

EVACUATION FLIGHT FROM SAIGON

THE TIME WAS APPROXIMATELY 1830 HOURS, MONDAY, 28 APRIL 1975, AND I WAS HAVING WHAT TURNED OUT TO BE MY LAST MEAL AT OUR HOME [IN SAIGON LOCATED AT 307/33 CACH MANG.] SOME UNIDENTIFIED AIRCRAFT BEGAN BOMBING THE AIRPORT AND SUBSEQUENTLY ANTI-AIRCRAFT FIRING COULD BE HEARD. IT QUICKLY BECAME APPARENT THAT EVENTS WERE TAKING PLACE THAT MIGHT NECESSITATE AN EVACUATION.

I QUICKLY FINISHED MY MEAL, DISMISSED OUR SERVANT AS SMALL ARMS FIRE COULD BE HEARD IN ALL DIRECTIONS AND GATHERED SOME ESSENTIAL CLOTHING, A SHAVING KIT AND DROVE IN OUR CAR TO MY DESIGNATED PICKUP POINT AT [259 TROUP QUOC DUNG, THE USAID APARTMENTS WHERE I SPENT THE NIGHT.] I HAD BEEN ASSIGNED A ROOM THERE ON THE EMERGENCY LIST FOR PICKUP AT AIR AMERICA FIC.

AT APPROXIMATELY 0430 HOURS ON THE 29 APRIL 1975 I WAS AWAKEN BY WHAT SOUNDED LIKE HEAVY SHELLING VERY NEAR BY. [I GOT UP AND DRESSED AND WENT UP ON THE ROOF WHERE THE HELICOPTER PICKUP SPOT WAS LOCATED.] THERE I FOUND MOST OF THE OTHER RESIDENTS OF THE BUILDING OBSERVING WHAT APPEARED TO BE A LARGE SCALE ROCKET AND ARTILLERY ATTACK ON THE AIRPORT. THERE WERE ALREADY MANY HUGE FIRES BURNING ON THE AIRPORT.

AT APPROXIMATELY 0830 HOURS IT WAS DECIDED THAT EVERYONE OF THE AIR AMERICA CREWS AND STAFF WITH CARS WOULD LINE UP TO BE ESCORTED TO THE AIRPORT BY THE MISSION WARDEN PATROL CAR. AFTER SOME DELAY, THE MISSION WARDEN RETURNED TO SAY THAT PLAN HAD FAILED, THAT IT WAS NOT ADVISED TO DRIVE TO THE AIRPORT. AT THIS POINT EVERYONE RETURNED THEIR CARS TO THE PARKING UNDER THE [259 BUILDING.] THAT WAS WHERE I LEFT MY CAR LOCKED.

APPROVED FOR  
RELEASEDATE:  
13-Mar-2009

SOMETIME LATER, ABOUT 1000 THE WORD CAME THAT ALL THE STAFF AND CREWS WERE TO BE EVACUATED FROM [THE ROOFTOP HELICOPTER PAD TO THE AIRPORT.]

I COLLECTED MY FLIGHT KIT AND BAGS AND WENT [TO THE ROOF TO "P" PAD WHERE I WAS TAKEN TO THE AIRPORT BY ONE OF OUR HELICOPTERS.] THE PILOT WAS [CAPT. FONBURG.] I WOULD ESTIMATE THAT I ARRIVED AT THE AIR AMERICA FLIGHT OPERATIONS AT ABOUT 1030L. JUST PRIOR TO LANDING [CAPT. FONBURG.] ADVISED [MR. GREEN] WHO WAS ALSO ABOARD THAT FLIGHT, THAT THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE WERE STEALING OUR HELICOPTERS. AND EVEN AS WE LANDED ON THE [AIR AMERICA RAMP.] ENEMY ROCKETS COULD BE SEEN DROPPING ALL AROUND THE AREA. WE MADE A HASTY EXIT FROM THE HELICOPTER AFTER IT LANDED AND RAN FOR FLIGHT OPERATIONS.

I HAD PREVIOUSLY BEEN ASSIGNED BY [CAPT. ROBERTS] TO FLY AIRCRAFT, C-46, N67985 AS PRIMARY AIRCRAFT WITH [CAPT. WILSON] AS PRIMARY CAPTAIN---SEE ATTACHED SHEET.] THE ALTERNATE AIRCRAFT WAS [C-46 N67984] AND THE ALTERNATE CAPTAIN WAS TO BE [CAPTAIN BUSSART.] WHEN I ARRIVED IN FLIGHT OPERATIONS NEITHER [CAPTAIN WILSON] NOR CAPTAIN BUSSART.] WERE THERE.

