

MSTS Historical Diary  
1 September - 15 September 1954

Summary of Preliminary Events in the French Indo-China Evacuation

The enclosed report is an account, from 6 August through 13 September, of the preliminary events leading up to MSTS participation in the French Indo-China evacuation.

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FIC EVACUATION; SUMMARY OF PRELIMINARY EVENTS

On 6 August 1954, CNO alerted CINCPAC to prepare for FIC evacuation and designated CTF 90 in charge. CINCPAC recommended to CNO that Amphib Forces should be replaced by non-amphib (MSTS) LST's, and advised estimated MSTS shipping desired. CNO directed, on 8 August, MTSWESTPACAREA to support FIC evacuation, as well as PHIBPAC. CINCPAC recommended to CNO that MSTS shipping report to CTF 90 for OpControl.

On 9 August 1954, COMSTSWESTPACAREA advised COMNAVFE of availability of shipping for FIC evacuation and impact on routine mission, and recommended that ships assigned be charged on a per diem basis. COMNAVPHIL expressed concern to CINCPAC over use of Jap crewed MSTS LST's and CINCPACFLT concurred in this, also that MSTS chartered shipping would present problems, but reiterated desire to replace PHIBFOR shipping soonest.

On 11 August 1954, CHMAAG SAIGON advised CINCPACFLT of preliminary estimate of refugees to be moved (as many as 750,000) and that 4 MSTS troopers were initially desired, plus as many as possible later.

On 13 August 1954, COMNAVFE recommended to CINCPACFLT as follows:

1. Against diversion of MSTS troopers currently in FECOM to FIC.
2. Breaking out 8 ROC MSTS troopers on West Coast, and sailing direct to FIC.
3. Use in the interim of MSTS cargo ships as transports.
4. Against use of Jap crewed MSTS LST's.

On same date, CINCPACFLT advised CNO that RADM SABIN, as CTF 90, had assumed charge of FIC evacuation, that PHIBFOR shipping was enroute, and that logistic support under COMNAVFE would be based at Tourane. RADM SABIN advised CNO via COMNAVPHIL that an accurate estimate of MSTS shipping required could not yet be made due varied estimates of refugees to be lifted.

On 14 August 1954, COMNAVFE advised COMSERVPAC that he had requested MTSWESTPACAREA to provide two small tankers for potable water and that he wanted PASIG (TAW-3) activated. RADM SABIN advised CINCPACFLT that he wanted one additional MSTS trooper (additional to 4 previously requested).

CNO asked COMSTS how many TAP's were in ROC, and was advised. CNO requested of COMSTS status of TAP's and earliest arrival Haiphong, and was advised of availability of TAP's on West Coast (6), East Coast (3), and in Med (1).

On 15 August 1954, CNO directed COMSTS to activate and sail PASIG to FIC. COMSTS so directed MTSWESTPACAREA. CINCPACADMIN told CTF 90 no action would be taken on MSTS TAP's until requested. NAVSECT MAAG FORMOSA advised CINCPAC that funding would include overhaul and support of FIC evacuation shipping.

On 17 August 1954, CTF 90 advised CINCPACFLT that he wanted all MSTS TAP's. ADMINCINCPACFLT requested CNO to send all West Coast TAP's (MSTS). CNO so advised COMSTS, who passed to MTSWESTPAC and NORPAC. ADMINCINCPACFLT advised

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CNO that FIC evacuation had commenced. COMSTSPACAREA advised CTF 90 that CDR DILLON was being ordered to represent MSTTS.

On 18 August 1954, CTF 90 advised CINCPACFLT that he wanted East Coast and Med MSTTS TAP's as well as West Coast ships. CTF 90 advised ADMINCINCPACFLT of requirement for 16 MSTTS TAP's for refugee lift at 2,000 passengers per trip. CINCPACFLT requested CNO sail East Coast and Med MSTTS TAP's to FIC.

On 19 August 1954, COMSTS sent medical instructions to MSTSPAC and NORPAC for TAP's. CNO withheld sailing East Coast and Med MSTTS TAP's until ADM STUMP (CINCPACFLT) confers with CTF 90.

On 20 August 1954, COMSTSWESTPACAREA reported to CTF 90 readying for sailing of 10 CLMAV1 and 6 Victory/Liberty cargo ships, also alternatives to these. COMSTS ordered COMSTSPAC and NORPAC sail all ROS TAP's. COMSTS advised COMSTSWESTPACAREA intentions regarding exercising options on time charter cargo ships.

On 22 August 1954, COMSTSWESTPACAREA advised COMSTS of cargo ship requirements; 15 deep draft.

On 23 August 1954, COMSTS informed COMSTSWESTPACAREA that Coast Guard had granted authority to waive certified maximum passenger capacity of vessels designated by SOPUS in charge of FIC evacuation of refugees.

