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Last Vietnam Envoy Blames Fall of Saigon on War Critics

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Former Ambassador Graham Martin broke his silence on the fall of South Vietnam yesterday to blame it on "one of the best propaganda and pressure organizations the world has ever seen" operating in the United States on Congress and the public.

A House International Relations subcommittee, which had been demanding testimony from Martin since last June, received the diplomat's views with skepticism.

MARTIN, From A1

outweigh the combined power of the U.S. President, the State and Defense departments and others supporting the war. Martin responded that the government's power to persuade was not used, effectively. He asked for an investigation of how the Resource Center was able to prevail.

Martin, who is reported to be seeking another major diplomatic post, used his first public appearance since the evacuation from Saigon last April 30 to rebut critics who blamed him for lacking quick reactions and realistic judgment in Vietnam's final days.

Reading a prepared statement for 50 minutes to open the hearing, Martin attacked "gross distortions" about his approach to Vietnam. He read part of a cable he sent to the White House during the siege of Saigon, complaining of "sly, anonymous insertion of the perfumed icepick into the kidneys from my colleagues in the Department" of State.

He quoted Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger as commending him by cable for "operating in the best tradition of field commander and doing a tremendous job of it" and quoted his wife as saying "the historians will treat you very kindly." When the full story is told, the evacuation of Saigon will be seen as "a hell of a good job," he asserted.

Introduced as "the former Ambassador to the former state of South Vietnam," the tall, gray-haired diplomat steadfastly held his ground before incredulous questioners.

Martin identified the "pressure organization" as the Indochina Resource Center, an antiwar group operating from Washington. Martin claimed that Fred Branfman, one of its leaders, had boasted of having "a person" in each of 500 congressional offices.

George Hildebrand, an associate of the center which

is at 1322 18th St. NW, called Martin's assertion "ridiculous." "We are a small organization and our budget reflects that," he said. Christina Macy, a former center associate, said it had eight staff members and an annual budget of between \$50,000 and \$65,000 at the height of its activity in 1974-75. Branfman could not be reached last night.

Subcommittee Chairman Lee Hamilton (D-Ind.) expressed doubt that a small group of private citizens could

See MARTIN, A7, Col. 1

His lengthy self-defense was studded with minor revelations about the last months of South Vietnam.

Martin said he had decided in January, 1975 — more than three months before the end — that "the game was up" and only a miracle could save it. Under questioning he said he reached this conclusion because of declining support from the United States.

He decried the combination of U.S. budget cuts and rising prices and implied that the South Vietnamese army lacked sufficient ammunition to fight. He quoted a calculation that South Vietnamese forces could expend ammunition at one-tenth the rate normally expended by a comparable American unit. No source for the calculation was given.

Martin described in detail a meeting with President Nguyen Van Thieu on April 20 when he presented a report of impending disaster. Thieu resigned the following day.

The former ambassador put the onus on Washington for moving slowly and reluctantly to authorize admission of Vietnamese refugees to the United States, a necessary element in the decision to bring out large numbers. Even seven days before the end, Washington authorized evacuation of only 50,000 Vietnamese, he said. Martin said he "stretched" his authority, bringing out about 140,000.