

Communists Snub Minh's 2d Truce Bid

Panic in Saigon Terms Harden

By John Saar

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Leaving scenes of chaos and mass panic behind them, Americans fled the collapsing city of Saigon Tuesday in an armada of helicopters guarded by U.S. marines and fighter-bombers.

The American exodus from South Vietnam to ships of the 7th Fleet was accompanied by danger, difficulty and delay as Communist forces and bitter South Vietnamese soldiers turned their weapons on helicopters swooping in to extricate Americans from the roof of the American embassy and 12 other emergency landing zones.

The carefully planned evacuation—code-named Operation Talon Vise—began at 11 a.m. (11 p.m. Monday EDT) and became progressively slower and more hazardous as the day wore on. Over the 13-hour airlift, 6,400 Americans and South Vietnamese were evacuated. Two U.S. Marines were lost, presumed dead, when their CH-46 helicopter crashed into the South China Sea. Two other crewmen were rescued.

The evacuation triggered panic among Vietnamese soldiers and civilians. Observers reported wild scenes at the U.S. embassy as Marines and American civilians used pistol and rifle butts to smash the fingers of Vietnamese trying to claw their way over a 10-foot wall.

From News Dispatches

SAIGON, April 30 (Wednesday)—South Vietnamese President Duong Van (Big) Minh was rebuffed Tuesday for a second time in his efforts to reach a cease-fire agreement with Communist-led forces who continued to advance on this surrounded capital.

Minh sent high-ranking emissaries to the Vietcong compound at Tansonnhut Airport twice Tuesday to let it be known that he had accepted two conditions for a cease-fire and peace talks, only to be met with a strict interpretation of those conditions amounting to a demand for unconditional surrender.

Vice President Nguyen Van Huyen, who with Premier Vu Van Mau went to talk to the Communist side, said on Saigon radio and television that Minh's government had decided to accept the two earlier conditions—ending American intervention in Vietnamese affairs and abolition of the Saigon "war machine."

But shortly after he spoke, a Paris spokesman for the Vietcong's Provisional Revolutionary Government said the demands had still not been met. The U.S. 7th Fleet must withdraw from Vietnamese waters, he said, and the South Vietnamese army and police "repression" must be dismantled.

The helicopter removal climaxed a U.S. evacuation program in which a total of about 8,000 Americans and 55,000 South Vietnamese have been flown out of Saigon.

Tuesday's U.S. operation was paralleled by the frantic flight of South Vietnamese air force officers. Seventy-five South Vietnamese air force planes, including F-5 fighters and C-130 transport planes, landed at the Utapao

See EVACUATION, A12, Col. 1

"For there to be a settlement, our two main demands must be met," the spokesman said. "This is not the case. Therefore, there is no cease-fire."

Political sources here said that the government is expected to agree to disarm most of its remaining forces if necessary, and the U.S. fleet is expected to leave the area once the evacuation effort is completed.

A broadcast by the Vietcong's clandestine Libera-

See VIETNAM, A6, Col. 1

VIETNAM, From A1

tion Radio urged the people of Saigon to "be worthy citizens of the city which has the great honor of bearing the name of Great President Ho," suggesting that the Communists plan to rename Saigon Ho Chi Minh City, as they said they would during the Tet offensive of 1968.

The South Vietnamese air force flew officers and their families to the Philippines, Taiwan, Singapore and Thailand. Seventy-four plane-loads—about 2,000 persons—landed in Thailand, the Thai Foreign Ministry said. The passengers included a number of top generals.

Gen. Vinh Loc, the new chairman of the Joint General Staff, told troops in a Saigon radio address to obey orders "and don't run away like rats."

Loc, one of the few generals remaining in South Vietnam, took over the high command after the hasty departure of former Chairman Gen. Cao Van Vien Monday.

By nightfall Tuesday, signs of the American presence were disappearing.

The automatic FM radio station run by Americans in Saigon continued its Muzak-like broadcasting long after it was abandoned. But by midnight, the tapes had run out and the station had ceased broadcasting.

Most of the government's generals were gone, including the Saigon city defense

commander, Lt. Gen. Nguyen Van Minh, who left one of the U.S. Marine helicopters.

President Minh called a meeting of all his Saigon command generals. Only one showed up.

