

Senate Backs Authority for Ford to Use U.S. Troops for Evacuation; Votes Humanitarian Aid to Saigon

EMERGENCY FUNDS

Action on New Arms Assistance Is Viewed as Improbable

NYTimes

By JOHN W. FINNEY
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, April 23—The Senate, by a vote of 75 to 17, approved legislation today giving the President limited authority to use American troops to protect the evacuation of Americans and South Vietnamese from Saigon.

The House, with more hesitation and caught up in parliamentary confusion that forced an evening session, was moving toward passage of similar legislation.

Both the House and Senate bills also would authorize emergency humanitarian aid for South Vietnam.

Two Funds Planned

The Senate bill would establish a \$100-million "contingency fund" that could be used by the President for humanitarian and evacuation efforts and a separate \$150-million fund for humanitarian relief to be administered through international relief agencies. The House bill would authorize \$327-million for humanitarian and evacuation programs, with the humanitarian assistance provided largely to the Saigon Government.

At the State Department, officials were still grappling with plans for resettlement of the thousands of Vietnamese fleeing from Saigon aboard American military aircraft. The United States shifted its pri-

mary refugee reception center to Andersen Air Force Base on Guam from Clark Air Base in the Philippines. Details on Page 18.

President Ford, in a speech before a joint session of Congress on April 10, asked for \$250-million in humanitarian aid and \$722-million in emergency military assistance as well as broad authority to use troops to protect the evacuation of Americans and South Vietnamese.

Military Aid Opposed

With the military situation in South Vietnam rapidly deteriorating, there was overwhelming opposition in Congress to providing any additional military aid to the Saigon Government, and it seemed unlikely that Congress would act on the President's request.

One source of concern in both the House and the Senate was that a large-scale evacuation of South Vietnamese such as proposed by the Administration could lead to military re-involvement of American forces in the final stages of the Vietnam war.

President Ford has contended that he has inherent powers as commander in chief to use troops to protect the evacuation of Americans, although he

Continued on Page 19, Column 3

Continued From Page 1, Col. 8

asked that this authority be "classified" by Congress. At the same time, Mr. Ford said he needed Congressional authority to use American troops for the evacuation of foreign nationals from South Vietnam.

The Administration has asked for broad authority to use American troops in an evacuation of both Americans and South Vietnamese. But it approved that the legislation, as it was emerging from Congress, would give the President only circumscribed authority to use the troops for evacuation of South Vietnamese.

'Thinning Down' Continues

Pentagon officials said today that they believed the number of Americans in Saigon was being reduced to what they described as "a manageable level" so that all those remaining, and their dependents, could be evacuated in about nine hours

by helicopters.

According to Administration officials, about 1,780 Americans and dependents remain in Saigon—about one-third the level that existed about a week ago before Graham A. Martin, the American Ambassador, was ordered to begin a major "thinning down" in preparation for an emergency evacuation. By tomorrow the level is expected to be reduced to 1,200.

About 60 helicopters have been assembled on three aircraft carriers lying off the South Vietnamese coast in readiness for the evacuation. The helicopters would be capable of carrying about 1,000 persons.

As envisioned by Pentagon planners, three flights of the helicopters would be needed to take marines in to establish a protective cordon around landing areas in central Saigon, to evacuate the Americans and some South Vietnamese and foreign diplomats, and then to remove the marines.

The original plan was that Ving Tau, a city on the coast 40 miles southeast of Saigon, would be used as a port staging area to shorten the flights of the helicopters. But with Vung Tau crowded with refugees and remnants of South Vietnamese units from the northern provinces, it is now considered more advisable to fly the helicopters directly to the carriers offshore.

Little Room for Vietnamese

Defense Department officials said that in such an emergency evacuation, in which the emphasis would be on removing Americans and their dependents, there would be little room or time to take out a substantial number of South Vietnamese nationals.

There was growing concern in the Pentagon about the danger of using Tan Son Nhut Airport on the outskirts of Saigon for the continued evacuation of Americans and South Vietnamese by military and commercial planes.

Maj. Gen. Winant Sidle, a Pentagon spokesman, said it did not appear that SAM-2 anti-aircraft missiles possessed by the North Vietnamese forces were within effective range of the airport yet. But he added: "This could happen at any time." Pentagon officials reported that "any little advance" by the North Vietnamese troops would bring the missiles within range of the airport.

Meanwhile, General Sidle said, there have been inconclusive reports that four military transport planes flying in and out of Tan Son Nhut have come under fire, presumably from anti-aircraft guns. The reports by the pilots were "hazy," however, and are being viewed with some skepticism in the Pentagon, he said.