

The original documents are located in Box 13, folder “Indochina - Saigon Evacuation” of the Ron Nessen Papers at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

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April 4, 1975
3:00 PM

RON:

Joe Laitin called with the following items for your information:

1. He advises that he is telling news media that they can put photographers and reporters aboard U.S. Government aircraft in Manila to California carrying orphans, but on a space available non-interference basis and that news media will not be flown from Saigon to Manila for this purpose, nor will they be flown from California.

2. According to the law, the President has until 4:30 PM EDT Saturday morning to decide whether to notify Congress under the War Powers Act that our ships are in territorial waters, that the papers, he understands, are on the way to the President now with various recommendations but that a lot of reporters are aware of the legal deadline. You can expect queries on it if the President decides not to advise Congress.

3. He will advise you as soon as he knows the ETA of the first planeload of orphans arriving in California.

JUDY



THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

April 9, 1975

TO THE TROOPS:

It is my understanding that if we receive any calls from people who want to get their relatives out of Vietnam they should call the following State Department phone number: 632-9380 (Indochina Desk).

Gay



Q: The Washington Post says the Voice of America has been ordered to kill stories about possible evacuation of Americans from South Vietnam except in official Government statements or official actions by Congress or the Administration. Is this true? Why is the "open" Ford Administration trying to censor the news?

A: This is a very difficult problem. But I don't see it as one of censorship. Rather it is one of responsibility. The Voice of America is trying its best to be responsible in a very difficult situation. ~~As the official voice of the government it carries special weight with its listeners, and of necessity must operate under some special constraints,~~

SPECULATING about evacuation could very well add substantially to those problems. I wouldn't want to think that any one of us -- in the government or in the media -- would want to do anything that might lead to endangering American lives. It is not easy or pleasant to ask reporters to avoid questions or stories on any subject. But there are occasions when it has been done -- and when reporters have cooperated. Usually, it is -- as in this case -- a matter where idle or irresponsible speculation or gossip might lead to placing American lives in jeopardy. That is the ~~purpose~~ purpose of the VOA policy in this limited area. A policy I believe to be responsible, under the extraordinary circumstances now prevailing in Vietnam.

Q: Who told the VOA to adopt this policy? The President? Kissinger?

A: I understand this particular policy was coordinated with the State Department. ~~_____~~
I am sure that you are aware that it is not the normal VOA policy to limit news coverage of an event to Congressional actions or official statements. But I am sure you are equally aware that the situation in South Vietnam is far from normal.

JWR



April 15, 1975

Answer to Questions on IndoChina Evacuation

The President made his position clear in his speech last week to Congress. A great number of discussions are taking place. The Secretaries of State and Defense are testifying before Congress today. Because of the sensitivity of the subject and the importance of the safety of the individuals involved I believe it would be best to leave the specific aspects to the Secretaries unless I have something to announce.



THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

April 15, 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR: RON NESSEN
FROM: ED SAVAGE
SUBJECT: EVACUATIONS

State is refusing to speak to any of the possible planning or details of an evacuation of Americans or Vietnamese from South Vietnam.

With respect to the 5 American newsmen still in Phnom Penh, State has sent out a telegram saying that it is unwilling to risk an emergency evacuation effort without receiving further information because of the deteriorating military situation in Phnom Penh and the lack of secure communications. This telegram was sent to the Phnom Penh American Embassy officers now working out of Bangkok. The telegram stated also that it is our understanding -- although we are not sure of the total accuracy of the report -- that international voluntary organization people in Phnom Penh apparently have made contact with the other side with regard to the recognition of a safehaven hotel for them and it was suggested that the newsmen contact those people to see if they could not be folded into the safehaven plan.



MEMORANDUM

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

April 23, 1975

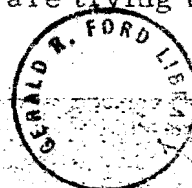
MEMORANDUM FOR: RON NESSEN
FROM: MARGI VANDERHYE
SUBJECT: Morning Press Items

VIA: BILL ROBERTS

If asked about evacuation from Saigon to Guam, you may confirm that Guam is being used as a staging point. It is important that you include an expression of appreciation for the continuing efforts of the Philippine government in their assistance to our evacuation plans. FYI: The reason for this is that the Philippines have asked us to limit the number of people we transfer and the duration of their stay at Clark AFB, so that their government does not become unduly involved or identified with the evacuation program itself. In an effort to comply with their wishes, we don't want to convey any change in our attitude. END FYI. The size of the base at Guam is ideally suited for accommodating the expected numbers of people who may be arriving from Saigon in view of the Attorney General's revision of the parole authority. For any details on evacuation refer to State or Defense, depending on the question.

Q. On the question of a proposal for a seven day cease-fire to permit the evacuation of Americans from Vietnam, the State Department responded yesterday in the following manner:

A. On the question of what we are trying to do to get the fighting stopped, I do not want to go into any details on these efforts. The President indicated that efforts are being made, and I believe the Secretary has also said this in testimony on the Hill. But obviously, I just don't want to get into any of the details.... People's lives are involved here. And it serves no useful purpose, in trying to discuss any of the details that we are trying to work out.



EVAQUATION

AP 25

REFER PRESS QUERIES TO - MORT SMITH,
STATE EAST ASIAN PRESS OFFICER
63 22538 - OR ANDERSON (BOB)

1357 AMERICANS LEFT IN SAIGON
AS OF MIDNIGHT, LAST NIGHT, EDT
EXPECT TO BE DOWN TO ABOUT 1100
BY END OF DAY, OUR TIME

YESTERDAY IN SAIGON

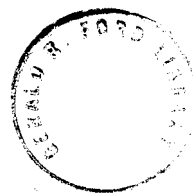
TOOK OUT

501 - AMERICANS (ALL CATEGORIES -
GOVERNMENTAL
+ NON-GOVERNMENTAL)

5587 - NON-AMERICANS (MOSTLY
VIETNAMESE)
US GOVERNMENT
EMPLOYEES (LOCALS)

H1 - RISK
(DON'T HAVE BREAKDOWN)

6088



April 29, 1975

Office of the White House Press Secretary

NOTICE TO THE PRESS

Ron Nessen's briefing will not occur before 12:30 PM today and there will be no Presidential statement until then. Secretary Kissinger will be present at the briefing, which will be in the briefing room, and will be available to answer questions.

