

U.S. Places Marines On Refugee Vessels

By Fred S. Hoffman

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

Pentagon officials said there was no such security detachment aboard the Greenville Victory, which was forced by refugees to take them to Tungtau on the South Vietnamese coast rather than to Phuquoc Island in the Gulf of Thailand.

Unsuccessful attempts were made by refugees to divert two other ships, the Greenport and the Navy transport Andrew Miller, from Phuquoc Island, officials said.

There were no Marines on either the Greenport or the Miller at the time, the Pen-

tagon said, but a security detachment has since boarded the Greenport, now standing off the island.

Pentagon officials said detachments of 40 to 60 Marines each also had been sent to the American Challenger, and the Pioneer Contender off Phuquoc and to the Transcolorado off Tungtau, a one-time resort.

The detachments were drawn from four companies of Marines totaling some 700 men who had been aboard four Navy amphibious ships sent to positions off South Vietnam to take off civilian refugees.

Two of the amphibious ships have returned to the U.S. base at Subic Bay in the Philippines, perhaps to pick up additional Marines.