

DoD Morning News Briefing
Tuesday, March 25, 1975
(Maj. Gen. Sidle, DASD/PA)

Announcements:

1. On the Hill: There are several statements that you might be interested in -- Fred Wacker, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Comptroller, who specializes in Program and Budget, will appear before the Senate Appropriations Defense Subcommittee about three of our reprogramming actions; Admiral Cramer, Director of the Defense Mapping Agency, is in an open session of the House Armed Services R&D Subcommittee; Admiral Weschler, Director of Logistics, JCS, and several other people will be talking to the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Investigations. Their subject will be the transfer of certain naval petroleum reserves to the Department of the Interior.

2. No speeches.

3. There was a question yesterday about the \$8 million for additional rice flights. We've posted this. Just to make sure you all got it, the Agency for International Development has transferred \$8 million from its commercial import program to extend the DC-8 program for about thirty more days. You may remember the original program was due to be over on the 27th of this month. This is strictly for supplies to civilians. Shortly after the first of April we expect to have six DC-8 aircraft flying this material in. The additional airline involved is going to be Seaboard World Airlines which is headquartered in New York City and they will furnish one DC-8 and perhaps a second one later.

Q: Now one of those DC-8s was flying ammunition from Utapao; is that one going to end on the 27th?

A: I'll take the question.

Q: The total carriers involve five?

A: Six will be the total as fast as they can get them over there.

Q: That's what, the total number of planes?

A: The total number of planes -- DC-8s flying rice out of Saigon.

Q: Is that four airlines or five airlines?

A: It becomes five airlines now as soon as Seaboard starts flying.

Q: The original figure was \$4.6 million?

A: Yes, we are now up to \$13.5 for the whole thing. That's the old contract plus the new contract.

Q: Why does it cost you more?

A: More planes.

Q: One more plane?

A: It's varied up and down. Remember we had six, five, four, this will be six.

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Q: Are you sure it's costing more?
A: I'm giving you the figure.

4. You have in your package a memo announcing the Army's change in weapons training policy for enlisted women. After 30 June, all enlisted women in the Army will be required to take defensive weapons training. This will be part of their basic training. Their whole thing is to stress defensive use. The Army has no plans to change anything about putting women in combat roles, but they will be required to be able to shoot in self defense.

Q: Is that an M-16?

A: They are going to learn to fire defensive type weapons, including qualifications on the M-16. Actually they have been doing this on a voluntary basis up to now and about 80 percent of the women who have been enlisting have volunteered for the training.

Q: A constitutional question arose when this came up a couple of years ago. Did your General Counsel decide there was no such constitutional problem? Admiral Zumwalt was arguing --

A: I'll take the question.

Q: I didn't know whether you had backup material on the legality of this.

A: No. Incidentally currently the Navy gives a familiarization course during boot training. The Air Force and the Marine Corps use the voluntary system that the Army was using. I'll check that. My recollection was that it had something to do with the question of women in combat rather than anything to do with training. But I'll check that for you.

5. Did Colonel Burke tell you yesterday that Secretary Laitin has arranged for you all to get your building passes now without being investigated?

The following was announced by Colonel Robert L. Burke, USA, Director, DDI, on Monday, March 24, 1975:

Secretary Laitin asked me to tell you that he's worked out an arrangement with the OSD Security Office where henceforth news correspondents assigned to the Pentagon by accredited news organizations will no longer have to go through the usual red tape to get building passes. This is for newsmen assigned from now, it's not retroactive. All that's needed, he says, is a letter from the home office or proper executive saying that you work for them. The letter won't even have to vouch for your character, he says. I talked with him about this a few minutes ago and he pointed out that if at any future time you're being investigated, it's not for the building pass, it's your own problem. You're on your own.

6. You asked yesterday why the Armed Forces Policy Council did not meet and you probably have noticed in the past that they don't necessarily meet every Monday. There were too many people too busy is the reason I've been given.

7. Another question from yesterday was: How many U.S. citizen soldiers, etc., are in Saudi Arabia? We have slightly under 250 military personnel; 22 DoD civilians and the contractors' technical assistance personnel currently in place is about 2200; either individuals or teams.

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Q: But Vinnell hasn't arrived there, has it?
A: They have somebody there, but the full amount is not there. The 2200 are going but less than half, about 1,000, are in-country at the present time.

Q: As of what date?
A: This is pretty current information.

Q: The remaining 1200 are contractor people on their way now?
A: Being hired, trained, etc.

Q: Are there AID people out there, permanent employees of AID?
A: There may be. All my question was for DoD -- military and DoD.

Q: So these wouldn't cover the State Department?
A: No.

Q: So it isn't all U.S. civilians then?
A: The ones I gave are contractor personnel. I cover two categories -- DoD civilians and contractor technical assistance personnel.

Q: There are just under 2500 altogether in the categories that you counted?

A: There will be when all the civilians, contractors' technical assistance teams get there. Not that at least 1200 of those are not there.

Q: Is there any change in the plans to send the remainder of the contractors' assistance personnel there?

A: No change that I know of at this time.

Q: Have U.S. forces been alerted or otherwise affected by the assassination?
A: No change.

Q: Does the Defense Department have any official comment on it?
A: No comment. After all, it's pretty quick.

Q: Are we still flying ammunition into Phnom Penh from Utapao?
A: The pipeline is still not empty, so I would assume you are correct. I don't actually have the figures today. I do have the total flights which came to 30 flights, but I don't have a breakdown.

Q: It was the same as yesterday?
A: Apparently is, yes.

Q: Tuesday, the 25th?
A: This is dated the 25th.

Q: Some did come from Utapao, right?
A: We have to assume that, yes. I can't firmly say it.

Q: What's been the result of the comment of the Thai Prime Minister that there would be no more ammunition flights?

A: Let me take the question. As I say, I'm not actually sure there were any because this doesn't say so. If in fact there were some, then I can answer your question.

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Q: Thirty total flights, doesn't say where they're from?
A: No, and doesn't say what was on them either.

Q: Why all of a sudden we're not getting a breakdown?
A: You recall, it's been off and on; I missed a day last week you may remember.

Q: We didn't get it yesterday.
A: You got it yesterday, I've got it here in front of me.

Q: Maybe it was the number of rounds?
A: I've got the number of rounds, 13.

Q: 107s?
A: 107s, no 105s.

Q: Has the Thai statement taken the form of a formal request that you know of or is it just --

A: I do not know the answer to that. I do know we have been in consultation with the Thai Government on a number of things for a number of years; this has all been worked out through a series of consultations. I suggest you direct that question to the State Department because they're the ones who will be dealing with it.

Q: Can you give us an update on the situation around Danang and the movement of the carrier HANCOCK?

A: The HANCOCK, as you know, is scheduled to leave Honolulu some time this week. I don't have a date. Danang, again it's awful hard to be up to date from this distance, but I don't know of any significant change from yesterday, I can say that.

Q: The question was asked yesterday if legislation would permit evacuation of --

A: Yes, I know, I read that and the legal people are still discussing this. I'm not in a position to answer that question.

Q: Also the question was asked for the breakdown of Soviet military aid to Hanoi between economic and military aid.

A: This is also being worked on; it was not ready as of time coming in here -- shouldn't be too long. The other one may be harder to answer.

E N D

(This is not a verbatim transcript)

DoD Morning News Briefing
Monday, March 24, 1975, 11:15 a.m.
(Colonel Robert L. Burke)

Announcements:

1. This morning we're releasing a statement by Secretary Schlesinger on the equal opportunity policy. In the statement he reaffirms the Department's equal opportunity policy and this incidentally is being distributed to the members of the Armed Forces Policy Council this morning. He says, "It must be emphasized once again that the Department of Defense will base this solely on the abilities of the personnel concerned, and individual's race, religion, ethnic background or national origin shall not influence the selection process." He indicates the actions to be taken if an individual refuses selection to a country to which he doesn't wish to be assigned. If there are any questions later, we can answer them.

Q: As a practical matter, how does this change things, when the Saudi Arabians, for example, can still veto an assignment of a man they don't want to come because he's Jewish?

A: As I understand it, Fred (Hoffman, AP), it will insure that any decision as to whether a man is going to be assigned to Saudi Arabia will be something that will not be anticipated by us on the basis of past experience but it will have to be made on an individual basis by the country concerned.

2. We have another document for release: the annual real and personal property report, which is available in DDI.

Q: In that there are two categories, donated land, public domain land. What is donated land? Does that mean the State lets the military use land for a base?

A: We'll have to check.

3. On the Hill: We have copies of Assistant Secretary of Defense (Comptroller) McClary's prepared statement before House Appropriations Defense Subcommittee on FY '76 supplemental request for pay, subsistence, etc. Also copies of prepared statements by Lt. Gen. Graham, Director of DIA, and Dr. C. H. Heilmeier, Director of ARPA, for their testimony before the House Armed Services R&D Subcommittee.

4. No speech texts today.

5. Also we're releasing the monthly figures on military strength and recruiting results for February.

6. We also have a release which announces the selection of the new Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps. This is Sergeant Major Henry Black, originally from Imperial, Pennsylvania. He becomes the seventh Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps, succeeding Sergeant Major Clinton A. Puckett, who is retiring.

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Q: I wonder if we can get any explanation from Mr. Schlesinger as to an answer he gave last Friday in which he said: "inevitably, we must provide equipment and supplies that will sustain South Vietnam and hopefully Cambodia." What does he mean by inevitably? Is he making a prediction or just a philosophical statement?

A: I assume that he is referring to the fact that they don't have the capability to produce the kind of armaments that they need themselves.

Q: What's the compulsion that will force Congress to vote the equipment? Does he have any justification for saying "inevitably?"

A: I can ask.

Q: Has there been any change in our military aid program as a result of the recent developments in South Vietnam? Accelerating deliveries, for example.

A: We can check on that.

Q: Could you explain why the Defense Department's been so niggardly in obligating that \$700 million? According to Senator Mathias, who got the figures from the Defense Department, something on the order of \$500 million of the \$700 million have not yet been delivered.

A: I'll check, John (Finney, NY Times). The question about the rate at which it was being provided has been discussed here a couple of times. I understood it was being spread out throughout the entire year, but we can check on that.

Q: Let's see how much has been delivered, how much is in the pipeline and how much has not yet been obligated. I'd like your latest figures on that with some explanation, if possible, as to why such a large amount is still either in the pipeline or unobligated.

Q: There seems to be a fourth of the total appropriations in Vietnam, only a fourth has been delivered in weapons so far; do you know whether that's true?

A: No, I don't; we can check and see.

Q: Can I put an addendum on John (Finney's) question, as to whether any plans for accelerating deliveries are in the works? Actually run through where we are and how we got there.

A: We'll check that.

Q: Is there any ammunition left anywhere in Southeast Asia that is available for shipment to Cambodia at this time?

A: To Cambodia?

Q: Yes. \$21.5 million ought to have been drawn down; it's been about two weeks.

A: Let me see if I understand the question right.

Q: Is there any ammunition or other supplies in the pipeline left for Cambodia?

A: For which there are funds available?

Q: Yes. Right.

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Q: Senator Mathias draws a conclusion from this, which on the basis it seems valid that you want the extra \$300 million not for the present fiscal year, but for deliveries in the ensuing fiscal year because you must have a time period between obligation and delivery in the order of three months or so.

A: I don't think that's the case, John, but I'll find out what the story is.

Q: There's a specific query within the framework of what's happened to aid and where does it stand. If the reports are accurate that South Vietnam is indeed running short on POL and we had money in the kitty to furnish POL, how come they are short? In other words, is it their option not to spend the money available for POL? Is it our option to spread this thing out evenly for purposes of bookkeeping so we let shortages develop? In other words, can you give some rationale as to why they should be short of POL if, indeed, there's money available for POL?

A: You're asking really how the system works specifically for POL.

Q: I'm asking why the shortage if there's still money available and as a specific within that question, about why are they short of POL if there's lots of money to turn.

A: We'll check.

Q: Can you comment on a report -- I understand that it's out of Bangkok this morning - the Thai Prime Minister says that he will no longer allow the United States to fly arms from Utapao to Cambodia?

A: No, I have seen that story, but I just wouldn't want to comment. You might check State on that.

Q: Would the Pentagon have any contingency plans if we were not allowed to fly from Utapao, if we were flying from Tan Son Nhut instead?

A: I just don't know that there's any intention to fly from anywhere else.

Q: You have no comment at all on that report?

A: I just am not briefed on what the U.S. response is to that.

Q: Do you have any reports on airlifts as to what ammunition is moving from Utapao?

A: The information I have indicates that ammunition has been coming from Utapao.

Q: Can you give us the details as to what the airlift is bringing in in the last day?

A: In terms of sorties?

Q: Yes.

A: Coming out of Utapao, they're flying more than just ammunition; it includes also POL and general cargo. On the 22nd there were three C-130s sorties and one DC-8 sortie for a total of four. On the 23rd of March, there were no air-landed sorties at Phnom Penh and on the 24th of March, there were a total of 30 sorties, 18 C-130s and 12 DC-8s.

Q: The 18 C-130s were all out of Thailand?

A: Yes, that's the information I have.

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Q: The 12 DC-8s were out of South Vietnam?

A: I think there was one DC-8 on March 22; that one that flew on March 22. I believe that came out of Utapao.

Q: The point is that at least for today the flights are continuing out of Thailand?

A: Yes, that's correct.

Q: Were they ammunition flights?

A: Ammunition, rice, POL, general cargo.

Q: The Prime Minister said he would allow food but these are definitely ammunition flights?

A: To the best of my information, yes, that's correct.

Q: Contract will be up in three days on the DC-8s; have they renewed that contract yet?

A: We'll check and see. On the DC-8 question, there was something working to extend the contract; I don't know whether it's been announced or what the details are.

Q: In the event that the civilian pilots prove reluctant to continue flights into Phnom Penh, does the Defense Department have contingency plans to use Air Force pilots and Air Force planes to fly in the ammunition and equipment?

A: Not to my knowledge.

Q: What would be your disposition to having one of the military assistance people here tomorrow at the briefing time to run through where you stand with aid to Cambodia and Vietnam as the Pentagon sees it; since it's front and center right now as an issue it might maybe be worth getting the facts out on the table all at one time for everybody.

A: We'll ask whether we can do that. The same people who could do that most knowledgeably are also involved in testifying and doing other things. We'll see.

Q: Could you also clarify the Soviet aid to Hanoi? General Brown said the other day how it had increased from about \$700 million in '73 to about \$1.7 billion last year. I understand the major part of that increase is economic aid. Could we get that broken down by economic and military?

A: We'll see if there's a breakout.

Q: Can we get a reading from the Pentagon as to whether the fighting in Vietnam has reached the proportions of Easter of '72 or Tet of '68? There seems to be some dispute between the State Department and Defense.

A: I know what you're talking about but I think it depends on what terms you use. In terms of the intensity of the contacts that are being made by the opposing forces, it does not seem to be as high yet as 1972. In terms of territory lost, of course it's considerably greater.

Q: Does the Pentagon still not consider this a nationwide offensive?

A: There's heavy fighting in Military Region I and MR II and MR III it seems as though, and of course there is also some contact in MR IV, I

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think you would probably call that a nationwide offensive.

Q: Didn't Schlesinger acknowledge on the Hill last week that yes, this is a major offensive?

A: Right.

Q: When you say not as high yet as in '72, do you mean in terms of actual fighting as opposed to deployment of number of tanks and troops, you're talking about clashes?

A: If you remember in '72 there were three major points where there were very heavy contacts -- at Quang Tri, up in the Pleiku/Kontum area and down in the An Loc area -- and so far, although there have been some intense contacts, I don't think it's quite reached the level of that 1972 fighting.

Q: What's the Defense Department's comment as to the number of provinces that have been lost?

A: I just don't have one for you. It appears that the provinces that border, for example, on Cambodia, Kontum, Pleiku, Darlac and on down --

Q: Phuoc Long?

A: Phuoc Long was the first, I think. I don't have anything definite on Binh Long.

Q: It may be lost, it may not be?

A: It may be; I'm just not briefed on that.

Q: Do we have any plans to supply DaNang? It's supposedly now being cut off; they've got troops on the South and North of it.

A: I saw that, I don't know whether we do have plans to assist the refugees at Danang or the South Vietnamese military forces that are trying to defend that area.

Q: How about the disposition of the North Vietnamese reserve divisions?

A: There isn't any change since last week.

Q: Two out of seven?

A: That's right.

Q: I think the Secretary has indicated, that if there was a major nationwide offensive the Defense Department would consider asking Congress for permission to give direct military support to the South Vietnamese. Is the Defense Department considering asking Congress for permission to give direct military support, if this is a nationwide offensive?

A: You know that under the law there is no way that U.S. military forces can be used in South Vietnam without the permission of Congress. Whether or not there will be any request for anything like that would be something that would be addressed at the highest levels of government and whether the Secretary will make that kind of a recommendation to the President would be something he'd have to decide and I have no idea.

Q: Is it being considered by the Secretary now?

A: I haven't been informed of any such discussion.

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Q: Didn't he indicate in one of those corridor interviews last week that the climate was such that -- he didn't say it in so many words but the tone seemed to me -- the climate is such that the Administration probably wouldn't?

A: I'm not aware that that issue is a live one and is being discussed right now.

Q: I'm confused by your earlier answer on the two divisions, I think there's the 314th and the 316th. Do you now have definite information that those two divisions have moved into South Vietnam or is your information still inconclusive?

A: I think that the analysts feel that elements of those two divisions are certainly in South Vietnam.

Q: Still only the elements? You still do not have conclusive proof that the entire division has moved down?

A: I can't tell you right from here whether or not the entire division in each case is down and you're talking about the 341st and the 316th. I believe.

Q: Are those the Hanoi home guard divisions?

A: I'm not sure.

Q: Has Danang been a port of entry in the past for our military equipment?

A: It has, yes.

Q: Since we withdrew?

A: I don't know whether we've brought it into Danang or not; we can check that.

Q: If we begin to send our ships directly into Danang, would that represent a change in our past action and policies.

A: We'll check and see.

Q: Have they brought the 105s back into Phnom Penh? Are they firing those again?

A: I don't have the last two days' reports, they're available but we just haven't gotten them. As of last Friday, the only rounds landing in that area were twenty 107mm rockets, not 105s.

Q: In the Phnom Penh airport?

A: In the vicinity of Pochentong airport, yes.

Q: What about evacuation plans, is there anything that can be said on those yet? If they take them out, are they going to take them to Okinawa or are they going to take them to Utapao, or what?

A: I just don't want to talk about the evacuation plans.

Q: Is the OKINAWA still in the Gulf of Siam?

A: Yes.

Q: Tell us about the HANCOCK and whether it's loaded up with Marines.

A: The HANCOCK is due into Pearl Harbor shortly and there is a Marine CH-53 helicopter squadron alerted on Hawaii.