The briefing will be open for live coverage.

#



[4/29/75]

Q. When did the President make the decision on the evacuation?

A. Around 11:00 P. M., Secretary Kissinger called him in his quarters and discussed it. The President made the decision based on Ambassador Martin's recommendation and Secretary Schlesinger's analysis of the situation. The President then returned to his office and then went down to the Situation Room around 11:30 P. M. The President returned to his residence shortly before midnight. He went to bed about 12:30 A. M. and arose at 5:30 A. M.

Q. What other staff members were in?

A. Lt. General Brent Scowcroft, Don Rumsfeld, Dick Cheney and myself. I would add that Jack Marsh, Max Friedersdorf and their staff also Phil Buchen were in during this period notifying appropriate Congressional leaders.

Q. Was this a formal notification under the War Powers Act or an informal notification for informal purposes?

A.

Q. What time did the evacuations actually start?

A. Details on the actual start and finish of evacuation such as exact times, numbers of people, etc., can be obtained from Joe Laitin at Defense. I recommend that you call him for that information.



In general it started around 3:30 A.M., EDT and was completed at approximately _____. In the joint statement by State and Defense, they announced there were some 800 to 900 individuals involved.

Q. Where were they taken?

A.

Q. Was the President kept informed on the progress of the evacuation during the evening and if so, how? And was he informed when it was completed, and if so, how?

A.

Q. Where is the President now?

A.

Q. Will he be making any other statements today?

A.



Q. Has he contacted the South Vietnamese?

A.

Q. Has he talked personally to Ambassador Martin or has
or has Kissinger or Schlesinger contacted Martin?

A.

Q. When will Martin return to the United States?

A.

Q. Do you have any knowledge if any newsmen stayed behind?
And if so, who?

A.

Q. Will there be briefings later on in the day by Defense or State?

A.

Q. Has the President contacted the families or sent messages
to the families of the two marines who were killed?

A.



Q. Was anyone injured or killed in the evacuation or were the two marines the last Americans killed in the Vietnamese War?

A.

Q. Is there any meeting of the National Security Council called for this morning?

A.

Q. Will the President be meeting with Congress this morning?

A.

Q. Ron, now what is the status of the \$722 million?

A.



Q. How many Vietnamese were evacuated?

A.

Q. Will there be any more, either through negotiations with the new government or through third country intervention?

A.

Q. Where are the Vietnamese now?

A.

Q: When will the first Americans arrive back in the U.S. and where?

A.

Q: What is the status of the remaining money under the Paris accords for reparations to North Vietnam? Can this money be used for assistance to the Vietnamese who were evacuated?

A:



Q: Will America recognize the Vietnamese government; will we support their entrance into the U.N. ?

A:

Q: Has the American Government been in touch with Hanoi ?

A:

Q: Did Secretary Kissinger notify the heads, or his counterparts in any other governments around the world about the evacuation ?

A:

Q: Will Secretary Kissinger be available later today for a briefing ?

A:



Q: Does the President plan any statement to the Nation beyond that which was read this morning?

A:

Q: Has the President indicated that he plans to establish any Administration Commission to work on rehabilitation and employment assistance for the Vietnamese refugees?

A:



[4/21/75]

The air evacuation by helicopter which you were advised of last night is still underway and is expected to be completed by mid-day.

The evacuation is located at primarily two places: the airport and the Embassy complex. It is understood that the airport has been completed and all evacuees including Americans and security forces have been withdrawn from there.

At this time the evacuation is continuing from the Embassy where it is estimated about 2,000 persons are scheduled to be airlifted.

Since the evacuation has begun, it is learned that the number of Vietnamese represent a substantial portion of those leaving. Any figures that we now have are merely estimates.

These include about 4,000 from the airport, which breaks down to 3,500 Vietnamese and 500 Americans excluding the security forces of which there are approximately

1200



There remain at the Embassy approximately 2,000 of which about 200 are U.S. Nationals.

The local situation in Saigon at the time of the evacuation necessiated a change in evacuation plans to include substantially larger numbers of Vietnamese than originally indicated to you last night.

Insofar as U.S. casualties are concerned, these include the two U.S. Marines that were killed earlier yesterday before the evacuation begun and a fighter bomber is reported to be lost at sea but the circumstances of its crash is not determined insofar as hostile action is concerned. With these two exceptions, reports indicate force has not been encountered and there are not other U.S. casualties.

Although figures cannot be precise, the following estimates maybe helpful:

Vietnamese: _____

U. S. Nationals in Saigon _____

Security Forces _____



FROM JOE LAITIN

10:00 am

April 29 - Tuesday

Questions Joe feels you will get hit with at your briefing:

Why was there such a long gap between the "go" order and the first evacuation chopper that landed more than four hours later?

Was the extraction of the 800-900 Nationals delayed in order to justify the evacuation of several thousand Vietnamese?

Under what authority were thousands of Vietnamese evacuated in the absence of specific Congressional action on the President's recent request?

Probably the best answer to the first question:

Ambassador Martin did not request the helicopter evacuation until shortly before 11 pm Washington time. As far as the gap between the go order and the first chopper, it should be broken down into two parts:

The first chopper took off at 12:45 a.m. EDT which is about an hour and 50 minutes after the decision. But there are probably operational problems involved here that the Navy will have to answer.

