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MANY AMERICANS LEAVING VIETNAM

NYTimes

U.S. Embassy Says There Is No 'Evacuation,' but Lets Aides Take Families Out

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By FOX BUTTERFIELD

Special to The New York Times

SAIGON, South Vietnam, April 1—Americans are streaming out of South Vietnam.

Airline officials reported today that all flights out of Saigon, which in recent months had been lightly booked, were full. A Pan American World Airways officer said there had been a doubling in demand for Pan Am's twice-weekly flights direct to the United States, and China Airlines, which flies to Hong Kong and Bangkok, was said to have sold all its seats through April 9.

In an unusual public statement today, the United States Embassy said it "has not ordered an evacuation of its staff or dependents."

But the statement acknowledged that "the embassy has now authorized a favorable response to any officer here with his family who would like to move his dependents" either back to the United States or to some other place in Asia.

This is not the same thing as evacuation, the embassy statement explained, because "the embassy has not ordered or suggested evacuation of its American personnel."

There are 1,486 Americans here who officially work for the United States Government, along with their dependents. It is estimated that 2.6 million Americans in all have served in Vietnam during the war here. Though some were leaving,

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Americans Leaving Vietnam, But U.S. Denies 'Evacuation'

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for many of the 5,880 Americans left in Vietnam, it was business as usual.

A secretary at the white concrete United States Embassy building said her boss could not return a phone call this afternoon because he would be leaving promptly at 5 o'clock. The large swimming pool inside the embassy compound was busy, as was the 11-lane embassy bowling alley at Tan Son Nhut Air Base.

Other Americans were still buying shampoo, hair dryers, whisky and Frank Sinatra recordings at the huge post exchange store at Tan Son Nhut.

Some senior officials in the American mission were privately reported to be deeply alarmed by the rout of the South Vietnamese Army and to recognize the possibility that Saigon itself might not hold out much longer.

"I wouldn't plan any parties for the weekend," one formerly hawkish official told a friend.

But in what appeared to be an effort to prevent panic among Saigon's two million residents, these ranking officials continued to insist publicly that the embassy had no plans for evacuation.

Da Nang Exodus Was Noted

In Da Nang, South Vietnam's second largest city, which was lost to the Communists three days ago, the exodus of local American officials was carefully observed by residents and their departure is believed to have contributed to the chaos that ensued soon after they left.

Junior officers in the mission and several secretaries said today that they had received no word about whether or when they might be evacuated.

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Despite the embassy's denial, knowledgeable sources said

that late last week someone had installed now mobile radar and other electronic equipment in the compound of Pacific Architects and Engineers at Tan Son Nhut. The organization, known informally as P.A. & E., is a major Government contractor in South Vietnam.

The new radar could presumably be used to guide evacuation planes into Tan Son Nhut if the airfield's regular equipment was abandoned or destroyed by ground personnel, as has happened at Da Nang and other cities on the northern coast lost to the Communists.

Some of the international airlines that fly into Saigon were said by travel agents to be leery about landing here. Cathay Pacific, a British-owned Hong Kong-based line that flies throughout Asia, reportedly canceled its flight from Hong Kong today, but rescheduled it at the last minute after urgent pleas from its Saigon manager.

The plane arrived two hours late. Ticket agents ascribed the delay to "mechanical difficulty."

But one well-informed travel agent said he had been informed that if Phan Thiet, a coastal city 102 miles to the northeast, fell to the Communists, several airlines would stop landing in Saigon. The reason, the agent explained, is that airliners from Hong Kong make their approach to Saigon over that area.

Wives and Children Going

The Americans who have begun leaving Saigon in the last few days are mostly the wives and children of officials and private businessmen, but they also apparently include some officers of the United States mission whose places of assignment have been captured by the North Vietnamese, such as Pleiku, Hue and Da Nang.

The United States Consulate here was jammed today with Vietnamese women trying to get their marriage papers to Americans certified or to obtain visas for the United States so they could leave Vietnam. Several of the women, in tight-fitting pants and blouses, wore the heavy eye make-up affected by bar girls here.