

1,000 AMERICANS EVACU IN COPTERS WITH 5,500 FORD SAYS DEPARTURE

APRIL 30, 1975 —

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ATED FROM SAIGON SOUTH VIETNAMESE; 'CLOSES A CHAPTER'

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TUMULT AT END

APR 30 1975

4 Marines Killed —
Buses at Airport
Are Fired On

By **GEORGE ESPER**

The Associated Press

SAIGON, South Vietnam, Wednesday, April 30 — With American fighter planes flying cover and marines standing guard on the ground, Americans were completing their airlift from Saigon yesterday after fighting off many Vietnamese civilians who tried to go along.

Eighty-one helicopters from carriers in the South China Sea landed at Tan Son Nhut airport and on roofs at the United States Embassy compound to pick up most of the approximately 1,000 remaining Americans and many Vietnamese.

But large groups of other Vietnamese clawed their way up the 10-foot wall of the embassy compound in desperate attempts to escape approaching Communist troops. United States marines and civilians used pistol and rifle butts to dislodge them.

At the airport, angry Vietnamese guards fired in the air and in the direction of evacuees on buses, shouting, "We want to go too."

Four Marines Killed

The final stage of the evacuation, which stretched over 13 hours, brought to an end an American involvement in Vietnam that cost more than 50,000 lives and \$150-billion. Four marines died during the final evacuation—two early yesterday as a result of a bombardment of Tan Son Nhut airport, two later when their helicopter plunged into the South China Sea.

Communist forces, meanwhile, pressed closer to Saigon. Fighting was reported less than 10 miles from the western edge of the capital along Route 1. But the fighting there and elsewhere in the Saigon area reportedly tapered off as the Americans departed.

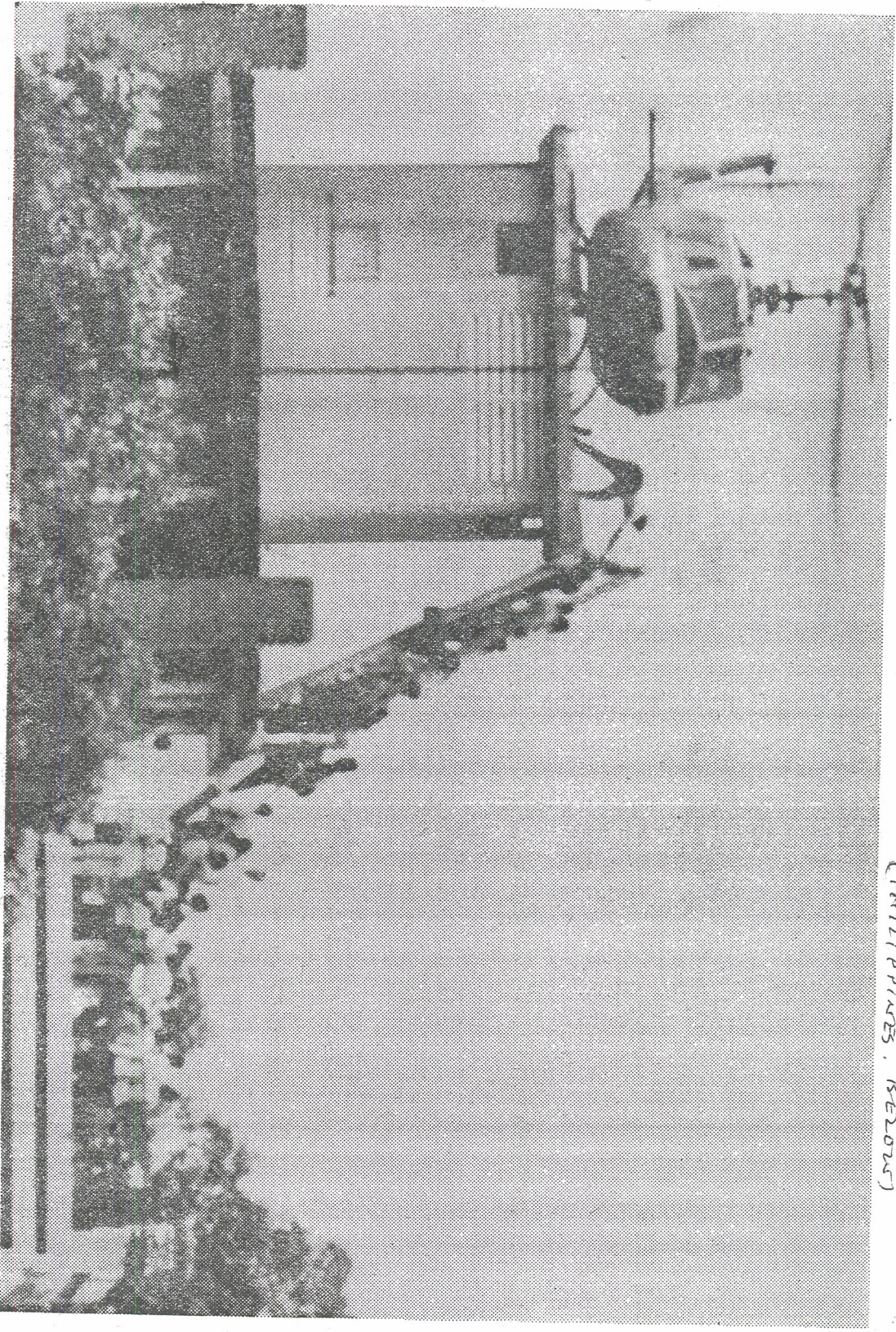
While most Americans were pulling out, some newsmen and missionaries chose to remain.

