

U.S. Marine Guard For Refugee Ships

Washington

The Pentagon announced yesterday that about 700 marines have been sent to protect U.S. Navy ships while they evacuate civilian refugees from South Vietnam.

It said the four rifle companies of marines will not leave the ships but "will be used for individual ship security and shipboard evacuation control."

Military sources also said the Pentagon is taking small numbers of artillery pieces and communication equipment from National Guard units in the United States and rushing them to Vietnam for emergency supply of South Vietnamese forces.

Items being sent, sources said, include recoilless rifles, some radios, 105-mm. howitzers, telephones and other communications equipment.

The four rifle companies and a headquarters company from the Third Marine Division on Okinawa are traveling toward South Vietnam aboard the command ship Blueridge and the amphibious transport Dubuque.

When these ships join two other Navy amphibious vessels, the Frederick and the Durham, the marine companies will be transferred to them. The Frederick and Durham are already on station off South Vietnam.

The four ships are expected to rendezvous early today, the Pentagon said.

This means that each of the four evacuation vessels will be guarded by a rifle company of about 160 men. The headquarters company of between 50 and 60 men will remain aboard the Blueridge.

The Pentagon announcement was the first word that marines were aboard the amphibious ships ordered to South Vietnam for what the Ford administration calls a humanitarian mission of evacuating civilian refugees fleeing from advancing North Vietnamese troops.

The White House has said no U.S. military personnel will go ashore, but that refugees will be taken out to the ships.

Pentagon officials said commanders of the marines being sent to protect the ships are under orders to avoid any fighting with the North Vietnamese.

Evacuation of South Vietnamese civilians from Da Nang and elsewhere aboard civilian transport ships has been marked by reported incidents of violence, with unruly South Vietnamese soldiers and marines blamed for terrorizing civilian refugees.

Presumably, the U.S. ma-

rines will prevent this from happening aboard the Navy transport vessels when they take refugees aboard.

Congress in 1973 adopted three laws relating to the involvement of U.S. troops overseas:

The State Department authorization act forbids use of federal funds "to finance the involvement of United States military forces in hostilities in or over or from off the shores of North Vietnam, South Vietnam, Laos or Cambodia." The amendment was sponsored by Senators Clifford P. Case (Rep.-N.J.) and Frank Church (Dem.-Idaho).

The 1973 Foreign Aid act includes an amendment by Senator George McGovern, (Dem S.D.), banning funds

for "military or paramilitary operations by the United States in or over Vietnam, Laos or Cambodia."

The War Powers Act of 1973 requires the President to report to Congress within 48 hours on the introduction, in the absence of a declaration of war, of U.S. armed forces "into hostilities or into situations where imminent involvement in hostilities is clearly indicated by the circumstances."

The use of U.S. troops in such situations, without congressional approval, is limited to 60 days unless Congress ends it sooner, although the President would have another 30 days to protect withdrawing U.S. forces.