A youthful mob looted the Brinks Hotel, an American landmark in downtown Saigon. Twice bombed by Vietcong terrorists, the hotel housed American officers for more than a decade.

Abandoned American homes were looted.

Soldiers, policemen and civilians, men and women, young and old, carried off anything they could lay

their hands on.

With the dark, the city became an ants' nest of jeeps, taxis, pedicabs, motorbikes—anything on wheels—loaded down with refrigerators, air conditioners, television sets, radios, cartons of canned goods, bathroom fixtures, books and furniture.

At the U.S. embassy, looters took vehicles apart piece by piece if they were unable to wire them to drive them off.

The headquarters of a Catholic charity was swept clean—even cassocks and surplices hanging in the cloakroom were taken.

A heavy downpour failed to slow the looters.

What was valuable yesterday is worthless today. The owner of a local American restaurant gave away his jeep; a departing Japanese

gave away his diplomatic-licensed car.

A one-hour electricity breakdown plunged Saigon into darkness lit only by the red and white emergency landing lights installed at the helicopter pads where the evacuation of Americans was being carried out. Bursts of automatic fire could be heard, as gangs of trigger-happy ragged soldiers roamed the streets.

Shortly after midnight, the city appeared calm, the streets deserted under the 24-hour curfew. People slept in corridors for fear of rockets, and through the night came the whirling sound of U. S. helicopters and the intermittent thumping of artillery.

Hundreds of Vietnamese remained camped out in front of the U. S. embassy and others at the British embassy compound next door.

While most Americans were pulling out, some newsmen and missionaries chose to remain. Three Associated Press correspondents stayed — George Esper, Peter Arnett and Matt Franjola.

Max Ediger, 28, a Mennonite missionary from Turpin, Okla., said that after thinking it over "we realize that having talked of love to our Vietnamese people and told them not to yield to fear or

ignorance, we cannot leave them in this hour of need. So we are staying."

(In New York, the American Telephone & Telegraph Corp. said that long-distance calls to South Vietnam are no longer getting through. A spokesman said, "As from 11 EDT (11 p.m. Tuesday in Saigon) we were getting no answer to calls to Saigon. We have checked constantly since then, but have had no luck," he said.)

(He said apparently the switchboard in Saigon was not manned, adding that there was no way of telling if or when service would be restored.)

Rumors swept the city—some saying that a cease-fire had been agreed on, others that Vietcong troops were already in the city—reflecting the fear that the battle would reach the streets of Saigon.

Although it was impossible to tell how close the Vietcong's main lines were, it was widely believed that the Communists would infiltrate the capital.

The North Vietnamese news agency said that the provinces of Bienhoa and Phuctuy had already fallen, and another communique said that Nhontraoh, about 10 miles east of Saigon had been taken. The village of Hocmon, about 12 miles from Saigon on Highway 4, fell earlier in the day.

The situation at Tansonnhut airport, the frequent target of Communist attacks, was described as confused.

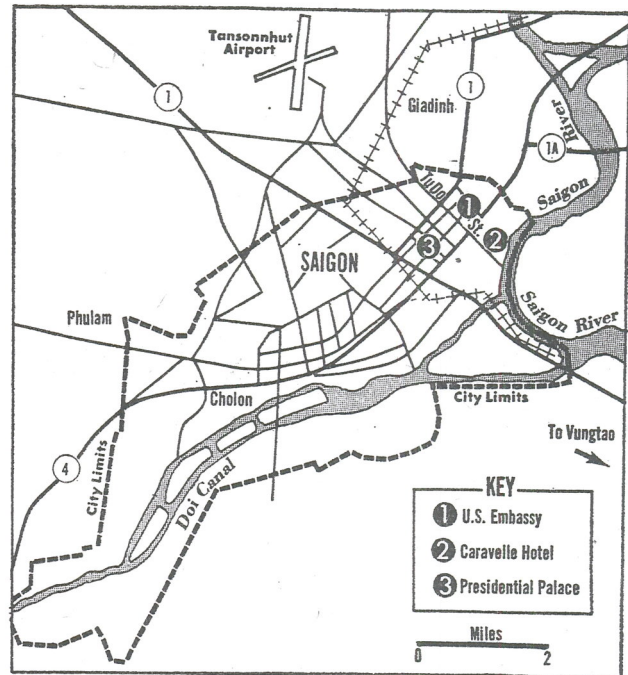
There was no sign of an

attack on the city of Saigon itself, however, although it is clearly within range of North Vietnamese guns and tanks. For the first time in a decade, no war communique was issued by the Saigon command.