The American involvement ended in tumultuous scenes at both airport and embassy. Marines in battle gear pushed all the people they could reach off the wall, but the crush of people was so great that scores got over.

Some tried to jump the wall and landed on barbed wire strung along the top. A middle-aged man and a woman were lying on the wire, bleeding. Peering Americans to take them over the fence.

During the airport evacua-

Continued on Page 17, Column 1



(PHILIPPINES. BELOUS)

A crewman from an American helicopter helping evacuees to the top of a building in Saigon, South Vietnam, for flight to a U.S. carrier

United Press International

tion, two Vietcong rockets whistled overhead and exploded behind the United States defense attaché's compound, sending marines and evacuees diving for the pavement. The two marine guards had been killed at the compound by an earlier attack.

Across the street from the embassy, soldiers, police and youths stripped and stole scores of abandoned embassy cars. Thousands of other Vietnamese stripped apartment buildings in which Americans had lived, collecting bathroom fixtures, books, furniture and food. They sat on sidewalks with their booty, waiting for friends in cars to pick them up.

American newsmen who had been taken to Tan Son Nhut airport earlier in buses could not be evacuated from there because Vietnamese guards would not let the buses into the air base.

The buses returned to the embassy, and the newsmen climbed over the wall themselves, beating off Vietnamese who tried to cling to them.

Among the newsmen remaining in Saigon were Peter Arnett, Matt Franjola and this correspondent, of The Associated Press.

Among the missionaries was Max Ediser, 28 years old, of Turpin Okla., who works with the Mennonite Central Committee.

"We have talked about this for years," he said. "We could never come up with a definite answer. Now 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."

Other remaining with Mr. Ediser included James Klassen, from Kansas, and Luke Marin, from Pennsylvania, both Men-

nonites, and Claudia Krieh and her husband, Keith Brinton, of the American Friends Service Committee.

The final evacuation followed the heavy shelling of Tan Son Nhut airbase yesterday morning and an order by President Duong Van Minh for the American defense attaché and his staff to leave. The general issued his order as he and his Government sought ways to open peace talks with the Vietcong.

As word of the evacuation spread, some Government officials telephoned the office of The Associated Press and asked if they could also be taken out.

Many South Vietnamese officers and officials were reported fleeing as rumors spread that Communist-led forces would soon march on the city.