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Q: How many CH-53s?

A: I'm not sure how many they have; we can check that.

Q: Marine helicopter squadron alerted for evacuation duty?

A: It's for a possible move to Western Pacific.

Q: You put them aboard ship?

A: Aboard the HANCOCK.

Q: When is the HANCOCK due in?

A: It's due in Hawaii about now and conceivably it could leave for WESTPAC some time this week.

Q: Are any Marines at Okinawa on alert?

A: Not to my knowledge.

Q: By speaking of WESTPAC, would that include Vietnam as well as Cambodia?

A: That's all in that area, it would also include places like the Philippines.

Q: Can you tell us what the Soviet tug around Hawaii is doing, where it is operating now?

A: We can take the question, I think we can find that.

Q: To what do you attribute the increased accuracy of the Khmer Rouge rockets in the Pochentong area?

A: I haven't seen those reports but usually with rockets the accuracy is a function of range and if you can move them in closer you can get better accuracy and that may be the case. I just don't know.

Q: The airport is suitable for landing now?

A: Yes.

Q: The Marine helicopter squadron on Hawaii, do you know which one and when it was put on alert?

A: I don't have that here but we can find that out for you.

Q: Do you know when it was put on alert? Over the weekend?

A: No, I think it's been alert to go for several days; it did not happen over the weekend.

Q: Where is the HANCOCK coming from?

A: California.

Q: San Diego?

A: Alameda.

Q: How many helicopters in the squadron?

A: We can find that out for you.

Q: Is this the last mission for the HANCOCK?

A: I'm told this is its last scheduled deployment.

Q: When did it leave Alameda?

A: We can get that for you.

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Q: How many Marines are involved?
A: I would guess about 300.

Q: There have been no other Marine units alerted, have they?
A: Not to my knowledge.

Q: None on Okinawa?
A: No.

Q: Just the helicopters, pilots and maintenance people?
A: That's right.

Q: Where on Hawaii are we talking about?
A: Kaneohe.

Q: Is this a scheduled mission?
A: I haven't said that. It's not a regular operation.

Q: I would take it that it's going to take part in a special mission around South Vietnam, is that correct?
A: No, not necessarily.

Q: These Marines will board the HANCOCK? Can we say that?
A: Yes, they will.

Q: That will depart some time this week?
A: Yes.

Q: Presumably they would pull up near Danang and ferry back and forth?
A: We are not able to tell you where they are going and I would not make any assumptions at this time if I were you.

Q: What's the transit time to WESTPAC?
A: It takes about 10 days.

Q: Aside from the pilots, flight crews and maintenance men, no other Marines have been put on alert?

A: Not to my knowledge. No other Marines are on alert other than that one helicopter squadron.

Q: Aside from the basic number of crew of the squadron, no other Marines are traveling on the HANCOCK wherever they go?

A: To the best of my knowledge, no; it's just the one squadron.

Q: Is there any Marine battalion afloat in that general area -- South China Sea? Or is one being sent there?

A: I haven't heard but we can check.

Q: What carriers are in WESTPAC now?
A: ENTERPRISE is in Subic Bay; midway at Yokosuka, Japan; and CORAL SEA is at sea.

Q: Where?
A: WESTPAC.

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Q: West of the Philippines?
A: Yes.

Q: Vietnam or Cambodian waters?
A: No, it's fairly close to the Philippines.

Q: Is it accompanied by an amphibious force of any sort?
A: CORAL SEA is not accompanied by amphibious forces.

Q: What other ships are with her?
A: She is accompanied by two destroyers and an oiler.

Q: Has there been any change in the makeup, the composition of that OKINAWA group or for that matter the location?
A: We can check and see.

Q: What's the latest count on the number of Marines?
A: I don't think that's varied. We can check that.

Q: Still 800?
A: We'll see if we can get you a figure.

Q: What kind of helicopters are involved?
A: CH-53.

Q: Why are the people in this building so reluctant to talk about evacuation from Cambodia or Vietnam when obviously we're not going to send any troops in there. When we had the Cyprus situation, we were told everything. Why can't they do the same thing in the Indochina area?

A: We'll answer as many questions as we think we can safely. We won't be able to answer the others.

Q: What's the subject of safety have to do with it? I don't think North Vietnam or the Khmer Rouge is going to attack our carriers.

A: There is some concern about talking about contingency plans which in the case of evacuation would conceivably have to be carried out in a very difficult and dangerous situation. There is some concern over the lives of the people that might have to carry out that mission and also for the safety of the evacuees who will be leaving. So it limits what we feel able to say on that subject.

Q: Could you find out how many people the HANCOCK could accommodate if it turned out to be necessary?

A: Do you mean in the way of troops?

Q: I was thinking of evacuees.

Q: When did CORAL SEA leave? Are there any Marines aboard it?

A: I said I don't know when she left port. To the best of my knowledge, there are no Marine units with helicopters aboard the CORAL SEA.

Q: Are there more than the normal complement of Marines aboard?
A: We can check and see.

Q: You say the HANCOCK will stop long enough to pick up this squadron and head out?
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A: It's expected to leave sometime this week.

Q: Is this an emergency measure?

A: No, I don't see it that way.

Q: Would we be off base to speculate that there are contingency plans for evacuating Danang?

A: We have all kinds of contingencies and I can't help you with that kind of speculation.

Q: Evacuating who? I'm getting lost here.

A: He's talking about Danang.

Q: I'm talking about evacuating the South Vietnamese troops if they happen to get stalled in Danang.

Q: If that's the line of questioning then we're going to have to ask the Defense Department whether it views the current legislation as permitting it to evacuate either military or civilians of South Vietnam.

A: We'll take that question.

Q: Is the Secretary going to come see us this week since he didn't make it last week?

A: I wouldn't rule that possibility out.

Q: Is it likely that he will?

A: I don't know; I'm not sure but it is possible.

Q: Did anything important happen at the Armed Forces Policy Council meeting this morning?

A: It did not meet this morning. I said earlier that copies of that Equal Opportunity statement were being sent to members of the Armed Forces Policy Council.

Q: Any reason why they did not meet?

A: I'm sure there is but I don't know it. I should have asked.

Q: Would you comment on Jack Anderson's column this morning saying we lost a super-secret Mark 48 torpedo?

A: I saw that but I don't have any information on it yet.

Q: Can you respond to Rep. Aspin's weekender on the nerve gas transport?

A: Yes, there was a response over the weekend on it which we have in DDI.

E N D

DoD Morning News Briefing
Thursday, March 27, 1975, 11:15 a.m.
(Maj. Gen. Sidle, DASD/PA)

Announcements:

1. On the Hill: Congress is in recess. It is expected to last until April 7. We have no representatives scheduled to appear there until the week of April 7.
2. We have no speeches.
3. We are announcing the appointment of Robert J. Murray as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy, Planning and Management in the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs. Bob Murray was Assistant to the Secretary and the Deputy Secretary under both Mr. Richardson and for a while under Mr. Schlesinger. Prior to that he worked in ISA -- since about 1961.
4. We've notified the Congress of a proposed letter of offer to sell the Government of Saudi Arabia additional equipment and services for the construction of port, base and headquarters facilities and the continuation of the planning and design for their naval expansion program. Value: \$142.8 million.

Q: Have they ever explained that, as to what they meant by increased facilities? They imply that this was in addition to something else that had gone on?

A: Yes. You know they've had a plan for naval expansion for some time. My understanding was they had a meeting last fall and agreed that this and that had to be done and this was part of the agreed expansion. I don't have any details on it.

Q: And this is the construction portion of it, in other words?

A: There is some construction in base and headquarters facilities plus further design. I'm not sure what that amounts to.

Q: Can you tell us the current whereabouts and what the alert status is of the 1st Battalion of the 4th Regiment of the 3rd Marine Corps Division in Camp Hansen in Okinawa and similarly the current status about the 3rd Battalion of the 4th Regiment of the 3rd Marine Division at Camp Hansen?

A: I can say as I did yesterday there's no change in the alert status of any of the units on Okinawa and none have gone from their locations on Okinawa. I can't answer your specific question on the two units but what I said covers that.

Q: What is the alert status?

A: Whatever it was, there's been no change in weeks. Let me explain to you what's going on over there which I found out this morning.

Q: Let me explain. Apparently there is some lawsuit involving Bird Air. Various people have brought a case, including members of Congress, against Bird Air. These people, the plaintiffs in this case, content that they have been informed by the Defense Department that certain steps have been taken on these two battalions that I'm quoting. I am trying to establish what the facts are.

A: I'll have to take the question; I don't know when the current alert status started; all I know is there has been no change in many, many, many days.

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(This is not a verbatim transcript)

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Q: Weeks or months?

A: I said weeks before, I think weeks is right. But let me check when we did make the last change. My recollection though is that it's at least three or four weeks; whenever we first started talking about the USS OKINAWA. At that time, as became generally known, two companies up there were placed on an increased alert status as a precautionary measure in connection with the possible evacuation of Phnom Penh. I know of no change in that, in all that time. That's a long time, so I say it's nothing recent.

Now let me explain to you, I found out finally, at least I think I know why the sudden spate of queries on this subject. Apparently the local commanders on Okinawa, and this is on their own, anticipating that something might be in the wind, did take local action designed to improve their readiness in the event they're directed to participate in evacuation type duty. As you know, there is a back-up battalion up there for the one that's on the OKINAWA and I think we've discussed with you the possibilities of switching those. There was no decision made on this and as a former commander, I know that on many occasions I would alert my troops to get ready for something that might or might not happen. In fact, I'm sure that's the origination of the old Army term "hurry up and wait," and many of these "hurry up and wait" things come from such actions. So the key point: there has been no change in the alert status from here or CINCPAC. There's no official change in the alert status, and none of the troops on Okinawa have gone anywhere. That answers the question.

Q: Is it contemplated that one of these companies or both would move aboard the HANCOCK?

A: I can't say that's contemplated because there won't be a decision on anything like that until later. Obviously, that's a possibility, but it wouldn't necessarily have to be one of them. There's no point in drawing that inference.

Q: Has the HANCOCK left, do you know?

A: The HANCOCK left yesterday at one o'clock. It is west of Honolulu as you could guess.

Q: It has aboard 15 helicopters or thereabouts?

A: That's the figure we were saying would be logical, yes.

Q: 300 Marines?

A: Approximately, yes.

Q: That's with the helicopter company, but there are other Marines aboard, aren't there? There's supposed to be a company.

A: They have what we might call a station complement. That's a very small group. I think it's 43 or something like that, part of the ship's company. Every ship sails with a Marine detachment. It doesn't have to be a company.

Q: There was a report yesterday or the day before yesterday of an amphibious group moving out of San Diego westward.

A: This will occur tomorrow. There will be a movement of what they call PHIBRON V. We aren't going to announce this until tomorrow, but I might as well tell you now. This is a normal long-planned replacement action. The group will go out to the Western Pacific and eventually replace some of the ships out there who will then return to the West Coast. This is a normal thing. There

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was some word that they were going to have a Marine complement on board. It is true. There will be 200 Marines on board, going only to Honolulu. These are Marine replacements. This is not a unit; it is not a military organization. It is 200 replacements and they will get off at Honolulu.

Q: Do we know for a fact how many other Marines are on the HANCOCK or are we assuming it's 40?

A: I'll check that. I know it's just part of the normal ship's company.

Q: PHIBRON V consists of how many ships?

A: I'll have to get that for you. I didn't expect to put that out today.

Q: When you said earlier that these commanders, on their own, were telling their troops to get ready, what orders were they, do you know?

A: I don't know that.

Q: Were these battalion commanders; company commanders?

A: I would suspect it would be at least battalion; it might even be division. But you know if you're out in the field and you know that you are at the end of the line and if anybody's going to do anything about anything, it's going to be you, you tend to try to get ready.

Q: Since you had two commanders doing this --

A: I don't know that we had two. This is the way the story came in. I can't confirm that. My understanding was there was only one.

Q: You first said that there were two.

A: No, I said there were two companies.

Q: I got the impression that you used a plural -- the unit commanders.

A: I don't actually know that. My understanding was that it was only one. So I'd have to check that. We were trying to run down why the sudden spate of stories, and this appears to be the answer.

Q: Have any orders been given to any of these units to move out of Okinawa?

A: No, absolutely not.

Q: What is the Defcon status? Is it one, two, three, four or five? Can you say that?

A: I'll have to check that.

Q: What does increased status mean?

A: If you increase an alert status, it ups the number of hours in which they're supposed to be ready; in other words, move out in eight hours; move out in 16, 24, 32, you name it.

Q: That's the reason that Frank's question is important.

A: I know it's important but I'll have to get the answer to that.

Q: Five or whatever it is -- it could be next to the bottom for all we know.

A: Sure, it could go from five to four, which would not be much.

Q: The word alert is like an alarm bell you know, you've got to be very precise.

MORE

(This is not a verbatim transcript)

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A: I agree, that's why I'm taking the question. I don't want to speculate on it because I don't know.

Q: Have Defense analysts confirmed that 105s are again shelling Pochentong?

A: 105s are again landing in the Pochentong area.

Q: The first day now?

A: I understand it's the second, yesterday, I'm speaking now of Pochentong time, 26 March, there were twenty-eight 107s and five 105s. We don't have our today's report.

Q: The 105s and 107s all hit the airport?

A: These were all in the area of the airport. There was no interruption of flights so apparently there wasn't any serious damage.

Q: How many flights?

A: The total coming in were 46 for today, that is, the 27th; 48 for yesterday. I don't have the breakdown. We will post the breakdown between C-130s and DC-8s.

Q: Are they still coming out of Thailand?

A: They're coming out of Thailand and Saigon.

Q: Has the U.S. Government received any official request from the Thai Government yet that you're aware of to stop the flights?

A: Not to my knowledge.

Q: What's the status of the Danang airlift?

A: As you know, there is at least one plane involved so far. This is being handled by the State Department. I really shouldn't get into this. I would suggest that you ask them about the Danang airlift because we're not involved.

Q: Did you negotiate a contract?

A: Not yet, we're not involved at this point.

Q: You're not involved; in other words, there's been no contract signed yet?

A: No new contract.

Q: This one supposedly is under charter to Air Vietnam, not to the U.S. So the Defense Department has signed no contract as yet with anybody for 727s or 747s or anything?

A: That's correct.

Q: And the Defense Department has not been asked as yet to sign a contract?

A: That's correct also.

Q: The State Department then has not told the Defense Department what it has already told the public?

A: I wouldn't want to put it that way. I'm sure that the State Department has not officially asked us yet.

Q: It says in the little memo that the MAC has made the arrangements.

A: Well, the MAC has done some unofficial checking around; that's probably what they're talking about.

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(This is not a verbatim transcript)

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Q: Has anything happened with the sea lift proposal?

A: I have nothing new on that.

Q: It just hasn't gone anywhere?

A: No, that's of course a little different ball game, but there's nothing new on it.

Q: In this case the military sealift command would be involved?

A: Right. MSC would, in all probability, would be used as the contracting authority.

Q: There are reports that ships are already moving.

A: Again I would refer this to the State Department.

Q: Can we have a reading from Mr. Schlesinger as to whether the death warrant for Cambodia has been signed yet with the delay of the Easter recess?

A: I'll take your question.

Q: You got a stay on that death warrant, didn't you, with that \$21.5?

A: A small stay.

Q: That's not much of a stay; in fact, it isn't a stay. The point is that Congress is going to be gone until after April 7 and therefore that is a delay in action and I wonder what the effect of that is going to be.

A: I don't have the figure and I'll try to get this tomorrow but there's still some of the \$21.5 left.

Q: That has not been drawn down?

A: I don't believe it's all even been obligated yet.

Q: Have you got the figures on that?

A: I will get those; I didn't get them this morning.

Q: Is the holdup on the contract for the airlift because AID has not come up with the money yet?

A: I'm not familiar with the reason; again, that would have to be a State question. But we have not officially been asked to do the job and of course that would include a fund cite as we say.

Q: A fund cite?

A: When we do anything in the Defense Department, somebody's got to pay for it, and the term we often use is a fund cite --what funds are you going to use to pay for it.

Q: You know who paid for that flight yesterday that brought the Americans out?

A: That was Air Vietnam. That would have been funds already available over there.

Q: This is a left over question about whether you can legally evacuate South Vietnamese troops and the last time we asked you the "legals" were still looking at it.

A: They still are.

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(This is not a verbatim transcript)

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Q: This would include civilians, South Vietnamese?

A: The whole problem is being addressed.

Q: Anything new on North Vietnamese reserve unit movements?

A: I'm sure there is nothing new.

Q: Does the Defense Department have any idea of the extent of loss of equipment, supplies and ammunition by the South Vietnamese forces that are being withdrawn?

A: Not yet. We of course are anxious to learn this and as you know in our present situation that this information is not as easy to come by as it was in days gone by so we do not have a figure on that. We will undoubtedly have them.

Q: Do you have any general feel on this question without precise figures?

A: Not really, I'd just be participating in a wild speculation and there's no point in doing that.

Q: Do you have any information on whether the South Vietnamese forces have or have not been blowing up ammunition dumps as they retreat?

A: There is definitely some information that they have in at least some cases. We don't have information in other cases whether they have or not.

Q: Ammunition?

A: And equipment. If you can't take it out with you you better destroy it. That's a rule of war.

Q: What kind of equipment?

A: Well, it would be kind of across the board; I don't have any specifics but there'd certainly be some artillery and some tanks and some airplanes and trucks.

Q: Airplanes?

A: Aircraft, you know there was some aircraft left behind in Pleiku and they were inoperative. Now whether they went to the trouble of making them more inoperative I don't know, but they were considered unflyable.

Q: How serious has been the loss of this territory in its effect on our intelligence availability in the area?

A: I don't have an answer to that. Let me take that question. I don't know that we'll be able to answer but let me take it. As you know, our intelligence has not been as good since our own people got out as it was when we were there.

Q: Were there not sizeable ammunition stocks in Hue?

A: Probably, but I'll take the question. Danang is the big supply point up in the north. You know it's prudent if you're defending to spread your stocks out so there's bound to have been some in Hue.

Q: Along with the evacuation of people, is there anything being done to evacuate these ammunition stockpiles from Danang?

A: It certainly would be prudent to do so but this is a South Vietnamese problem. I don't know the answer to that.

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(This is not a verbatim transcript)

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Q: It's something I suggest we ought to know about since we are in the business of supplying them.

A: I would suggest that would be correct.

Q: Is there any speculation on how long the South Vietnamese could hold without additional American aid?

A: We haven't gotten into that yet.

Q: We have been talking about the Cambodians running out of ammo.

A: It's still far from a parallel case. The Cambodians are almost down to a hand-to-mouth operation and the South Vietnamese are not. I think we could refer to Mr. Schlesinger's statement on that.

Q: The other day your office said that due to constrained consumption of the South Vietnamese POL, stocks are not critically short at this time. Can you make a similar statement about ammo stocks?