The second part of the problem is that the evacuation choppers were scheduled to set down at Ton Son Nhut at 2 a.m. and everything was on schedule until several minutes before 2, when the first wave of choppers turned back from Ton Son Nhut and went into a parking orbit.

At the time this occurred, Joe was in the Command Center and was advised that the evacuation choppers had been ordered by radio not to land until 3 a.m., an hour later. Various efforts by Admiral Guylar at CINPAC and by General Homar Smith at Ton Son Nhut as to who gave this order and why it was given failed to produce any answer at all.

The only chopper to land shortly after 2 a.m. was the one containing Brigadier General Richard Carey, the Marine General in charge of the ground evacuation.



The evacuation choppers began landing at 3 a.m. with no explanation of the radioed instructions. The radioed instructions were carried in a secure channel so that it could not have been a random voice or from a hostile, and at this hour there is still no explanation for it.

As to the delay of taking out the Americans at the expense of the Vietnamese, Joe thinks that you can address yourself to that.

As for the authority, Joe gives up, and if all ends well, this may not become an issue at all.

He is going to issue no further briefings of any kind until after the Kissinger briefing, as per instructions he received.



Q. When did the President make the decision on the evacuation?

A. Around 11:00 P. M. , Secretary Kissinger called him in his quarters and discussed it. The President made the decision based on Ambassador Martin's recommendation and Secretary Schlesinger's analysis of the situation. The President then returned to his office and then went down to the Situation Room around 11:30 P. M. The President returned to his residence shortly before midnight. He went to bed about 12:30 A. M. and arose at 5:30 A. M.

Q. What other staff members were in?

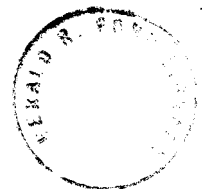
A. Lt. General Brent Scowcroft, Don Rumsfeld, Dick Cheney and myself. I would add that Jack Marsh, Max Friedersdorf and their staff also Phil Buchen were in during this period notifying appropriate Congressional leaders.

Q. Was this a formal notification under the War Powers Act or an informal notification for informal purposes?

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Q. What time did the evacuations actually start?

A. Details on the actual start and finish of evacuation such as exact times, numbers of people, etc. , can be obtained from Joe Laitin at Defense. I recommend that you call him for that information.



In general it started around 3:30 A.M., EDT and was completed at approximately _____. In the joint statement by State and Defense, they announced there were some 800 to 900 individuals involved.

Q. Where were they taken?]

A.

Q. Was the President kept informed on the progress of the evacuation during the evening and if so, how? And was he informed when it was completed, and if so, how?

A.

Q. Where is the President now?

A.

Q. Will he be making any other statements today?

A.



Q: Does the President plan any statement to the Nation beyond that which was read this morning?

A:

Q: Has the President indicated that he plans to establish any Administration Commission to work on rehabilitation and employment assistance for the Vietnamese refugees?

A:



[4/29/75]

JOINT STATEMENT
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

The President has ordered the evacuation of the remaining Americans from Vietnam. The military situation around Saigon, particularly at the airport, has deteriorated to such an extent that this measure has become necessary to insure their safety.

This operation is being carried out by U.S. military helicopters and is being protected by a security force of U.S. Marines and tactical aircraft. Force will not be used unless essential to protect the lives of those involved.

The evacuees will be taken temporarily to carriers offshore before being moved onward to the U.S.

We do not have precise figures on the number of Americans involved, but it should be about 800 to 900.

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632-9380



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4/29/75

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Q. What time did the evacuations actually start?

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In the joint statement by State and Defense, they announced there were some 800 to 900 individuals involved.

Q. Where were they taken?

A.

Q. Actually how many got out?

A.

Q. Was the President kept informed on the progress of the evacuation during the evening and if so, how? And was he informed when it was completed, and if so, how?

A.

Q. Where is the President now?

A.

Q. Will he be making any other statements today?

A.



Q. Has he contacted the South Vietnamese?

A.

Q. Has he talked personally to Ambassador Martin or has
or has Kissinger or Schlesinger contacted Martin?

A.

Q. When will Martin return to the United States?

A.

Q. Do you have any knowledge if any newsmen stayed behind?
And if so, who?

A.

Q. Will there be briefings later on in the day by Defense or State?

A.

Q. Has the President contacted the families or sent messages
to the families of the two marines who were killed?

A.



- Q: Is there any meeting of the National Security Council called for this morning?
- Q: Will the President be meeting with Congress this morning?
- Q: Ron, now what is the status of the \$722 million?
- Q: How many Vietnamese were evacuated?
- Q: Will there be any more, either through negotiations with the new government or through third country intervention?
- Q: Where are the Vietnamese now?
- Q: When ^{will} the first Americans arrive back in the U.S., where?
- Q: What is the status of the remaining money under the Paris accords for reparations to North Vietnam? Can this money be used for assistance to the Vietnamese who were evacuated?
- Q: Has the President indicated that he plans to establish any Administration Commission to work on rehabilitation and employment assistance for the Vietnamese refugees?
- Q: Will America recognize the Vietnamese government, will we support their entrance into the U.N.?
- Q: Has the American Government been in touch with Hanoi?
- Q: Did Secretary Kissinger notify the heads, or his counterparts in any other governments around the world about the evacuation?
- Q: Will Secretary Kissinger be available later today for a briefing?
- Q: Does the President plan any statement to the Nation beyond that which ~~he~~ ^{was} read this morning?



Q. Was anyone injured or killed in the evacuation or were the two marines the last Americans killed in the Vietnamese War?

A.



