

NYTimes  
**SEA EVACUATION  
CONCLUDED BY U.S.**

**MAY 2 1975**

**Ford Terms It Complete—  
Schlesinger Speaks of Ire  
With U.S. Embassy**

By **JOHN W. FINNEY**

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, May 1—Defense Secretary James R. Schlesinger said today that United States Navy ships, which had been picking up refugees fleeing by small boats, had left the coast of South Vietnam.

While Mr. Schlesinger, who was speaking at the Pentagon news conference, did not exclude the possibility that one or two ships might still pick up refugees at sea, it was clear that for all intents and purposes the evacuation effort that began early Tuesday morning had come to an end.

The Defense Department announced later that at 3 P.M. E.D.T.—three hours after the Schlesinger news conference—the Joint Chiefs of Staff ordered ships in the Seventh Fleet and the Military Sealift Command “to terminate all refugee operations” and to return to “normal operations.” Ships carrying the refugees were ordered to proceed to Subic Bay in the Philippines or to Guam.

**Ford Issues Statement**

President Ford, in a statement issued by the White House late this afternoon, declared that “the evacuation is complete.”

A total of 5,595 South Vietnamese, according to Mr. Schlesinger, were evacuated by helicopter and 32,000 more were picked up by Navy ships after the surrender of the Saigon Government, including 10,000 in the last day.

Mr. Schlesinger provided an insight into the friction that developed between the Pentagon and the American Embassy in Saigon when he said that Graham A. Martin, the American Ambassador, was instructed to “expedite” the evacuation of Americans and South Vietnamese when the helicopter oper-

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ation, in its final stages, moved more slowly than desired by authorities in Washington.

The Defense Secretary clearly indicated that one of the principal reasons for the delay was that at the instructions of Mr. Martin far more South Vietnamese were being evacuated from the embassy than had been planned by the Defense Department.

Defense officials reported that on Tuesday afternoon, when the operation had been under way for more than 12 hours, an oral message, backed up immediately by a written message, was sent from the Pentagon's National Military Command Center telling Mr.

Martin of the displeasure of the President and the Secretary of Defense at the prolonged pace of the evacuation, caused in large measure by the number of South Vietnamese who were put on helicopters ahead of the Americans.

**Deadline Extended**

The messages, according to officials, placed a deadline on the operation and informed the Ambassador that a final flight of 19 helicopters would come in to pick up him and the remaining Americans as well as any South Vietnamese who could find space. At Mr. Martin's request, five additional helicopters were sent and the deadline was extended 45 minutes.

By that time, the helicopter pilots, who drew particular praise from Mr. Schlesinger for their performance under “most difficult conditions,” had been flying for some 16 hours, and there was mounting concern in the Pentagon that the opera-

tion could run into problems if protracted much longer.

After the last embassy personnel were evacuated, there also remained the problem of removing some 100 marines, who in the final stages had to use tear gas to hold back South Vietnamese crowding up the stairs to the landing pad on the embassy roof.

“The evacuation proceeded more slowly at the embassy than we would have wished,” Mr. Schlesinger said. “Naturally, under the circumstances, we did not want the operation to continue without limit, and we made attempts to expedite it.”

The original evacuation plan, Mr. Schlesinger disclosed, called for removing most of the South Vietnamese by plane from Tan Son Nhut airport outside Saigon and only “a relatively limited number of high-risk” South Vietnamese from the embassy in downtown Saigon. This plan had to be dropped at the last minute in

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favor of an all-helicopter operation when the airport was closed by panicky crowds on the runways.

The helicopter operation at the airport moved smoothly with 4,475 South Vietnamese and 395 Americans evacuated in about four hours. It took more than 16 hours before 1,120 South Vietnamese and 978 Americans were removed from the embassy.

Mr. Schlesinger estimated that “in excess of \$5-billion” worth of American-supplied weapons and military equipment had fallen into the hands of North Vietnam with the retreat and surrender of the South Vietnamese forces. Much of the equipment, he said, will be “unusable” by North Vietnamese forces because of the lack of spare parts.

In contrast to many Administration officials who have been blaming Congressional restrictions on military aid for the fall of the South Vietnamese Government, Mr. Schlesinger,

in response to a question, said that he believed interannual factors also led to the decay and collapse of the army.

The restrictions in aid, he said, made “a very substantial contribution in the immediacy of the collapse.” But he said, “a massive collapse might have occurred at some time irrespective of a greater generosity in aid appropriations.”

Mr. Schlesinger's announcement that the Navy ships were leaving the Vietnam coast followed a statement broadcast by the North Vietnamese Foreign Ministry demanding that the ships immediately cease “the forcible evacuation of the population of South Vietnam and withdraw from the South Vietnam coast.”

The Defense secretary, however, suggested that the orders to the Navy ships to withdraw preceded the North Vietnamese demands, adding that “those demands characteristically follow an action: rather than precede them.”

In assessing the post-Vietnam period, Mr. Schlesinger saw America's important national security interests now lying in Western Europe, Korea “and indirectly Japan,” the Middle East, and in treaty commitments to such countries as the Philippines, Australia and New Zealand. On his original listing, he omitted Taiwan, which has a mutual security agreement with the United States.

With the fall of South Vietnam, Mr. Schlesinger foresaw a reduction in the American force that has been maintained in Thailand, largely as a deterrent against North Vietnam, although he expressed hope that a “residual force” would remain in that country.