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Minh Orders  
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All Forces to  
End Fighting

Panic in City VC Takeover

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Leaving scenes of chaos and mass panic behind them, Americans fled the embattled and collapsing city of Saigon Tuesday in an armada of helicopters guarded by U.S. Marines, fighter-bombers and gunships.

The American exodus from South Vietnam to ships of the waiting U.S. 7th Fleet was accompanied by danger, difficulty and delay as Communist forces and bitter South Vietnamese soldiers turned their weapons on helicopters swooping in to extricate Americans from the roof of the American embassy and 12 other landing zones.

Two U.S. Marines died in a predawn bombardment of Tansonnhut airport and two pilots were missing and presumed dead after their helicopter plunged into the South China Sea.

In Washington, President Ford said panicky South Vietnamese had threatened to clog Tansonnhut's runways and delay the evacuation a full day. That persuaded the U.S. government to use helicopters rather than planes, he said.

The carefully planned evacuation—code-named Operation Talon Vise and using a force of 800 Marines and 81 giant helicopters—began at 11 a.m. (11 p.m. Monday EDT) and became progressively slower and more hazardous as the day wore on.

When the 19-hour airlift ended early Wednesday, 6,400 Americans and South Vietnamese had been evacuated to a task force of more than 40 ships reported cruising 25 miles off-shore.

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From News Dispatches

SAIGON, April 30 (Wednesday) — South Vietnam's President Duong Van (Big) Minh announced an unconditional surrender to the Vietcong Wednesday, after his second attempt in two days to achieve a cease-fire was rebuffed.

The full text of Minh's brief speech, broadcast nationwide at 10:14 a.m. (10:14 p.m. Tuesday EDT) follows:

"The policy we back is reconciliation.

"I believe firmly in reconciliation among Vietnamese to avoid unnecessary shedding of Vietnamese blood.

"For this reason, I ask the soldiers of the Republic of Vietnam to cease hostilities in calm and to remain where they are.

"I ask the brother soldiers of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam to cease hostilities. We wait here to meet the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam to discuss together ceremony of orderly transfer of power so as to avoid any unnecessary bloodshed in the population."

Ten minutes later, a general staff communique asked. "Soldiers, regimental commanders, unit commanders, Regional Forces, Popular Forces and Self-Defense Forces . . . of all ranks to follow strictly the order of the president of the Republic of Vietnam concerning the cease-fire" and assured the military command of the PRG that Saigon's military command was "ready to enter into contact . . . to effect a cease-fire without bloodshed."

Shortly after noon Saigon time (12:10 a.m. Wednesday EDT) about 20 tanks carrying green-clad Vietcong

See VIETNAM, A6, Col. 1

*"This action closes a chapter in the American experience. I ask all Americans to close ranks, to avoid recrimination about the past, to look ahead to the many goals we share and to work together on the great tasks that remain to be accomplished."*  
—President Ford.

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# Helicopters Pluck 6,400 From Chaotic Saigon

EVACUATION, From A12

reach it. Some ships reported loading as many as 9,000 refugees.

Apparently taking their cue from the U.S. action, dozens of South Vietnamese helicopter pilots took off to head out to sea in search of the American carrier force.

Reports from the USS Blue Ridge, the amphibious command and communications ship for the 7th Fleet, said that at least 14 South Vietnamese helicopters landed on the ship or were deliberately ditched beside it.

In the rush of flights two helicopters collided and another crashed onto the Blue Ridge's deck as South Vietnamese refugees, including babies, sobbing women and a three-star general carrying a suitcase of gold took desperate risks to leave Saigon.

Several of the \$500,000 helicopters were pushed into the sea to make room for other overloaded craft. Others were deliberately ditched, after the passengers were unloaded and U.S. seamen ripped off the doors to make them sink.

One South Vietnamese pilot, apparently afraid to ditch, jumped 100 feet into the sea and was saved.

One armed South Vietnamese helicopter carrying 20 passengers set down after sunset on the Blue Ridge. American Marines, responding to the order "armed refugee reaction crews to the flight deck," disarmed 16 young South Vietnamese soldiers aboard and flung their weapons into the sea.

"You won't need these anymore, it's all over for you," one Marine told the refugee soldiers.

Passengers from the helicopters were frisked, disarmed and shown below decks. "This is a lesson in humility," commented one watching Marine.