April 29, 1975

PRESS QUESTIONS - VIETNAM

Policy

Under the President's orders, a large number of South Vietnamese were evacuated in contrast to the much smaller number of Americans who were taken out in the final stage. Does the President believe he has the legal authority to do this, and if so, what is it?

There has been Congressional criticism this morning over leaving some 1,000 Americans in Saigon until the eleventh hour. At least 2 Americans have been killed. What was the basis for this policy decision? What is the President's response to the assertion that they were kept there as a symbol of support to the South Vietnamese government and/or were used as a screen behind which we could continue to extract large numbers of South Vietnamese?

Secretary Kissinger said recently that some 174,000 South Vietnamese should be evacuated before any communist takeover. We have only gotten out some 45,000. Do we consider that the large remainder is in serious danger? If so, will we try to obtain their safe passage out of South Vietnam either through negotiations with any new coalition government or through third country channels?

Assuming that a coalition government finally emerges in Saigon, would we recognize it and would we seek to maintain an embassy there?

Has the President been in touch with other heads of government with respect to the current Vietnamese situation? *Nixon?*

Does the President plan to establish a governmental task force to deal with the huge problems of resettlement and employment of Vietnamese refugees in the United States.

What is the President's response to the less than warm -- or even downright cool -- reaction of Congressional and State representatives and some of the public at large to bringing refugees to certain arms services camps in the continental U.S.?



April 29, 1975

Office of the White House Press Secretary

NOTICE TO THE PRESS

STATEMENT BY THE PRESS SECRETARY

The President's statement issued earlier today and the Secretary of State's remarks at his news conference were based on reports that all Americans had been evacuated from Saigon. Communications were such that Washington was not aware that elements of the ground security force were still at the U.S. Embassy at that time. Therefore, the evacuation actually was completed after the President's announcement had been issued and after the Secretary had concluded his news conference.

The latest reports indicate that the remaining security forces have now been evacuated.

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NOT RELEASED

April 29, 1975

Office of the White House Press Secretary

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The latest reports indicate that the remaining U.S. Marines have now been evacuated.

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APRIL 29, 1975

Office of the White House Press Secretary

NOTICE TO THE PRESS

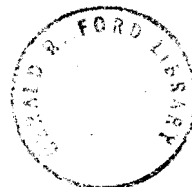
STATEMENT BY THE PRESS SECRETARY

The President's statement issued earlier today and the Secretary of State's remarks at his news conference were based on reports that all Americans had been evacuated from Saigon. Communications were such that Washington was not aware that there were approximately 130 Marines of support force on the ground at that time. Therefore, it appears that the evacuation actually was completed after the President's announcement had been issued and after the Secretary had concluded his news conference.

The latest reports indicate that the remaining U.S. Marines have now been evacuated.

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DRAFT



April 29, 1975

Office of the White House Press Secretary

NOTICE TO THE PRESS

STATEMENT BY THE PRESS SECRETARY

The President's statement issued earlier today, and the Secretary of State's remarks at his news conference, were based on reports that all Americans had been evacuated from Saigon. Communications were such that Washington was not aware that there were approximately 130 Marines of the security force on the ground at that time. We are now advised that the evacuation has not yet been totally completed.

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DRAFT



April 29, 1975

Office of the White House Press Secretary

NOTICE TO THE PRESS

STATEMENT BY THE PRESS SECRETARY

Earlier today we announced that the evacuation had been completed. At that time we were not aware that an element of the ground security force remained to be evacuated. Therefore the completion of the evacuation actually occurred after the conclusion of the press conference.

Latest reports indicate that the remaining security forces now have been evacuated.

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DRAFT



April 29, 1975

Office of the White House Press Secretary

NOTICE TO THE PRESS

STATEMENT BY THE PRESS SECRETARY

Earlier today we announced that the evacuation had been completed. At that time we were not aware that an element of the ground security force remained to be evacuated. Therefore, the completion of the evacuation of these personnel actually occurred after the conclusion of the press conference.

Latest reports indicate that the remaining security forces now have been evacuated.

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FINAL



APRIL 29, 1975

Office of the White House Press Secretary

NOTICE TO THE PRESS

STATEMENT BY THE PRESS SECRETARY

The President's statement issued earlier today and the Secretary of State's remarks at his news conference were based on reports that all Americans had been evacuated from Saigon. Communications were such that Washington was not aware that ~~there were approximately~~ 130 Marines of support force on the ground at that time. Therefore, ~~it appears that~~ the evacuation actually was completed after the President's announcement had been issued and after the Secretary had concluded his news conference.

The latest reports indicate that the remaining U. S. Marines have now been evacuated.

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APRIL 29, 1975

Office of the White House Press Secretary

NOTICE TO THE PRESS

STATEMENT BY THE PRESS SECRETARY

The President's statement issued earlier today and the Secretary of State's remarks at his news conference were based on reports that all Americans had been evacuated from Saigon. Communications were such that Washington was not aware that there were approximately 130 Marines of support force on the ground at that time. Therefore, it appears that the evacuation actually was completed after the President's announcement had been issued and after the Secretary had concluded his news conference.

The latest reports indicate that the remaining U.S. Marines have now been evacuated.



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Q - How did this happen.

A - ~~It was based on~~
~~the National~~ That was
what was communicated
to the National Military
Command Center.

April 29, 1975

Office of the White House Press Secretary

NOTICE TO THE PRESS

STATEMENT BY THE PRESS SECRETARY

The President's statement issued earlier today, and the Secretary of State's remarks at his news conference, were based on reports that all Americans had been evacuated from Saigon. Communications were such that Washington was not aware that there were ~~approximately 150 Marines of the~~ security force on the ground at that time. We are now advised that the evacuation has not yet been totally completed.

elements of the ground

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APRIL 29, 1975

Office of the White House Press Secretary

NOTICE TO THE PRESS

STATEMENT BY THE PRESS SECRETARY

The President's statement issued earlier today and the Secretary of State's remarks at his news conference were based on reports that all Americans had been evacuated from Saigon. Communications were such that Washington was not aware that ~~there were approximately 120 Marines of support force on the ground at that time.~~ *clearer* Therefore, *ground* ~~it appears that the evacuation actually was completed after the President's announcement had been issued and after the Secretary had concluded his news conference.~~

The latest reports indicate that the remaining U.S. Marines have now been evacuated.

