

011

AFTER BEING REMOTELY ASSOCIATED WITH THE EVACUATION OF DANANG, NHA TRANG AND HUE IT BECAME INCREASINGLY EVIDENT TO ME THAT OUR PREPARATION FOR THE EVACUATION OF SAIGON WAS NOT ADEQUATE. IN ALL CASES THE AVAILABILITY OF FUEL WAS A MAJOR PROBLEM SURPASSING ONLY SLIGHTLY AND ASSOCIATED WITH RAMP SECURITY. AT HUE AND DANANG FUEL PROBLEMS ALMOST COST THE COMPANY NO LESS THAN THREE HELICOPTERS. AT ALL STATIONS IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO SECURE OUR FUELING AREAS AND AIRCRAFT RAMPS WHICH WERE LOCATED ON MAJOR MILITARY INSTALLATIONS NOT DUE TO ENEMY INCOMING BUT PANIC STRICKEN FRIENDLY TROOPS. I DISCUSSED THIS WITH CAPT. WINSTON AND POINTED OUT THAT REMOTE AREAS HAD REMAINED FAIRLY STABLE DUE TO LACK OF COMMUNICATION WITH MAJOR POPULATION AREAS AND ADVISED THAT WE FIND OTHER SECURE AREAS OUTSIDE THE CITY OF SAIGON TO POSITION FUEL AND IF NECESSARY STATION OUR OWN PEOPLE THERE TO INSURE IT WOULD NOT BE STOLEN. MY IDEA BEING THAT THESE OUTLYING AREAS WOULD NOT BE AWARE OF EVENTS IN THE CITY AND THUS IN THE CASE OF POSSIBLE PANIC OR ENEMY ACTION IN THE CITY WE STILL MIGHT HAVE A SECURE AREA TO OBTAIN FUEL. I WAS TOLD THAT I DID NOT KNOW WHAT I WAS TALKING ABOUT AND MORE OR LESS TOLD THAT THE U.S. MARINES WOULD INSURE THE SECURITY OF OUR RAMP NO MATTER WHAT THE SITUATION. I GRITTED MY TEETH AND WENT ABOUT MY BUSINESS ONCE AGAIN LISTENING TO SOMEONE SITTING IN AN OFFICE AND TELLING PEOPLE DOING THE JOB IN THE FIELD WITH FIRST HAND EXPERIENCE HOW TO DO IT AND BEING RIGHT BECAUSE OF A POSITION THEY WERE AWARDED IN OUR MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE. THUS, AT THE VERY START OF THIS MOST CRUCIAL OPERATION WE WERE ALREADY AT A TREMENDOUS DISADVANTAGE DUE TO THE SHORT-SIGHTEDNESS OF A MANAGEMENT TEAM WHO APPARENTLY LEARNED NONE OF

APPROVED FOR
RELEASE DATE:
13-Mar-2009

THE LESSONS SO VIVIDLY TAUGHT AT [HUE, DANANG AND NHA TRANG] JUST SHORT WEEKS BEFORE.

ANYWAY, TO START THE DAY I WAS ON THE FIRST LIFT-OFF OF THE ROOF AT [259] AND AT MY ARRIVAL AT OPERATIONS ALONG WITH [CAPT. GRADY] I APPROACHED [CAPT. WINSTON] AND ASKED FOR AN AIRCRAFT ASSIGNMENT. I WAS TOLD TO "COOL IT" AND JUST STAND BY. [CAPT. GRADY] ADVISED ME THAT EVACUATION PLANS WERE AVAILABLE IN FIC AND I IMMEDIATELY WENT THERE TO OBTAIN A COPY. I HAD NEVER BEEN BRIEFED ON THE PLAN NOR THE PROCEDURES WE WERE EXPECTED TO FOLLOW, ALTHOUGH I HAD ASKED FIC A WEEK PRIOR FOR A COPY OF THE PLAN AND WAS TOLD IT WOULD BE MADE AVAILABLE AT THE PROPER TIME, SO I STARTED TO THE PILOTS' LOUNGE TO LOOK OVER THE MATERIAL WHILE I HAD TIME. AS I ARRIVED ON THE LOWER FLOOR [FRANK ANDREWS] BURST THROUGH THE DOOR WITH THE NEWS THAT THE VNAF WERE TAKING OUR AIRCRAFT. HE WAS TOLD TO JUST TAKE-IT-EASY BUT SOME OF THE PILOTS DECIDED IF SOMEBODY DID NOT DO SOMETHING WE JUST MIGHT NOT HAVE ANY AIRCRAFT TO FLY WHEN THE TIME CAME TO FLY THEM. I AGAIN ASKED FOR AN AIRCRAFT ASSIGNMENT AND WAS TOLD TO TAKE ANY AIRCRAFT AND TO BEGIN MOVING CREWS FROM [259] TO THE RAMP TO TRY TO SECURE OUR AIRCRAFT. I TOOK THE NEAREST AIRCRAFT TO OPERATIONS [03X] AND BY THE TIME I HAD THE ENGINE RUNNING I BELIEVE I HAD AT LEAST FOUR OTHER CAPTAINS ON BOARD PLUS SEVERAL FLIGHT MECHANICS WHICH I TOOK IMMEDIATELY TO THE ICCS RAMP TO SECURE THOSE AIRCRAFT AS THERE WAS NO SECURITY ON THAT RAMP. AT THAT TIME I BELIEVE ALL AVAILABLE PILOTS WERE MANNING AIRCRAFT. I THEN WENT TO [259] TO BRING ADDITIONAL CREWS TO THE AIRFIELD. AFTER MY FIRST TRIP I WAS ADVISED TO BRING PEOPLE FROM THE [MONTEREY APTS.]