A: I'll take the question but I'm personally sure that's correct because they were spread around; the use was rationed and the statement should be a true one.

Q: But aren't the ammo stocks, putting aside Hue and Danang, primarily concentrated in the region of Saigon?

A: I think the answer to that is yes; that they aren't going to be forced into a hand-to-mouth existence very quickly on that, but let me take the question.

Q: Is the situation around Pochentong airport more dangerous than --

A: There's been very little change on who owns what around there. The enemy recaptured Toul Leap two or three days and that area was close enough before for them to shoot the 105mm artillery, so the presumption is that they are shooting the 105s out of there again. I don't have any confirmation of that. That is the current presumption.

Q: Is the situation any different than when the 105s were there previously?

A: No.

Q: Do you consider it any more dangerous?

A: What do you mean by dangerous? What I'm saying is that it's about the same as it was except that Toul Leap is again in the hands of Khmer Rouge. That's the only significant change that we're aware of.

Q: There were reports on the radio this morning that the Chinese are sending cargo ships towards Hue with supplies. Is that true?

A: I don't have any word on that.

Q: Is it true that either China or Russia or both have stepped up, in the last few days or weeks, their military aid to Hanoi?

A: I'll take the question. I have not seen anything personally or heard anything.

Q: Have any of the other Southeastern Asia countries changed the alert status of their troops, particularly Thailand?

A: We have no word that would indicate that. That doesn't mean they haven't done something on the local basis. The local border guard commander

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(This is not a verbatim transcript)

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might have increased the alert status of his personnel. We have nothing on that situation at all.

Q: We plan to continue flights into Phnom Penh at the current level?
A: Yes.

Q: Do we detect through our surveillance means any signs of aggressive or possibly threatening moves in the Middle East area in the last few days, by either side?

A: No change in that area at all to my knowledge.

Q: No movement of troops forward or mobilization?
A: I have seen no reports on that.

Q: Can I get your help in interpreting a statement put out by your office the other day? This was on the whole question of the status of aid to South Vietnam. The statement says as of 24 March records in Saigon indicate that supplies services valued at 430.3 million "had been used" thus far this fiscal year. Does "used" in this sense mean obligated; does it mean delivered, what does that mean?

A: It means delivered, which to us is the point where the paperwork starts going back and eventually winds up in the Comptroller's office and at that point it becomes an outlay. Remember this was the cause of the confusion in the first place.

Q: That represents deliveries?

A: Yes. I guess you weren't here, but we had a breakdown of exactly where all the money was. The \$175 million for the fourth quarter of this fiscal year, of course, has not yet been obligated. It will be put out for obligation on the 31st -- next week. Of the \$525 million that had been released for obligation, \$430.3 million was used as you said, and there was \$94.7 million which is still in the pipeline --

Q: It means \$430 has been delivered?

A: Right. Let me just point that part of that is services, and when you talk about a service being delivered, that's a little hard to figure. What they try to do is figure that in and the unexpended part of that that's been put out for obligation, the \$94 million does include money for services.

Q: That is a deceptive figure since out of the whole total of \$700 million, as I understand it, only \$268 million represents ammunition and hardware.

A: There's a little more -- hardware, spare parts, POL -- but a sizeable portion of it is services. You've got to account for it. Why would it be misleading?

Q: It's misleading in the sense when you say \$430 million, people got the impression that it's \$430 million worth of ammo --

A: I didn't say ammo; we're talking money.

Q: I know, but what I'm saying is that money sounds like a lot, but when it's reduced to actual bullets, it's a very small amount; it's roughly one-third.

A: Relative to what? That's a lot of ammunition.

MORE

Q: It's like buying insurance and discovering that you're getting very little for it because the administrative costs eat up most of the insurance.

A: It's not administrative costs.

Q: Various costs involved in servicing this?

A: This is part of the deal. For instance, the crating and packaging we're required to charge against the \$700 million, for example. It's not too huge a figure, but it's a sizeable figure.

Q: Could these figures be broken out?

A: We have them broken out. We'll get it out today. We worked it out last night.

1. As of 26 March 1975, \$525 million of the \$700 million DAV Appropriation for FY75 has been obligated; i.e., three-fourths of the FY 75 DAV appropriation has been committed by OSD for the procurement of supplies and services by the individual Military Departments. A breakdown by general categories is as follows (in millions):

\$204.6	Ammunition (bullets, shells, bombs).
74.8	Fuel and other petroleum products.
66.7	Spare parts and components for aircraft, weapons, combat vehicles, and other combat equipment.
31.0	Other military supplies (e.g. medical supplies).
64.0	Technical assistance and training, including highly skilled technicians for jet aircraft, radar and other sophisticated equipment.
82.9	Transportation of equipment and supplies and administrative services chargeable to the DAV.
1.0	Non-major items of equipment; e.g. combat radios, tank sights, and aircraft modifications.
<hr/> <u>\$525.0</u>	

2. The remaining \$175 million for the fourth quarter FY75 will be ordered/allocated to the Military Departments on 31 March 1975. To fund requirements identified at this time which are generally proportionate to those requirements already funded. It should be noted however, that ongoing reassessments of the tactical situation may necessitate reprogramming of funds to accommodate new developments.

Q: (Inaudible).

A: I'm not arguing with your point Lloyd (Norman, Newsweek), but this has been worked out in agreement with everybody and I don't really see any problem. One of the biggest problems is that we don't have enough money for example, for more services. One of the reasons that the airplanes aren't flying in full numbers is because they don't have enough money to pay for the services.

Q: Can you expect the same proportion to prevail in the remaining \$200 million?

A: I would expect it, but I'll check that, I don't know.

Q: Would you elaborate on that? One of the reasons not all of their aircraft are flying is that they do not have enough money for services.

A: You remember back last fall they were forced to terminate a large number of contract employees at Bien Hoa and at that time there was a spate of stories saying this is going to seriously affect the maintenance, etc., of the VNAF. I would say this has come to pass.

Q: Were they forced to terminate or did they elect to terminate and buy ammunition instead.

A: I'd have to check that, but that's my understanding. Again, this was so long ago, they didn't have enough money for everything so they cut that out.

Q: I mean this was nothing legislative...

A: No, this was an administrative decision on the part of the South Vietnamese, as counseled by our attache personnel, probably.

Q: It was the lack of maintenance supplied by American contractor employees than it was lack of spares--

A: Spare parts, of course, are very important, too. I wouldn't begin to speculate on which would be considered more important--they're both important.

Q: If they've got 5/6th of one type of an aircraft down, presumably if they had full maintenance capability they could start to cannibalize and get a goodly proportion of them flying.

A: I think that's reasonable speculation.

Q: I think the figures show that the South Vietnamese are getting twice as much aid as the North Vietnamese are getting in this latest appropriation.

A: You mean military aid?

Q: Yes, military assistance. I think it's \$700 million as opposed to \$400 million. Is that true?

A: Right now I won't comment on the truth of that because we're not really sure how this got worked out. This very same problem could be applied to the North Vietnamese, how does their bookkeeping work. Are they counting their services in one pot and their actual hardware in another--we don't know, we're looking into this.

Q: Still the total figures and you come up with the word "niggardly." How can the Defense Department justify that kind of a word?

A: We only got half of what we asked for; I would say that was pretty niggardly.

MORE

Q: What was unclear from that briefing paper on Soviet and PRC supplies to Hanoi was how that \$400 million estimate was broken out into services and hardware and POL.

A: That's correct, it was unclear to me, too.

Q: There must be some speculation that could lead one to say that half of this is real hardware, or two-thirds of it.

A: I'd be unwilling to speculate until we look into it further. You are citing my suspicions on this, but I don't know this yet.

Q: I think there's a report which shows that 38% of the \$700 million goes in for ammo and actual hardware for the South Vietnamese and something like 68% of the \$400 million of the North Vietnamese goes into the same equipment.

A: I can't comment on it, but I can give you the figures for ours.

Q: I don't want to belabor the point except I do want it made a part of the record, but you said we did not ask the question. It would have been more politic for the Defense Department and a lot more appropriate that the Defense Department anticipate the question that I should have asked, and forthrightly and on a volunteer basis give us the information that we should have had.

A: I believe we would have no doubt done that had we thought of it. You didn't think of it and we didn't think of it. We got asked and we gave it out.

Q: Back to Marines. If CINCPAC or DoD says to the Marine units, "You should be able to move within 48 hours," is it the local commander's prerogative to up that status?

A: It's his prerogative. I can't speak for the Marine Corps, but we in the Army, in the past, have tried to discourage people from doing too much of that because it does turn out to be "hurry up and wait," but it often happens. You get the men poised at the initial point and then they stand there for two days. This is bad, this is a morale problem. I'm not criticizing the Marines.

Q: I know, but a local commander can do it?

A: He can do it, right.

Q: This comparison between North and South Vietnamese aid, the question the people who have to pay the taxes are asking is that we're giving the South Vietnamese twice the amount of money to buy this equipment and handling and everything else as the North Vietnamese. The North Vietnamese are doing twice as much on the ground. How can you justify...

A: I can't accept your premise until we look into it further. I don't accept it. We don't have that kind of guaranteed fact.

Q: Is what you're saying is that the Defense Department questions the validity of the recent study prepared by the intelligence community?

MORE

A: No, I'm not saying that. I'm saying that we want to know further about what rules they used to break out different costs. It's kind of like the discussions that we've had in the past on how much the Soviets spend on defense. If you put down all your--this is an extreme case but a possible one--let's say you put your civilian pay in support of the Defense Department in another pot and then they say we're only spending this much not counting the civilian pay. We want to know what the analysts did--what pots they assign what to. That's the key to it.

Q: If the Defense Department had these questions, why in the world did General Brown quote approvingly from that report in his recent speech? He used the figures right out of that report.

A: I'm not able to answer that question.

Q: What progress are you making in getting the security file on me (John Finney) and other people who have had to go through your security clearance. Remember I asked for that under the Freedom of Information Act.

A: I'll take that question, I don't know. As you do know, we will not do that anymore. All we're going to require is a letter from your employer saying you are a bona fide employee and that'll be good enough. Mr. Laitin will make the decision as to getting a building pass. So if you find that somebody's investigating you, as I said the other day, better get worried because it won't be us.

Q: I'm still interested in getting that security file.

A: Okay.

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SECTION 1 OF 4

FROM OASD/PA

FOR INFORMATION AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICERS

SUBJECT: DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE MORNING NEWS BRIEFING

PART I: DOD MORNING NEWS BRIEFING BY ASD/PA LAITIN,
WEDNESDAY, MAY 7, 1975, 11:15 A.M.

1. IN RESPONSE TO POPULAR DEMAND, YOU SHOULD HAVE COPIES OF THE NEWS RELEASES AND OTHER DATA WHICH YOU NORMALLY GET AT THE CONCLUSION OF THESE BRIEFINGS AND JUST TO MAKE SURE YOU'VE GOT EVERYTHING THOUGH, LET ME QUICKLY RUN DOWN FOR THE RECORD WHAT'S ON THE HILL TODAY:

DASD/COMPTROLLER FRED WACKER, BEFORE HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS DEFENSE SUBCOMMITTEE CONCERNING OVER ALL D&M BUDGET REQUEST; ASD/M&RA WILLIAM BREHM, ASD/COMPTROLLER TERENCE MCCLARY AND BRIGADER GENERAL EMMETT W. BOWERS OF THE DEFENSE COMMISSARY.

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STUDY GROUP BEFORE OPEN SESSION OF HOUSE ARMED SERVICES INVESTIGATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE ON COMMISSARIES: MR. PERRY FLIAKAS, DIRECTOR OF THE FACILITY PROGRAMMING, OASD/I&L, E. R. HARRINGTON, OASD/I&L, LT. GEN. WARREN JOHNSON, DIRECTOR OF DNA AND LT. GEN. DANIEL GRAHAM, DIRECTOR OF DIA, BEFORE OPEN SESSION OF THE HOUSE ARMED SERVICES MILITARY CONSTRUCTION SUBCOMMITTEE; DR. JOSEPH RYERSON, CHAIRMAN OF DOD METRICATION PANEL AND MESSRS. FOX AND MITCHELL OF OASD/I&L BEFORE OPEN SESSION OF HOUSE SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY SUBCOMMITTEE ON METRICATION.

SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE APPROVED THE NOMINATION OF LT. GEN. LOUIS WILSON TO BE COMMANDANT OF THE MARINE CORPS AND VOTED TO SEND HIS NOMINATION TO THE FLOOR OF THE SENATE FOR CONFIRMATION.

2. SPEECHES: DASD/M&RA (EQUAL OPPORTUNITY) H. M. FRANCIS SPOKE ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN AT A MEETING AT THE WHITE HOUSE YESTERDAY AND TEXTS OF HIS REMARKS ARE AVAILABLE.

3. THERE'S ALSO THE MEMORANDUM I HOPE YOU HAVE ON THE REFUGEE STATUS FIGURES. I JUST WANT TO POINT OUT THAT THE FIGURES ARE A LITTLE DIFFERENT TODAY THAN THEY'RE YESTERDAY BECAUSE DAY BY DAY WE'RE REFINING THE FIGURES AS WE GET MORE PAGE 3 RUEKJCS 1177 UNCLAS

AND MORE DATA.

4. AS YOU RECALL, I ADVISED YOU LAST THURSDAY THAT THE

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REMAINS OF THE TWO MARINES KILLED AT TAN SON NHUT WERE ON THE MIDWAY. A FEW DAYS AGO WE WERE ADVISED BY THE MIDWAY THAT THE BODIES OF THE TWO MARINES WERE NOT ABOARD THAT VESSEL AND SINCE WE RECEIVED THAT REPORT, WE'VE BEEN MAKING A THOROUGH SEARCH THROUGHOUT THE FLEET TO DETERMINE THE WHEREABOUTS OF THE BODIES. BUT LATE YESTERDAY, AFTER TALKING TO ALL THOSE INVOLVED AT TAN SON NHUT AND CHECKING THE INCOMING REPORTS OF VARIOUS SHIPS AND PEOPLE AT THE EMBASSY WHO WERE INVOLVED, WE CAME TO THE CONCLUSION THAT THERE WAS EVERY PROBABILITY THAT THE BODIES OF THE TWO SLAIN MARINES ARE STILL AT THE SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST HOSPITAL IN SAIGON. AS SOON AS WE WERE CONVINCED THE ORIGINAL INFORMATION WAS WRONG, THE NEXT OF KIN WERE NOTIFIED LATE LAST NIGHT TO THIS EFFECT. I JUST WANTED TO ADD THAT THE STATE DEPARTMENT, I CAN ASSURE YOU, IS NOW DOING EVERYTHING POSSIBLE AND WILL CONTINUE TO DO EVERYTHING TO DETERMINE WHERE THE BODIES ARE AND TO ARRANGE FOR THEIR RETURN.

Q: WHY WEREN'T THEY BROUGHT OUT?

A: THAT GETS VERY COMPLICATED, IKE (PAPPAS, CBS); YOU RECALL PAGE 4 RUEKJCS 1177 UNCLAS THE TWO MARINES WERE KILLED AT TAN SON NHUT BEFORE THE ACTUAL EVACUATION GOT UNDERWAY. THEIR BODIES WERE TAKEN TO THE NEARBY ADVENTIST HOSPITAL. WHEN PEOPLE AT THE EMBASSY AND THE MARINE CONTINGENT CALLED THE HOSPITAL, THEY APPARENTLY WERE TOLD BY HOSPITAL OFFICIALS THERE THAT THE AMERICAN AUTHORITIES HAD REMOVED THE BODIES WITHOUT IDENTIFYING THEM AND BECAUSE OF THE SWIFTLY MOVING EVENTS OF THAT MONDAY AND TUESDAY, IT WAS ONE OF THOSE CASES WHERE APPARENTLY DIFFERENT PEOPLE IN CHARGE THOUGHT IT HAD BEEN TAKEN CARE OF. IT WAS CERTAINLY NOT THAT THE EFFORT HAD NOT BEEN MADE FROM EVERYTHING I'VE READ OF THE ACCOUNTS.

Q: I HEARD ONE STORY THAT THEY KNEW THAT THE BODIES WERE STILL AT THE HOSPITAL BUT THEY COULDN'T GET OUT OF THE COMPOUND BECAUSE IT WAS SURROUNDED; IS THAT CORRECT?

A: I HAVE NOT HEARD THAT STORY. ALL I HAVE SEEN, AND I'VE DONE A LOT OF READING OF CABLES AND I'VE DONE A LOT OF TALKING TO PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN MAKING THE SEARCH, AND AS NEARLY AS I CAN FIGURE, WITH ALL THE EFFORT THAT HAD BEEN MADE, THEY HAD ASSUMED THAT THE BODIES HAD BEEN MOVED OUT BY FIXED-WING AIRCRAFT BEFORE THE ACTUAL HELICOPTER EVACUATION BEGAN."

Q: FIXED-WING TO THE MIDWAY?

PAGE 5 RUEKJCS 1177 UNCLAS

A: AT FIRST IT WAS BY FIXED-WING AND THEY ASSUMED THEY WERE GOING TO THAILAND, I THINK, I'M NOT CERTAIN ABOUT THAT. BUT THEN IN THE ENSUING HOURS SOMEBODY BELIEVED THAT THEY HAD BEEN TAKEN OUT BY HELICOPTER AND THAT'S WHY WE GOT THE REPORT FROM THE EMBASSY THAT IT WAS UNDERSTOOD THE BODIES HAD BEEN FLOWN TO THE MIDWAY. FOR A COUPLE OF DAYS, THIS WAS THE ASSUMPTION UNTIL WE CHECKED THE MIDWAY TO MAKE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE REMOVAL AND WERE ADVISED THE BODIES WERE NOT ABOARD. THEN WE BEGAN TO SEARCH AMONG THE OTHER SHIPS.

Q: CAN WE GET THE NAMES OF THOSE TWO MARINES?

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A: CORPORAL CHARLES MCMAHON, JR., OF WOBURN, MASS., AND LANCE CORPORAL DARWIN L. JUDGE, OF MARSHALLTOWN, IOWA. BOTH THESE MARINES WERE SERVING WITH THE MARINE SECURITY GUARD DETACHMENT AT THE AMERICAN EMBASSY IN SAIGON.

Q: YOU SAY YOU GOT THE REPORT FROM THE EMBASSY?

A: YES.

Q: DO YOU MEAN IT CAME IN HERE TO THE PENTAGON OR TO THE STATE DEPARTMENT?

A: I ASSUME IT CAME IN BOTH PLACES. IT WAS A REPORT FROM THE EMBASSY.

PAGE 6 RUEKJCS 1177 UNCLAS

Q: SO FAR YOU HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO CONFIRM THAT THEY ARE IN FACT AT THE HOSPITAL, RIGHT?