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*were still
at it ~~5:00~~
on the Embury*



APRIL 29, 1975

Office of the White House Press Secretary

NOTICE TO THE PRESS

STATEMENT BY THE PRESS SECRETARY

The Security
The President's statement issued earlier today and the Secretary of State's remarks at his news conference were based on reports that all Americans had been evacuated from Saigon. Communications were such that Washington was not aware that there were approximately 130 Marines of ~~support~~ force on the ground at that time. Therefore, ~~it appears that~~ the evacuation actually was completed after the President's announcement had been issued and after the Secretary had concluded his news conference.

The latest reports indicate ~~that the remaining U.S. Marines have~~ now been evacuated.

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PRESS RELEASE

The President's statement issued earlier today, and the Secretary of State's remarks at his press conference, were based on reports that all Americans had been evacuated from Saigon. I regret to say that communications were such that ~~at that time there were approximately 130 Marines of the security force still on the ground. Therefore, it appears that the evacuation was actually completed after the President's announcement had been issued and after the Secretary had concluded his press conference.~~

The latest reports ~~now~~ indicate that the U. S. Marines have ~~been evacuated, and, according to the best information available, all known American citizens desiring evacuation are now out of Saigon.~~



PRESS RELEASE

The President's statement issued earlier today, and the Secretary of State's remarks at his ^{NEWS} ~~press~~ conference, were

based on reports that all Americans had been evacuated from

Saigon. ~~There were reports that~~ ^{UNSHY... was} communications were such that

at that time there were approximately 130 Marines of the security

force ~~still~~ on the ground. ^{at that time} ~~Therefore, it appears that~~ ^{we are now advised that} the evacua-

^{had not yet been fully} ~~tion was~~ actually completed after the President's announcement

had been issued and after the Secretary had concluded his

^{NEWS} ~~press~~ conference.

^{now} The latest reports ^{remains} indicate that the U. S. Marines

have been evacuated and according to the best information

available, all known American citizens desiring evacuation

are now out of Saigon.

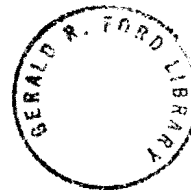


7:53 p.m. —

[4/29/73?]

Joe Laitin just calledall the
Marines are out and there are no
casualties...everybody is out.

Patty



6:58

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

April 29

Ron:

Joe Laitin just called to say that
they are down to 38 Marines at
the Embassy, and they may get
out scott free. He will let you
know as soon as anything happens.

joy

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

April 30, 1975

Dear Mr. President:

On April 4, 1975, I reported that U.S. naval vessels had been ordered to participate in an international humanitarian relief effort to transport refugees and U.S. nationals to safety from Danang and other seaports in South Vietnam. This effort was undertaken in response to urgent appeals from the Government of South Vietnam and in recognition of the large-scale violations by the North Vietnamese of the Agreement Ending the War and Restoring the Peace in Vietnam.

In the days and weeks that followed, the massive North Vietnamese attacks continued. As the forces of the Government of South Vietnam were pushed further back toward Saigon, we began a progressive withdrawal of U.S. citizens and their dependents in South Vietnam, together with foreign nationals whose lives were in jeopardy.

On April 28, the defensive lines to the northwest and south of Saigon were breached. Tan Son Nhut Airfield and Saigon came under increased rocket attack and for the first time received artillery fire. NVA forces were approaching within mortar and anti-aircraft missile range. The situation at Tan Son Nhut Airfield deteriorated to the extent that it became unusable. Crowd control on the airfield was breaking down and the collapse of the Government forces within Saigon appeared imminent. The situation presented a direct and imminent threat to the remaining U.S. citizens and their dependents in and around Saigon.

On the recommendation of the American Ambassador there, I ordered U.S. military forces to proceed by means of rotary wing aircraft with an emergency final evacuation out of consideration for the safety of U.S. citizens.

In accordance with my desire to keep the Congress fully informed on this matter, and taking note of the provision of section 4 of the War Powers Resolution (Public Law 93-148) I wish to report to you that at about 1:00 A.M. EDT, April 29, 1975, U.S. forces entered South Vietnam airspace.



*Orig not seen or handled by Records Office.
Delivered by a Mr. Walther of the Congressional Liaison office: 4/30/75*

A force of 70 evacuation helicopters and 865 Marines evacuated about 1400 U.S. citizens, together with approximately 5500 third country nationals and South Vietnamese, from landing zones in the vicinity of the U.S. Embassy, Saigon, and the Defense Attache Office at Tan Son Nhut Airfield. The last elements of the ground security force departed Saigon at 7:46 P.M. EDT April 29, 1975. Two crew members of a Navy search and rescue helicopter are missing at sea. There are no other known U.S. casualties from this operation, although two U.S. Marines on regular duty in the compound of the Defense Attache Office at Tan Son Nhut Airfield had been killed on the afternoon (EDT) of April 28, 1975, by rocket attacks into a refugee staging area. U.S. fighter aircraft provided protective air cover for this operation, and for the withdrawal by water of a few Americans from Can Tho, and in one instance suppressed North Vietnamese anti-aircraft artillery firing upon evacuation helicopters as they departed. The ground security forces on occasion returned fire during the course of the evacuation operation.

The operation was ordered and conducted pursuant to the President's Constitutional executive power and his authority as Commander-in-Chief of U.S. Armed Forces.

