

# Pentagon and the Pullout

## A Lot of Brass for a Tiny Ship

By Fred S. Hoffman  
Associated Press

Washington

Rarely, if ever, in American history has so much high brass supervised so tiny a naval operation.

The mission of a single small U.S. Navy craft to pick up a few hundred Americans and others from a Lebanese beach yesterday was monitored every step of the way by enough Pentagon officials to run a major invasion.

At the other end of the long chain of command stretching from Washington was 46-year-old Chief Bosun's Mate Glen R. Kennedy of Rhinelander, Wis., whose 185-ton LCU (landing craft, utility) chugged unarmed and unescorted to the beach and back to its mother ship three miles out at sea.

LCU 1654's every move was followed closely from the Pentagon's War Room, thousands of miles away.

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld was there. So were Deputy Secretary William Clements and three members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff — General George Brown, the chairman; Admiral James Holloway, chief of naval operations, and General Louis Wilson, Marine Corps commandant.

Vice Admiral Harry Train, senior JCS staff officer, stayed on the phone constantly, receiving progress reports from the scene and relaying them to the top-rankers grouped around a conference table.

From time to time, Rumsfeld or one of the others made comments or asked questions which

were passed on to admirals commanding the Sixth Fleet and the main amphibious force, which remained discreetly out of sight off the Lebanese coast.

Rumsfeld sat at one position in front of a large console containing the telephone lines that were used to stay in constant contact with the Sixth Fleet, and in frequent contact with the White House. Brown and Clements sat on either side of him.

In front of them were six large projection screens rising from the floor nearly to the ceiling of the two-story room, and as the night wore on maps, photographs of Beirut and the area of the evacuation and reports were projected on the screens — each showing preceded by a loudspeaker announcement of "screen three" or "screen one."

Train stayed constantly on the telephone to the Sixth Fleet. Rumsfeld was on the phone about half the time, alternately listening to progress reports coming in, asking questions and talking with President Ford and his top aides in the White House.

Officials who were in the command center said the JCS sent only three direct orders — to start the operation, to make sure all evacuees had been taken from the beach, and to end the operation.

But the senior brass had laid down in advance detailed and explicit instructions on how the

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operation — code-named Fluid Drive — was to be conducted.

The Sixth Fleet was told to keep the military aspect at as low a profile as possible.

The ten sailors who manned the landing craft were not permitted even to carry sidearms or wear helmets. No U.S. fighting ships were in sight of the beach, where security was provided for the evacuees by Arab soldiers.

However, swift help was available if needed.

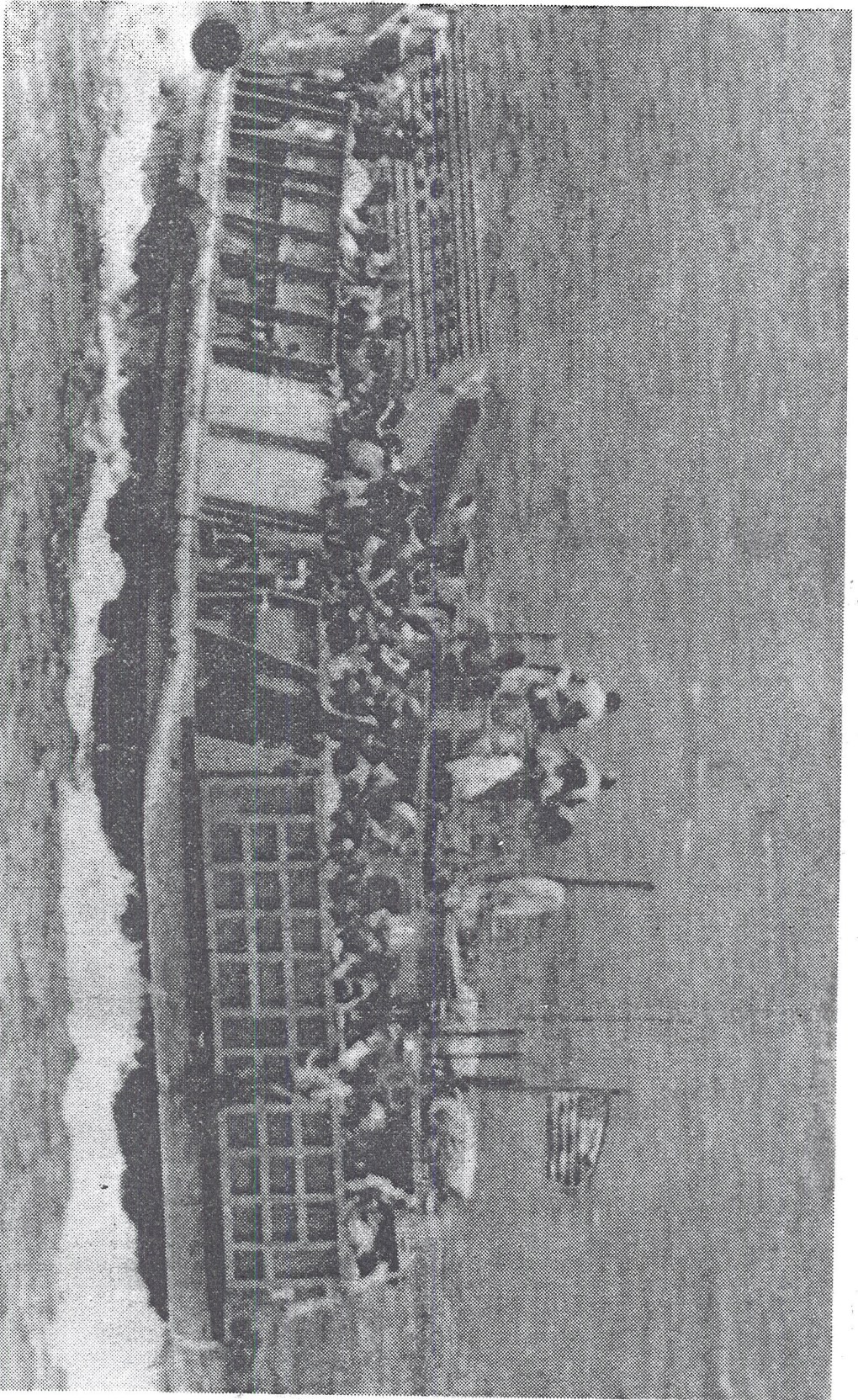
Some jet fighters were placed on "short alert" on the deck of the giant aircraft carrier *America* about 100 miles at sea. From there high-speed jets could have reached the beach in minutes. And there were 150 marines aboard the landing craft's "mother," the dock landing ship *Speigel Grove*, about 20 minutes away by boat.



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The landing craft, crammed with Americans and others, headed out to sea from the Lebanese beach

AP Wirephoto

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