

# Pullout of 5,000 to Leave 1,000 Americans in Saigon

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WASHINGTON, April 15—Secretary of State Kissinger said today that the United States Embassy in Saigon had been ordered to reduce the number of Americans remaining in South Vietnam to "a minimum level." Administration and Congressional sources said the objective was to reduce the number, which until recently had totaled more than 6,000, to 1,000 or less within two weeks.

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee, meanwhile tentatively endorsed a proposal for a \$200-million "contingency fund" that President Ford could use to evacuate Americans from Saigon and provide humanitarian aid to South Vietnamese.

The committee sent its proposal to the White House, where it was expected to be accepted as a significant compromise, breaking an impasse between Congress and the executive branch.

Even before the committee had acted, Secretary Kissinger had told the Senate Appropriations Committee that the Administration was prepared to accept the concept of a "contingency fund" that the President could use at his discretion for humanitarian and military aid as well as the withdrawal of Americans.

Mr. Kissinger told the committee that "the number of Americans is being reduced energetically to minimum levels necessary for essential tasks."

With as little publicity as

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possible, therefore, the Administration has ordered a large-scale withdrawal of Americans remaining in South Vietnam—a step long resisted by Graham A. Martin, the American Ambassador in Saigon. By today, according to estimates supplied by Defense Secretary James R. Schlesinger, the American contingent in South Vietnam had been reduced by a third, with 800, according to Congressional sources, leaving in the last day.

The contingency fund endorsed by the Foreign Relations did not deal with military aid but a move was developing in Congress—if various committee jurisdictions could be resolved—to extend the contingency concept to a limited amount of arms aid.

In testimony before the House Armed Services Committee, Secretary Schlesinger, urging approval of the President's military aid request, suggested that 200,000 to 1 million South Vietnamese could be killed in a Communist take over, but he gave no details on his estimate. Mr. Kissinger was less emphatic on the possibilities of a "bloodbath," stating that the "most endangered groups" would be those in any way identified with the Saigon Government or the United States and that a Communist take over would be "a traumatic and tragic experience for millions of South Vietnamese."

There was a near-crisis atmosphere on Capitol Hill as Congress sought to decide whether to provide the additional aid to South Vietnam before the April 19 deadline set by the President.

### Top Leaders Testify

Normal legislative work was put aside and House and Senate committees met through the day. There was testimony from Secretary Kissinger, Secretary Schlesinger and Gen. Frederick C. Weyand, the Army Chief of Staff, who conducted a Presidential fact-finding mission to South Vietnam that led to the President's recommenda-

tions.

Leaders of the Senate Foreign Relations, Appropriations and Armed Services Committees scheduled a meeting tomorrow to see whether they could develop a common approach. At present, the various Presidential requests are divided among the three committees.

If the committees should adopt the contingency-fund concept, it was expected that they would approve a substantially smaller sum than requested by the President. In a speech before a joint session of Congress Thursday, Mr. Ford requested \$722-million in emergency military aid for South Vietnam and \$250-million in humanitarian aid.

While at least outwardly the executive branch and Congress were coming together, there remained fundamental differences in approaches between the two branches that could upset any compromise.

### A Delicate Situation

The comments of members advancing the contingency concept made it apparent they were thinking of additional aid only to assure the safe withdrawal of American citizens and as the last installment of American aid to the Saigon Government.

The Administration, perhaps caught in what Secretary Kissinger at one point described as a "delicate" situation in Saigon, was unwilling to concede a termination of American aid to the Saigon Government or to make the aid contingent upon the withdrawal of Americans still in Saigon.

Even if the emergency aid should be approved, both Mr.

Kissinger and Mr. Schlesinger said the Administration still wanted \$1.3-billion in military aid in the coming fiscal year, beginning July 1, and the Defense Secretary talked in terms of aid continuing at about the \$1-billion level into the foreseeable future.

Some Senate leaders felt, however, that members who opposed any additional military aid might modify their position if they could maintain they were voting for "contingency funds" to assure the safe withdrawal of all American and an end to military involvement in the Vietnam war.

It was also apparent that the substantial Congressional opposition to military aid was being modified not by the perilous military position of South Vietnam that the Administration was stressing but by an overriding concern for the safety of Americans.