One refugee spared the body search was South Vietnamese Air Vice Marshal Nguyen Cao Ky. Ky, who recently called Vietnamese seeking to leave the country "cowards," landed on the USS Denver, as did Mrs. Graham Martin, wife of the U.S. Ambassador, who was himself evacuated later.

The Blue Ridge's captain, William D. Hart, refused several circling Air America helicopters permission to land. He said the helicopters had been hijacked from Tansonnhut airport.

The evacuation, "Option 4" was ordered by President Ford after two U.S. Marines were killed Tuesday morning in a heavy rocket and artillery bombardment of Tansonnhut airport by Communist forces inexorably squeezing in on the city. Accurate 130-mm artillery shells left all but 5,000 feet of runway unusable.

Mortar fire bombed the airport, and the last U.S. Air Force planes circling overhead left without landing when they saw panicky mobs of civilians massing below. The evacuation by fixed-wing transport planes was halted with about two-thirds of the 130,000 Vietnamese that American officials said they wanted to evacuate marooned in the beleaguered city.

Pentagon spokesman said the helicopter evacuation was delayed twice after President Ford gave the order. One hour after the helicopters lifted off from the 7th Fleet carriers 25 miles off the Vietnamese coast an unexplained radio message ordered them to turn back before touching down in Communist-encircled Saigon.

There was a second 80-minute delay later in the day after the evacuation began, also for uncertain reasons. "Its probably because of crew fatigue, said a Pentagon spokesman. "These guys have been going for 13 hours straight," he said referring to the total length of the operation.

Presidential spokesman Ron Nessen said the operation dragged out several hours longer than expected because "A lot more Vietnamese were taken out than had been planned."

The original intention was that only Americans would leave in a tightly controlled helicopter ferry. But as the convoys of buses guided by Marines moved to pick-up points in downtown Saigon, many Vietnamese army officers shedding their military clothing and begging to be allowed aboard the buses.

Vietnamese youths on motorcycles were pulling alongside foreigners in cars and offering large sums of

money to be taken into the airport. Hundreds of cars were abandoned outside the airport, some with their engines running.

A French correspondent was stopped near the airport, by soldiers who demanded to know his identity. Told he was French, the soldiers replied, "That's okay, if you had been American we would have killed you."

Angry Vietnamese guards at the airport fired at busloads of evacuees and shouted "We want to go, too." As Americans pulled out, South Vietnamese soldiers, civilians and police looted their former homes and offices, carrying off refrigerators, furniture, air conditioners and other household goods.

Washington Post correspondent David Greenway reported scenes of "Danang-style panic at the waterfront as desperate Vietnamese tried to board barges evacuating American Embassy staff." Later filing by phone from the embassy to Post Special Correspondent James Fenton, who elected to stay, Greenway said Marines with fixed bayonets faced a weeping crowd.

Crowds of Vietnamese were crying and pleading to be allowed into the embassy. Angry Marines shouted at them in English which few of them understood, Greenway reported.

As the helicopters lifted off the embassy roof and from a car park the crowd

ringed the enclosure in what Greenway called "a passive siege." Some tried to leap across the barbed wire from the height of adjoining buildings. A man and a woman lay bleeding across the strands. People held small children out to Americans begging that they be evacuated.

Three SA-7 missiles were fired at one helicopter as it lifted out of the embassy grounds, but none hit. Communist and government anti-aircraft guns opened up at jets and helicopters alike, apparently without causing damage.

American military and civilian radio communications monitored in Singapore indicated that a vessel carrying the American consul gen-

eral in the Mekong Delta, plus the U.S. Marines, 16 other Americans and 100 Vietnamese was adrift in the South China Sea after escaping down the Mekong River.

In response to an earlier appeal from the boat, American naval aircraft drove off helicopters with South Vietnamese air force markings said to have been attacking the vessel.

The American pilot of the last plane to take off from Tansonnut, before damage and the threat of fire closed it down, said he was fired on by South Vietnamese soldiers as he took off. The pilot said a Vietnamese colonel tried to ram his jeep into the side of the taxiing Air America C-46.

The pilot said the colonel and 14 others forced their way onto the plane. "They just sat there and refused to move," he said. The plane landed at Hong Kong with 22 passengers.

The scenes around the U.S. Embassy became increasingly desperate as the evacuation went on into the night. Some Vietnamese families were split up with some family members finding their way onto the helicopters, others beseeching places, were left behind.

One well-dressed young man offered a reporter \$20,000 to get him on a helicopter. Others cried out "Please help me! please help me!" with screams that could be heard over the clattering rotor blades.