The United States Armed Forces performed a very difficult mission most successfully. Their exemplary courage and discipline are deserving of the nation's highest gratitude.

Sincerely,



The Honorable James O. Eastland
President Pro Tempore of the Senate
United States Senate
Washington, D. C.



THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

May 2, 1975

Dear Jim:

Please convey to all personnel involved in the Vietnam evacuation operation my appreciation and respect for their superb performance.

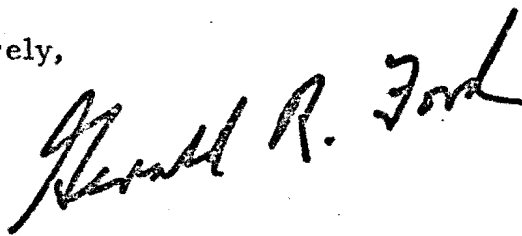
This operation was carried out under extremely adverse conditions. Its smooth and orderly accomplishment reflects great credit upon the men and women who participated in its planning and execution.

I also join with their comrades in mourning the loss of those gallant men who gave their lives in this humanitarian task. To their families and loved ones goes our deepest sympathy.

Their sacrifices, as well as the courage and determination of all the participating units, stand as a final example of the selfless dedication which has typified the performance of our armed forces throughout our involvement in Indochina.

They have my gratitude and that of the American people for the successful accomplishment of this difficult mission.

Sincerely,



The Honorable James R. Schlesinger
Secretary of Defense
Washington, D. C. 20301



In response to the appeals from the Government of the Republic of Viet-Nam and because of the extremely grave nature of the circumstances involving the lives of hundreds of thousands of refugees, the United States is taking the following action:

1. The President has ordered U.S. participation in a naval evacuation effort off the coast of Viet-Nam to assist in the transport of refugees.
2. The President wishes the Congress to be fully informed of what we are doing.
3. Our participation in the refugee evacuation is part of an international humanitarian relief effort. At this point a number of countries, including Australia, the United Kingdom, the Republic of China and the Republic of the Philippines are also participating.
4. United States naval vessels, principally consisting of transport ships, will enter Viet-Nam waters in order to pick up refugees being ferried out from the coast. However our vessels will not enter combat areas or participate in any hostilities.
5. A group of _____ transport vessels are leaving the naval base in the Philippines for Viet-Nam waters to take up this task.

Responses to Further Questions

Q: Is this consultation under the War Powers Resolution?

A: Section 3 of the resolution requires consultation only when United States forces are to be introduced into hostilities



or circumstances where hostilities are imminent. That is not the case here. However, we are informing the Congress of our actions in accordance with the general spirit of the War Powers Resolution. This is a humanitarian effort in which involvement in hostilities will be avoided.

Q: Will the ships fire back if fired upon?

A: No, if there is any serious risk from hostile fire, they will withdraw.

Q: Does our action violate the statute prohibiting United States military forces in Indochina since August 1973?

A: No. The statute prohibiting U.S. military forces in Indochina is designed to prevent U.S. involvement in hostilities. U.S. military personnel engaged in this humanitarian relief operation will not be involved in hostilities.

Q: Does the United States action violate the 1973 Agreement on ending the war and restoring peace in Viet-Nam?

A: Where refugees have been forced to flee by North Vietnamese forces, whose actions constitute a massive violation, we are not bound to refrain from humanitarian efforts to assist those refugees.



MAY 2 1975

Dear Mrs. Shea:

I have learned with great sadness of the death of your husband, First Lieutenant Michael J. Shea. All America shares your loss, and the deepest sympathies of our fellow citizens will forever honor your husband's profound sacrifice.

Mrs. Ford and I want you to know that you and your loved ones are in our thoughts and in our hearts. We pray that the eternal respect your husband has so tragically earned will sustain and comfort you in the days ahead.

Sincerely,

/s/GERALD R. FORD

Mrs. Michael J. Shea
5840 Porpoise Drive
El Paso, Texas 79929



Dear Mrs. Nystul:

I have learned with great sadness of the death of your husband, Captain William C. Nystul. All America shares your loss, and the deepest sympathies of our fellow citizens will forever honor your husband's profound sacrifice.

Mrs. Ford and I want you to know that you and your loved ones are in our thoughts and in our hearts. We pray that the eternal respect your husband has so tragically earned will sustain and comfort you in the days ahead.

Sincerely,

/s/GERALD R. FORD

Mrs. William C. Nystul
823 Kingsley Drive
Arcadia, California 91006



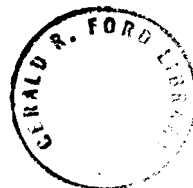
Dear Mr. and Mrs. McMahon:

I have learned with great sadness of the death of your son, Corporal Charles McMahon, Jr. All America shares your loss, and the deepest sympathies of our fellow citizens will forever honor your son's sacrifices.

Mrs. Ford and I want you to know that you and your loved ones are in our thoughts and in our hearts. We pray that the eternal respect your son has so tragically earned will sustain and comfort you in the days ahead.

Sincerely,

Mr. and Mrs. Charles McMahon
51 Montvale Avenue
Woburn, Massachusetts 01801



Dear Mr. and Mrs. Judge:

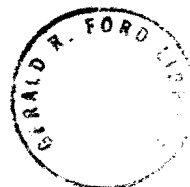
I have learned with great sadness of the death of your son, Lance Corporal Darwin L. Judge. All America shares your loss, and the deepest sympathies of our fellow citizens will forever honor your son's profound sacrifices.

Mrs. Ford and I want you to know that you and your loved ones are in our thoughts and in our hearts. We pray that the eternal respect your son has so tragically earned will sustain and comfort you in the days ahead.

