

Book Charges CIA Deserted Viet Agents

New York

A former senior analyst for the Central Intelligence Agency in Vietnam has charged that the agency's 1975 evacuation from South Vietnam was "an institutional disgrace" that abandoned thousands of Vietnamese employees and collaborators and exposed them to North Vietnamese retaliation.

Frank Swepp, who was the CIA's principal analyst of North Vietnamese political affairs and prepared the agency's intelligence estimates during the final years of the war, further alleges in a book to be published next week — amid close secrecy and without government clearance — that high-level officials of the CIA and other government agencies later prevented an investigation into the evacuation.

The central thesis of Swepp's book, titled "Decent Interval," is that there was a major failure to plan for the evacuation and that this failure occurred because U.S. officials — including Secretary of State Henry Kissinger; Graham Martin, the last U.S. ambassador to South Vietnam, and Thomas Polgar, the last CIA station chief in Saigon — had refused to heed

intelligence showing that the North Vietnamese would directly attack Saigon.

Admiral Stansfield Turner, the current director of Central Intelligence, could not be reached by telephone late yesterday to comment on the charges. But his executive assistant, Navy Commander Bernard F. McMahon, acknowledged that Swepp has filed a series of written complaints to Turner about the Vietnam evacuation.

"He's written some specific complaints and Admiral Turner has investigated every specific case and asked for more," McMahon said.

None of the Swepp's accusations have been verified, McMahon said, adding that he personally did not think the evacuation "was as bad as" Swepp alleged.

Kissinger responded through an aide: "It's nonsense."

Martin is now visiting in Italy, his family said, and could not be reached.

The North Vietnamese offensive, launched in early March, 1975, routed the army of South Vietnam in 55 days, leaving it panicked, inept and in full retreat.

New York Times