

NYTimes MAY 3 1975
Saigon Copters Find U.S. Haven at Sea

By FOX BUTTERFIELD

Special to The New York Times

ABOARD THE U.S.S. MOBILE, in the South China Sea, April 30 (Delayed)—On this day of the surrender of Saigon, dozens of Vietnamese refugees sat clustered around a radio they had brought with them, listening to the first Communist broadcasts.

"It's unbelievable," a middle-aged Vietnamese said, shaking his head, "but true!"

The radio at that point was announcing that Saigon would be known among the people of the revolution as Ho Chi Minh City.

The refugees came aboard this ship yesterday and today by helicopter in the final American airlift from South Vietnam.

Helicopters Approach

Late this afternoon, several hours after Gen. Duong Van Minh, the last President of the non-Communist Saigon Government, announced its capitulation, 25 South Vietnamese helicopters appeared on the horizon flying in like a flock of fireflies.

More than a dozen landed on the United States aircraft carrier Midway, while others sought out the decks of whatever ship of the Americans' evacuation fleet was willing to take them. One landed on a destroyer, another on the aft helipad of the Mobile, which is listed by the navy as an amphibious cargo ship.

A door gunner stood outside on the helicopter skid as the aircraft touched down. United States Marine and Navy guards armed with shotguns ran to the aircraft to disarm the five crewmen.

The Americans threw four 38-caliber pistols and two M-16 rifles overboard and then, joined by other Navy men, pushed the helicopter itself over the side.

37 Copters Land

By the end of the day, the Midway had taken on 37 helicopters, according to a radio transmission.

Many of the Vietnamese men who landed on the Mobile yesterday and today arrived without their wives, and many women arrived

without husbands.

The refugees were fed rice and noodles mixed with chicken by white-aproned Navy and Marine cooks. Some Navy men carried Vietnamese children around the decks on their shoulders, and the children played with the sailors' beards.

The Mobile is surrounded by tiny fishing boats loaded with refugees. Once the refugees were aboard United States ships, the owners

burned their boats as heavy rain clouds hovered overhead and lightning played on the horizon.

Start From Can Tho

The South Vietnamese helicopters that arrived late this afternoon in a group had started in the morning from Can Tho, the major city in the Mekong delta south of Saigon. According to the pilot of the craft that landed on the Mobile, Lieut. Tran Van Hanh, they fled from Can Tho when the Communists began shelling the city, then proceeded to Son Island off

South Vietnam's southern tip. Hearing broadcasts about the Seventh Fleet, the pilots formed in a group and flew to the American ships.

This evening the Mobile began moving her group of Vietnamese refugees into her landing craft for transfer to a cargo ship that will head for Guam.

The Mobile has more than 800 Vietnamese and American refugees aboard, including Malcolm W. Browne and this correspondent of The New York Times who arrived yesterday with only the clothes they were wearing.