

VOA Coverage Limited

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On U.S. Evacuation

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The Voice of America has been ordered not to make any mention of possible American evacuations from South Vietnam except official government statements or official actions by the administration or Congress.

This policy led to the deletion from a broadcast of at least one report this past weekend in which Sen. Henry M. Jackson (D-Wash.) mentioned the evacuation issue. A VOA correspondent reported the senator's comments and then reviewed President Ford's statement on the subject in his foreign policy speech Thursday night, but this section of her report was not broadcast.

A VOA official said yesterday that a report on comments by Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield (D-Mont.) on the Vietnam evacuation question, which was filed for use on Saturday, also was "deemed not usable."

"We've got a fluid situation, a situation where we have to be very conscious at all times about adding to the complications already existing—even to the extent of placing American lives in jeopardy," Andrew Falkiewicz, a United States Information Agency spokesman said yesterday. VOA is a function of USIA.

"Normally the news coverage of VOA is not limited to congressional actions or official expressions," Falkiewicz

said, "but the situation in Saigon is not normal."

In situations where statements could be misconstrued, with possible consequences for the lives of Americans and others in South Vietnam, Falkiewicz said, the VOA has been ordered to place limits on its coverage. VOA broadcasts are beamed to all parts of the world, including Southeast Asia.

The restrictions on VOA are another example of the extreme sensitivity of the evacuation issue, particularly in the State Department. When asked if the policy originated outside USIA, Falkiewicz said the VOA policy was "completely coordinated" with the State Department.

Officials in the news divisions of VOA have been chaffing under the new policy, however, and many are displeased at being ordered to limit coverage to official policy or actions on the evacuation issue.

"A lot of people feel there is an obligation here to reflect all segments of society, not just the policy of the government," said one official who has been involved in broadcasts dealing with Vietnam.

"At the same time," this official said, "we are also aware of the question of safety of the population. It is a close one to call."

According to other officials in VOA, the Vietnam policy directives began to evolve

last Friday, ^{11 APR} a day after an important meeting of the National Security Council which dealt with policy on South Vietnam and Cambodia.

President Ford's foreign policy speech Thursday night, in which he asked for clarification of laws dealing with the use of U. S. forces in Southeast Asia if necessary in an evacuation effort, was carried in its entirety by VOA.

Philomena Jurey, a White House correspondent for VOA, said yesterday, however, that when she filed a report Sunday on Sen. Jackson's comments on the evacuation issue on ABC-TV's "Issues and Answers(wmal)" she was "advised by the coverage desk that there were strictures on the subject of evacuation and we weren't supposed to mention it."

She said a report which she filed on White House press secretary Ron Nesen's comments on Vietnam yesterday was used in its entirety, including statements on evacuation.

According to VOA officials, statements by official spokesmen at the White House, the State Department and the Department of Defense may be used in broadcasts.

On reports of congressional actions, VOA official said, "What Congress does as an institution — when a committee votes, for example — that is more authoritative than what 102 individual personalities might say."