



South Vietnamese were quick to remove furniture, plumbing fixtures and other property from the U.S. Embassy in Saigon on Tuesday after it was evacuated and the security guards left the premises. United Press International

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Looters Rush the Abandoned U.S. Embassy in Saigon

By **PETER ARNETT**

The Associated Press

SAIGON, South Vietnam, April 30—The six-story United States Embassy in Saigon withstood a determined Communist commando attack in 1968. Five Americans died in its defense.

Today thousands of Saigoneses took everything from the abandoned embassy, including the kitchen sinks.

The bronze plaque with names of the five American servicemen who died in the embassy in 1968 was torn from the lobby wall. It lay amid piles of documents and furniture on the back lawn. We carried it back to the Associated Press office.

"It is our embassy now," said a laughing young Vietnamese soldier as he pranced gleefully along the littered hallway of the administrative building.

The handsome embassy building on Thong Nhut Boulevard was abandoned by a detachment of United States marines at 7:50 this morning. They remained behind after Ambassador Graham A. Martin left, to prevent waiting Vietnamese from rushing the last helicopters.

As the marines left, they threw tear-gas grenades into the elevator shaft. But after their helicopter lifted off the roof, the Vietnamese rushed in, ignoring the tear gas as they tore into filing cabinets and cupboards.

Payroll Checks Scattered

The Vietnamese had started on the embassy annex to the rear of the main building at dawn.

Eleven young people, some of them soldiers in uniform, tried to smash open a heavy

safe they had turned face down.

They looked at our white faces and cameras suspiciously, but when we claimed French citizenship they laughed conspiratorily and invited us to share in the proceeds. We didn't stay for the opening.

Rolls and rolls of Bank of America embassy payroll checks were strewn across a concrete parking lot.

Smashed typewriters and overturned filing cabinets marked with red "secret" and "classified" stickers were in many rooms.

A group of Vietnamese were dragging from a basement room a large device for shredding documents. Five large drums marked "One each, Document Destroyer, drum type without igniter" were in a corner of the room. Piles of dust that probably

had been secret papers the night before were on the floor.

In the back of the main building, automobiles had been smashed. Amid broken tables and broken pictures, what seemed like tons of documents floated about in the breeze.

About 50 Vietnamese men, women and children still perched on the helicopter pad on the roof. They beckoned to us to come up to them, apparently believing that if white people were there, the helicopters might come back.

We entered through the broken back door of the embassy and started up the stairs. The reek of tear gas was almost overwhelming. Every room we looked into appeared to have been hit with a battering ram. The gas drove us back down stairs.



Associated Press

Marines carrying children who were rescued when a copter carrying them from Vietnam crashed on deck of U.S.S. Blue Ridge, command ship, Tuesday. All were saved.