AFTER THE DECISION WAS MADE BY [CAPT. WINSTON], THE CHIEF PILOT.] TO BEGIN THE EVACUATION OF THE FIXED WING AIRCRAFT ALONG WITH THE COMPANY PERSONNEL PRESENT, I PROCEEDED TO THE FLIGHT DISPATCH SECTION AND COLLECTED THE FLIGHT LOG BOOKS AND FERRY PAPERS FROM THE OM, [MR. REED CHASE.] I WENT TO THE PRIMARY AIRCRAFT, [N67985] AND PLACED THE AIRCRAFT DOCUMENTS AND MY BAGS ABOARD. I CHECKED THE AIRCRAFT FOR FLYING CONDITION AND FOUND IT TO BE O.K. THERE WAS JUST SLIGHTLY LESS THAN 800 GALLONS

OF FUEL IN THE AIRCRAFT. I RETURNED TO FLIGHT OPS TO CHECK FOR [CAPTAIN WILSON] AND FOUND HE HAD ARRIVED. [CAPTAIN GUTHRIE] WAS TOLD HE COULD GO WITH [CAPTAIN WILSON] AND MYSELF SINCE [CAPTAIN SADLER] HAD ALREADY REPLACED ON THE PRIMARY AIRCRAFT WITH [CAPTAIN SAILER.]

UPON REACHING THE AIRCRAFT AND PREPARING TO DEPART; IT WAS DECIDED BY THE CREW THAT DUE TO THE AMOUNT OF FUEL ABOARD AND FOR SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS, THE FLIGHT WOULD BE MADE TO [BANGKOK] WE HAD PREVIOUSLY BEEN INFORMED THAT OUR ALTERNATE SOURCE FOR ADDITIONAL FUEL HAD BEEN RENDERED UNUSABLE DUE TO BEING BLOCKED BY VNAF AIRCRAFT.

WE DEPARTED [AN SON NHUT] AIRPORT AT 1135L WITH 9 REFUGEE PASSENGERS AS THAT WAS ALL THERE WAS REMAINING ON THE RAMP WHEN WE DEPARTED. THE FLIGHT WAS UNEVENTFUL TO [BANGKOK] BEFORE REACHING THE [THAI FIR] WE WERE ABLE TO OBTAIN A CLEARANCE FROM [BANGKOK CENTER] FOR THE FLIGHT TO [BANGKOK] AT THE TIME WE REQUESTED A CLEARANCE WE ALSO ADVISED [BANGKOK] THAT OUR FLIGHT WAS AN EMERGENCY EVACUATION FLIGHT FROM [SAIGON]

WE ARRIVED AT THE [BANGKOK AIRPORT] AT 1500 SAIGON TIME. WE LOGGED [3 + 45] BLOCK TIME ENROUTE. AFTER LANDING AT [BANGKOK] AND CONTACTING [MR. LARSON] THE AIR AMERICA REPRESENTATIVE, AND [THE AMERICAN EMBASSY] IT WAS DECIDED TO TAKE THE PASSENGERS TO [UTAPAO AIR BASE] WHERE THEY COULD BE PROCESSED OUT [TO OTHER REFUGEE CAMPS] AFTER TAKING THE PASSENGERS TO [UTAPAO] THE AIRCRAFT AND CREW RETURNED [TO BANGKOK] AS SUGGESTED BY THE AUTHORITIES DUE TO THE LARGE AMOUNT OF AIRCRAFT ALREADY AT [UTAPAO.]

I REMAINED IN [BANGKOK AT THE CHAO PHYA HOTEL] UNTIL THE 16TH OF MAY WHEN I WAS RELEASED TO COME [TO HONG KONG FOR] FINAL PROCESSING BY [MR. LARSON IN BANGKOK]

SOME DIFFICULTY WAS EXPERIENCED IN [BANGKOK IN GETTING TICKETS FOR HONG KONG.] [MR. LARSON] HAD PROMISED TO GET THE TICKETS FOR ME AND THE FAMILY AT 50% DISCOUNT WITH [PAN AMERICAN] AFTER TWO DAYS AND NO TICKETS I CALLED [MR. LARSON] AND DISCOVERED HE HAD DEPARTED FOR [HONG KONG] AND STILL NO TICKETS. AT THIS POINT, I PROCEEDED TO GET THE TICKETS ON MY OWN AND WE ARRIVED IN [HONG KONG] AT 1800 LOCAL ON THE 16TH OF MAY 1975.

IT BECAME NECESSARY FOR MY FAMILY TO DEPART [BANGKOK] AND TRAVEL TO [HONG KONG] WITH ME AS THEIR VISAS EXPIRED ON THE 16TH OF MAY AND WHEN I TOOK THEIR REPATRIATION TICKETS TO [KLM FOR CONFIRMATION ON TO THE STATES] I WAS INFORMED THAT THEY, THE TICKETS WERE NO GOOD DUE TO BEING WRITTEN ON [AIR VIETNAM STOCK] I ASKED TO SEE THE KLM MANAGER, [MR. VOS] AND HE CONFIRMED THAT THERE WAS NOTHING THAT COULD BE DONE WITH THOSE TICKETS. THIS SITUATION MAKES IT NECESSARY TO SECURE NEW REPATRIATION TRAVEL FOR MY FAMILY FROM [BANGKOK] ONWARD.

[CAPT. HERMAN L. HINES]  
AIR AMERICA, INC.