A: NO. I SAID THE PROBABILITY EXISTS.

Q: THAT'S WHAT I UNDERSTOOD. WITH THE CHANGE IN GOVERNMENTS, HOW DO YOU GO ABOUT TRYING TO FIND THIS OUT? WHAT ARE THE EFFORTS THAT ARE BEING MADE?

A: THERE ARE MANY, MANY AVENUES AVAILABLE AND THE STATE DEPARTMENT IS EXPLORING ALL OF THEM.

Q: DO ANY OF THE REPORTS THAT YOU GET INDICATE HOW MANY AMERICANS MAY HAVE BEEN LEFT BEHIND, EITHER IN JAIL OR OTHERWISE NOT AIRLIFTED OUT?

A: THE AMERICAN EMBASSY IN MANILA HAS SENT TO THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE AND THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE A LIST CONTAINING THE NAMES OF SOME 30 AMERICANS AND ABOUT 25 PERSONS OF OTHER NATIONALITIES WHO WERE REPORTED TO BE IN SAIGON.

THE LIST WAS COMPILED WHEN VIETNAM EVACUEES AT SUBIC BAY WERE INTERVIEWED BY U.S. AUTHORITIES. THE VIETNAM EVACUEES INDICATED THAT TO THE BEST OF THEIR KNOWLEDGE THESE PEOPLE REMAINED IN VIETNAM. THIS IS NOT CONFIRMED AND IS BASED UPON THEIR PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS. NO ADDITIONAL INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE AT THIS

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SECTION 2 OF 4

TIME. THE LIST OF NAMES IS BEING CHECKED AGAINST A MASTER COMPUTER LIST MAINTAINED BY THE USS BLUE RIDGE.

Q: THOSE TWO MARINES WERE KILLED ON MONDAY AFTERNOON, OUR TIME, WASN'T IT?

A: AS I RECALL, IT WAS ABOUT 4:30 IN THE AFTERNOON, OUR TIME. (FYI: 0400, 29 APRIL 1975, SAIGON TIME)

Q: APRIL 28, WAS IT?

A: MONDAY. IT WAS AS THE RESULT OF A HEAVY ARTILLERY ROCKET THAT LANDED NEAR THE DAD COMPOUND.

Q: IS THE REMOVAL OF AIRCRAFT FROM THAILAND STILL IN SUSPENSION?

A: IT IS NOW TEMPORARILY IN SUSPENSION, BUT AS YOU KNOW WE DID GET A FORMAL REQUEST FROM THE THAI CABINET AND WE'RE DISCUSSING WITH THE THAIS THE FINAL SETTLEMENT OF THE PROBLEM.

PAGE 2 RUEKJCS 1178 UNCLAS

Q: HOW MANY DID YOU GET OUT BEFORE THE SUSPENSION TOOK PLACE?

A: APPARENTLY AS MUCH AS THE MIDWAY COULD CARRY. THEY WERE FULLY LOADED: THERE'S STILL SOME EQUIPMENT THERE BUT IT'S REALLY IN SMALL AMOUNTS: SOME OF IT'S DAMAGED FROM WHAT I COULD LEARN THE EQUIPMENT LEFT INCLUDED SOME HIGH VALUE EQUIPMENT, SIX C-7S WHICH ARE RELATIVELY SMALL TRANSPORT PLANES THAT HAVE FACILITY FOR GETTING INTO AND OUT OF SMALL PLACES.

Q: LEFT BEHIND?

A: IT IS STILL THERE. AS YOU KNOW, WE BELIEVE THAT WE HAVE LEGAL RIGHT TO THIS EQUIPMENT.

Q: THE ORIGINAL REMOVAL OF EQUIPMENT WAS DONE WITH THE APPROVAL OF THE THAI CABINET, WAS IT NOT?

A: IT WAS DONE, AS I UNDERSTAND IT, BEFORE THEY FORMALLY PROTESTED.

Q: THE OTHER AIRCRAFT THERE ARE WHAT, OBSERVATION -- DID THEY GET OUT ALL THE F-5S?

A: THE ONES THAT WERE IN GOOD CONDITION. I DON'T HAVE A BREAKDOWN.

Q: IT WAS SAID THERE WERE 120 AIRPLANES THERE -- DOES THAT MEAN THAT WE GOT OUT 117 AIRCRAFT, LET'S SAY?

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A: THERE WERE QUITE A FEW HELICOPTERS THAT FLEW OUT TO THE MIDWAY, THEY WEREN'T TAKEN TO THAILAND.

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Q: THEY'RE NOT INCLUDED IN THE 120 THOUGH?

A: THERE WERE TWENTY-SEVEN A-37S; TWENTY-FIVE F-5S; 48 HELICOPTERS, MOST OF WHICH WERE FLOWN ON BOARD, INCLUDING FIVE AIR AMERICA HUEY HELICOPTERS.

Q: YOU'RE SAYING THESE ARE ON THE MIDWAY?

A: YES.

THEN THERE'S AN O-1 WHICH IS AN OBSERVATION PLANE.

Q: FIVE AIR AMERICA?

A: YES, I DON'T KNOW WHAT KIND THOSE ARE; JUST SAYS AIR AMERICA HERE.

Q: THERE WERE SOME C-130S FLOWN OUT TOO?

A: I BELIEVE THERE WERE, BUT I DON'T KNOW HOW MANY.

Q: WERE SOME OF THE PLANES ACTUALLY LIFTED BY HELICOPTERS OUT TO THE CARRIER?

A: I DON'T HAVE THE DRAMATIC DETAILS OF IT, EXCEPT WHAT I READ IN THE NEWSPAPERS OF MEN WHO WERE THERE AND APPARENTLY SAW IT.

Q: SAW THEM ACTUALLY LIFTING THE AIRCRAFT?

PAGE 4 RUEKJCS 1178 UNCLAS

A: APPARENTLY, BUT I DON'T HAVE ANY REPORTS OR COLOR ON THAT.

Q: SO, MOST IF NOT ALL OF THE FLYABLE AIRCRAFT THAT WERE THERE HAVE BEEN NOW RECOVERED BY THE UNITED STATES. IS THAT CORRECT?

A: THAT'S PROBABLY A FAIR ASSUMPTION TO MAKE.

Q: THE 48 HELICOPTERS WERE NOT IN THE ORIGINAL 122 COUNT, WERE THEY?

A: I DON'T KNOW WHETHER THEY WERE OR NOT, ACTUALLY.

Q: THEY WEREN'T IN THAT LIST THAT WE GOT HERE; THAT WAS ALL FIXED-WING AIRCRAFT.

Q: THAT LIST YOU GAVE US HAS 38 F-5S; THAT MEANS THREE ARE STILL THERE?

A: THEY COULD BE THERE AND I DON'T KNOW WHETHER THEY WERE LEFT BEHIND BECAUSE THEY WERE DAMAGED OR WHAT. A LOT OF THE EQUIPMENT THAT IS STILL THERE IS APPARENTLY NOT OPERABLE WITHOUT ADDITIONAL WORK.

Q: WEREN'T TWO OF THE F-5S FLOWN TO KORAT FOR THE U.S. AIR FORCE?

A: I DON'T KNOW.

Q: SECRETARY SCHLESINGER SPOKE AT MAXWELL THE OTHER DAY, IT WASN'T PUBLICIZED. DO YOU HAVE ANYTHING ON THAT?

PAGE 5 RUEKJCS 1178 UNCLAS

A: HIS TALK WAS OFF THE RECORD TO 300 AIR FORCE OFFICERS ATTENDING THE AIR WAR COLLEGE. HE SPENT AN HOUR TALKING TO THEM AND AN HOUR ANSWERING THEIR QUESTIONS.

Q: WAS IT JUST A TALK OR WAS THERE A TOPIC?

A: IT RANGED OVER ALL OF MILITARY AFFAIRS AND IT WAS ALL OFF THE RECORD AND CONSIDERED SECRET.

Q: CAN YOU TELL US ANYTHING ABOUT HIS MEETING WITH AMBASSADOR CARLUCCI AND WHAT THEY TALKED ABOUT?

A: I THINK HE'S STILL UP THERE. AT LEAST WHEN I CHECKED HE WAS ABOUT TO GO IN.

DECLASSIFIED

Q: THERE WERE REFERENCES MADE BY HENRY KISSINGER TO ALTERNATIVES THAT WOULD BE AVAILABLE IF THE PORTUGUESE BASES WERE NOT AVAILABLE TO US. IS HE DISCUSSING THAT WITH HIM PERHAPS?

A: I'M SURE HE'S DISCUSSING ALL THE PROBLEMS WE MAY FACE IN PORTUGAL. THERE'S NO AGENDA.

Q: YOU IMPLIED EARLIER THAT THESE PLANES WERE MOVED BEFORE THEY FORMALLY PROTESTED. AN EFFORT TO SWIFTLY REMOVE THEM FROM THE COUNTRY BEFORE THEY CAN ACT IS THE IMPLICATION?

A: THAT WASN'T THE IMPLICATION THAT I WAS MAKING. I WAS SIMPLY POINTING OUT THAT THE MIDWAY WAS CARRYING ALL THE EXCESS EQUIPMENT IT COULD HANDLE AND SAILED AWAY WITH IT. MEANTIME, WE ARE NEGOTIATING WITH THE THAI GOVERNMENT WITH THE HOPE OF SETTLING THE DIFFERENCES.

Q: WE ARE NEGOTIATING WITH THE THAI GOVERNMENT AND THEY HAVE ASKED US TO LEAVE WITHIN A YEAR. ARE WE ALSO NEGOTIATING THEIR PAYING US FOR UTAPAO, AND ALL OF THOSE OTHER BASES THAT WE BUILT THERE IN RECENT YEARS, WHICH THEY WILL NOW INHERIT?

A: I DON'T KNOW BUT I IMAGINE THAT WILL EMERGE AS THE DISCUSSIONS CONTINUE.

Q: WAS THAT AN OFFICIAL REQUEST BY THEM THAT WE LEAVE?

A: I DON'T KNOW. IT WAS AN OFFICIAL REQUEST ABOUT KEEPING THE EQUIPMENT THERE, BUT I DON'T KNOW THE OTHER DETAILS.

Q: ARE YOU ACKNOWLEDGING OFFICIALLY THAT WE HAVE BEEN ASKED TO LEAVE BY A PARTICULAR DAY? BY A4Y DAY?

A: I DON'T KNOW, LLOYD (NORMAN, NEWSWEEK). I DON'T RECALL SEEING THAT IN THE COMMUNIQUE, BUT THAT'S EASILY CHECKED.

Q: YOUR ANSWER COULD BE INTERPRETED AS AN INDICATION THAT YOU ACKNOWLEDGE THAT.

A, I DIDN'T MEAN TO ACKNOWLEDGE, AS I DON'T HAVE ANY FIRST-HAND KNOWLEDGE AT THE MOMENT.

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SECTION 3 OF 4

Q: HAVE YOU GOT A BREAKDOWN YET AVAILABLE OF THE PLANES THAT WERE REMOVED OUT OF THE NEXT INCREMENT OF WITHDRAWLS FROM THAILAND?

A: A LOT OF THAT DETAILED INFORMATION ABOUT EQUIPMENT IS BEING PULLED TOGETHER NOW AND WHEN IT'S AVAILABLE TO ME, I'LL BE HAPPY TO MAKE IT AVAILABLE TO YOU.

Q: WHAT'S THE STATUS OF THE STUDY THAT'S BEING MADE OF WHAT WAS LEFT BEHIND IN VIETNAM OF VALUE?

A: I ALSO MEANT TO ALLUDE TO THAT MATTER OF GATHERING THIS INFORMATION.

Q: IS IT STILL GOING ON?

A: YES.

Q: WHEN DO YOU EXPECT TO GET THAT?

A: I DON'T KNOW, SOMETIME IN THE NEAR FUTURE, I WOULD HOPE.

Q: AFTER WE ANNOUNCED THAT WE WOULD STOP REMOVING THE AIR-
PAGE 2 RUEKJCS 1179 UNCLAS

CRAFT FROM THAILAND, DID THE MIDWAY SAIL BEFORE THAT POINT OR AFTER THAT POINT, AFTER THEY ANNOUNCED FORMLLY?

A: I DON'T KNOW WHAT THE TIMING WAS. WHEN SHE WAS FULLY LOADED WITH EQUIPMENT, SHE SAILED. WHEN THE FORMAL REQUEST WAS RECEIVED, WE HONORED IT AND ENTERED INTO NEGOTIATIONS ABOUT THE REMAINING EQUIPMENT WHICH WE FEEL IS OURS.

Q: THE THAI FOREIGN MINISTER, AT LEAST STATED IN THE PRESS, THAT THAILAND INTENDED TO KEEP CONTROL OF THOSE PLANES. WOULD THEY HAVE TO MAKE A FORMAL DECLARATION OF THIS INTENT?

A: I DON'T KNOW WHAT THE PROTOCOL INVOLVED IS, BUT WE ARE INVOLVED IN NEGOTIATIONS WITH THEM AS A RESULT OF THEIR INITIATIVE.

Q: CAN YOU SAY ANYTHING FURTHER ONTHE AIR COMBAT FIGHTER DECISION? WHAT IS THE SECRETARY GOING TO DO AND WHEN?

A: YOU MEAN ON THE F-18? NO, BUT THE MORE I GO INTO THAT MATTER, THE MORE I'M CONVINCED MAYBE WE OUGHT TO HAVE ONE OF THE F-18 EXPERTS DOWN HERE TO ANSWER YOUR QUESTIONS. IN LOOKING OVER THE TRANSCRIPT OF DR. POTTER, I COULDN'T SEE ANY CONFLICT THERE. IF YOU DON'T HAVE COPIES OF IT, I'LL BE GLAD TO GIVE YOU ANOTHER, AND IF YOU HAVE ANY ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS, I
PAGE 3 RUEKJCS 1179 UNCLAS
THINK THAT. . . .

Q: POTTER INDICATED THAT HE EXPECTED THE DECISION BY THE

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SECRETARY IN A MATTER OF DAYS. HE INDICATED IT MIGHT BE BEFORE THE TESTIMONY BEGAN ON THE HILL YESTERDAY. HE SEEMED VERY CLEAR IN THAT HE WAS SIGNALING HIS EXPECTATION OF AN EARLY SCHLESINGER DECISION.

A: WHEN I LOOKED INTO THAT I CAME TO THE CONCLUSION THAT THE OVERALL PROGRAM CONCEPT AND THE CONTRACTOR CHOICE FOR THE F-18 OR THE F-17 DERIVATIVE, DEPENDING ON WHAT YOU WANT TO CALL IT, HAS THE FULL SUPPORT OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE AND THIS IS A PERIOD WHERE THIS DETAILED DEFINITION BEFORE THE FINAL APPROVAL IS MADE FOR THE FULL-SCALE SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT AND I COULDN'T SEE ANY CONFLICT.

Q: DR. POTTER SAID, I LOOKED AT THE TRANSCRIPT YESTERDAY, HE DEFINITELY REFERRED TO THE FULL-SCALE DEVELOPMENT. HE SAID THAT HE EXPECTED AN AFFIRMATIVE ANSWER IN A VERY FEW DAYS. DR. CURRIE CAME OUT YESTERDAY IN HIS TESTIMONY AND SAID APPROVAL WOULDN'T BE UNTIL LATE SUMMER.

A: I WENT INTO THAT AND I THINK THEY MIGHT HAVE BEEN TALKING ABOUT TWO DIFFERENT THINGS. I'LL GET A STATEMENT FROM DR. CURRIE PAGE 4 RUEKJCS 1179 UNCLAS DR DR. POTTER ABOUT THAT AND POST IT. THE CONTRACTUAL MATTERS ARE A LITTLE TOO COMPLICATED FOR ME TO ABSORB IN A COUPLE OF HOURS, BUT I'LL HAVE THEM PREPARE THIS. . . .

Q: DO YOU FIND THAT THERE'S ANY RELATIONSHIP TO THIS DECISION BY THE FOUR-COUNTRY CONSORTIUM OVERSEAS?

A: I DON'T BELIEVE THERE IS. NO.

Q: THEY WOULD EITHER BE FACED WITH A POSSIBLE CHOICE OF TWO PLANES OR JUST THE F-16. WOULD WE BE DEFERRING THE DECISION ON THE F-18 IN ORDER JUST TO GIVE THE FOUR COUNTRIES?

A: YOU'RE GETTING INTO A VERY DELICATE AREA WHICH I DON'T FEEL COMPETENT AT THE MOMENT TO ADDRESS MYSELF TO, I'LL BE GLAD TO PRODUCE THE PEOPLE WHO CAN.

Q: CAN I SUGGEST THAT YOU ASK THE SECRETARY TO TELL US WHAT HE HAS ALREADY DECIDED ABOUT THE F-18 AND WHAT HE FEELS HE HAS LEFT TO DECIDE?

A: SURE.

Q: THE THING THAT PUZZLED US YESTERDAY WAS THAT BOTH DR. CURRIE AND DR. POTTER REFERRED TO FULL-SCALE DEVELOPMENT; THEY BOTH USED EXACTLY THE SAME WORDS, DR. CURRIE SAYING LATE SUMMER AND DR. POTTER SAYING IN A VERY FEW DAYS. HE SAID THAT TWICE. PAGE 5 RUEKJCS 1179 UNCLAS

A: THERE'S NO REASON WHY THAT CONFUSION SHOULD REMAIN AND I'LL DO MY BEST TO HAVE THAT CLEARED UP BY PEOPLE WHO ARE FAR MORE QUALIFIED. WHEN I ASK FOR ANSWERS ON THINGS LIKE THAT AND I GET LITTLE PARAGRAPHS THAT DON'T SATISFY ME, I THINK THAT THE PEOPLE WHO ARE IN CHARGE OF THESE THINGS OUGHT TO ADDRESS THEMSELVES.

Q: WE NEED AN F-18 EXPERT TO ANSWER A LOT OF OTHER QUESTIONS.

A: I THOUGHT THAT HAD ALL BEEN TAKEN CARE OF WHEN WE BROUGHT DR. POTTER DOWN HERE LAST WEEK.

Q: DOES THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE APPROVE THE USE OF THE

GOVERNMENT FUNDS BY THE AIR FORCE LEGISLATIVE LIAISON OFFICE TO THROW A COCKTAIL PARTY FOR STAFF MEMBERS OF CONGRESS WHEN THEY WATCH A B-1 MOVIE?

A: THE WAY YOU PUT IT, I DON'T KNOW HOW ANYBODY COULD APPROVE OF IT, JOHN (FINNEY, NY TIMES).

Q: I THINK IT'S A FAIRLY FACTUAL STATEMENT OF WHAT OCCURRED AND I'M JUST ASKING WHETHER THE SECRETARY APPROVES OF SUCH USE OF GOVERNMENT FUNDS?

