



REAR ADMIRAL L. S. SABIN, U.S.N.

15 November 1954

Dear Dutch:

Your letter of 27 October reached me in Saigon a few days ago.

Back in the latter part of September I had heard there was a possibility that you might come out to take over this evacuation job but I recommended against it. When this operation was originally conceived it was the desire of CinCPacFleet that the PhibForce units be phased out as rapidly as possible and be replaced by MSTS ships. Under those conditions I felt that if a Flag Officer was to retain command of the operation it should be an MSTS officer in view of the fact that all of the ships would be MSTS ships. It didn't quite work out that way because of certain road blocks thrown in the way of phasing out the PhibPac ships.

I have had considerable difficulty all the way through the operation in getting the French to use their full shipping capacity and in convincing them that there are other types of Amphibious ships besides LST's. When we finally got the situation in hand, Admiral Stump sent me a message saying that he preferred me to remain in command out here until such time as either the end of the evacuation was in sight or that it appeared propitious to turn over the local command to a senior Captain. This is being done today.

I think one of the most important occurrences in this operation were the talks which took place in Washington (Dulles - Carny VS La Chambre - Ely) as the attitude of the French changed considerably after these talks. I still had difficulties and troubles but the cooperation and coordination was much better from that time on. There has been an average of about one crisis per day, sometimes more, and most of them occurring around two o'clock in the morning. The latest was a "Honey". After going over all figures on prospective refugee flow and the remaining MDAP equipment to be evacuated I worked out and submitted the phase out plan which had the agreement of both French and MAAG personnel. I submitted this to higher authority and it was approved in Washington. After everything had been approved and the beginning of the roll-up just two days off, the French submitted a request to retain 10 of our LST's. To my utter amazement this was concurred in by General O'Daniel who had gone over my original plan line by line and had concurred with it.



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Fortunately CinCPacFleet and CNO backed me up completely and fully and the phase out is proceeding according to plan.

Of considerable concern has been the explosive potential of the current political situation in South Vietnam. This has resulted in most sensitive conditions where one had to call upon all his reserve tact and diplomacy to keep from blowing a gasket. I have some general ideas on the whole picture which I must refrain from stating in a letter of this sort for obvious reasons. I have met and talked to every high level official out here from the President of Vietnam and the leading dissident Generals to Lieutenants and Captains on the one hand and with the French from General Ely on down on the other, as well as all Americans from the Ambassador and General O'Daniel on down, plus a few odds and ends like the Indians, Italians, British, etc. It is a very complicated picture and you come out with some very interesting deductions.

I took the boys down to Singapore as a reward for having had very little liberty since the 10th of August, and during that trip we crossed the Equator and initiated some six or seven hundred Pollywogs into the Mysteries of King Neptune's Domain.

I am now in route to Hong Kong but am not sure at this moment whether we will make it as typhoon SALLY, one of the worst we have had, will have to be watched very closely. This has been the worst season for typhoons in the history of the Pacific. Fortunately only about three of them came near the Indo-China area and these finally went far enough North to cause only slight damage in the Haiphong area. They did, however, interfere with the operation as we had to suspend operations, batten down and disperse the ships for typhoon evasion.

With regard to the MOUNTRAIL and the investigation in the use of narcotics on board. I had to refer that to ComPhibPac by way of ComNavFE. On the last load that was carried to Saigon I went over to watch the disembarkation of the refugees, it was at that time that the Captain appraised me of the situation he had uncovered. By the time I received the MOUNTRAIL report the ship was either in route to the United States or just before leaving, I don't remember which, and therefore there was nothing I could do about it out in this isolated area.

I plan to go up to Inchon after leaving Hong Kong to observe some Italian LEXES then return to Japan sometime before the middle of December. CinCPacFleet is still keeping me in over all command of this



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operation although Nick FRANK will handle the local situation. Incidentally, Admiral Stamp has given me the most wonderful support and backing throughout this entire very trying situation. It is possible that I will have to come back down here the latter part of January to see what the situation is.

I don't doubt that you were not able to get in touch with Mrs. Sabin. She has been hopping from one married daughter to the other to assist in delivering babies. She got one launched in Monterey about two weeks ago and will go to North Carolina in the spring for the other.

With best wishes to you and to Tex Settle.

Sincerely yours.

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