close to 7 million people prior to the offensive. It is assumed that major dislocations took place around Hue, Da Nang, Quang Ngai, Qui Nhon and Nha Trang. Certainly the dislocation must equal that of the 325,000 refugees who fled Military Region I and II and are now in GVN territory. The normal needs of a group of this size will be compounded by the fact that Military Region I and II are food deficit areas as is North Vietnam. The P.R.G. has already appealed to the world community for food.

Noting these appeals and proposals introduced in Congress, we requested an appointment and were received by the P.R.G. representative to the Four Party Joint Military Team at Camp Davis

on the Ton Son Nhut Airbase. The discussions were frank and pleasant. While the P.R.G. representative stated that he was not authorized to speak for his government, he lead us to believe that the question of humanitarian aid to P.R.G. controlled areas was reconcilable. But he stressed that the U.S. must stop aiding the "forced" evacuation of Vietnamese from the occupied areas, cease taking Vietnamese adults and children out of the country, and begin withdrawing U.S. "military advisors" and terminating U.S. involvement in the political affairs of South Vietnam. We indicated that we could meet with the P.R.G. mission in Paris or Geneva should his government desire to continue discussions on possible humanitarian aid by the United States to P.R.G. controlled territory.

Large non-discriminating grants of humanitarian aid at this time might be counter productive unless their disbursement were carefully monitored. If such aid is authorized and appropriated, it should be held in trust until needs can be more accurately defined and suitable delivery procedures worked out.

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EMERGENCY EVACUATION
Estimated Number of Potential Evacuees

	<u>April 7</u>	<u>April 12</u>
Total Estimated Number of Potential Evacuees	<u>173,719</u>	<u>175,817</u>
A. American Citizens	<u>5,422</u>	<u>4,969</u>
DOD Employees and dependents	1,057	597
Other USG Employees and dependents	1,122	893
Residents of Vietnam	800	980
Transients	62	62
U.S. Press and dependents	70	73
U.S. Contractors (DOD and USAID) and dependents	2,301	2,184
B. Alien Evacuees	<u>168,297</u>	<u>170,848</u>
Dependents of U.S. Citizens	500	904
Foreign Diplomatic Missions	1,346	1,092
Third Country Nationals employed by U.S.G. and dependents	23	25
Third Country National contractors (DOD and USAID) and dependents	599	552
Official Aliens and other aliens	1,178	1,178
U.S. Mission Local National Employees	14,000	17,600
Dependents	150,000	150,000
ICCS	606	400

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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

April 7, 1975

Mr. Marsh:

Your office called to tell you that
Mike Reed called and can be reached
on 225-2204

Florence

TO JIM
SN
Eve

—
THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Mr. Marsh,

Assistant Secretary for
Congressional Affairs at the State
Department asked that this cable be
brought to your attention. He asked
that you please take note of para. 2e.

Phil -

For your
immediate consid-
eration, and
suggestions. *John*

OP: IMMED
 MJA982JDA102
 DE: RUMJDH #3605 0950419
 O: 050403Z APR 75
 FM: AMCONSUL HONG KONG

TO: SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4452

SECRET HONG KONG 3605

EXDIS
 DEPARTMENT PASS PAT HOLT, CHIEF OF STAFF, COMMITTEE ON
 FOREIGN RELATIONS FROM MOOSE AND MEISSNER
 E.O. 11652: XGDS-3

1. (UNCLASSIFIED) GIVEN YOUR REQUEST FOR INFORMATION
 SOONEST AND NOT KNOWING WHAT CONSTRAINTS THERE MAY BE ON
 COMMUNICATING WITH YOU ONCE WE REACH SAIGON, WE OFFER THE
 FOLLOWING BASED ON BRIEFINGS, CONSULTATIONS AND CONVERSATIONS
 TO DATE:

2. CAMBODIA: (A) (UNCLASSIFIED) IT SEEMS DOUBTFUL WE
 WILL GET TO PHNOM PENH AND WE PROBABLY WILL LEARN LITTLE
 NEW ABOUT CAMBODIA ONCE WE REACH SAIGON.

(B) (UNCLASSIFIED) THE MILITARY SITUATION AROUND
 PHNOM PENH APPEARS TO BE DETERIORATING SO RAPIDLY
 THAT THE SUPPLEMENTAL MILITARY AID QUESTION MAY BE MOOT
 BY MONDAY. THE RECENT FALL AT NEAK LUONG AND BANAM HAS
 RELEASED 1-3,000 INSURGENT TROOPS FOR ATTACK AGAINST PHNOM
 PENH'S WEAKLY DEFENDED SOUTHERN PERIMETER.