A: I CAN SAY WITH SOME DEGREE OF SURETY THAT HE WOULD APPROVE OF NO IMPROPER EXPENDITURE OF FUNDS.

PAGE 6 RUEKJCS 1179 UNCLAS

Q: THAT OF COURSE IS NOT REALLY MY QUESTION. MY NEXT QUESTION IS, DOES HE REGARD SUCH USE OF FUNDS AS A PROPER OR IMPROPER USE OF GOVERNMENT FUNDS?

A: I'LL BE GLAD TO DISCUSS IT WITH HIM SOMETIME. IT'S A PERFECTLY GOOD QUESTION; I'M NOT DISREGARDING YOUR QUESTION.

Q: I HOPE YOU'RE NOT; I DON'T PRESENT IT FRIVOLOUSLY; I THINK IT'S OUTRAGEOUS.

A: PLEASE DON'T REGARD MY ANSWER AS FRIVOLOUS.

Q: THE HANDOUT ON THE USO, IT SAYS THE BLUE RIBBON COMMITTEE RECOMMENDED CONTINUED UNITED WAY FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR THE USO, BUT IT DOESN'T SAY WHETHER THE USO IS GOING TO GET CONTINUED FINANCIAL SUPPORT; THEN IT GOES ON TO SAY THE USO SAYS IT WILL NEED A MILLION DOLLARS MORE AND . . .

A: I'LL TAKE YOUR QUESTION AND I'LL ARRANGE FOR SOMEBODY TO GIVE YOU MORE DETAILS ON IT.

Q: ON THE THAI NEGOTIATIONS, WHAT ELSE COULD THEY BE DISCUSSING? WHAT EQUIPMENT ARE YOU REFERRING TO?

A: I SAID THERE WAS MORE EQUIPMENT THERE, ALTHOUGH MOST OF THE HIGH VALUE EQUIPMENT HAD BEEN TAKEN OUT.

Q: DO YOU HAVE A TOTAL VALUE ON THE EQUIPMENT?

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SECTION 4 OF 4

A: I DON'T HAVE A MONEY FIGURE.

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UNCLAS 6187

SECTION 1 OF 2

FROM OASD/PA

FOR INFORMATION AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICERS

SUBJECT: DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE MORNING NEWS BRIEFING

PART I: DOD MORNING NEWS BRIEFING BY ASD/PA LAITIN,
THURSDAY, MAY 8, 1975, 11:15 A.M.1. YOU ALL HAVE THE MATERIAL IN ADVANCE AGAIN THIS MORNING.
I'VE ASKED DR. MALCOLM CURRIE TO COME DOWN HERE THIS MORNING
AND ANSWER ANY OF THOSE QUESTIONS YOU BROUGHT UP YESTERDAY
ABOUT THE F-18 AND HE SHOULD BE HERE SHORTLY. HE CAN ONLY
STAY FOR A FEW MINUTES. HE'S GOT TO CATCH A PLANE BUT I
THOUGHT WITH QUESTIONS LIKE THAT, IF THEY REALLY ARE THAT MUCH
ON YOUR MIND OUGHT TO BE ANSWERED BY THE TOP MAN.2. THE PRIME MINISTER OF SINGAPORE, MR. LE QUAN YEW WILL
VISIT SECRETARY SCHLESINGER HERE IN THE PENTAGON AT 2:30 P.M.
PAGE 2 RUEKJCS 1310 UNCLAS

TOMORROW.

Q: WHEN WAS THAT APPOINTMENT ARRANGED, CAN YOU TELL US THAT,
WAS IT WEEKS AGO OR JUST NOW?A: I DON'T KNOW. I CAN LET YOU KNOW LATER. IT NEVER OCCURRED
TO ME TO FIND OUT WHEN.3. SECRETARY OF THE NAVY J. WILLIAM MIDDENDORF, II, WILL
SIGN A CONTRACT AGREEMENT TODAY AUTHORIZING DONATION OF THE
AIRCRAFT CARRIER USS YORKTOWN TO THE STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA.
THE NEWS MEDIA REPRESENTATIVES ARE INVITED TO ATTEND THE
CEREMONY WHICH WILL BE HELD IN THE U.S. CAPITOL, ROOM EF100
AT 3:00 P.M.4. DEPUTY SECRETARY CLEMENTS WILL ADDRESS AN AEROSPACE
LUNCHEON OF THE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE OF LOS ANGELES TOMORROW
AND WE'LL HAVE THE ADVANCE TEXT HERE.5. YOU HAVE IN YOUR PACKAGE THE RELEASE ABOUT THE 10
CIVILIAN EMPLOYEES OF THE DEFENSE INTELLIGENCE AGENCY WHO
WILL BE PRESENTED THE DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD AT 2 P.M.
FRIDAY, IN ROOM 5A1070.

6. YOU HAVE THE INDOCHINA REFUGEE STATUS.

INDOCHINA REFUGEES ARE PRESENTLY LOCATED AS FOLLOWS:
PAGE 3 RUEKJCS 1310 UNCLAS

AT SEA ENROUTE TO PACIFIC SITES. 16,678

AT U.S. PACIFIC BASES. 59,877

PA
MP
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SPD
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Corrected Copy
Corrected Throughout
By Originator

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AT CONUS U.S. BASES: FORT CHAFFEE 7,808
CAMP PENDLETON . . . 15,482
EGLIN AFB 619

COMPLETED PROCESSING AND DEPARTED 13,362

7. YOU ASKED ME YESTERDAY ABOUT THE MIDWAY AND I'LL ANSWER THAT JUST AS SOON AS WE HAVE DR. CURRIE UP HERE.

GENTLEMEN, DR. CURRIE.

(DR. MALCOLM CURRIE, DIRECTOR, DEFENSE RESEARCH AND ENGINEERING DISCUSSED WITH NEWSMEN THE NAVY'S DECISION ON SELECTING THE F-18 AS THE NAVY LIGHTWEIGHT FIGHTER.)

MR. LAITIN: YESTERDAY YOU ASKED ABOUT THE SAILING OF THE MIDWAY FROM THAILAND. I CHECKED ON IT. THE MIDWAY ARRIVED TO LAOS THE FORMER VIETNAMESE AIRCRAFT WITH THE APPROVAL OF THE APPROPRIATE THAI OFFICIALS AND IT DEPARTED THAILAND AT 11:30 P.M. MONDAY, LOCAL THAI TIME, WHICH WAS 15 HOURS BEFORE THE ROYAL THAI GOVERNMENT REQUESTED AND THE U.S. AGREED TO A TEMPORARY SUSPENSION OF THE REMOVAL OF THE REMAINING AIRCRAFT.

Q: WHO WERE THE APPROPRIATE THAI OFFICIALS? WE HAD NEWS PAGE 4 RUEKJCS 1310 UNCLAS REPORTS FROM THREE DIFFERENT THAI OFFICIALS.

A: THAT'S THE WAY IT WAS DESCRIBED TO ME BY OUR EMBASSY IN BANGKOK AND I ASSUME THEY KNOW WHO THE APPROPRIATE AUTHORITIES ARE.

Q: LAST NIGHT THE WHITE HOUSE GAVE A FIGURE OF 250 AIRPLANES WHICH HAVE BEEN RECOVERED. WILL THOSE NOW BE GOING TO THE U.S. INVENTORY? WILL THAT BE REFLECTED IN THE LESS NEED FOR FUTURE PROCUREMENT?

A: I DON'T KNOW HOW TO ANSWER THE LAST PART OF YOUR QUESTION. THE ANSWER TO THE FIRST PART OF YOUR QUESTION, IS YES. THE FIGURES USED YESTERDAY WERE 250 AND FROM THE PRESS REPORTS THERE'S A LITTLE CONFUSION ABOUT WHETHER THAT INCLUDED THE OTHER AIRCRAFT THAT I REFERRED TO HERE YESTERDAY. THE ANSWER IS THAT THE 250 FIGURE INCLUDED THE 122. THERE SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN SOME CONFUSION THAT IN THE NEWS REPORTS THAT I READ

LET ME GO INTO THAT THIS WAY. THE 250 AIRCRAFT WHICH INCLUDED 25 HELICOPTERS WERE FLOWN BY CAMBODIAN AND VIETNAMESE PILOTS TO THAILAND FROM THEIR RESPECTIVE COUNTRIES, EXCEPT FOR SEVEN OF THESE 250, WHICH WERE FLOWN TO SINGAPORE. THE 48 HELICOPTERS THAT I REFERRED TO YESTERDAY, ABOARD THE MIDWAY, WERE FLOWN PAGE 5 RUEKJCS 1310 UNCLAS

DIRECTLY TO THE MIDWAY FROM VIETNAM BY VIETNAMESE PILOTS.

Q: THE 48 ARE INCLUDED IN THE 250?

A: NO, THEY ARE NOT INCLUDED?

Q: SO, WE ACTUALLY GOT 300 AIRPLANES OUT OF THERE?

A: SO FAR, BUT WHEN YOU PUT IT THAT WAY YOU ARE DISREGARDING A LOT OF HELICOPTERS AND PLANES THAT FLEW OUT TO OTHER SHIPS AND WERE DROPPED INTO THE SEA.

Q: WE ARE TRYING TO FIND OUT HOW MANY AIRCRAFT OF ALL TYPES WE RECOVERED.

A: IT'S A LITTLE EARLY TO BE DEFINITIVE ABOUT THAT. THAT'S

DECLASSIFIED

WHY I SAID EARLIER A LOT OF THIS INFORMATION HAS TO BE SORTED OUT. IT WILL TAKE A FEW DAYS AND I HOPE THAT BEFORE TOO LONG WE WILL HAVE A FINAL AND OVERALL FIGURE.

Q: IN RESPONSE TO A QUERY YOU SAID THE 122 WAS PART OF THE 250. IN FACT, PART OF THAT 122 WHICH IS AN ISSUE BETWEEN US AND THE THAIS, ABOUT HALF OF THEM ARE IN SUSPENSION RIGHT NOW. SO WE HAVEN'T RECOVERED THOSE.

A: THAT'S CORRECT. WE'RE TALKING ABOUT THE PLANES THAT WERE FLOWN OUT OF CAMBODIA AND VIETNAM.

Q: THAT WE HAVE IN OUR POSSESSION NOW?

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A: THAT ALL DEPENDS ON WHAT YOU MEAN 'IN OUR POSSESSION NOW.' I'M REFERRING TO THE PLANES THAT WERE FLOWN OUT OF CAMBODIA AND VIETNAM TO THAILAND.

Q: SOME OF WHICH ARE STILL IN DISPUTE?

A: SOME OF WHICH ARE STILL THERE, LET'S PUT IT THAT WAY.

Q: HOW WERE THE 128 PLANES TAKEN OUT OF VIETNAM? WERE THESE AMERICAN PILOTS WHO TOOK THEM OUT, VIETNAMESE PILOTS?

A: NO, THEY WERE VIETNAMESE PILOTS.

Q: HAVE YOU HEARD ANYTHING ABOUT THE MARINE BODIES THAT WERE LEFT BEHIND?

A: THE SITUATION IS PRETTY MUCH AS I PUT IT TO YOU YESTERDAY ALTHOUGH THERE SEEMS TO BE SOME MISUNDERSTANDING ABOUT THE FACT THAT WE WITHHELD THE NEWS FROM YOU WHICH REALLY ISN'T SO. WE JUST GAVE THE INFORMATION TO YOU A FEW HOURS AFTER THE NEXT-OF-KIN WERE NOTIFIED ABOUT IT. I NOTICED IN THE NEWS REPORTS, AT LEAST IN SOME OF THE NEWS REPORTS, SOME MISUNDERSTANDING ABOUT THAT, BUT THE FAMILIES WERE NOTIFIED LATE TUESDAY EVENING.

Q: I GUESS THE MISUNDERSTANDING WAS BY THE FAMILIES, THEY WANTED TO KNOW WHY THEY HADN'T BEEN NOTIFIED. WHY IT TOOK SO LONG.

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SECTION 2 OF 2

A: THEY WERE NOTIFIED AS I THOUGHT I EXPLAINED TO YOU YES-
TERDAY AS SOON AS WE WERE SURE THAT THE BODIES OF THE TWO
MARINES WERE NOT ABOARD ANY OF THE SHIPS.

Q: THROUGH DIPLOMATIC CHANNELS HAVE WE LOCATED THE BODIES DEF-
INITELY AS IN THE HOSPITAL?

A: I SAID I HAVE NO ADDITIONAL INFORMATION TO GIVE YOU OTHER
THAN WHAT I GAVE TO YOU YESTERDAY.

Q: ISN'T THAT WHY THERE'S A QUESTION ABOUT THE PLANES IN
SINGAPORE WHETHER THE STATUS IS IN QUESTION OF THE SINGAPORE
GOVERNMENT OR WHETHER THE SINGAPORE GOVERNMENT ACCEPTS IT
THERE. . . .

A: I KNOW OF NO QUESTION THAT'S BEEN RAISED ABOUT THEM.

Q: WHERE IS ERIC VON MARBOD?

A: HE'S ENROUTE BACK TO THE STATES.

PAGE 2 RUEKJCS 1311 UNCLAS

Q: WILL HE COME BACK WITH AN ACCOUNTING OF MISSING HARDWARE?

A: HE'LL COME BACK WITH A GOOD DEAL OF INFORMATION, I'M
SURE.

Q: IN THE FINAL DAYS OF EVACUATION, THERE WERE VARIOUS BOATS
AT NEWPORT FIELD, WHICH AS I RECALL LEFT EMPTY WE WERE TOLD.
WERE THEY TAKING EQUIPMENT OUT OF THE EMBASSY? DID WE SUCCEED
IN TAKING ANY HARDWARE OUT OF THOSE KINDS OF BOATS OR. . . .

A: I DON'T KNOW WHETHER WE TOOK ANY EQUIPMENT OUT. I
UNDERSTAND THAT ALL SENSITIVE EQUIPMENT WAS MADE UNUSABLE.

Q: WERE THERE ANY RADIOS; WAS THERE ANYTHING TAKEN OUT AT
ALL?

A: I DON'T KNOW. WE CAN FIND THAT OUT PERHAPS WHEN MR. VON
MARBOD RETURNS TO THE STATES.

Q: ONE OF THE THINGS WE'D LIKE TO FIND OUT WHEN HE COMES
BACK IS HOW MUCH OF THE NAVY WAS SALVAGED, IF ANYTHING? WE
GAVE THEM AN AWFUL LOT OF PATROL BOATS AND DUN BOATS. G

A: WHEN HE COMES BACK I PLAN TO TALK WITH HIM. I THOUGHT
THAT THE NUMBER OF VIETNAMESE BOATS WERE ACCOUNTED FOR. I
DON'T KNOW WHETHER HE WILL HAVE THAT INFORMATION, BUT HE'LL
HAVE AN AWFUL LOT OF INFORMATION. HE WAS IN THE THICK OF IT

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AND HE KNOWS HIS BUSINESS IN THAT AREA

Q: I'D LIKE TO KNOW WHAT YOU THOUGHT THE ACCOUNTING WAS.

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I'VE BEEN TRYING FOR TWO WEEKS TO FIND OUT SOMETHING ABOUT THE VIETNAMESE NAVY AND HAVE BEEN ASSURED THAT NOBODY KNOWS EXCEPT FOR 29 THAT THEY SPOTTED ON THE HIGH SEAS.

A: THAT'S ALL I KNOW ABOUT.

Q: THEY HAD A THIRD OF A BILLION DOLLARS WORTH OF SHIPS AND CRAFT, I FORGET THE NUMBER.

A: ULTIMATELY, I HOPE THAT WE WILL HAVE ALL THAT INFORMATION AVAILABLE. WE HAVE JUST COMPLETED ONE OF THE MOST FANTASTIC EVACUATIONS IN OUR HISTORY AND I THINK THAT THE MILITARY HAS DONE REMARKABLY WELL AT SUPPLY FIGURES AS WE GO ALONG. THERE'S NO POINT GETTING INTO A NUMBERS GAME NOW, WE'LL GET ALL THAT MATERIAL FOR YOU AS WE RECEIV E IT SORT IT OUT AND ANALYZE IT.

Q: NEVERTHELESS, I WILL CONTINUE TO ASK.

A: I WOULD HOPE SO.

Q: WHETHER YOU CONSIDER THERE'S ANY POINT IN IT OR NOT BECAUSE I THINK THAT SINCE WE BOUGHT THIS NAVY, WE'RE ENTITLED TO FIND OUT WHAT'S HAPPENED TO IT. JUST AS I'M

PAGE 4 RUEKJCS 1311 UNCLAS APPALLED TO DISCOVER HOW MANY MORE AIRPLANES YOU GOT INFORMATION ON THAN YOU'VE BEEN TELLING US ABOUT ALL WEEK. WE'VE BEEN TOLD ABOUT 170 INCLUDING 48 HELICOPTERS AND NOW IT TURNS OUT THERE'S ALMOST 300.

A: AS WE GET INFORMATION, I TRY TO RELAY IT TO YOU AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE.

Q: YES, BUT THE POINT IS THE AIRPLANES FROM CAMBODIA WOULD MOST OBVIOUSLY HAVE ARRIVED IN THAILAND BEFORE THE AIRPLANES FROM VIETNAM, BUT WE'VE NEVER HAD ANY INFORMATION ON THEM BEFORE.

A: THE INFORMATION WAS NOT AVAILABLE TO ME UNTIL THIS MORNING AND I'M RELAYING IT TO YOU WITHOUT EVEN A CHANCE TO ADD UP ALL THE FIGURES.

Q: IS THERE A DOLLAR VALUE ON THE AIRCRAFT THAT'S BEEN RECOVERED?

A: NO. I WILL EVENTUALLY HAVE THAT INFORMATION. THERE'S JUST A MATTER OF TIME TO GET AROUND TO IT.

Q: DID ALL THE C-130S MAKE IT TO THE PHILIPPINES?

A: I DON'T KNOW IF THEY DID OR NOT.

Q: THE PLANES THAT FLEW TO CAMBODIA ARE NOW IN U.S. HANDS?

PAGE 5 RUEKJCS 1311 UNCLAS

A: I ASSUME SO.

Q: THE STORY SAID THAT 250 PLANES HAVE BEEN RECOVERED BY THE

A: 250 PLANES FLEW TO THAILAND.

Q: THE IMPRESSION YOU GOT IS THAT WE RECOVERED 250 PLANES, BUT OBVIOUSLY HALF OF THE 122 THAT WE TALKED ABOUT THE LAST COUPLE OF DAYS ARE STILL IN THAI HANDS, WE MAY NOT GET THEM BACK. THEY COULD CONCEIVABLY GO BACK TO SAIGON OR HANOI, OR -# WHEREVER.

A: THAT MATTER'S BEING NEGOTIATED RIGHT NOW WITH THE THAI

GOVERNMENT.

