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**Reaction of U.S. Troops:
Relief and Bitterness**

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FORT McCLELLAN, Ala., April 30—American soldiers woke up this morning saddened, relieved, glad, embittered and frustrated over the news that the Vietnam war was over and that the side on which they had fought had lost. A few said that when they heard of Saigon's surrender late last night, they wept.

Whan Brig. Gen. Joseph P. Kingston, the commander of this training base, arrived at his office this morning, he was confronted by a local newspaper reporter's obvious question: What did he think about it? The general, a Vietnam combat veteran decorated for valor, did not hesitate—he referred the question to Department of the Army headquarters in Washington. His feelings remained private.

Official Reaction

Eight first sergeants and sergeants major who were seated around a table here this morning were what they thought about the war's ending. They sat in silence for a few seconds and then responded, in order, "no comment."

Officially, Army spokesmen at posts around the country repeated basically what the information officer at Fort Stewart, Ga., said over the telephone:

"The current Army position

is to reserve comment at this time in keeping with the President's desire that this not be a time in keeping with the President's desire that this not be a time of recrimination but a time for binding up wounds."

But among themselves and to their friends, the American soldiers reacted in various ways.

"Whoopie!" shouted a sergeant at Fort Bliss, Tex. "I'm glad it's over with. We had no business over there in the first place."

Study Held Vital

A major who served in Vietnam and is now based at Fort Hood, Tex., said, however, that the Vietnam war was far from over for the United States Army, regardless of how much some of its leaders would like to put it behind them.

"We have got to remember it, study it and find out what happened in great detail," he said. "I think this is vitally important. Both our military and political mistakes have to be learned and analyzed before we can let this thing die." He added:

"We committed some big military mistakes. The biggest one was that we underestimated

our enemy to almost criminal degree, especially his perseverance. We were not willing to pay the price. North Vietnam was. North Vietnam had more perseverance, it paid a higher price than we did, and it won the war."

Like the American people in general, American veterans of the Vietnam War decided long ago whether the United States involvement was right or wrong. If there is a commonly expressed opinion now, it is this: The United States sent to Vietnam an army with its hands tied behind its back—it could not fight all out to win because politicians and diplomats were running the war. Therefore, don't blame the United States Army for losing the war.

'Hate to Lose'

Several officers at Army posts around the country agreed with a sergeant here at Fort McClellan who said "Americans hate to lose, and getting over this is not going to be easy."

Some were bitter over the waste of American lives, the loss of friends, and especially the rout of the South Vietnamese forces in the final week of the war.

"I lost 37 people the last time I was there with my cavalry troop," another sergeant said here. "And to see it go down the drain so quickly hurts, it really hurts."

Some were deeply moved as they watched television programs last night reviewing the war as it was ending.

"I sat there and I couldn't take it," said an Army major. "I broke down and cried."

When the last American combat troops were withdrawn from Vietnam in August, 1972 and the draft was ended, the Army set out to rebuild itself as an all-volunteer force. Vietnam was not forgotten, but it was rarely mentioned except in telling war stories at post bars. But as province after province quickly fell to the Communists during the final North Vietnamese offensive this spring, the war forced its way back into Army conversation. It was not happy talk.

Today, as the war ended there was a general feeling of relief but not much talk. One infantry colonel at Fort Bragg remarked, "There's really not much to say, is there?"