(C) (SECRET) REPORTS INDICATE FURTHER INFLUX OF
 INSURGENT TROOPS DRAWN FROM PROVINCES FOR FINAL MOVES ON
 CAPITAL. INSURGENTS ALREADY HLD POSITIONS FROM WHICH
 CITY AND AIRPORT CAN BE BROUGHT UNDER HIGHLY ACCURATE
 105 MM HOWITZER FIRE. TERRORIST ACTIVITIES WITHIN CITY
 ARE AN INCREASING POSSIBILITY. US OFFICIALS ESTIMATE
 CAMBODIAN AIR FORCE WILL SHORTLY BE NON-OPERATIONAL.
 DESPITE AIRLIFT, MALNUTRITION AND STARVIATION SAID TO BE
 REACHING CRISIS PROPORTIONS.

(D) (CONFIDENTIAL) WE ARE TOLD THAT NOTWITHSTANDING
 FOREGOING SOME CAMBODIAN LEADERS CLING TO HOPE THAT
 AMERICANS WILL SOMEHOW "SAVE" THEM. AIRPORT MAY SOON BE
 INTERDICTED AND, WITH FALL OF NEAK LUONG, MEKONG UNLIKELY
 EVEN TO BE REOPENED. ADDITIONAL MILITARY AID, IF AVAILABLE,

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By DAD NLF Date 11/4/80



WOULD PROBABLY BE UNDELIVERABLE. IN ANY EVENT, NO ANALYST WITH WHOM WE HAVE SPOKEN BELIEVES AID WOULD ENABLE GOVERNMENT FORCES TO BREAK PRESENT SEIGE OR REVERSE PRESENT TERMINAL TREND. ACCORDINGLY, COMMITTEE MIGHT WISH TO CONCENTRATE ON QUESTIONS OF HOW HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE CAN BEST BE GOTTEN TO CAMBODIAN PEOPLE AND HOW FUTURE US INTERESTS IN CAMBODIA CAN BEST BE SERVED VIS A VIS THE LIKELY SUCCESSOR GOVERNMENT.

(E) (UNCLASSIFIED) IN THE LATTER CONNECTION, THE PROSPECT OF RECEIVING SUBSTANTIAL HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE THROUGH MULTILATERAL CHANNELS, COUPLED WITH THE ATTENDANT PRESENCE OF INTERNATIONAL RELIEF WORKERS MIGHT GO FAR TOWARD SOFTENING POSSIBLE HARSHNESS OF INSURGENT TAKEOVER. DEMONSTRATION OF US WILLINGNES TO CONTRIBUTE TO AN EFFORT DESIGNED TO REACH ALL CAMBODIANS MIGHT ENCOURAGE NEW GOVERNMENT IN MAINTAINING ITS FREEDOM OF ACTION, ESPECIALLY, AS REGARD THE NORTH VIETNAMESE.

2. VIETNAM: (A) (SECRET) NORTH VIETNAMESE STRENGTH IN MR-3 AREA SURROUNDING SAIGON IS BUILDING STEADILY. ARRIVAL IN AREA OF ADDITIONAL NVA DIVISIONS NOW EN ROUTE FROM (#)

WOULD GIVE HANOI DECISIVE EDGE. MOST ANALYSITS ECPLECT HANOI WILL CONTINUE TO EXPLOIT PRESENT MOMENTUM. THUS, BATTLE FOR SAIGON COULD BEGIN AT ANY TIME BUT MOST BELIEVE CERTAINLY WITHIN TWO WEEKS. PRESENT THREAT TO SAIGON FROM NORTHWEST WILL SOON BE COMPOUNDED BY NVA MOVES FROM EAST AND NEW THREATS TO ITS LINKS WITH THE DELTA. MOREOVER, ACCESS TO SAIGON BY SEA COULD SOON BE INTERDICTED THUS PLACING THE CITY IN SITUATION SIMILAR TO PHNOM PENH. AIRLIFT WOULD BE EXTRAORDINARILY DIFFICULT TO SUSTAIN FOR A NUMBER OF REASONS, INCLUDING DOUBTFUL AVAILABILITY OF THAI FACILITIES.