Q: THE PLANES ARE IN U.S. HANDS, IS WHAT I'M ASKING?

A: WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY U.S. HANDS?

Q: NOT EMBARGOED.

A: I JUST DON'T HAVE A PRECISE BREAKDOWN OF THAT.

Q: YOU TOLD US 109 YESTERDAY.

A: THOSE WERE THE BEST FIGURES I HAD YESTERDAY AND I'M JUST SAYING THAT I HAVE NO ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, THAT'S ALL ON THAT.

Q: OF THE 250 WE HAVE ON THE MIDWAY OR FLOWN OUT, ABOUT PAGE 6 RUEKJCS 1311 UNCLAS

60 PLANES, IS THAT RIGHT?

A: EXCEPT FOR THE ONES IN SINGAPORE AS I TOLD YOU.

Q: THE LIST THAT YOU SAID YESTERDAY, THESE 55 PEOPLE THAT YOU BELIEVE ARE IN VIETNAM, IS THERE ANYTHING NEW ON THAT?

A: NOTHING. I DON'T HAVE ANYTHINS ON IT. NO ONE KNOWS.

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IN 07240/129/75 /ACK

(This is not a verbatim transcript)

DoD Morning News Briefing
Wednesday, May 7, 1975, 11:15 a.m.
(ASD/PA Joseph Laitin)

Announcements:

1. In response to popular demand, you should have copies of the news releases and other data which you normally get at the conclusion of these briefings and just to make sure you've got everything though, let me quickly run down for the record what's on the Hill today:

DASD/Comptroller Fred Wacker, before House Appropriations Defense Subcommittee concerning overall O&M budget request; ASD/M&RA William Brehm, ASD/Comptroller Terence McClary and Brig. Gen. Emmett W. Bowers of the Defense Commissary Study Group before open session of House Armed Services Investigations Subcommittee on commissaries; Mr. Perry Fliakas, Director of the Facility Programming, OASD/I&L, E. R. Harrington, OASD/I&L, Lt. Gen. Warren Johnson, Director of DNA and Lt. Gen. Daniel Graham, Director of DIA, before open session of the House Armed Services Military Construction Subcommittee; Dr. Joseph Ryerson, Chairman of DoD Metrication Panel and Messrs. Fox and Mitchell of OASD/I&L before open session of House Science and Technology Subcommittee on metrication.

Senate Armed Services Committee approved the nomination of Lt. Gen. Louis Wilson to be Commandant of the Marine Corps and voted to send his nomination to the floor of the Senate for confirmation.

2. Speeches: DASD/M&RA (Equal Opportunity) H. M. Francis spoke on the status of women at a meeting at the White House yesterday and texts of his remarks are available.

3. There's also the memorandum I hope you have on the refugee status figures. I just want to point out that the figures are a little different today than they were yesterday because day by day we're refining the figures as we get more and more data.

4. As you recall, I advised you last Thursday that the remains of the two Marines killed at Tan Son Nhut were on the carrier MIDWAY. A few days ago we were advised by the MIDWAY that the bodies of the two Marines were not aboard that vessel and since we received that report, we've been making a thorough search throughout the fleet to determine the whereabouts of the bodies. But late yesterday, after talking to all those involved at Tan Son Nhut and checking the incoming reports of various ships and people at the Embassy who were involved, we came to the conclusion that there was every probability that the bodies of the two slain Marines are still at the Seventh Day Adventist Hospital in Saigon. As soon as we were convinced the original information was wrong, the next of kin were notified late last night to this effect. I just wanted to add that the State Department, I can assure you, is now doing everything possible and will continue to do everything to determine where the bodies are and to arrange for their return.

Q: Why weren't they brought out?

MORE

(This is not a verbatim transcript)

2.

A: That gets very complicated, Ike (Pappas, CBS); you recall the two Marines were killed at Tan Son Nhut before the actual evacuation got underway. Their bodies were taken to the nearby Adventist Hospital. When people at the Embassy and the Marine contingent called the hospital, they apparently were told by hospital officials there that the American authorities had removed the bodies without identifying them and because of the swiftly moving events of that Monday and Tuesday, it was one of those cases where apparently different people in charge thought it had been taken care of. It was certainly not that the effort had not been made from everything I've read of the accounts.

Q: I heard one story that they knew that the bodies were still at the hospital but they couldn't get out of the compound because it was surrounded; is that correct?

A: I have not heard that story. All I have seen, and I've done a lot of reading of cables and I've done a lot of talking to people who have been making the search, and as nearly as I can figure, with all the effort that had been made, they had assumed that the bodies had been moved out by fixed wing aircraft before the actual helicopter evacuation began.

Q: Fixed-wing to the MIDWAY?

A: At first it was by fixed wing and they assumed they were going to Thailand, I think, I'm not certain about that. But then in the ensuing hours, somebody believed that they had been taken out by helicopter and that's why we got the report from the Embassy that it was understood the bodies had been flown to the MIDWAY. For a couple of days, this was the assumption until we checked the MIDWAY to make arrangements for the removal and were advised the bodies were not aboard. Then we began to search among the other ships.

Q: Can we get the names of those two Marines?

A: Corporal Charles McMahon, Jr., of Woburn, Mass., and Lance Corporal Darwin L. Judge, of Marshalltown, Iowa. Both these Marines were serving with the Marine Security Guard Detachment at the American Embassy in Saigon.

Q: You say you got the report from the Embassy?

A: Yes.

Q: Do you mean it came in here to the Pentagon or to the State Department?

A: I assume it came in both places. It was a report from the Embassy.

Q: So far you have not been able to confirm that they are in fact at that hospital, right?

A: No. I said the probability exists.

Q: That's what I understood. With the change in governments, how do you go about trying to find this out? What are the efforts that are being made?

A: There are many, many, avenues available and the State Department is exploring all of them.

Q: Do any of the reports that you get indicate how many Americans may have been left behind, either in jail or otherwise not airlifted out?

A: The American Embassy in Manila has sent to the Department of State and the Department of Defense a list containing the names of some 30 Americans and about 25 persons of other nationalities who were reported to be in Saigon.

MORE

(This is not a verbatim transcript)

3.

The list was compiled when Vietnam evacuees at Subic Bay were interviewed by U.S. authorities. The Vietnam evacuees indicated that to the best of their knowledge these people remained in Vietnam. This is not confirmed and is based upon their personal recollections. No additional information is available at this time. The list of names is being checked against a master computer list maintained by the USS BLUE RIDGE.

Q: Those two Marines were killed on Monday afternoon, our time, wasn't it?

A: As I recall, it was about 4:30 in the afternoon, our time. (FYI: 0400, 29 April 1975, Saigon time)

Q: April 28, was it?

A: Monday. It was as the result of a heavy artillery rocket that landed near the DAO compound.

Q: Is the removal of aircraft from Thailand still in suspension?

A: It is now temporarily in suspension, but as you know we did get a formal request from the Thai Cabinet and we're discussing with the Thais the final settlement of the problem.

Q: How many did you get out before the suspension took place?

A: Apparently as much as the MIDWAY could carry. They were fully loaded; there's still some equipment there but it's really in small amounts; some of it's damaged. From what I could learn the equipment left included some high value equipment, six C-7s which are relatively small transport planes that have facility for getting into and out of small places.

Q: Left behind?

A: It is still there. As you know, we believe that we have legal right to this equipment.

Q: The original removal of equipment was done with the approval of the Thai Cabinet, was it not?

A: It was done, as I understand it, before they formally protested.

Q: The other aircraft there are what, observation -- did they get out all the F-5s?

A: The ones that were in good condition. I don't have a breakdown.

Q: It was said there were 120 airplanes there -- does that mean that we got out 117 aircraft, let's say?

A: There were quite a few helicopters that flew out to the MIDWAY, they weren't taken to Thailand.

Q: They're not included in the 120 though?

A: There were twenty-seven A-37s; twenty-five F-5s; 48 helicopters, most of which were flown on board, including five Air America Huey helicopters.

Q: You're saying these are on the MIDWAY?

A: Yes. Then there's an O-1 which is an observation plane.

MORE

(This is not a verbatim transcript)

4.

Q: There were some C-130s flown out too?

A: I believe there were, but I don't know how many.

Q: Were some of the planes actually lifted by helicopters out to the carrier?

A: I don't have the dramatic details of it, except what I read in the newspapers of men who were there and apparently saw it.

Q: Saw them actually lifting the aircraft?

A: Apparently, but I don't have any reports or color on that.

Q: So, most if not all of the flyable aircraft that were there have been now recovered by the United States, is that correct?

A: That's probably a fair assumption to make.

Q: The 48 helicopters were not in the original 122 count, were they?

A: I don't know whether they were or not, actually.

Q: They weren't in that list that we got here; that was all fixed wing aircraft.

Q: That list you gave us has 38 F-5s; that means three are still there?

A: They could be there and I don't know whether they were left behind because they were damaged or what. A lot of the equipment that is still there is apparently not operable without additional work.

Q: Weren't two of the F-5s flown to Korat for the U.S. Air Force?

A: I don't know.

Q: Secretary Schlesinger spoke at Maxwell the other day, it wasn't publicized. Do you have anything on that?

A: His talk was off the record to 300 Air Force officers attending the Air War College. He spent an hour talking to them and an hour answering their questions.

Q: Was it just a talk or was there a topic?

A: It ranged over all of military affairs and it was all off the record and considered secret.

Q: Can you tell us anything about his meeting with Ambassador Carlucci and what they talked about?

A: I think he's still up there. At least when I checked he was about to go in.

Q: There were references made by Henry Kissinger to alternatives that would be available if the Portuguese bases were not available to us. Is he discussing that with him perhaps?

A: I'm sure he's discussing all the problems we may face in Portugal. There's no agenda.

Q: You implied earlier that these planes were moved before they formally protested. An effort to swiftly remove them from the country before they can act is the implication?

A: That wasn't the implication that I was making. I was simply pointing

MORE

(This is not a verbatim transcript)

5.

out that the MIDWAY was carrying all the excess equipment it could handle and sailed away with it. Meantime, we are negotiating with the Thai government with the hope of settling the differences.

Q: We are negotiating with the Thai government and they have asked us to leave within a year. Are we also negotiating their paying us for Utapao, and all of those other bases that we built there in recent years, which they will now inherit?

A: I don't know but I imagine that will emerge as the discussions continue.

Q: Was that an official request by them that we leave?

A: I don't know. It was an official request about keeping the equipment there, but I don't know the other details.

Q: Are you acknowledging officially that we have been asked to leave by a particular day? By any day?

A: I don't know, Lloyd (Norman, Newsweek). I don't recall seeing that in the communique, but that's easily checked.

Q: Your answer could be interpreted as an indication that you acknowledge that.

A: I didn't mean to acknowledge, as I don't have any first-hand knowledge at the moment.

Q: Have you got a breakdown available of the planes that were removed out of the next increment of withdrawals from Thailand?

A: A lot of that detailed information about equipment is being pulled together now and when it's available to me, I'll be happy to make it available to you.

Q: What's the status of the study that's being made of what was left behind in Vietnam of value?

A: I also meant to allude to that matter of gathering this information.

Q: Is it still going on?

A: Yes.

Q: When do you expect to get that?

A: I don't know, sometime in the near future, I would hope.

Q: After we announced that we would stop removing the aircraft from Thailand, did the MIDWAY sail before that point or after that point, after they announced formally?

A: I don't know what the timing was. When she was fully loaded with equipment, she sailed. When the formal request was received, we honored it and entered into negotiations about the remaining equipment which we feel is ours.

Q: The Thai Foreign Minister, at least stated in the press, that Thailand intended to keep control of those planes. Would they have to make a formal declaration of this intent?

A: I don't know what the protocol involved is, but we are involved in negotiations with them as a result of their initiative.

MORE

(This is not a verbatim transcript)

6.

Q: Can you say anything further on the air combat fighter decision? What is the Secretary going to do and when?

A: You mean on the F-18? No, but the more I go into that matter, the more I'm convinced maybe we ought to have one of the F-18 experts down here to answer your questions. In looking over the transcript of Dr. Potter, I couldn't see any conflict there. If you don't have copies of it, I'll be glad to give you another, and if you have any additional questions, I think that --

Q: Potter indicated that he expected the decision by the Secretary in a matter of days. He indicated it might be before the testimony began on the Hill yesterday. He seemed very clear in that he was signaling his expectation of an early Schlesinger decision.

A: When I looked into that I came to the conclusion that the overall program concept and the contractor choice for the F-18 or the F-17 derivative, depending on what you want to call it, has the full support of the Secretary of Defense and this is a period where this detailed definition before the final approval is made for the full-scale system development and I couldn't see any conflict.

Q: Dr. Potter said, I looked at the transcript yesterday, he definitely referred to the full-scale development. He said that he expected an affirmative answer in a very few days. Dr. Currie came out yesterday in his testimony and said approval wouldn't be until late summer.

A: I went into that and I think they might have been talking about two different things. I'll get a statement from Dr. Currie or Dr. Potter about that and post it. The contractual matters are a little too complicated for me to absorb in a couple of hours, but I'll have them prepare this --

Q: Do you find that there's any relationship to this decision by the four-country consortium overseas?

A: I don't believe there is. No.

Q: They would either be faced with a possible choice of two planes or just the F-16. Would we be deferring the decision on the F-18 in order just to give the four countries?

A: You're getting into a very delicate area which I don't feel competent at the moment to address myself to, but I'll be glad to produce the people who can.

Q: Can I suggest that you ask the Secretary to tell us what he has already decided about the F-18 and what he feels he has left to decide?

A: Sure.

Q: The thing that puzzled us yesterday was that both Dr. Currie and Dr. Potter referred to full-scale development; they both used exactly the same words, Dr. Currie saying late summer and Dr. Potter saying in a very few days. He said that twice.

A: There's no reason why that confusion should remain and I'll do my best to have that cleared up by people who are far more qualified. When I ask for answers on things like that and I get little paragraphs that don't satisfy me, I think that the people who are in charge of these things ought to address themselves.

MORE

(This is not a verbatim transcript)

7.

Q: We need an F-18 expert to answer a lot of other questions.

A: I thought that had all been taken care of when we brought Dr. Potter down here last week.

Q: Does the Secretary of Defense approve the use of the government funds by the Air Force Legislative Liaison office to throw a cocktail party for staff members of Congress when they watch a B-1 movie?

A: The way you put it, I don't know how anybody could approve of it, John (Finney, NY Times).

Q: I think it's a fairly factual statement of what occurred and I'm just asking whether the Secretary approves of such use of government funds?

A: I can say with some degree of surety that he would approve of no improper expenditure of funds.

Q: That of course is not really my question. My next question is, does he regard such use of funds as a proper or improper use of Government funds.

A: I'll be glad to discuss it with him sometime. It's a perfectly good question; I'm not disregarding your question.

Q: I hope you're not; I don't present it frivolously; I think it's outrageous.

A: Please don't regard my answer as frivolous.

Q: The handout on the USO, it says the Blue Ribbon Committee recommended continued United Way financial support for the USO, but it doesn't say whether the USO is going to get continued financial support; then it goes on to say the USO says it will need a million dollars more and --

A: I'll take your question and I'll arrange for somebody to give you more details on it.

Q: On the Thai negotiations, what else could they be discussing? What equipment are you referring to?

A: I said there was more equipment there, although most of the high value equipment had been taken out.

Q: Do you have a total value on the equipment?

A: I don't have a money figure.

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(This is not a verbatim transcript)

DoD Morning News Briefing
Monday, May 5, 1975, 11:25 a.m.
(ASD/PA Joseph Laitin)

Announcements:

1. On the Hill: No Congressional testimony for release today.
2. I do have a statement by the press which I am happy to communicate to you. It is signed by 85 media representatives who were on the USS OKINAWA. This message was received by CINCPAC Public Affairs at Clark Air Base on arrival of these men from the OKINAWA by helicopter. It is simply provided for your background information.

"A message to the officers and men aboard the USS OKINAWA:

"On behalf of the entire press corps aboard the USS OKINAWA we would like to express our deepest gratitude to the officers and men of the United States Navy and the United States Marine Corps for transporting us out of Saigon in the face of personal danger.

"We would also like to express our admiration for the professional manner in which this operation was carried out.

"Especially, we would like to thank Captain Charles J. Moore, USN, his crew and the members of the U.S. Marine Corps aboard the USS OKINAWA for the hospitality and sacrifices made during our stay. Special thanks also go to those members of the crew who have handled the vast amount of press communications from the USS OKINAWA this week.

"Once again, our sincerest thanks and admiration.

"The Press Corps"

I don't recall ever getting a message like this from anybody in the Pentagon press corps.

Q: And nor are you likely to. (laughter)

A: I wasn't suggesting that I was anticipating it, Mr. Hoffman (AP).

3. The latest update on the refugee ships: Indications are that we have about 52,375 evacuees aboard Navy, MSC and former South Vietnamese navy ships. Most of the U.S. Navy and MSC ships arrived over the weekend at Subic Bay in the Philippines. We expect the South Vietnamese flotilla to arrive at Subic on Wednesday, May 7. The first MSC ships are expected to arrive in Guam tomorrow. The first two ships, the SS PIONEER COMMANDER and the SS AMERICAN CHALLENGER with about 10,000 refugees aboard, did not stop at Subic Bay because both masters of these ships stated that they were in good shape and the U.S. Navy stores ship, WHITE PLAINS, is escorting these first two MSC ships on route to Guam. The present plan is to airlift about 30,000 of the shipboard refugees from Subic to Guam or Wake with the remaining 43,000 going to Guam by MSC ships. The airlift by Air Force C-130's began yesterday. We expect to airlift about 6,000 people daily from Subic to Guam or Wake.

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Incidentally, the latest count of the South Vietnamese flotilla is 29 ships. The plan is to transfer the majority of these refugees to MSC ships for the trip to Guam. But some of the refugees will be airlifted to Guam.

Q: How many people are on the South Vietnamese ships?

A: The last count was somewhere in the neighborhood of about 25,000.

4. Secretary Schlesinger's remarks Saturday at the Commissioning of the USS NIMITZ at Norfolk are available.

5. A transcript of Under Secretary of the Navy Potter's briefing on the F-18 is available.

6. We have posted the joint statement issued today in Bangkok:

"In accordance with a joint announcement of the Royal Thai Government and the United States Government, on March 29, 1974, concerning the reduction of U.S. military forces, U.S. military personnel in Thailand last year decreased by 10,000. Following consultations between representatives of the two Governments, a decision has now been reached to further reduce the U.S. military forces in Thailand. By about the end of June 1975, the current level of 27,000 authorized personnel will be reduced by 7,500. Further discussions will determine the specific forces to be deleted and the timing of their departure."

7. Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger today announced the President has nominated Rear Admiral Edward W. Cooke, USN, for appointment to the grade of Vice Admiral and his assignment as Deputy Chief of Naval Operations, Logistics.