The continuing onslaught was a sharp rebuff of Minh's appeal to his "brothers on the other side," made Monday when he took over as president.

Almost as sharp was the PRG's accusation that the Minh government is "stubbornly prolonging the war

in the hope of maintaining American neocolonialism" and Hanoi's characterization of Minh's government as "a Thieu administration without Thieu" and his forces as "puppet troops." Minh him-



self, a Hanoi newspaper said, was a "retired puppet general."

A PRG clandestine radio broadcast called on the South Vietnamese troops to

turn their guns around and urged the residents of Saigon to rise up against the Minh government.

Saigon, it said, is "living its last hours."

EVACUATE, From A1

air base in Thailand with 2,000 refugees.

Other fleeing South Vietnamese pilots landed their planes in the Philippines and Taiwan. One aircraft crashed and exploded while trying to land at Chantaburi, Thailand, killing the four persons on board.

One South Vietnamese plane crashed in Saigon's Chinese quarter of Cholon, killing about 10 people. The cause of the crash was unknown.

A Vietnamese F-5 fighter crashed on a road in Si Sa Ket Province, 300 miles northeast of Bangkok after running out of fuel. The two

crewmen emerged unscathed.

Other South Vietnamese military personnel found refuge on ships of the 7th Fleet after landing or ditching 18 helicopters.

Among the passengers in helicopters landing on the USS Denver was Vietnamese air vice marshal Nguyen Cao Ky who recently called Vietnamese seeking to leave the country "cowards," and the wife of U.S. Ambassador Graham Martin.

In the only reported counter-action by U.S. forces during the evacuation, an American fighter silenced an antiaircraft battery, presumably with ground-to-air

rockets. Explosions were seen and there was no further fire, a Defense Department spokesman said.

Under Communist rocket and mortar fire about 50,000 Vietnamese refugees sailed from the port of Vungtau in fishing vessels and other small craft.

One ship in the U.S. task force reported 1,000 fishing vessels heading out to sea. A second ship said it had taken on 400 persons, was being tailed by 10 more boats and had 20 more trying to reach it. Off Vungtau, South Korean, Japanese and Taiwanese vessels joined American naval ships in the massive, uncoordinated rescue operation.

One armed South Vietnamese helicopter carrying 20 passengers set down after sunset on the USS Blue Ridge, command and communications ship for the 7th Fleet task force. American Marines disarmed 16 young Vietnamese soldiers and flung their weapons into the sea saying "You won't need these anymore, it's all over for you."

Earlier two helicopters collided and another collided and another crashed onto the Blue Ridge's deck as South Vietnamese refugees, including babies, sobbing women and three-star generals took desperate risks to leave Saigon.

Reports from the Blue Ridge said 14 South Vietnamese helicopters landed on or beside the ship. In the rush of flights, several of the craft were pushed into the sea to make room for other overloaded craft.

Others were deliberately ditched by their Vietnamese pilots—after landing their passengers—to leave space for other helicopters swarming above the ship.

The evacuation, "Option 4" was ordered by President Ford after two U.S. Marines were killed Tuesday morning in a heavy rocket and artillery bombardment of Tan Son Nhut airport by Communist forces inexorably squeezing in on the city. Accurate 130-mm artillery shells left all but 5,000 feet of runway unusable.

Mortar fire bombed the airport, and the last U.S. Air Force planes circling overhead left without landing when they saw panicky mobs of civilians massing below. The evacuation by fixed-wing transport planes was halted with about two-thirds of the 130,000 Vietnamese that American officials said they wanted to evacuate marooned in the beleaguered city.

Pentagon spokesman said the helicopter evacuation was delayed twice after President Ford gave the order. One hour after the helicopters lifted off from the 7th Fleet carriers 25 miles off the Vietnamese coast an unexplained radio message ordered them to turn back before touching down in Communist-encircled Saigon.

