

U.S. Is Rushing Men, Planes To Aid American Evacuation

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The United States is sending several thousand additional Marines plus electronic warfare planes, jet refueling tankers, more helicopters and more transports to Indochina as concern grows here over evacuating some 3,000 Americans still in South Vietnam.

Senior U.S. officials describe the situation as "touch and go."

The likelihood has increased that a swift emergency evacuation may be necessary as Saigon's outer defenses crumble and North Vietnamese artillery and anti-aircraft missiles come within range of Saigon's Tansonnhut airport.

A big question mark, however, is the political impact of South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu's resignation yesterday. Conceivably, Thieu's departure could produce last-minute negotiations that could forestall an attack on the city

and its airport and allow a more orderly evacuation.

The United States is taking a number of steps to beef up U. S. forces already positioned within reach of South Vietnam:

- Several thousand Marines from the 3rd Marine Division are preparing to board amphibious ships on Okinawa to join the more than 4,000 Marines from the same division already on Navy carriers and other ships off the South Vietnamese coast.

- Air Force transport planes have been ordered to pick up at least an additional 1,500-man battalion of Marines from Hawaii and

move them to Okinawa. They will remain there as a back-up force in the Pacific for the 3d Division.

- Air Force helicopters based in Thailand are being flown to the U. S. aircraft carrier Midway in the South China Sea to give the potential evacuation force a third carrier loaded with helicopters.

- To cope with the increasing threat from North Vietnamese missile crews near Tansonnhut airport, the Air Force is rushing specially equipped F-4 Phantom jets back to Thailand from bases in Okinawa.

These planes, code-named **See MILITARY, A13, Col. 2**

MILITARY, From A1

"Wild Weasels" and used extensively in the U.S. air war against North Vietnam in the early 1970s, carry special equipment for detecting and jamming the radar systems that guide the Russian-built

SA-2 missiles to their targets.

- The Air Force has begun a stepped-up airlift out of Tansonnhut using C-130 transports flying from bases in the Philippines.

These four-engine transports, while smaller and slower than the C-141 and C-5 jet transports, are far more rugged and are viewed as a better bet to survive hits from smaller Russian SA-7 anti-aircraft missiles that are also known to be in the Saigon area.

- To help keep the growing U.S. air armada flying, the Air Force is also dispatching additional aerial refueling planes to Thailand.

There are also reported to be three U.S. merchant ships in Saigon harbor

which conceivably could be used for evacuation purposes, though the narrow river channel is viewed as quite vulnerable.

The military build-up is meant to cope with an evacuation under fire, although U.S. officials hope the remaining Americans can be withdrawn without being threatened by hostile fire.

If Tansonnhut is under fire but an airlift still seems the best way out, then the Marines would be flown in to try to protect the field from direct assault, while U.S. jets struck threatening missile batteries and, if they could spot them, long-range 130mm artillery.

If the airfield were shut down, then helicopters could be used to pick up remaining U.S. citizens from various locations in downtown Saigon, with Marines again being used to form protective rings around much smaller landing zones.

Though a helicopter evacuation was used without incident in Phnom Penh, senior U.S. officials are clearly worried about having to resort to helicopters in Saigon, a city which could be in the midst of panic and anti-American violence if a final assault on the capital is launched.

While political developments could forestall such an attack, the prospects that a last-resort helicopter evacuation might be necessary increased in the past two days as U.S. military analysts declared that the Saigon area had clearly come within range of the Communists' SAM anti-aircraft missiles and long-range artillery.