### Pressure for Evacuation

Several members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee made clear that it was prepared to approve the "contingency fund" only if it was satisfied that the Administration had begun a large-scale evacuation of nonessential personnel and dependents from Saigon and had prepared a workable plan for evacuation of all remaining Americans.

In effect, the committee was holding the legislation hostage for an Administration commitment to evacuate the Americans, just as some members of Congress had complained that the Administration was holding the Americans in Saigon as hostage for a continuing American commitment to the Saigon Government.

The Administration, after a meeting yesterday between President Ford and members of the Foreign Relations Committee, seemed intent on meeting the Congressional demands for a substantial evacuation of Americans.

In part the withdrawal of embassy personnel disclosed by Mr. Kissinger today was to ease the way for final evacuation of all Americans should the Saigon Government be about to fall.

### Avoidance of Panic

Mr. Kissinger stressed that the Administration was reluctant to announce a total evacuation because of the adverse impact upon the South Vietnamese Government. "We do not contemplate total evacuation," he explained, "because we have a problem of not producing the very panic we are trying to avoid."

The legislation tentatively approved by the Foreign Relations Committee would give the President restricted authority to use United States troops to protect the evacuation of Americans as well as some unspecified number of South Vietnamese.

At his meeting with committee members yesterday, President Ford reportedly talked in terms of 174,000 South Vietnamese citizens whose lives he said might be endangered in a Communist take-over.

### Some Doubts Expressed

Mr. Kissinger acknowledged, however, that logistically such a large evacuation might be impossible. And Mr. Schlesinger said that a safe evacuation of Americans, if the South Vietnamese Government were falling, would depend upon "a cooperative attitude on the part of the South Vietnamese people."

He foresaw possible interference by the Vietcong and said that the movement of North Vietnamese antiaircraft battalions to the vicinity of Saigon might make it impossible to use the Tan Son Nhut and Bien Hoa airports for the evacuation.

Throughout his day-long testimony before the Appropriations Committee, Mr. Kissinger sought to link the \$722-million requested in military aid and the safe withdrawal of Americans should that become necessary.

#### Move for Stabilization

The principal purposes of the aid, he argued repeatedly, were to "stabilize" the military situation and to promote the prospects for a negotiated settlement.

"If the worse comes to pass," he said, the additional aid would "permit the most orderly transition of the situation" and "provide the best conditions for any evacuation that way become necessary."

The implication was the "Congressional refusal of aid would provoke not only a collapse of the Saigon Government but also a wave of anti-Americanism that could jeopardize the safe removal of Americans. The members of this committee," he said, "must understand the extraordinary delicacy" of the situation and "how, by our actions, we can bring about the most drastic consequences."

At one point, Mr. Schlesinger said the significance of the additional aid was as much political and psychological as military.

#### Pressure on Saigon

Mr. Kissinger was vague as to what kind of a political solution he thought could come out of a "stabilized" situation, although he indicated he thought the Saigon Government was being driven to accept a negotiated settlement that it would have previously found unacceptable.

"I believe the necessity for a political settlement is inescapable under the present conditions," he observed, adding that he thought the Saigon Government now would support creation of the National Council for National Reconciliation provided for in the 1973 Paris peace accords.

He said, however, that "a modicum of military stabilization" was necessary "before there can be negotiations for other than the surrender of the present political structure" and "to improve the chances for a minimum degree of self-determination" for the South Vietnamese people.

#### Breakdown on Funds

Mr. Kissinger and Mr. Schlesinger provided the first public breakdown on how the Administration planned to use the \$722-million to reconstitute and re-equip the South Vietnamese forces. According to their estimates, these forces lost more than \$800-million in equipment and supplies in their chaotic retreat from the provinces in the north.

They said that \$326-million would go to equip and reconstitute four divisions to be formed from military evacuees. In addition they said, the sum would buy equipment to convert 12 lightly armed ranger groups into regular army regiments and to convert 27 Regional Forces into regular regiments.

The over-all effect, Mr. Schlesinger said, would be to add about five divisions to the South Vietnamese Army, which lost five of its 13 divisions in the retreat.

The remaining \$396-million would go for ammunition, fuel, spare parts and medical supplies to sustain up to 60 days of intensive combat.

Mr. Schlesinger estimated that without the additional aid, the South Vietnamese would run out of ammunition before July 1. This estimate conflicted with those given by other Pentagon officials and by South Vietnamese officers to two staff members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.