(B) (SECRET) US OFFICIALS SAY THERE ARE APPROXIMATELY 6,000 AMERICAN IN SOUTH VIET-NAM WHO WILL NEED TO BE EVACUATED, PLUS LARGE NUMBER OF VIETNAMEE TO WHOM US OBLIGATED. ESTIMATES OF VIETNAMESE RANG FROM 20,000 TO 1 MILLION, DEPENDING ON CRITERIA. THERE IS REASON TO DOUBT WHETHER ADEQUATE PROCEDURES EXIST FOR IDENTIFYING AND COLLECTING VIETNAMESE TO BE EVACUATED OR THAT SUCH ARRANGEMENTS CAN NOW BE MADE.

(C) (SECRET) GIVEN THE LARGE NUMBERS OF PEOPLE INVOLVED, WHETHER VIETNAMESE ARE INCLUDED OR NOT, THE EVACUATION OF AMERICANS FROM SAIGON IN LARGE NUMBERS PROBABLY SHOULD BEGIN NOW, NOT JUST THE REMOVAL OF DEPENDENTS. THERE IS SAID TO BE SOME RELUCTANCE TO INTIATE SUCH A MOVE LEST IT PRECIPITATE PANIC AND A COLLAPSE. YET PROCRASTINATION WOULD SEEM TO INCREASE THE EVENTUAL RISKS OF THE OPERATION, DECREASE THE POSSIBILITY OF TOTAL SUCCESS.

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AND LIMIT THE NUMBER OF VIETNAMESE THAT MIGHT ULTIMATELY BE TAKEN OUT.

(D) (UNCLASSIFIED) EXPERIENCE OF THE LAST FEW EVACUATIONS IS THAT THEY QUICKLY BECOME CHAOTIC. IT IS OUR FEELING THAT ALMOST ANY PRACTICAL PLAN FOR MASS EVACUATION FROM SAIGON WILL REQUIRE USE OF US TROOPS TO ENSURE CONTROL OF LOADING ZONES. MASS MOVEMENTS MAY ALSO NECESSITATE USE FOR LIMITED PERIOD OF TIME OF TRANSHIPMENT POINTS SUCH AS VUNG TAU WITH ITS DOCKS AND AIRFIELD, OR CON SON OR PHU QUOC ISLANDS.

* (E) (CONFIDENTIAL) THERE SEEMS TO BE GENUINE UNCERTAINTY WITHIN EXECUTIVE BRANCH AND THE ARMED SERVICES REGARDING LEGAL RESTRICTIONS WHICH WOULD APPLY TO USE OF US ARMED FORCES IN EVACUATION SITUATIONS. OBVIOUS SENSITIVITY OF THIS ISSUE AND APPARENT RELUCTANCE OF EXECUTIVE BRANCH TO INITIATE ADVANCE CONSULTATIONS SUGGESTS DESIRABILITY OF RENEWED BUT DISCREET CONGRESSIONAL INITIATIVE. PROBLEMS INVOLVED ALL APPEAR SOLVABLE AND MISUNDERSTANDINGS AVOIDABLE PROVIDED CONSULTATION BEGINS SOON.

(F) (UNCLASSIFIED) ONE OF CONSISTENT PROBLEMS OF LAST FEW DAYS SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN DIFFICULTY OF GRASPING OR ACCEPTING SPEED AND EXTENT OF DETERIORATION IN SOUTH VIET-NAM. RESULT HAS BEEN THAT GOOD PLANS TENTATIVELY ARRIVED AT HAVE OFTEN BEEN OVERTAKEN BY EVENTS. IF THIS PATTERN CONTINUES, RESULTS IN SAIGON COULD BE EVEN MORE CATASTROPHIC THAN THOSE ALONG THE COAST. NEED FOR CLOSE EXECUTIVE-LEGISLATIVE CONSULTATION ON THESE PROBLEMS SEEMS ESSENTIAL.

(G) (UNCLASSIFIED) OUR VIEWS THUS FAR ON OTHER HUMANITARIAN QUESTIONS IN VIET-NAM ARE SIMILAR TO THOSE EXPRESSED ABOVE WITH REGARD TO CAMBODIA. IN ADDITION, WE HAVE SEVERED DOUBTS ABOUT THE PRACTICABILITY OF ATTEMPTING TO MOVE, OR TO CARE FOR AFTER THEIR MOVEMENT, ANY MASSIVE NUMBER OF VIETNAMESE REFUGEES. WE MIGHT BETTER CONCENTRATE ON FINDING WAYS TO ASSIST THEM WHERE THEY ARE. IN THIS CONNECTION, IT WOULD SEEM DESIRABLE TO BEGIN CHANNELING MUCH OF OUR RELIEF EFFORT THROUGH THE MULTILATERAL AGENCIES WITH WHOM HANOI AND THE PRG HAVE ALREADY INDICATED A WILLINGNESS TO DEAL.

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