

IT BRINGS 14 GUNS, NO MEDICAL GOODS

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U.S. Aides There Assume,
but Do Not Confirm, the
Opening of Supply Run
NYTimes

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SAIGON, South Vietnam, April 1—When the telephone rang last Sunday morning, Capt. Don Wiegard was stretching in bed just before taking his daughter Kelly to hunt Easter eggs in downtown Vacaville, Calif.

This morning, Captain Wiegard and 11 other United States Air Force men guided their giant C-5A cargo plane to a landing at Saigon's Tan Son Nhut airport.

It was the start of what United States officials here describe as an urgent airlift of military and medical supplies to South Vietnamese forces that have lost or abandoned more than one billion dollars in military equipment in recent days.

What difference today's cargo, 14 105-mm. howitzers, will make in what continues to be a rapidly deteriorating military situation for South Vietnamese forces was not explained.

Nor was the exact scope of the "airlift" defined. South Vietnamese newspapers described the plane's arrival as "the first" of the latest shipments.

But American Embassy spokesmen here would say only that they "believed" more supplies were being assembled and they "thought" more cargoes, including medical supplies, would be forthcoming.

"We assume there will be more planes," said one.

Crew members on the cargo plane that arrived today, however, said they knew of no other planned flights.

Air Refuelings Unspecified

The trip began with a phone call alerting Captain Wiegard and Captains David Pfeifer and Herman Lohse, the two other pilots who take turns flying the plane and sleeping in the six beds it carries.

The giant plane, which is 247 feet long and 222 feet between whgtips, left Travis Air Force base in northern California Sunday night.

Because of its speed—500 miles an hour—and the international date line, the plane flew from Sunday night straight into Monday night without any daytime.

It was a nonstop trip with an unspecified number of mid-air refuelings. And 17½ hours after it arched over San Francisco's Golden Gate bridge, the 364-ton craft touched down here.

It was daylight by then, so the two dozen photographers and cameramen hustled to the airport by South Vietnamese authorities could film the whining jet taxiing to unload.

The actual unloading was delayed until the cameras could be positioned. A pallet of telephones was unloaded. And then one by one South Vietnamese Army trucks backed into the gaping rear door of the plane and pulled out a new olive-drab cannon.

Each had a case of shells marked "fragile" strapped to it. There were no medicines or other medical supplies on board.

The entire load weighed about 80,000 pounds, crew members said, or roughly half the plane's carrying capacity.

Another Airlift Outbound

A few yards away on an adjacent runway another airlift was under way. But this one was going out of—not into—South Vietnam.

Chartered DC-8 jets roared away to the west carrying tons of rice for the beleaguered Cambodian capital, Phnom Penh, 35 flying minutes away.

This was not Captain Wiegard's first trip to South Vietnam. He was here in January on a routine supply mission. And he spent a year here in the late nineteen-sixties flying "Jolly Green Giants"—rescue helicopters—out of Da Nang in the north.

"I don't know if this load helps any," said Captain Wiegard, "but I sure hope so."

Two hours later, with its cargo delivered, the C-5A took off and headed out over the South China Sea. The crews' orders took them only as far as Clark Air Base in the Philippines, two hours away.

Vietcong Protests Airlift

HANOI, North Vietnam, April 1 (Agence France-Presse)—The Vietcong strongly protested today what they called an illegal airlift of arms from California to Saigon.

A Vietcong communiqué issued to the press here said the airlift, which began today, was a new attempt on the part of the Ford Administration "to raise the morale of the Saigon Army and phantom administration which are on the point of collapse and to breath new life into the belligerent group of Nguyen Van Thieu so it can continue the war."

The communiqué, which was backed by a statement from the North Vietnamese Foreign Ministry, called for an end to the airlift today.