8. The Army selected 56 Colonels for promotion to Brigadier General and included in this list, which you should now have, is Colonel Mary E. Clarke, Chief of the Women's Army Corps Branch. She will be succeeding Brig. Gen. Mildred Bailey as Director of the WACs when she retires on August 1.

9. There is for your edification the Pentagon Protestant pulpit presents Colonel Heath Bottomly, USAF retired, on the Pentagon concourse at 12:00 noon.

Q: What can you tell us about the troop pullout in Thailand? Can you amplify on that?

A: Nothing beyond what the joint statement says. As you know, negotiations are continuing and that's all I can say.

Q: The authorized strength is 27,000; what's the current strength?

A: About 25,000.

Q: Can you tell us why this reduction is any greater than had been contemplated two or three months ago?

A: I don't have that information.

Q: Thai officials are still speaking of the total removal of American troops by next March, I think it was. Is that the plan?

A: As I said before, the negotiations are continuing and I wouldn't want to go beyond that for obvious reasons.

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Q: Who is conducting the negotiations?

A: The State Department.

Q: Does this reduction also mean a reduction in the number of airplanes stationed there?

A: I don't know; this is a matter of negotiations.

Q: What's the current level of the number of planes there?

A: 350 of which 200 are combat.

Q: Will the overall worldwide strength be cut by this number?

A: I don't have that information.

Q: Where are the men going to be taken to that are being withdrawn?

A: I can get that for you.

Q: Are we making arrangements to take from Thailand the planes that South Vietnamese people flew into there?

A: I can only assume so, but I don't have any specific information on that.

Q: Have you dispatched a carrier or anything like that?

A: I don't know if we dispatched a carrier specifically to take care of this matter and I don't know what the logistic arrangements are.

Q: Have you dispatched a carrier to the Gulf of Thailand or an area close enough that they could be flown out?

A: We have ships in that area but I don't know if that's their mission or not.

Q: Has the Thai Government agreed to release the planes?

A: I don't have any knowledge of that. I assume those arrangements will be made through the State Department.

Q: In whose hands are those aircraft, Thai or U.S.?

A: I assume they are in our hands.

Q: I've been trying to get the cost of this evacuation operation, including the cost of the helicopters that went over the side.

A: It's been a little early. We'll come up with figures on that sooner or later. It takes some time to work that out.

Q: I think there is legitimate interest as to what happens to those airplanes. Secretary Schlesinger told us we would reassert title and regain the airplanes. Now it's some days later; instead of saying you don't know, are you willing to say you would find out whether we're going to take them out?

A: I wasn't trying to be evasive; is that what you were suggesting?

Q: I'm suggesting you said you don't know.

A: I don't know but I'm certainly going to find out for you.

Q: Can we find out rather swiftly to go along with this Bangkok announcement?

A: I'll find out as soon as I possibly can. (FYI: Some aircraft, like C-130s are being flown to Clark AFB and most of the others are being removed by ship. The USS MIDWAY is in the Gulf of Thailand at Sattahip and is loading some of these aircraft.)

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Q: Also, can we get an updated list by type of plane?
A: I don't know whether that's immediately available, but I'll try to get that.

Q: Can you tell us what bases these 7,500 men are going to come from?
A: No, I don't have that breakdown. I'm not sure that's available this quickly.

Q: Will any of those bases be closed?
A: I have no knowledge or information on that.

Q: Those 25,000 aboard South Vietnamese ships, they are in addition to your earlier figure?
A: Let me give a complete breakdown.

~~✓~~ Indochina refugees are presently located as follows:

At sea enroute to Pacific sites.....	52,375 (including SVN Navy)
At U.S. Pacific Bases.....	39,043
At CONUS U.S. Bases:	
Fort Chaffee.....	2,784
Camp Pendleton.....	8,673
Eglin Air Force Base.....	360
Completed Processing and Departed.....	11,138

Q: When is Secretary Schlesinger going to make his decision known on the Navy's air combat fighter?

A: I'd say in the very near future. I don't have a specific date.

Q: Like today before tomorrow's hearing?

A: I can't answer that question right now, mainly because I don't have the information.

Q: When he signs off on it would you inform us?

A: Indeed.

Q: If he signs off on it today, no matter how late, could we be informed?

A: If he signs off on it late today, I guess the only expeditious way of doing it would be to notify the wires -- depending on what time it is. We won't keep it a secret if that's what you mean.

Q: Could you enlighten us any more than the Navy did on why a Service was able to make an announcement of a choice of weapons system and also state that the Secretary of Defense had not approved it? It may not be unprecedented but it's not the usual thing. All they could tell us was that they were afraid the secrecy not be kept once they had decided and so they announced it. The secrecy had already escaped them but it was a very unusual thing.

A: I'm not in position to say that it was unusual or not. I accept your word for it. I do know they were concerned about the information leaking out and wanted to go ahead with it and I thought the best thing to do was that once the decision was made at that level was to get it out as fast as you can and I approved of them putting it out immediately.

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Q: It would be a bit awkward if the Secretary says "no dice," won't it?
A: Awkward for whom? It depends on where you sit.

Q: Can you shed any light to the report that there were some 450 South Vietnamese employees left in the Embassy once Ambassador Martin departed the courtyard?

A: There were quite a few Vietnamese in the building, I don't know whether they were employees or not. I think this is a matter that you would have to take up with another agency. All I do know is that the report that the Marines used their small arms weapons was unfounded.

Q: They used tear gas though?

A: They used crowd control devices, whatever they were, but only in the building, I understand.

Q: Not outside, not out on the grounds?

A: I heard it was only in the building.

Q: Did the last Marines out from the DAO and from the Embassy set fire to those buildings?

A: I have not heard anything of that nature.

Q: Were the plans for the evacuation made here or were they made by the Embassy in Saigon?

A: You mean the overall plans?

Q: The specifics, in terms of the picking of the landing sites, the scheduling of areas where refugees or evacuees were to be picked up by bus, that sort of thing.

A: I understand those detailed plans had to be made over there. They may have been submitted here at some point but I think that it was in the hands of the personnel over there. You can't master-mind something like that from here.

Q: My question was when these specific plans were submitted or referred here to the people who would carry them out.

A: I don't know whether they got down to that kind of a detail over here. It just seems to me that people on the spot would be in the best position to determine where the landing zones would be. That's the way it was done in Phnom Penh and I would imagine that's the way it was done over there.

Q: Does anybody know how much military equipment was in South Vietnam at the time of the surrender?

A: That information is being pulled together and one of the people who knows more about that probably than any other person is not back in Washington. When he comes back, I plan to get some information from him.

Q: Are you also putting together an inventory of fixed installations and their value; the buildings and equipment belonging to U.S. contractors?

A: I can only assume that somebody is doing it. I don't know who it would be.

Q: That would be well over \$5 billion.

A: I don't have any figures. A lot of those things are obviously going to be done and it takes a little while to pull things like that together.

E N D

(This is not a verbatim transcript)

DoD Morning News Briefing
Friday, May 2, 1975, 11:15 a.m.
(ASD/PA Joseph Laitin)

Announcements:

1. No DoD witnesses on the Hill today.
2. The President speaks tomorrow at the commissioning of the USS NIMITZ in Norfolk at 11 a.m. The Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of the Navy will participate in the ceremonies. The Secretary of Defense will introduce the President.
- Q: Could you apropos of that get us the estimated cost now of the NIMITZ and how far behind schedule she is in this commissioning?
A: Yes, I can get that. I've got part of it, but I'd rather get the whole thing for you later, John (Finney, NY Times).
3. Secretary Schlesinger is announcing today that the President has nominated General Lucius D. Clay, Jr., to be placed on the retired list in his current grade effective September 1, 1975. General Clay is currently serving as the Commander-in-Chief, NORAD, and Commander, Aerospace Defense Command.
4. The Secretary of the Army, Howard Callaway, will present the 1975 Pace Awards for distinguished service to the Department of the Army at Pentagon ceremonies at 11:30 a.m. today. The awards made annually since 1963 and named after former Secretary of the Army Frank Pace, will be presented to Major Patrick A. Metress and Mr. I. Stanley DeGroote.
5. Release on new assignments for general and flag officers.
6. The 1973-1974 Harmon International Aviation Trophies will be presented by President Ford to Air Force LCol. Edgar L. Allison and Col. Edward J. Nash in White House ceremonies today. The presentations are scheduled before noon in the Rose Garden. The Harmon Trophies are, as you all know I'm sure, for outstanding feats of individual flying skill; adjudged "worthy of international recognition and contributing to the art and science of flight." There is additional information available on this at the Air Force Desk if you're interested. I understand the White House is inviting the press to the ceremonies.
7. About the correspondents and news media representatives with the fleet in the South China Sea, we're receiving messages from the fleet with the names of correspondents who were evacuated or are otherwise embarked. DDI has the list and will be happy to make copies available to those of you who would like to get it for yourself for your offices, or if you've got any friends whose whereabouts are unknown to you. We're purusing it, and we'll update the list as we get additional information.

Incidentally, we're still pressing for access to communications facilities on behalf of your colleagues who are aboard various ships. We tried to get them all on one ship for transport to the Philippines. We are still working that out. As a matter of fact, as early as this morning, I took some new measures to try to expedite the transport of these correspondents so that we

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can get them to the Philippines before nightfall our time tonight. I saw some messages that indicated that the plans were to have them in the Philippines Sunday night and felt that we ought to make a little better effort.

Q: Is there any possibility of getting copy off by other means?

A: As part of this effort, I've also tried to get extra communications facilities made available because there has developed, surprisingly to me, quite a large backlog of copy which I thought had all cleared. Either your colleagues have become much more prolific than I'd anticipated or the channels of communications have not been adequate to meet the need. Anyway I'm trying to clear up both problems and if any of you want to know what progress, what luck we're having, touch base with my office and we'll be glad to tell you.

Q: Is that the OKINAWA you're talking about, that you're trying to get into the Philippines?

A: A good many of them are on the OKINAWA now, but I discovered that there are quite a few on other ships.

Q: Do you have an ETA on the OKINAWA?

A: On ETA, we're trying to get them off the ship by chopper into the Philippines.

Q: Does that mean you'd go through Clark or Subic?

A: They're headed in that direction.

Q: Which one, Subic or Clark?

A: If they stay on the ship, they go to Subic. By plane they would go to Clark.

Q: Is there any chance of getting a pouch on a jet fighter or similar aircraft?

A: We're working on every angle of this, Lloyd (Norman, Newsweek), and I'll know within a couple of hours whether we can do anything. I'm trying to find out why the problem has developed and before I know what the problem is, it's a little difficult to find ways of solving it.

Q: So what's the one ship you're trying to put them on?

A: It doesn't have to be on one ship. I'd be perfectly happy if they get them off the other ships and when they come within range of the Philippines to get them on either a fixed-wing aircraft, you know like a COD, or with these big helicopters and get them into the Philippines before the weekend has started.

Q: Do you know where the rest of the fleet is headed now? Is it going to Subic? Is it going to Guam or what?

A: Let me get to that in a moment.

8. General Robert E. Cushman, Jr., the Commandant of the Marine Corps, is making a speech tomorrow in Philadelphia before the Marine Corps Reserve Officers Association and copies of his text are available to you.

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9. Just a quick roundup of the numbers of evacuees. On U.S. bases in the Pacific, there're 35,319 people. On the U.S. mainland, which at the moment would include only Camp Pendleton, there are now 4,381. One really should round these figures but I'm giving you the specific count as given to me. It keeps changing, of course.

Q: Does that mean the people who have come there and perhaps have since left or people who are physically present?

A: The figure I just gave you, 4,381, are the people who are presently there. An additional 2,000 have already processed through Pendleton and are now proceeding to various places where their sponsors are living. Afloat on U.S. ships are 34,363 people. The Vietnamese Navy, which is now proceeding in an easterly direction, very slowly, with a couple of U.S. Navy ships nearby, have aboard a large number of refugees in the 26 ships that comprise this South Vietnamese Navy flotilla.

Q: What kind of ships are they?

A: I don't have an exact breakdown of the types of craft but I can tell you it consists of landing craft -- the LST type -- patrol craft, such as former Coast Guard cutters, patrol gunboats and service crafts such as small oilers. I have an estimated figure of the number of refugees aboard these Vietnamese Navy ships and I would suggest that you use the figure with a little caution. The estimated figure that I found in the cable traffic is 30,000. That's a very rough estimation.

Q: That's 30,000 refugees, and does not include crew members?

A: I don't know.

Q: In addition to the list, are you including the ones in Thailand?

A: No, these are just the ones on the Vietnamese Navy ships which are now moving slowly in an easterly direction in the Western Pacific.

Q: How was the estimate made, through aerial photos or what?

A: I would assume that it was made from observation by the two ships which are in the immediate area.

Q: What are the two ships in the immediate area?

A: The USS COOK, which is a destroyer escort and the TUSCALOOSA which is an LST. They may have a chopper with them that flew over; it's an eye-ball estimate, I would guess. A large part of the time was nighttime during this period.

Q: When did the two U.S. Navy ships meet up with the flotilla and could you call them an escort?

A: I would just prefer to say that two U.S. Navy ships are in the immediate area of the Vietnamese ships. I don't know whether they've been assigned as an escort, that takes on a very special significance. They are going at the same speed in the same direction and they're in the immediate area.

Q: Are they going to the Philippines or are they going to Guam?

A: They are heading apparently towards the Philippines, but I don't know whether they are going to the Philippines.

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Q: How far are they from South Vietnam?

A: I don't have a mileage estimate, but I would say that the present speed, according to the calculations of the reports, they could reach the Philippine area in the middle of next week.

Q: Are they still close enough to the Vietnamese coast to be picking up people or are they out of that range now?

A: It depends on too many factors; I don't know how to answer that question.

Q: Are there U.S. ships still out there picking up refugees?

A: No.

Q: When did that stop?

A: I think Secretary Schlesinger indicated to you yesterday that it stopped yesterday.

Q: There are none still out there?

A: There are no U.S. Navy ships in what you would call the immediate area of Vietnam.

Q: Does this mean that the Philippine government has acquiesced in their going there?

A: I have no knowledge of that. I didn't say they were going to the Philippines; I said they appear to be heading in the direction of the Philippines, in an easterly direction from Vietnam. I don't know whether they're going to the Philippines or not.

Q: Did this flotilla come out of various ports in Vietnam or did they all leave, say, Vung Tau?

A: I wish I had more information to give you on that. We just became aware of this flotilla late yesterday afternoon and we weren't sure about it. We weren't very certain of the number of refugees aboard even late yesterday afternoon. And, it wasn't until the evening hours when the information seemed to be firm enough so that we could even respond to queries about it.

Q: You mean that this came as sort of a surprise to you then, that this flotilla came out?

A: It came as a surprise to me, but I wouldn't want to speak for everybody. I don't know how many people were aware of that but I doubt whether very many people were aware of it much before yesterday; let me put it that way.

Q: What is the policy about picking up any of these refugees in these small boats?

A: The policy remains pretty much the way the Secretary put it yesterday and the way I put it the day before.

Q: Which was that you would pick them up?

A: Which is that there's no law against the United States Navy rescuing people in distress on the high seas.

Q: Are the sea conditions favorable, are these ships all right at this point?

A: I have no knowledge that they aren't.

Q: Are we going to claim title to all 26 ships?

A: I don't believe that title ever left us.

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(This is not a verbatim transcript)

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Q: So wherever those ships go we can presume the United States will then claim them?

A: I would suppose so but it's a legal question and I would like that question to be addressed to the lawyers. But I made a quick check and I understand that the title never actually left. Again, it's a highly technical question, which I would be glad to get an answer to for you.

Q: Related question, are the planes in Thailand under U.S. physical control? Who's got them?

A: Similarly, we never gave up title of those planes.

Q: But who's got physical possession?

A: I assume they're in our possession but I don't know.

Q: Do you have an up-to-date figure of Vietnamese refugees in Thailand?

A: I don't have any figures on the refugees in Thailand.

Q: Have you been flying out refugees from Thailand?

A: Not to my knowledge. I'll be glad to check into that.

Q: I have a gap here. State Department gave a figure of 80,000 Vietnamese refugees yesterday --

A: We're not too far from that.

Q: If you don't count the 30,000 that you didn't know about, I add up to something like 70,000.

A: Our figures add up to 74,000. You know when you have a mass movement like this, your figures don't always tote up the same and there's always a little discrepancy.

Q: That does not include the 30,000?

A: That does not include the estimated 30,000.

Q: During what reporting period, are the figures that you gave us?

A: I try to cover the whole period.

Q: As of what time, Washington time, are those figures that you gave us?

A: As of the time I walked into this room which was 11:15. I should tell you that all Navy and MSC ships, all of them with refugees aboard, are steaming eastward toward the Philippines.

Q: What's that in specific numbers?

A: I meant to get that for you but I don't have it. I know you asked that question yesterday and the day before. If you keep asking me the question, I may be able to come up with the answers.

Q: You are confident that you can find out?

A: I'm only confident of my desire to do so.

Q: Do you know whether there are any South Vietnamese ships still in the vicinity of South Vietnam that might still be picking up people?

A: No, I wouldn't have any knowledge of that now.

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Q: When will the Navy and MSC ships arrive in the Philippines?

A: We expect the first ship to arrive at Subic with evacuees will be the carrier USS HANCOCK. It has aboard 2001 evacuees.

Q: When does she arrive?

A: At 9:00 p.m. this evening EDT. I've got a breakdown on it: 101 Americans, 1815 Vietnamese and 85 third-country nationals. The first MSC ship-group to arrive in the Philippine area will be composed of the SS PIONEER COMMANDER which will have aboard 5,500 evacuees; the SS PIONEER CONTENDER which will have aboard 5,953 evacuees; and the SS AMERICAN CHALLENGER which will have aboard 5,029 evacuees. That totals out to 16,482 evacuees. The ETA is around noon tomorrow EDT.

Q: Is that at Subic?

A: I presume at Subic but these ships will simply replenish their supplies, obtain any necessary medical services, then proceed to Guam with the refugees.

Q: Does that apply to the HANCOCK also?

A: No, I don't believe that applies to the HANCOCK.

Q: Those 2,000 or so will be treated otherwise that are on the HANCOCK?

A: I don't know what the plans are. I imagine there's a lot of planning going on right now to determine how many can be flown from the Philippines to Guam or to Wake or whatever and how many could best be transported with reasonable comfort by ship.

Q: Will the US Government accept the refugees aboard the Vietnamese flotilla?

A: I haven't any idea; that's a State Department matter and I would refer you there for possible answer.

Q: What is composition of the refugees on the South Vietnamese flotilla?

A: I don't have any breakdown; I just have the number as I gave them to you.

Q: You don't know what kind of people they are, where they came from or anything else?

A: They all came from South Vietnam I assume.

Q: Whether they're just friends and relatives of the crewmen that were flown on board at the last minute?

