

U.S. Forces Set to Save Americans

Washington

A Marine battalion of about 1500 men has been moved to a U.S. naval base in the Philippines to be ready for use if needed in any evacuation of Americans from South Vietnam, it was learned last night.

This brings to about 4000 the number of U.S. Marines within a few days' sailing time of South Vietnam and Cambodia.

The Pentagon confirmed that a battalion had been moved from Okinawa to the U.S. base at Subic Bay in the Philippines.

It did not relate the movements to any evacuation of Americans, but said the Marines would provide "possible backup capability" for other Marines already at sea in the Cambodia-South Vietnam area.

This was a reference to a reinforced battalion of 1300 Marines aboard a Navy amphibious task group in the Gulf of Thailand, along with about 700 other Marines distributed among four civilian contract ships and two Navy amphibious vessels taking South Vietnamese refugees from threatened areas to safer havens.

The mission of the Marine battalion aboard the helicopter carrier and other amphibious ships in the Gulf of Thailand for more than a month has been one of waiting for an expected evacuation of Americans from threatened Phnom Penh in Cambodia.

However, that group could be switched to Vietnam.

The Navy has quietly gathered the makings of an evacuation force at Subic Bay.

Already at that big base across the South China Sea from South Vietnam are the carrier Hancock with a Marine helicopter squadron, two amphibious ships and the big aircraft carrier Coral Sea.

Meanwhile, it was learned that Marine riflemen had been put aboard four U.S. civilian contract ships to prevent takeover by South Vietnamese refugees.

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