BUT ENROUTE I RECEIVED HEAVY FIRE AND AGAIN LANDED AT THE [259] ROOF TO CHECK FOR POSSIBLE DAMAGE. WHILE MY FLIGHT MECHANIC CHECKED THE AIRCRAFT I WAS AGAIN LOADED AND PROCEEDED TO THE RAMP. I WOULD LIKE TO STATE THAT DURING THIS FIRST FEW SECONDS I OPENED MY EVAC PLAN AND FOUND WITHOUT A BRIEF AND SOMETIME TO STUDY, THE PLAN MADE LITTLE SENSE AND WAS ALMOST USELESS AND ACTUALLY A HAZARD TO FLIGHT BECAUSE TO LOOK AT IT FOR THE FIRST TIME WHILE FLYING SINGLE CREW LOW OVER THE CROWDED CITY AT FAIRLY HIGH SPEED SEEMED TO ME AN EXCELLENT WAY TO HAVE AN ACCIDENT. I WOULD LIKE TO ADD THAT I HAVE TALKED TO MANY PILOTS WHO FLEW THAT DAY AND COULD FIND NO ONE WHO EVER CONTACTED ANY PAD AS THE PLAN CALLED FOR AND ACTUALLY VERY FEW WHO HAD THE PLAN BEFORE THEY LEFT THE RAMP ANYWAY. OF THE PEOPLE WHO DID HAVE THE PLAN I FOUND NO ONE WHO FOUND ANY USE FOR THE PLAN EXCEPT MAYBE THE MAP TO FIND A GENERAL AREA IN THE CITY WHERE A PAD MIGHT BE LOCATED.

SHORTLY WE WERE TOLD TO FIND ROOFTOPS IN THE CITY AND SHUT DOWN WHICH I DID ON THE [#31 PAD]. LATER I WAS TO LEARN THAT THIS PAD WAS OFFICIALLY CLOSED BUT IN CONVERSATION WITH THE PAD COMMANDER LATER ON THE HANCOCK I WAS ADVISED THAT 79 PEOPLE WERE LIFTED FROM THIS PAD BEFORE THE DAY WAS OVER. WHILE ON [#31] I WAS SINGLED FROM [259] TO CRANKUP AND WE TOOK MORE PEOPLE TO THE RAMP AND SOME TO [#38] PAD AS WE WERE ADVISED THAT OUR RAMP WAS NOT SECURE. I WAS THEN ASKED BY [CAPTAIN GARTZ IN 105] TO COVER [BOYD MESECHER] WHO WAS ATTEMPTING TO START A [JP4] FUEL TRUCK, AND IF UNABLE TO BRING HIM OUT! THIS I DID. WHILE ORBITING THE SIGHT I WAS CALLED BY OUR OPERATIONS AND TOLD TO SHUT DOWN AND

STOP WASTING FUEL. SINCE OPERATIONS HAD NO IDEA WHAT WAS GOING ON OR WHAT ANYONE WAS DOING, I IGNORED THEIR DIRECTIONS AND DID WHAT WAS REQUIRED TO COMPLETE THE MISSION.

THE REST OF THE DAY I SAT ON A ROOF OR SHUTTLED AS FUEL ALLOWED DUE TO THE LIMITED RANGE OF OUR X-RAY MODELS. MY FINAL LANDING WAS ON THE [HANCOCK.] I AM NOT SURE OF OTHER SHIPS LANDED ON DURING THE DAY.

I WOULD LIKE TO ADD THAT ONCE AGAIN THE PILOTS OF AIR AMERICA MADE THE COMPANY LOOK GOOD BY THEIR PROFESSIONAL ABILITY TO DO THE JOB IN SPITE OF OUR INEPT MANAGEMENT. THIS PROFESSIONALISM ALONG WITH THE TEAM WORK BETWEEN CREWS MADE UP FOR THE LACK OF PREPARATION AND MADE THE SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF OUR MISSION POSSIBLE.

[CAPTAIN ISRAEL FREEDMAN]
AIR AMERICA, INC.