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Da Nang's
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flight of
terror

By Arnold Zeitlin
 Associated Press

SAIGON — "An old woman was pulled out of my arms and I saw her trampled five times," said air hostess Jan Wollett. "After that, there was nothing left of her."

It was the last flight out of Da Nang yesterday and everyone wanted to get aboard.

About 400 frenzied South Vietnamese troops shot and trampled their way over women and children to board the World Airways Boeing 727 cargo plane — the only remnant of a massive airlift promised by American officials to carry 10,000 people a day to safety.

As Da Nang, South Viet-

—Turn to Page 15, Col. 1

—From Page 1

nam's second largest city tottered on the brink of falling to the North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong, between 400,000 and 600,000 refugees still desperately sought a way out. The thousands waiting at the airport since Wednesday night were unlikely to escape before the arrival of the Communist forces.

"Those people are gone. Da Nang is gone," said World Airways president Ed Daly, who was clawed bloody and had his clothes torn as he smashed soldiers with his pistol butt to clear them off the plane to permit it to take off.

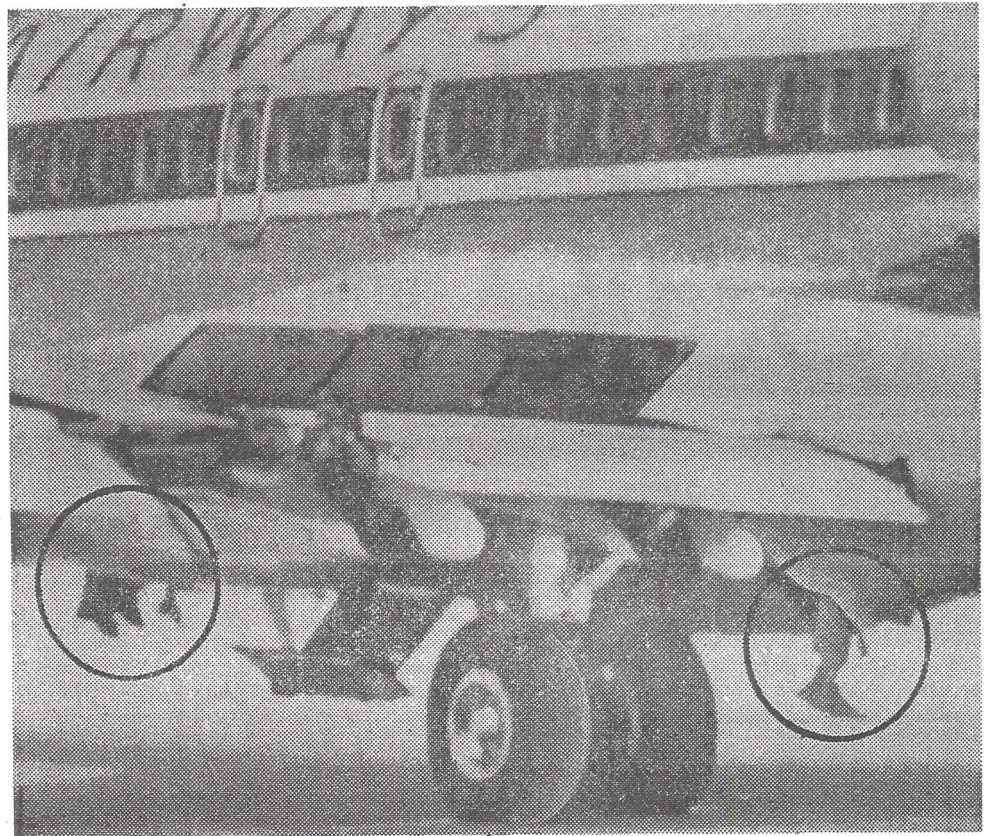
A sealift also under way took 10,000 refugees to Cam Ranh Bay yesterday. But U.S. officials said as many

as 400,000 were trying to get out of Da Nang by sea.

Miss Wollett, who is from Los Angeles, and two other air hostesses were to pull aboard the refugees on the Da Nang flight, which became the target of fragmentary grenades and of automatic rifle fire unleashed by angry troops unable to board it. The crew said 1,000 tried to get aboard.

"We were screaming, 'Where are the women and children? Where are the women and children?'" she said.

In the swirling melee on the sunbaked runway, Joe Hrezo, the World Airways manager at Clark Air Base in the Philippines, got off to try to organize things and



LEGS OF SOLDIERS DANGLE FROM PLANE AS IT LANDS AT SAIGON
 Soldier at right had climbed in wheelwell and was killed during the flight

—AP Photo

said he saw a Vietnamese air force man shoot down what appeared to be a whole family.

Another soldier shot out the tires of a minitruck people were riding to reach the aircraft. Hrezo said he saw a motorcycle crash into a packed Jeep, "and it must have killed 10 people."

With the body of a soldier swinging from the undercarriage, a gaping hole in one wing and its rear door flapping open, the 727 made it safely to Saigon airport after a heart-stopping two-hour flight that ordinarily would have taken 40 minutes to cover the 375 miles. said Daly.

The plane carried 293 persons in the cabin, fitted to seat 125. About 100 were in

the cargo hold or clinging to the wheel wells. The plane flew to Saigon with its landing gear down, Daly said.

At Saigon the refugee soldiers were taken into custody.

A few others who hung partly out of the plane during the flight survived.

Daly, who lives in Oakland, said he and two other men held the rear door closed for the entire two-hour flight back to Saigon.

He said he had fired his pistol over the mob trying to get Hrezo back aboard the aircraft as it was taking off.

"I don't know how I got on the plane," said Hrezo. "I didn't get to the second to last step of the ramp until we were 2,000 feet up."