Sincerely,

Mr. and Mrs. Harry E. Judge
118 New Castle Road
Marshalltown, Iowa 50158

GRF:beo



E HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Nance:

I have learned with great sadness of the death of your son, Sergeant Kenneth E. Nance.

I realize that words alone are of little comfort in so great a loss. Your son will be remembered as a dedicated American who faced the dangers of his profession so that other people might have the opportunity to live in the freedom we enjoy. His dedication to freedom will inspire other men to a new appreciation of its blessings and provide a new determination to enjoy them.

Mrs. Ford and I want you to know that you and your loved ones are in our thoughts and in our hearts. We pray that the eternal respect and gratitude your son has so tragically earned will sustain and comfort you in the days ahead.

Sincerely,

Mr. and Mrs. Harold E. Nance
1274 East Mendocino Street
Altadena, California 91001



HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Dear Mrs. Melton:

I have learned with great sadness of the death of your husband, Captain Edgar R. Melton.

I realize that words alone are of little comfort in so great a loss. Your husband will be remembered as a dedicated American who faced the dangers of his profession so that other people might have the opportunity to live in the freedom we enjoy. His dedication to freedom will inspire other men to a new appreciation of its blessings and provide a new determination to enjoy them.

Mrs. Ford and I want you to know that you and your loved ones are in our thoughts and in our hearts. We pray that the eternal respect and gratitude your husband has so tragically earned will sustain and comfort you in the days ahead.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Edgar R. Melton
166 Asbury Street
Vacaville, California 95688



HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Paget:

I have learned with great sadness of the death of your son, Staff Sergeant Michael G. Paget.

I realize that words alone are of little comfort in so great a loss. Your son will be remembered as a dedicated American who faced the dangers of his profession so that other people might have the opportunity to live in the freedom we enjoy. His dedication to freedom will inspire other men to a new appreciation of its blessings and provide a new determination to enjoy them.

Mrs. Ford and I want you to know that you and your loved ones are in our thoughts and in our hearts. We pray that the eternal respect and gratitude your son has so tragically earned will sustain and comfort you in the days ahead.

Sincerely,

Mr. and Mrs. Gordon W. Paget
3950 West 226th Street
Apartment 35
Torrance, California 90505



THE WH
WAS:

Dear Mrs. Payne:

I have learned with great sadness of the death of your husband, Master Sergeant Wendle L. Payne.

I realize that words alone are of little comfort in so great a loss. Your husband will be remembered as a dedicated American who faced the dangers of his profession so that other people might have the opportunity to live in the freedom we enjoy. His dedication to freedom will inspire other men to a new appreciation of its blessings and provide a new determination to enjoy them.

Mrs. Ford and I want you to know that you and your loved ones are in our thoughts and in our hearts. We pray that the eternal respect and gratitude your husband has so tragically earned will sustain and comfort you in the days ahead.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Wendle L. Payne
811 Azalea Way
Vacaville, California 95688



HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Dear Mrs. Willis:

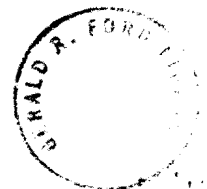
I have learned with great sadness of the death of your husband, Lieutenant Colonel William S. Willis.

I realize that words alone are of little comfort in so great a loss. Your husband will be remembered as a dedicated American who faced the dangers of his profession so that other people might have the opportunity to live in the freedom we enjoy. His dedication to freedom will inspire other men to a new appreciation of its blessings and provide a new determination to enjoy them.

Mrs. Ford and I want you to know that you and your loved ones are in our thoughts and in our hearts. We pray that the eternal respect and gratitude your husband has so tragically earned will sustain and comfort you in the days ahead.

Sincerely,

Mrs. William S. Willis
686 81st Place
APO San Francisco 96274



THE

W

Dear Mrs. Johnson:

I have learned with great sadness of the death of your husband, Technical Sergeant Denning C. Johnson.

I realize that words alone are of little comfort in so great a loss. Your husband will be remembered as a dedicated American who faced the dangers of his profession so that other people might have the opportunity to live in the freedom we enjoy. His dedication to freedom will inspire other men to a new appreciation of its blessings and provide a new determination to enjoy them.

Mrs. Ford and I want you to know that you and your loved ones are in our thoughts and in our hearts. We pray that the eternal respect and gratitude your husband has so tragically earned will sustain and comfort you in the days ahead.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Denning C. Johnson
Post Office Box 542
Dunn, North Carolina 27707





E HOUSE

INGTON

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Klinker:

I have learned with great sadness of the death of your daughter, Captain Mary T. Klinker.

I realize that words alone are of little comfort in so great a loss. Your daughter will be remembered as a dedicated American who faced the dangers of her profession so that other people might have the opportunity to live in the freedom we enjoy. Her dedication to freedom will inspire other men to a new appreciation of its blessings and provide a new determination to enjoy them.

Mrs. Ford and I want you to know that you and your loved ones are in our thoughts and in our hearts. We pray that the eternal respect and gratitude your daughter has so tragically earned will sustain and comfort you in the days ahead.

Sincerely,

Mr. and Mrs. Paul E. Klinker
3352 Woodmar Court
West Lafayette, Indiana 47906



7
DUSE
WASHINGTON

Dear Mrs. Dionne:

I have learned with great sadness of the death of your husband, Staff Sergeant Donald T. Dionne, Sr.

I realize that words alone are of little comfort in so great a loss. Your husband will be remembered as a dedicated American who faced the dangers of his profession so that other people might have the opportunity to live in the freedom we enjoy. His dedication to freedom will inspire other men to a new appreciation of its blessings and provide a new determination to enjoy them.