On 24 August 1954, CNO directed COMSTS to sail East Coast and Med MSTTS TAP's to FIC. COMSTS confirmed and directed MSTSPAC to sail PASIG (TAW-3).

On 25 August 1954, CTF 90 advised CNO of problems anticipated re MSTTS chartered cargo ships, re crew liberty, cargo, and stevedore hire. COMSTS advised COMSTSWESTPACAREA that negotiations for J. MARTI and CULCUNDIS for passengers were unsuccessful, but satisfactory for cargo lift. COMSTSWESTPACAREA advised COMNAVFE that tankers PETALUMA (TAOC-79) and PISCATAQUA (TAOC-80) had been designated to carry potable water. CTF 90 advised CNO that first MSTTS ships were due FIC 1 September, and advised CINCPACFLT that he desired an MSTTS office at Haiphong in one of his ships. COMSTS advised Area Commanders of cargo ships chartered for FIC evacuation lift.

On 27 August 1954, CINCPACFLT requested COMSTS to establish MSTTS Office Haiphong. COMSTSWESTPAC advised ETA of J. MARTI and CULCUNDIS as 3 September Haiphong. COMSTSWESTPAC advised COMSTS that cleaning gangs would be necessary for MSTTS chartered or USNS ships.

On 28 August 1954, CINCPACFLT advised COMSTS and CNO that it may not be necessary, as suggested by CTF 90, to transfer Haiphong office to MSTTS ship. COMSTSWESTPACAREA advised COMSTS of hiring of 4 Jap cooks per Time Charter cargo ship to feed refugees.

On 30 August 1954, COMSTSWESTPACAREA advised COMNAVFE re lift of tents for refugee camps. COMSTSWESTPACAREA advised MSTTSO Manila and Guam re alterations to Time Charter cargo ships for bunks, safety at sea alterations, accounting, etc.

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On 31 August 1954, COMSTS asked COMSTSWESTPACAREA to obtain CTF 90 comment on establishment of MSTS branch office at Haiphong. COMSTS advised Area Commanders re ration rate for Indo Chinese subsisted in troop messes aboard USNS troopers. COMSTSPACAREA ordered CAPT TOMPKINS TAD to MTSO Saigon re MSTS matters.

1 Sep 1954, COMSTSWESTPACAREA reported to COMSTS CTF 90's views that he needed advisory unit only at Haiphong, and that MTSO Saigon should be augmented by TAD orders of personnel to CTF 90 staff to perform MSTS functions.

On 3 Sep 1954, COMSTSWESTPACAREA reported to CTF 90 sailing of PISCATAQUA (TACG-30) with potable water. CTF 90 advised CNO of dusting (delousing) of passengers, and of Commie agents among refugees.

On 4 Sep 1954, CTF 90 advised CTU 90.9.8 that for logistics, time charter cargo ships would arrange through owner agents supervised by MTSO Saigon, and that USNS TAP's and TAK's would be handled in same manner as commissioned ships.

On 5 Sep 1954, CTF 90 advised CNO that grenades of home-made manufacture had been found aboard USS MAGOFFIN (not an MSTS ship).

On 6 Sept 1954, CHMAAG Saigon advised CTF 90 of congestion among refugee camp at Saigon.

On 7 Sep 1954, CTF 90, in SITREP, advised CNO of Control Team shortage (riding ships to control passengers, these control teams are Indo Chinese), and of downward trend in number of passengers. CTF 90 advised CINCPACFLTADMIN of difficulties experienced with time charter BEAUREGARD (MSTS cargo ship) in lifting refugees, due small Merchant Marine crew, lack of authority to pay overtime, and lack of sanitary facilities, and advised further that attitude of merchant crew was less understanding toward refugees than USS personnel. ADMIN CTU 90.8.2, CDR DILLON advised COMSTSPACAREA that shore representation necessary for MSTS at Haiphong.

CTF 90 advised CTU 90.8.2 of unsatisfactory treatment of control team in BEAUREGARD.

On 9 Sep 1954, MTSO Saigon advised MTSOPAC of problems in clearing Vietnamese work gangs for USNS MSTS ships at Saigon.

On 10 Sep 1954, CAPT TOMPKINS, through CTF 90, advised COMSTS he does not consider MTSO ashore or afloat necessary at Haiphong or Saigon, only small advisory group. Also expects to recommend to CINCPAC a reduction of ships.

On 11 Sep 1954, CTF 90 recommended to CINCPACFLT scheduled sailing of 7 MSTS ships to FIC be cancelled and in addition, -- 2 diverted -- 4 declared excess and released.

On 13 Sep 1954, COMSTS directed COMSTSPACAREA send additional officers TAD staff CTF 90. COMSTS directed COMSTSMEDSUBAREA to order three TAP's return New York. (These had passed through Suez enroute FIC.)

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