Four buses drove around Saigon picking up American, European and Vietnamese evacuees. As the first bus arrived at the gates of Tan Son Nhut air base, Vietnamese guards fired at it.

Hundreds of South Viet-

namese soldiers carrying weapons converged on the base, also seeking to leave the country.

Armed United States marines—there were 800 on duty to guard the evacuation process—pushed and struck Vietnamese trying to get inside the United States defense attaché's compound where those being airlifted waited for helicopters coming from carriers offshore.

A small caravan of Vietnamese military and government cars jammed with passengers followed the American buses to the air base. Some cars were allowed inside, but others were turned back by Vietnamese guards firing into the air.

Wrecked and burned motorcycles littered the entrance to the compound. Wrecked American cars were in witches, some with windows shot out. One was left with its motor running, lights on and door open.

U.S. Planes in Action

SINGAPORE, Wednesday, April 30 (Reuters)—United

States Navy fighter planes went into action over South Vietnam yesterday to protect fleeing refugees from marauding helicopters, according to military and civilian communications reports monitored here.

The fighters were said to have been called in when two boats on the Mekong River carrying the American consul general from the delta city of Can Tho reported that two helicopters with South Vietnamese markings were firing at his party. This consisted of 100 Vietnamese, six United States marines and 16 other Americans, according to the messages.

Later, the consul general was said to be stranded somewhere in the South China Sea.

Early in the day, United States naval authorities aboard ships about 40 miles offshore from Vung Tau, southeast of Saigon, could be heard promising air support for another group of refugees coming down the Saigon River from the South Vietnamese capital.

The messages monitored here indicated that 50,000 people fled through Vung Tau during the day. This evacuation was said to have occurred under intense shell fire.

The port's cable station, which handles much of South Vietnam's communications with the outside world, asked for United States air support early in the day when it was struck by mortar fire.

But no such support apparently was forthcoming, and although one American captain offered to try to go in to pick up the South Vietnamese who had manned the station, his offer appeared to have come too late. The cable station went off the air.

The evacuation was said to have been carried out by hundreds—some reports said thousands—of South Vietnamese craft of every size that ferried their compatriots to the safety of Japanese and Taiwanese vessels stationed about 10 miles southwest of Vung Tau.

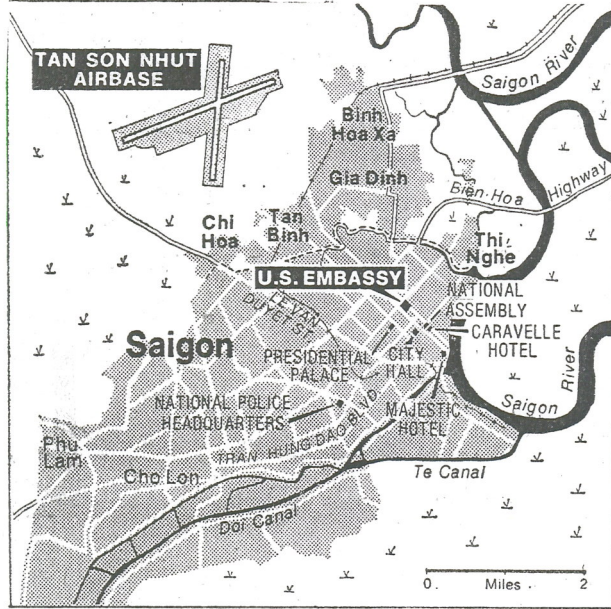
Some of the South Vietnamese craft were reported heading directly for the main United States fleet, further out in the South China Sea.



Authorities and civilians trying to push cars away from a fire in Cholon, the Chinese section of Saigon, South Vietnam. The fire was caused by an

A-1 Skyraider bomber that crashed into a form reamerican bachelor officers' quarters. The pilot parachuted and was held for investigation.

United Press International



The New York Times/April 30, 1975

Tan Son Nhut and U.S. Embassy were evacuation sites