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12,000 Viets

Evacuated

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U.S. officials said yesterday about 12,000 Vietnamese have been flown out of Saigon, mostly within the last week, and officials are racing against time to increase the airlift to 8,000 or 9,000 a day.

U.S. officials have no way of knowing how long the airlift can continue or how many refugees it may bring out, they emphasized.

In theory, up to 132,000 Indochinese refugees can be admitted to the United States, but the more realistic goal is 50,000 "high risk" Vietnamese and their families who could be marked for Communist retaliation.

"This is going on as long as humanly possible . . . until Saigon becomes an unsafe city for evacuation," said U.S. task force director L. Dean Brown.

"A lull" in the level of fighting during the last three or four days, Brown said, helped the United States to evacuate "about 12,000" Vietnamese and 3,474 Americans. Now the airlift has shifted overwhelmingly to evacuating South Vietnamese from Saigon to Guam, at an intensified pace.

"Any time North Vietnam makes the decision to move, they can move," said Brown, a former career diplomat. "If Saigon is under attack and the airfield is under attack, that is that," he said.

"That is when you go in for the last haul" of American personnel left in the South Vietnamese capital, Brown told a news conference at the State Department.

Meanwhile, President Ford met at the White House yesterday with the National Security Council White House officials declined to discuss the substance of the meeting.

One official said yesterday that there was no diplomatic breakthrough in the Vietnam crisis in sight.

By tonight, the American embassy in Saigon has been instructed to reduce the number of all Americans in the battered region to 1,100. An embassy official in Saigon said this means limiting official Americans, military and civilian, to "around 500."

Many other nations are closing down their operations in Saigon, and senior U.S. military officials yesterday continued to be privately critical of what they regard as the unnecessarily high number of Americans still in Saigon.

American military planners are concerned that as the threat to Saigon steadily mounts, efforts to extricate remaining Americans will become increasingly hazardous.

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This military disquiet shows that in the Pentagon, as well as among analysts in other agencies, including the State Department, there is no confidence that the recent lull in the fighting is a cause for reassurance.

Diplomats of some nations hopefully interpret that lull as a signal that the Communists are holding back to allow the airlift to proceed. Skeptical U.S. officials, however, said yesterday that while the level of fighting has fallen off, the North Vietnamese forces are steadily moving into position to close off the exit routes from Saigon.

Some American civilian specialists believe the Communists may wait a few days to see if the present political turnover in Saigon will produce the precise kind of regime which North Vietnam wants to put a facade of legitimacy on what amounts to a negotiated surrender of South Vietnam.

At best, these analysts believe, North Vietnam has an option strategy of political or military conquest, while it prepares to throttle Saigon,



L. DEAN BROWN

. . . lull aided airlift

probably counting on panic to create more havoc than gunfire.

Brown told reporters yesterday that since April 1, but largely during the last week, the United States has drawn down the numbers of Americans in Saigon to 813 military and civilian government employees, 405 contractor personnel, 284 others including missionaries, press and businessmen, and 179 dependents.

The approximately 12,000 South Vietnamese flown out of Saigon during this period, he said, were mostly persons with relatives in the United States.

While some persons in both categories already have reached the United States, Brown said, as of last night there were about 9,000 refugees in Guam, the new U.S. evacuation center and about 5,000 at Clark Air Force Base in the Philippines, the former refugee center.

With pressure on to hurry refugees through the U.S. embassy processing in Saigon, Brown said he hopes to see the clearance rate increased from the current 5,000 persons a day to "about 8,000 or 9,000."

About a dozen U.S. government agencies are participating in the crash operation to handle the refugee flow. They include State, Defense, Justice, Treasury, Interior, Transportation, Agency for International De-

velopment and the departments of Health, Education and Welfare and Housing and Urban Development.

Refugees entering the United States for resettlement, said Brown, will be spread around the country. "There'll be no localities in the United States," he said, "that are inundated with refugees or . . . employment or health problems."

Other nations also are accepting Vietnam refugees, Brown said, mentioning Australia and France among them.

California Sens. Alan Cranston and John V. Tunney have been assured, Brown said, that California will not be flooded with refugees.

In a joint statement, Democrats Cranston and Tunney said they met with Brown and Attorney General Edward H. Levi to express concern about health and hospital facilities for the refugees, and the fears of Californians that great numbers could be "dumped into California's already depressed job market."

They said Brown gave them "what he called a top estimate that as many as 50,000 refugees may be evacuated" to Guam for initial processing, and that "no more than a few thousand . . . will be settled in California."

Brown said the Ford administration is counting heavily on American voluntary agencies—church, welfare and similar groups—to

play "a vital role" in resettlement, as they did in helping Hungarian refugees in 1956.

Figures used yesterday by Brown on refugees evacuated from South Vietnam do not include persons who left on their own, or with the help of other nations. As a consequence, said Brown, "we have no idea of the dimensions of the overall evacuation."

Military and civilian transport planes yesterday shuttled into Guam's Andersen Air Force Base steadily, some of them literally "flying carpet service." Air Force crews removed webbed seats from C-141 cargo jets and lined the decks with carpeting to squeeze in up to 203 evacuees on one plane.

In Paris yesterday, Vietcong representatives repeated assurances that Vietnamese who had worked with Americans need not fear retaliation, but would be "treated correctly in a spirit of reconciliation and national concord and with a view to eliminating hatred and suspicion."

Tens of thousands of Vietnamese evidently were unassured, pleading with the dwindling number of Americans in South Vietnam to pay anything to get out of the country. In Washington, Brown, when asked if the United States was trying to prevent bribery in the evacuation, said the United States deplored that, but that realistically, people are bound to try anything "as a civilization collapses." Only Americans pay for the evacuation flights, he said, with no charge to Vietnamese.