

# Ford and Security Aides Hold Emergency Session

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WASHINGTON, April 28 — President Ford convened an emergency meeting of the National Security Council this evening, apparently to consider whether to order an evacuation of all Americans remaining in South Vietnam.

The meeting lasted slightly less than an hour, and the President's press secretary reported later that "there has not been an order to evacuate."

The special meeting of the President's top national security advisers was called shortly after the Defense Department received a "flash report" from the American Embassy in Saigon that two marines guarding the defense attaché's office in the Tan Son Nhut Airport outside Saigon had been killed in a Communist rocket barrage.

At the same time, the Pentagon also received a report that a United States C-130 transport

parked at the Saigon airport to pick up Vietnamese refugees had been destroyed by Communist rocket fire.

The White House would say only that the Security Council meeting had been convened to review developments in South Vietnam. But the immediate presumption in Pentagon and State Department circles was that the President and his advisers were considering whether to order a final evacuation of all Americans in view of the deteriorating military situation around Tan Son Nhut airport.

Ron Nessen, the Presidential press secretary, said that Mr. Ford had ordered the meeting after receiving a note while he was meeting with energy and economic advisers in the late afternoon.

The Defense Department announced earlier in the day that

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large numbers of South Vietnamese refugees would be flown to three military bases in Arkansas, Florida and California for temporary housing in the United States.

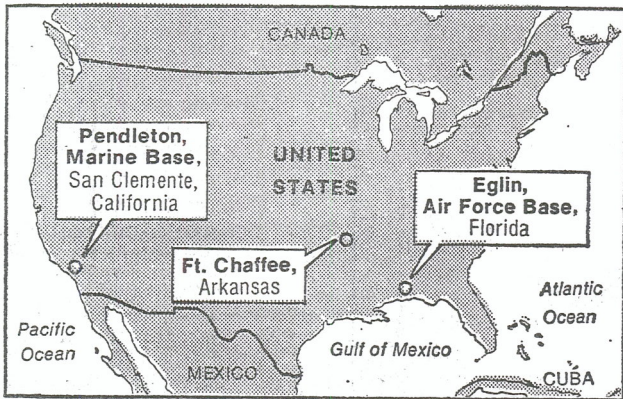
The Administration was under rising Congressional pressure, even before the rocket attack, to order the evacuation of all Americans. After the killing of the two marines, Senator Richard S. Schweiker, Republican of Pennsylvania, issued a statement charging that the Administration was risking the lives of Americans "as a subterfuge to evacuate South Vietnamese."

"We've stalled this evacuation for at least a week, and maybe two," the Senator said. "This is madness."

The Pentagon said that the movement of the refugees was expected to begin within the next two days to Fort Chaffee in Arkansas, Eglin Air Force Base in Florida and the Marine Corps' Camp Pendleton in California. Each base, according to the Pentagon, can handle up to 20,000 refugees.

The decision to bring them to this country was made at the direction of Ambassador L. Dean Brown, the director of the Vietnamese refugee program, to reduce the large build-up of South Vietnamese at United States bases in the Pacific, such as the base on Guam and Clark Air Force Base in the Philippines.

According to the Pentagon announcement, the three military bases will serve as "reception centers" providing temporary housing for "up to 90 days or more." The South Vietnamese, according to officials, will be processed at the centers for eventual permission



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to enter the United States, either as immigrants or refugees.

The selection of the three bases—one from each of the armed services—was reported by Administration officials to have run into objections from some members of Congress who represent the districts in which the bases are situated. The objections focused on the possible adverse economic impact of the influx in areas where there was high unemployment.

Senator John L. McClellan, Democrat of Arkansas, said that the number of South Vietnamese "planned for evacuation to the United States is excessive and is probably more than we should undertake to accommodate." Senator McClellan, chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, said that he intended to raise questions about the Administration's request for \$327-million for humanitarian assistance in South Vietnam and evacuation of refugees.

In a statement on the Senate floor, Senator Robert C. Byrd of West Virginia, the assistant

Democratic leader, said that he had "serious reservations" about the Administration's plans to bring as many as 130,000 South Vietnamese refugees to the United States.

"Some very practical considerations," such as cultural differences and unemployment, he said, "raise grave doubts about the wisdom of bringing any sizable number of evacuees here."

#### Airlift Is Criticized

Meanwhile, there was rising Congressional criticism — privately shared by high-ranking Pentagon officials — that the airlift out of Saigon was being used almost entirely to evacuate South Vietnamese and not to remove American citizens and their dependents.

Senator Mike Mansfield, the Democratic leader, and Senator Hugh Scott, the Republican leader, both urged that all remaining Americans be removed at once, and that the American Embassy in Saigon be closed.

According to Senator Scott, 20,000 South Vietnamese had been evacuated, largely by airplane, as of this morning.

On the basis of information

supplied by the State Department, Senator Dick Clark, Democrat of Iowa, said that 140 Americans were evacuated on Saturday and Sunday.

The State Department, meantime, said that as of yesterday 954 Americans were still in South Vietnam, of whom all but 116 were United States Government employees.

Senator Clark said, "One can't help but speculate that Americans are being held there to bring out more Vietnamese."

At a hearing of the House Rules Committee, Representative John Joseph Moakley, Democrat of Massachusetts, said, "It seems to me these Americans are being held hostage to get out the Vietnamese. I don't see why we can't get out 954 Americans when we can get out 20,000 Vietnamese."

The Rules Committee cleared the way for a House vote tomorrow on legislation that would authorize \$327-million in humanitarian aid and give the President restricted authority to use American troops to protect the withdrawal of American and South Vietnamese citizens. The legislation was approved by the Senate last week.

Under the legislation, the evacuation of South Vietnamese would be secondary to the withdrawal of American citizens. Thus once all Americans were withdrawn, the President would have no authority to use troops to protect the evacuation of South Vietnamese.

Graham A. Martin, the United States Ambassador in Saigon, was reported to have been given authority over the weekend to decide when the remaining Americans should be withdrawn. A State Department spokesman, Robert Anderson,

said today "no target date" had been set for final evacuation.

Administration officials said that Mr. Martin was being supported in his position that final evacuation should not be ordered until requested by the South Vietnamese Government or until it appeared that Saigon was on the verge of collapse.

State Department officials, who had high praise for Mr. Martin's performance in the last week, were still talking in terms of "not pulling the plug" on the Saigon Government by ordering the withdrawal of all Americans, and thus, in their opinion, setting off a panicky situation that could imperil the Americans.

To Pentagon officials, however, it appeared that Saigon was near collapse or military conquest. They were increasingly critical, although still privately, of the State Department and white house decision not to pull out all Americans while airplanes were still available.

The alternative for a final evacuation would be to go in with helicopters and marines in an operation that Pentagon officials fear would lead to casualties that could have been avoided if the Americans had been taken out earlier by airplane.

There was increasing doubt within the Pentagon about how much longer it would be possible to fly transports into Ton Son Nhut Airport outside Saigon.

The airport was shut down temporarily yesterday, Saigon time, when it was bombed and strafed by four A-37's. The A-37 is a small jet supplied to South Vietnam by the United States.

There was no immediate information from the Pentagon on whether the airlift had been ordered suspended again.