There was a second 80-minute delay later in the day after the evacuation began, also for uncertain reasons. "Its probably because of crew fatigue, said a Pentagon spokesman. "These guys have been going for 13 hours straight," he said referring to the total length of the operation.

Presidential spokesman Ron Nessen said the operation dragged out several hours longer than expected because "A lot more Vietnamese were taken out than had been planned."

The original intention was
See EVACUATION, A13, Col. 1

EVACUATION, From A12

that only Americans would leave in a tightly controlled helicopter ferry. But as the convoys of buses guided by Marines moved to pick-up points in downtown Saigon, many Vietnamese army officers shedding their military clothing and begging to be allowed aboard the buses.

Vietnamese youths on motorcycles were pulling alongside foreigners in cars and offering large sums of money to be taken into the airport. Hundreds of cars were abandoned outside the airport, some with their engines running.

A French correspondent was stopped near the airport, by soldiers who demanded to know his identity. Told he was French, the soldiers replied, "That's okay, if you had been American we would have killed you."

Angry Vietnamese guards at the airport fired at busloads of evacuees and shouted "We want to go, too." As Americans pulled out, South Vietnamese soldiers, civilians and police looted their former homes and offices, carrying off refrigerators, furniture, air conditioners and other household goods.

Washington Post correspondent David Greenway reported scenes of "Danang-style panic at the waterfront as desperate Vietnamese tried to board barges evacuating American Embassy staff." Later filing by phone from the embassy to Post Special Correspondent James Fenton, who elected to stay, Greenway said Marines with fixed bayonets faced a weeping crowd.

Crowds of Vietnamese

were crying and pleading to be allowed into the embassy. Angry Marines shouted at them in English which few of them understood, Greenway reported.

As the helicopters lifted off the embassy roof and from a car park the crowd ringed the enclosure in what Greenway called "a passive siege." Some tried to leap across the barbed wire from the height of adjoining buildings. A man and a woman lay bleeding across the strands. People held small children out to Americans begging that they be evacuated.

Flying cover for the lumbering helicopters which correspondents could see dipping among the downtown rooftops, F-4 fighter-

bombers screamed low over the city.

Three SA-7 missiles were fired at one helicopter as it lifted out of the embassy grounds, but none hit. Communist and government anti-aircraft guns opened up at jets and helicopters alike, apparently without causing damage.

American military and civilian radio communications monitored in Singapore indicated that a vessel carrying the American consul general in the Mekong Delta, plus the U.S. Marines, 16 other Americans and 100 Vietnamese was adrift in the South China Sea after escaping down the Mekong River.

In response to an earlier appeal from the boat, Amer-

ican naval aircraft drove off helicopters with South Vietnamese air force markings said to have been attacking the vessel.

Off the refugee-packed Vungtau beaches, the captain of one U.S. ship, William D. Hart refused several circling Air American helicopters permission to land. He said several of the helicopters had been hijacked from Tansonnhut Airport.

The American pilot of the last plane to take off from Tansonnut, before damage and the threat of fire closed it down, said he was fired on by South Vietnamese soldiers as he took off. The pilot said a Vietnamese colonel tried to ram his jeep into the side of the taxiing Air America C-46.

The pilot said the colonel and 14 others forced their way onto the plane. "They just sat there and refused to move," he said. The plane landed at Hong Kong with 22 passengers.

The scenes around the U.S. Embassy became increasingly desperate as the evacuation went on into the night. Some Vietnamese families were split up with some family members finding their way onto the helicopters, others beseeching places, were left behind.

One well-dressed young man offered a reporter \$20,000 to get him on a helicopter. Others cried out "Please help me! please help me!" with screams that could be heard over the clattering rotor blades.

At dawn Wednesday, Saigon time, Washington officials were quoted as saying that 30 U.S. Marine guards remained in the U.S. embassy, their extraction hindered by small arms fire in the vicinity. "At last report a couple of minutes ago (7:25 p.m. EDT) there still are roughly 30 Marine security guards there," an official said. "Helicopters are moving in to take them out momentarily."

This came about two hours after Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger said that all Americans were out.

Several additional helicopter loads of U.S. Marines were picked up from the U.S. embassy grounds well after Kissinger's 5:30 statement.