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# 4 U.S. CARRIERS SET FOR RESCUE ROLE

## But Ford Has Not Ordered Ships to Vietnam Waters to Evacuate Americans

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WASHINGTON, April 4—

Four United States Navy aircraft carriers are standing by in the Western Pacific to evacuate American citizens and some Vietnamese from South Vietnam, but President Ford has not issued orders for these carriers to proceed to Vietnam waters, according to Administration officials.

The carriers earmarked for the evacuation operation are the Coral Sea, now in port in the Philippines; the Midway, at sea near Japan; the Enterprise, about half way between the Philippines and Indochina, and the Hancock, nearing Subic Bay in the Philippines en route to the Indochina area. The Pentagon had announced the Hancock's orders several weeks ago in connection with the deteriorating situation in Cambodia.

Already on station in the Gulf of Siam is the helicopter carrier Okinawa.

Also being discussed by the Administration is the question of additional military aid to Saigon. The Pentagon is argu-

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ing against further large-scale shipments until, it says, the Saigon forces demonstrate a will to fight. [Page 7.]

According to officials, the four aircraft carriers, together with two-thirds of a marine division on the Japanese island of Okinawa, make up the forces that could be used in any emergency evacuation effort from South Vietnam.

President Ford mentioned this capability at his press conference yesterday. "I likewise can assure you," he said, "that we have contingency plans to meet all problems involving evacua-

tion; if that should become necessary. At this point I do not believe that I should answer specifically how those contingency plans might be carried out."

### More than 5,000 Americans

The officials said that there were now 5,000 to 6,000 Americans in South Vietnam. The contingency plans, they explained, also called for the evacuation of 2,000 South Vietnamese employes of the American Embassy.

They said hundreds of American citizens were leaving South Vietnam by commercial and military aircraft.

A senior Administration official reported the following

sequence for evacuation operations should they prove necessary and another high official confirmed them.

Marines would be deployed to secure a perimeter area. Helicopters would come in, pick up the evacuees, and deposit them on the carriers. The officials said, 25,000 people could be evacuated in this manner.

### Protection by Troops

"While the copters come in to take the people out," the senior Administration official said, "the troops would prevent refugees from climbing all over the choppers."

As far as the need for air cover from the carrier planes, the official said he knew of no

for it. He said he did not think there would be a danger from enemy forces because the evacuation would begin and end long before the enemy could possibly reach the evacuation zone.

The officials said that an important part of the plan was the avoidance of any contact with North Vietnamese forces.

One White House official stressed that the positions of the three aircraft carriers normally on station in the Western Pacific—the Midway, the Coral Sea, and the Enterprise—had not changed. He said they would react swiftly, but that the President had not ordered any phase of the contingency plan to be implemented.