

SFChronicle
MAR 26 1975
**Ford Orders
Army Chief
To Vietnam**

Washington

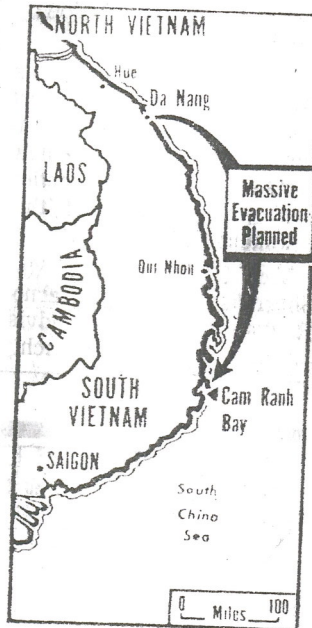
President Ford yesterday directed General Frederick C. Weyand, the Army chief of staff, to fly to Saigon today to assess the military situation and recommend whether any further American assistance is needed by South Vietnam.

White House Press Secretary Ron Nessen announced the mission. He said that Weyand, a former United States military commander in Vietnam, "has good relations" with President Nguyen Van Thieu and the South Vietnamese people.

Nessen also said Mr. Ford wants Weyand to "convey to the South Vietnamese the President's strong support and to tell the people that he is making an all-out effort" to obtain additional aid from Congress.

Meanwhile, Robert Anderson, a State Department spokesman, said the United States would be assisting in

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Airlift from Da Nang to
Cam Ranh bay

FORD ORDER TO ARMY CHIEF

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every way it could in the evacuation of thousands of refugees from the city of Da Nang, which has been cut off on all sides by the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong.

Newsmen said Weyand would return to Washington about the middle or end of next week. He declined to speculate on whether Weyand might recommend additional United States aid to South Vietnam beyond the \$300 million Mr. Ford already has been seeking without success from Congress.

The announcement followed news reports from South Vietnam on the fall of the former imperial capital of Hue and a 25-minute meeting at the White House in which Mr. Ford conferred with Weyand, Graham A. Martin, the U.S. ambassador to South Vietnam, Secre-

tary of State Henry Kissinger, and Lieutenant General Brent Scowcroft, the President's deputy national security adviser.

Mr. Ford also met with Tran Kim Phuong, the South Vietnamese ambassador to the United States, and a group of South Vietnamese parliamentarians visiting this country and told them he was "deeply disturbed" by the reports of increased fighting in South Vietnam, according to Nessen.

The press secretary said Mr. Ford asked the delegation to tell Thieu and the South Vietnamese people of his "respect and admiration for the courage and determination" South Vietnam has displayed in fighting the Communist invasion.

Weyand, who was in charge of the final disengagement and return of American forces from South Vietnam to the United States

in 1973, has recommended in recent congressional testimony that United States aid to South Vietnam be continued. He has also said that the aid might have to be stretched out over several years until South Vietnam could become economically and militarily self-sufficient.

In another development, Senator John J. Sparkman, Democrat - Alabama, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, made public a letter to Mr. Ford urging reconvening of the international conference that ratified the 1973 cease-fire agreement in Vietnam, in view of "the heart-rending human tragedy presently unfolding in Southeast Asia in which upwards of 2 million Cambodians and Vietnamese are homeless and hungry." He also urged efforts to "ease the pain and suffering" of the refugees.

New York Times