

For U.S. Envoy in Saigon, It's 'Business as Usual'

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WASHINGTON, April 17 — As Saigon's military situation has continued to decline, Ambassador Graham A. Martin has astonished a number of officials here by running a "business as usual" operation at the American Embassy in Saigon.

While the issues of evacuation of Americans from Saigon and emergency humanitarian aid have been uppermost in some minds in Washington, Mr. Martin has been sending high-priority cables urging long-term economic development programs for what Saigon retains of South Vietnam.

"The day after they bombed the palace," said one informant referring to a disaffected pilot's attack on President Nguyen Van Thieu's downtown residence, "Martin came in with a cable on the economic development of Cochinchina" — southern South Vietnam.

With more than a touch of irony, one State Department official said: "He thinks humanitarian aid isn't important, that the mission is taking good care of that. He thinks we should look to the future."

Message Distribution Curbed

Lately, Mr. Martin, who has long been preoccupied with a fear that his communications might leak to the press, has been sending the bulk of his cablegrams with the highest possible secrecy classification, sharply reducing their distribution.

But, among other things, his mission has been sending to Washington lengthy denunciations of alleged atrocities by the Communists in their advance toward Saigon. It also has been sending messages charging the American press with insufficient reporting of such atrocities.

Mr. Martin has taken the position that a firm American stand in support of President Nguyen Van Thieu's Government would in itself help stabilize the situation, the sources said.



Associated Press

Ambassador Graham Martin

Amid Military Setbacks

In one message, he was said to have advised the State Department to "lock up the panic button."

And the reportedly told a visitor in Saigon that if an evacuation became necessary he would take out "one million Vietnamese" and then leave himself.

At the same time that he has been taking this stand, a reliable source said, senior officials of the Central Intelligence Agency in Saigon have broken with the Ambassador's relatively optimistic view of the military situation.

Until the rout of Saigon's forces in the northern and coastal provinces last month, the same C.I.A. officials in Saigon took a relatively sanguine view of the military situation.

Mr. Martin strenuously opposed any evacuation of Americans from Saigon on the ground that such a move would have a demoralizing effect on the Thieu Government and Saigon's armed forces, reeling from their setbacks in the north.

The Ambassador's reluctance

to complete the details of contingency evacuation plans stirred deep bitterness in the embassy.

Under pressure from Congress, Mr. Martin is reported to have relented somewhat.

Since then, under pressure from Congress and the State Department, Mr. Martin has reportedly relented somewhat on the issue, although details on retrenchment of Americans in Saigon have not been plentiful.

"I think he's being overridden," said one high-ranking State Department official, who believed Mr. Martin's objections were being ignored and that orders to proceed with the evacuation were being given.

Mr. Martin, a 62-year-old career diplomat who has served as Ambassador to Thailand and Italy, is a figure of legend in Saigon for his long hours of work. Insomnia is known to keep him up late into the night, when he often dashes off some of his most acerbic messages to Washington.

Representative Paul N. McCloskey Jr., who joined an eight-member Congressional fact-finding tour that arrived in Saigon in February, remarked that Mr. Martin did not appear to be in good health.

Mr. McCloskey, Republican of California, said that when he and Mr. Martin paid a private visit to President Thieu, the Ambassador had difficulty in walking up the steps of the Presidential Palace.

"He's not a well man," Mr.

McCloskey said in a telephone conversation. "He's operating on will. His body's not in good shape."

The Congressional delegation, which represented a broad spectrum of opinion on the Vietnam issue, met with President Ford on March 5. Secretary of State Kissinger was present.

At the meeting, according

to several sources, Representative John J. Flynt Jr., a conservative Georgia Democrat who led the delegation, told Mr. Ford that the members of the group were in disagreement on a number of questions but added, "One thing we all agree on is that your Ambassador in South Vietnam is a disaster."

In Saigon, the delegation members were taken aback by

Mr. Martin's expressions of confidence in Mr. Thieu and his army, his optimistic view of their future and his widely disputed insistence that the Saigon Government held no political prisoners.

One participant in the meeting with President Ford, said that when Mr. Flynt delivered his harsh evaluation of Mr. Martin, "Jerry didn't say any-

thing. He just sat there puffing his pipe."

Today, Secretary of State Kissinger reiterated his "full support" for Mr. Martin, saying that the Ambassador was accomplishing with "great skill" the difficult job of protecting the lives of Americans in South Vietnam and keeping up the morale of the Saigon Government.