

try to counterattack

Examiner News Services

SAIGON — The South Vietnamese government has re-established radio contact with pockets of troops still holding out along the central coast and may try to retake some of the territory it has lost, military sources said yesterday.

At the same time, more American civilians, wives and dependents fled Saigon in what one said was the beginning of a U.S. exodus from the capital.

Hundreds of Vietnamese war orphans left by plane for the United States, but military orders closed the city to virtually all other Vietnamese trying to enter or leave.

A U.S. Navy task force including four aircraft carriers began assembling in the Western Pacific for possible evacuation of Americans and South Vietnamese from Saigon, official sources said.

They said the task force had no orders to move into

Vietnamese waters but that the threat to Saigon was being assessed hourly.

The carriers Enterprise, Coral Sea, Midway and Hancock were in various locations, from off the coast of Japan and the Philippines to midway between the Philippines and Indochina, the sources said. All have attack bombers aboard.

A fifth, the helicopter carrier Okinawa, is standing by in the Gulf of Thailand off Cambodia, ready for evacuation of Americans from Phnom Penh. It has hundreds of U.S. Marines aboard.

American sources said radio communications had been restored with pockets of defenders in and around the enclaves of Phan Rang, Phan Thiet, Cam Ranh and Nha Trang, 100 to 188 miles northeast of Saigon.

According to reports, the Saigon government may re-inforce some of these areas and attempt to re-

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establish control over coastal cities abandoned earlier this week.

Government sources also said yesterday three top generals had been detained on charges of improper leadership in connection with the debacle that cost South Vietnam 18 of its 44 provinces.

Only scattered fighting was reported in the countryside yesterday. A Saigon Command spokesman said sporadic shooting had broken out around Xuan Loc, about 40 miles east of Saigon, and in the Thuan Nhon district of the Mekong Delta, 75 miles southwest of the capital.

A U.S. Navy amphibious vessel, the USS Blue Ridge, said it had picked up about 3,400 refugees off the coast at Phan Rang, 165 miles northeast of Saigon, yesterday. Other U.S. ships operating off the central coast reported refugees were still reaching them in small, overloaded fishing boats.

The ships were ferrying the refugees to Vung Tau, 40 miles east of Saigon.

Thirty-three Americans, including four children, flew yesterday from Saigon to Clark Air Base in the Philippines. One, John McClelland, 52, of Los Angeles, said he believed it was the start of an American exodus from Vietnam.

McClelland said he also had heard from several sources that Saigon's fall "will come in 5 days. I'd say 5 to 10 days."

But a U.S. Embassy spokesman said yesterday there had been no official order for dependent evacuation. "Some people are flying out their wives and children, but not under orders," he said.