

April 10, 1975

TO: Moncrieff J. Spear, Principal Officer
FROM: ^{DA} David Adamson, Political/Consular Officer
SUBJECT: Recollection of Evacuation Events

As the political/consular officer at the Consulate General there, I observed closely the events leading to the eventual American evacuation of Nha Trang on April 1, 1975. Although the Communist offensive in Region 2 began on March 4, Nha Trang itself was not threatened until later in the month, when the Communists increased their military pressure against demoralized GVN troops in Khanh Duong District, Khanh Hoa. Accordingly, in late March we at the Consulate began to attempt to "thin down" the number of Americans resident in Nha Trang.

The necessity of an immediate, complete evacuation of American personnel from Nha Trang became evident only on April 1, on which date the bulk of GVN leaders and administrative personnel abandoned the city. Fortunately, we had already airlifted many Americans, TCNs, and local employees and their families to Saigon; nonetheless, we still had perhaps a hundred Americans and dependents and many locals to evacuate. As consular officer, I booked out on Air America all remaining Americans (except for a skeleton staff) early on April 1, and most of those left for Saigon before noon. I believe that many locals and their families --together with other Vietnamese who muscled their way onto our flights-- also departed on Air America during the morning of April 1.

About noon the heretofore smooth evacuation was interrupted when Nha Trang airbase authorities cut off ground access to the base. Because of this, we were forced to lift persons via helicopter into the base. In order to accomplish that we sealed off a section of the parking lot as a landing zone, access to which we rigorously controlled. Unavoidably, this procedure heightened the panic of many Vietnamese in our compound, though when these Vietnamese saw that few Americans were leaving on the helicopters they were somewhat calmed down.

Thus, throughout the middle of the afternoon we airlifted numerous Vietnamese --including many who evidently did not work for the Consulate-- and some of the remaining Americans to the airbase. Around 1600 hrs, however, we began to hear a rising amount of gunfire near the Consulate; the shots were apparently being fired by ARVN stragglers, and perhaps also by Communist saboteurs. It was obviously at this point that we would have to finish evacuation of the remaining Americans rapidly. Hence, with our Marines providing security, we evacuated to the airbase all remaining Americans by about 1730 hrs. There, not without considerable pushing and shoving through the crowds of Vietnamese, we expeditiously mounted planes to Saigon. All Americans from Nha Trang were in the air and heading for Saigon by 1800 hrs.