Mrs. Ford and I want you to know that you and your loved ones are in our thoughts and in our hearts. We pray that the eternal respect and gratitude your husband has so tragically earned will sustain and comfort you in the days ahead.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Donald T. Dionne, Sr.
216 Claggett Street
Travis Air Force Base, California 94535





HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Dear Mrs. Castro:

I have learned with great sadness of the death of your husband, Master Sergeant Joe Castro.

I realize that words alone are of little comfort in so great a loss. Your husband will be remembered as a dedicated American who faced the dangers of his profession so that other people might have the opportunity to live in the freedom we enjoy. His dedication to freedom will inspire other men to a new appreciation of its blessings and provide a new determination to enjoy them.

Mrs. Ford and I want you to know that you and your loved ones are in our thoughts and in our hearts. We pray that the eternal respect and gratitude your husband has so tragically earned will sustain and comfort you in the days ahead.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Joe Castro
636 East Yale Avenue
Fresno, California 93704



USE

WASHINGTON

Dear Mrs. Aguillon:

I have learned with great sadness of the death of your husband, Technical Sergeant Felizardo C. Aguillon.

I realize that words alone are of little comfort in so great a loss. Your husband will be remembered as a dedicated American who faced the dangers of his profession so that other people might have the opportunity to live in the freedom we enjoy. His dedication to freedom will inspire other men to a new appreciation of its blessings and provide a new determination to enjoy them.

Mrs. Ford and I want you to know that you and your loved ones are in our thoughts and in our hearts. We pray that the eternal respect and gratitude your husband has so tragically earned will sustain and comfort you in the days ahead.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Felizardo C. Aguillon
2042 San Luis Street
Fairfield, California 94533

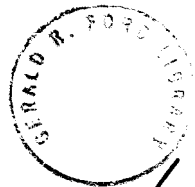


UNITED STATES
INFORMATION AGENCY

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

Ron —

I suppose there
is a possibility
that the President
may be asked
about this
tonight.



Jim Keogh



DIRECTOR

UNITED STATES INFORMATION AGENCY
WASHINGTON

May 6, 1975

Dear Senator Percy:

At the USIA authorization hearing yesterday, you said you had been informed that censorship of VOA broadcasting during the American evacuation from Vietnam culminated in the actual censorship of President Ford's remarks at Tulane University on April 23.

VOA did not censor the President's remarks.

The comment in question was the President's statement that the Vietnam war "is finished as far as America is concerned." VOA gave full and continuing coverage to that statement. This coverage included:

- # A news story based on the advance text of the President's speech.
- # A voice report by the VOA correspondent at Tulane.
- # A news analysis by VOA commentator Ronald J. Dunlavey.
- # A correspondent's report covering President Ford's remarks to newsmen as he was returning to Washington on Air Force One.

Each one of these pieces contained the statement in question. I am enclosing transcripts of this coverage.

The Honorable
Charles H. Percy
United States Senate



It is regrettable that someone so seriously misinformed you.

I trust that this letter and the transcripts can be made a part of the record of the hearing.

Sincerely,

James Keogh



CONGRESSIONAL NOTIFICATION RE SAIGON

Jack Marsh reports the following:

At about 12:30 a.m. today, shortly before the evacuation began, the ^{White House} Congressional Liaison Office began the Congressional leadership and the notifying chairmen and ranking Republican members of the Senate and House Armed Services Committees, Foreign Relations Committees, and Appropriations Committees. Not every individual was reached because some were out of town, etc., but we tried to reach each one.

As for any requirement that Congress be ^{consulted} notified under the War Powers Act, Marsh said that we would have ^{Advised and consulted with} notified the above-titled individuals without the Act. But we have complied with the Act, ^{if it applies} he said.

The general response from the Congressional leaders was one of relief ^{and approval} that the evacuation was underway and to thank ^{The White House} Marsh' people for the call. Marsh said the Members and Senators were not critical, ^{and made almost no comment on the} or at least voiced very little criticism of ^{timing} any delay in getting the Americans out. ~~"Relieved" was Marsh's description.~~

As for legislative requests pending before Congress, Marsh said the President would address that subject in his meeting with the bipartisan leadership. ~~That goes for both the \$222 million and humanitarian aid.~~ He indicated that the President would probably need some of the aid money to refund other sources of revenue which were used in Vietnam.



JWH

From Margie:

DoD statement on U.S. fire during Saigon evacuation:

At 5:10 am April 29, press pokesman in hallway without benefit of transcript told reporters that an F-4 had fired on anti-aircraft artillery. They had just heard reports.

At 7:30 am the morning of April 29 he provided a few details for the F-4 firing and mentioned that it had suppressed the anti-aircraft fire.

April 30 at the regular 11:15 am briefing, he mentioned that the ~~F04~~ had dropped bombs.

Not until May 2 in a classified SYNPAAC report wrapping up the Saigon evacuation that they report that 2 Air Force F-4s (first time 2 F-4's are mentioned) expended: 2 ~~CBU~~ CBU-58 and 2 CBU-71s and 1 AGM 45 missile against a 57 mm anti-aircraft sight north of ~~Ben~~ Bien Hoa.

Doubt if ever a public statement made subsequent to that.

During course of evacuation the 3 statements mentioned the bombing

Have
to
check
6-12-75
AM

no

6-12-75



AMBASSADOR MARTIN'S PERFORMANCE

Q: Do you believe that Ambassador Martin acted properly in his conduct of the evacuation, waiting as long as he did and then bringing out so many Vietnamese as well as Americans?

A: I believe that Ambassador Martin has accomplished an extraordinarily difficult task under very trying circumstances and has accomplished it well. He was responsible for the lives and safety of Americans in Vietnam and at the same time for maintaining the operation and function of our Mission there. The results I think speak for themselves. Not only did he bring out our Americans safely but his management made it possible to evacuate ^{*tens of thousands of*} ~~many~~ Vietnamese who had worked or were associated with us and whose lives were therefore endangered.