A: You're asking me a question it's impossible for me to answer. I can only assume what you assume.

Q: Did you say before the newsmen would come into Subic and then be flown to Clark AB?

A: No, I didn't say that at all. I said that I was trying to arrange for the news media people to be flown from the ships they were on to the Philippines either to Clark or to Subic whichever was most convenient for the military involved and that is what I'm trying to arrange now. It doesn't make that much difference whether it's Clark or Subic; they're both almost equidistant from Manila -- just an hour or two by jeep.

Q: And you also said before that you were trying to get them on one communication ship so they could file?

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A: No, I didn't say that.

Q: What did you say then?

A: I said I was trying to expedite the flow of copy from the various ships that the correspondents were on because I have discovered that there is an enormous backlog of copy due to circumstances that I am not aware of. I said that it might be because the correspondents are more prolific than I expected or it might be that there's been some problem with making available communications channels to them. I'm trying to do everything I can to reduce and eliminate the backlog of copy of whatever ships correspondents happen to be on.

Q: The first of the refugees are supposed to arrive at Chaffee today. When are they due at Chaffee, and secondly, with so many other refugees on the way, is DOD looking at any other bases that may be used?

A: I believe that we are looking at other bases but no decisions have been made yet.

Q: When are they due at Chaffee, do you know?

A: I don't know that. We have pretty high-level officers at the three bases -- men with good public relations backgrounds to help the media. Other agencies involved, by the way, are also sending people there. I heard from HEW yesterday that they are sending public relations people there to assist the press and it's all being coordinated and our military PR men will cooperate with them. We're responsible, of course, with the housekeeping, transportation and then there are many other facets in handling the refugees and so they're sending out top-level men, State Department, etc. I understand that out of Pendleton yesterday there were about 90-100 news media people. I hate the term news media, but I guess that'll be the only thing that'll cover cameramen and sound men.

Q: Could you give us a hint as to whatever bases you're looking at now?

A: I'd be glad to give you a hint, but I don't know.

Q: Is Pendleton full now, is that why they're going to Chaffee?

A: Pendleton is far from full. They've got 4,000 people there and they are arranging accommodations to handle up to 20,000 and maybe beyond at Pendleton.

Q: Why are they moving refugees to Chaffee at this point?

A: You want to spread them around. There's no point in putting the whole burden on one base and furthermore it takes time to get up to speed. You don't want to suddenly drop 20,000 people on one base. You realize that is bigger than the population of a lot of American cities.

Q: Are all the refugees on the South Vietnamese flotilla South Vietnamese, there are no Americans, no third-country nationals on board that you know of?

A: It's an interesting question, but I just assume that they are all Vietnamese. I can't elaborate on that at all.

Q: If these ships proceed to Guam, what would be their estimated time of arrival?

A: It depends on how fast a ship they're on.

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A: No, I didn't say that.

Q: What did you say then?

A: I said I was trying to expedite the flow of copy from the various ships that the correspondents were on because I have discovered that there is an enormous backlog of copy due to circumstances that I am not aware of. I said that it might be because the correspondents are more prolific than I expected or it might be that there's been some problem with making available communications channels to them. I'm trying to do everything I can to reduce and eliminate the backlog of copy of whatever ships correspondents happen to be on.

Q: The first of the refugees are supposed to arrive at Chaffee today. When are they due at Chaffee, and secondly, with so many other refugees on the way, is DOD looking at any other bases that may be used?

A: I believe that we are looking at other bases but no decisions have been made yet.

Q: When are they due at Chaffee, do you know?

A: I don't know that. We have pretty high-level officers at the three bases -- men with good public relations backgrounds to help the media. Other agencies involved, by the way, are also sending people there. I heard from HEW yesterday that they are sending public relations people there to assist the press and it's all being coordinated and our military PR men will cooperate with them. We're responsible, of course, with the housekeeping, transportation and then there are many other facets in handling the refugees and so they're sending out top-level men, State Department, etc. I understand that out of Pendleton yesterday there were about 90-100 news media people. I hate the term news media, but I guess that'll be the only thing that'll cover cameramen and sound men.

Q: Could you give us a hint as to whatever bases you're looking at now?

A: I'd be glad to give you a hint, but I don't know.

Q: Is Pendleton full now, is that why they're going to Chaffee?

A: Pendleton is far from full. They've got 4,000 people there and they are arranging accommodations to handle up to 20,000 and maybe beyond at Pendleton.

Q: Why are they moving refugees to Chaffee at this point?

A: You want to spread them around. There's no point in putting the whole burden on one base and furthermore it takes time to get up to speed. You don't want to suddenly drop 20,000 people on one base. You realize that is bigger than the population of a lot of American cities.

Q: Are all the refugees on the South Vietnamese flotilla South Vietnamese, there are no Americans, no third-country nationals on board that you know of?

A: It's an interesting question, but I just assume that they are all Vietnamese. I can't elaborate on that at all.

Q: If these ships proceed to Guam, what would be their estimated time of arrival?

A: It depends on how fast a ship they're on.

MORE

(This is not a verbatim transcript)

8.

Q: There is a logical question that flows out of this; it's a pretty long trip from Manila to Guam with 5,000 people.

A: I tried to tell you before when they were going to arrive, but I was interrupted by a very good question. They are expected to arrive on these MSC ships, the speed of which we know approximately, on next Wednesday, which is May 7.

Q: Next Wednesday in Subic?

A: No, in Guam.

Q: That's about 4 or 5 days aboard ships that aren't equipped to carry 5 or 6,000 people; why are you just replenishing them and going on to Guam, why don't you --

A: I thought I had conveyed to you that they were going to pause at Subic for medical checks and replenishment and also I understand that they are reviewing the whole situation to see what would be the best way of transporting these people to Guam. I don't know what answers they'll come up with, but they are looking at the situation. I said they will try to determine how many can be transported aboard ship in reasonable comfort and make their determinations on that basis, and to see what the medical situation is aboard the ship.

Q: What I'm getting at is whether we have run into governmental problems in taking those people off those ships in Subic Bay.

A: If we have, I'm not aware of them.

Q: Are these all South Vietnamese on the MSC ships?

A: I don't know. I don't have a breakdown on the MSC ships.

Q: When was the last ship to move off station, off the South Vietnamese coast?

A: I don't have that information.

Q: Do you have a figure of approximately how close the nearest Navy ship is to South Vietnam?

A: They're all in international waters now. Does that answer your question?

Q: No, because I don't know what you claim as international waters any more.

A: Without getting into the legal aspects of it, I understand they were all in excess of 35 miles off the coast and I would guess considerably in excess of that now.

Q: Do you know what has happened to the convoy that left Phnom Penh for Thailand? Where they are?

A: No, I don't.

Q: You say all the U.S. Navy and MSC ships are out of Vietnam waters or vicinity of Vietnam; are any U.S. ships still picking up refugees either off the coast of Vietnam or off certain islands?

A: To the best of my knowledge, no. I imagine this flotilla, if they find somebody adrift, with a life belt on, they'd pick them up. Your question is whether there's an organized effort right now and as far as I've been able to determine the answer is no.

MORE

(This is not a verbatim transcript):

9.

Q: Reuters quotes shipping communications monitored in Singapore as stating that evacuation of refugees was continuing from the offshore islands of Kon Son and Phu Quoc.

A: As far as Phu Quoc is concerned, I checked on that this morning and those operations were over.

Q: What operations?

A: Whatever operations were going on.

Q: Navy operations?

A: No, as far as I know they were refugees.

Q: Who was taking these off?

A: I don't know. There were some ships there a couple of days ago, but that's all I know. They aren't there now.

Q: Vietnamese Navy ships?

A: I have no idea.

Q: So no ships under charter to the Military Sealift Command are presently engaged in any organized effort of picking up refugees?

A: I would say that's probably a pretty accurate statement.

Q: I would like to go back to the Phu Quoc, we asked several times last week what was planned for refugees at Phu Quoc, and there was never a clear answer. Is this part of the sealift?

A: I don't have a clear answer for you; I just know that we are not there now.

Q: Were we ever there?

A: I don't know, I'll be glad to find out for you. I think we had picked up some people or delivered some people there. I'm not quite sure about that, but we are not there now.

Q: Has the Navy made its decision on which of the lightweight fighter planes it will choose, the F-16 or the F-17?

A: No.

Q: Are we going to hear about it today?

A: The matter is being studied by the appropriate people in Defense, and when the decision is made, it'll be announced promptly.

Q: Are we coming that close to that decision?

A: Probably, but don't nail me down. When the decision is made, it'll be announced.

Q: Has Mr. Clements briefed on this yesterday or today? Or to be more specific, did the Navy present its recommendations yesterday or today to Mr. Clements?

A: I don't know about the timing on it, but I know the matter is being studied by the appropriate people in Defense. I've just been handed a note which states the first planeload of refugees arrived at Fort Chaffee at 10 o'clock this morning. Everything went smoothly and the Governor was there to meet them.

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(This is not a verbatim transcript)

10.

Q: May I make the request that once the decision is made on the F-16 or 17 by the Navy, that that announcement be accompanied by a briefing by some civilian official to explain the reasons behind it and the implications of that recommendation?

A: I'll certainly take your request. It sounds reasonable.

Q: Will you work with us to the extent that you will not make the announcement after 5 o'clock today on the selection of that plane?

A: Don't pin me down on time.

Q: The decision was supposed to have been made in March and it was delayed and now we're into May. It was supposed to have been made in April and now into May, I think these questions are fair.

A: I didn't say they weren't fair.

Q: Are we getting anywhere close to that decision, so we could be alerted on this thing? We're not asking to be given the decision if it's not ready for the next 24-48 hours.

A: You'll be notified.

Q: You can't say now whether it'll be today or next week?

A: I can't say anything beyond what I've told you.

Q: Are NATO governments deciding this weekend whether or not to purchase the YF-16?

A: I don't know whether they are expected to or not. I know it's been under study for quite a while as you know. I don't know when they're coming up with their decision. Why don't you ask them?

Q: When the Air Force announced their decision, they had a news conference -- Mr. McLucas came down, everything. Can we expect that from Mr. Middendorf also?

A: I think we'll handle it in a way that will give it maximum exposure and we won't try to sneak anything out on you.

Q: Yesterday, the Secretary came down here and he said all U.S. Navy ships have been removed from the vicinity of Vietnam -- Vietnamese waters -- and he said that this action had preceded the North Vietnamese protest. Then late yesterday our office put out an announcement that the Joint Chiefs of Staff had issued orders at 3:00 p.m. EDT which was three hours after the Secretary's news conference that all Navy ships and MSC ships were to leave. I'm confused about the timing as to whether this order preceded or followed the protest of the North Vietnamese.

A: I think I would stand on what Secretary Schlesinger said, John.

Q: That leaves it in a state of confusion.

A: I thought he was rather precise in the way he put it to you.

Q: All the ships were pulled out yesterday then? Not today, is that correct?

A: That's correct.

Q: When was the JCS order announced?

A: What form was that in, John (Finney, NY Times)?

(This is not a verbatim transcript)

11.

Q: About 6 p.m. DDI put it out.

A: That was an answer to query, wasn't it?

Q: It was at Schlesinger's news conference. Why weren't we all called?

A: No one was called. I'm not familiar with what John is referring to.

If there is a problem I will look into it. The Secretary was down here and you asked him a question and he answered it. I really don't see what the problem is.

Q: Let's get it out in the open and discuss it. The problem is this: The Secretary comes down here and he makes certain statements. We are all covering those statements. The Secretary himself said there were certain questions I cannot answer at this point, we will have to check on them. He said we shall get you an answer and in fact he told Mr. Norman (Newsweek) we will get you time of that order. The whole afternoon your office labored on this and finally at 6 p.m. or thereabouts they came up with these answers to these questions. At that point does your office see fit to call the reporters who had been at the news conference and whom they should know are writing stories about it to inform them -- here are answers to some of the questions that were left unanswered at the news conference. I think if you will check you will find that the office did not call the interested reporters and that some reporters may have discovered more by accident than by any concerted plan down in DDI. I think that office has an obligation, particularly since they are answering questions that the Secretary said would be answered, to call the people and tell them.

A: I think you've got a point. There's another procedural matter; if there are 40 people here and everybody is interested in it and we have the information, there's also certain obligation on your part to call in, but that's procedural matter and we can straighten that out.

Q: We often call in before our deadlines and we are told it isn't up. Unless you go to rather great lengths to request that you be called on a specific day, you never do get called.

A: My understanding is that my office goes out of its way to accommodate your needs and if they are not doing the job they should be doing and I want to know about it and I will see to it that the matter is corrected.

Q: That's why I just made the comments.

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(This is not a verbatim transcript)

DoD Morning News Briefing
Thursday, May 1, 1975, 12:00 Noon
(ASD/PA Laitin)

A number of you in the last few days have asked for interviews with Secretary Schlesinger, so because I was not able to comply with all those requests I have invited Secretary Schlesinger to come down here himself today and he will be here within a few minutes.

Meantime, I just wanted to respond to one query that I had yesterday afternoon from a number of you asking whether the bodies of the two Marines killed at Tan Son Nhut on Monday had been taken out of Vietnam and I just wanted to tell you that the bodies are on the MIDWAY.

For the record, I would also like to get a slight error corrected that was made here yesterday by me when I reported that an F-14 had taken 20 rounds of ammunition, enemy fire. I discovered that the message that I saw did indeed say F-14, but it turns out to be a typographical error, which I'm sure none of you have had happen to you. It was an F-4 and not an F-14 and the rounds did not hit the plane, but they were observed in the air. Aside from that, my report was accurate.

Q: What is the position of the ships off the coast of Vietnam now?

A: I think that might be a question, in view of the fact that Secretary Schlesinger is expected here momentarily, that you might want to address to him, Mr. Finney.

Q: Were any F-14s used in the operation for cover?

A: There were a couple of squadrons of F-14s available on one of the carriers and I'm not certain as to whether any of them were used. You know they're high-flying craft; they operate most effectively at a higher altitude. But if you are interested in that, then I'll run a check. But the aircraft I referred to you yesterday was an F-4. I hope I don't have to issue another correction on that.

Q: Did they ever clear up where this radio message came to delay the landing of those helicopters a couple of days ago?

A: No, I have not. I tried to find out. I have not any additional information on that, but again you may want to address that to Secretary Schlesinger.

If there are any other questions that you don't follow up from yesterday's briefing, I'll be glad to take the questions before the Secretary comes.

Q: If there any reason why the Secretary has to schedule these news conferences in such an impromptu secret manner?

A: They aren't scheduled. I told him of a number of requests I'd had to talk to him in the past day and suggested that it would be a good idea for him to come down at my briefing and he agreed to do it. I notice you're all here.

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(This is not a verbatim transcript)

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Q: Your people are so uncertain whether he's going to have a press conference any day that when we get messages, it doesn't even say that he may come down. It's just that Colonel somebody called or Captain somebody called and I for one just happened to amble in here.

A: We're glad to have you aboard, Mike (Getler). Are you suggesting you wouldn't have been here if you thought that only I was doing the briefing?

Q: Even the call we're getting; we're having to question very thoroughly to ascertain what's happening.

A: All I can say is that I am delighted to see that you're here and I'm sure that Secretary Schlesinger will be delighted to see you're here too.

Gentlemen, Secretary Schlesinger.

(This is not a verbatim transcript)

DoD Morning News Briefing
Wednesday, April 30, 1975, 11:15 a.m.
(ASD/PA Latin)

Announcements:

1. Secretary Schlesinger is calling on King Hussein of Jordan at Blair House in the District.

Q: What time is that?
A: It was scheduled for 10 o'clock; I don't know how long it's lasting. He may still be there.

2. On the Hill: Thomas Dashiel of ODDR&E is appearing before open session of the House Science and Technology Subcommittee concerning the DoD environmental quality research and development program.

3. Secretary Schlesinger sent a message to Admiral Gayler, Commander in Chief, Pacific, late last night, which I'll read to you and then give you copies.

"Once again it is my privilege to congratulate you and the men and women of your Command for your continuous and exhausting efforts in the evacuation of personnel from South Vietnam during the past twenty-four hours. Again, as in the evacuation from Phnom Penh, the world has witnessed the professionalism and dedication of America's military forces in executing a most difficult operation.

"The performance of people under your Command is in keeping with the highest traditions of the Armed Services and reflects great credit on them, on the Pacific Command, and on the Department of Defense.

"Please extend to your entire Command our appreciation for another job well done."

Now that we've had a chance to take a few steps back and look at this operation, getting away from some of the nuts and bolts which we all had to concentrate on during the past forty-eight hours, there are one or two things that we missed because of the rapidly developing situation. One was that an F-14 from the carrier ENTERPRISE took about 20 rounds of antiaircraft fire, but the plane remained operable, landed safely, and the pilot was not injured.

Q: Where'd this happen?

A: It happened over Vietnam. I wasn't able to nail it down. I probably can do that later if it's of any interest to you. It took twenty rounds of 37mm fire while acting as part of the cover for the helicopter airlift.

Q: Do you have the time?

A: The message doesn't carry the time, but I can get that for you later. I did try to get it before I came in here, but I find that if you try to nail every one of those details down, you'd never get in here to get the job done.

Q: Did they return the fire?

A: No.

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(This is not a verbatim transcript)

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Q: In other words, two planes that were hit in the entire operation and only one plane that expended ammunition?

A: In recapping the whole project, which I have not had time to do in detail, I think you're probably right. The next couple of days we'll try to pull everything together. We really haven't had sufficient time.

Q: The helicopter was fired on; it wasn't hit, was it?

A: The lead helicopter at the DAO compound attracted some small arms fire, but as far as we know it was not hit. I don't know of any other aircraft that received any fire.

Q: The F-4 that took fire and responded, you didn't say at the time that it'd been hit.

A: As far as I know, it did not get hit, but it took a dim view of being fired upon, as I recall.

Q: So where in Vietnam did this happen?

A: I've got a latitude and longitude here, but I haven't been able to nail it down. I'll have that for you afterwards.

Q: Can you give that to us?

A: Sure we can.

Q: Was it definitely communist fire?

A: I haven't the slightest idea whether it was. Let's put it this way, it was apparently a rather unfriendly thing to do.

Q: I understand there was some antiaircraft fire; was there any indication there was any SAM fire by 2's and 7's?

A: Yes, there was; I reported that yesterday.

Q: Of the 30 shots fired by the F-14, how many actually hit?

A: I said there were 20 rounds it took. I don't know how many rounds were fired. It took 20 rounds.

Q: You were going to give us the latitude and longitude points.

A: I'll give it to you right after the briefing.

Q: How many instances were there of Americans returning fire?

A: I haven't assembled all that. The only one I recall reporting to you is the F-4 that responded to AAA fire. He did drop bombs, and there were secondary explosions as a result of that.

Q: Where was that?

A: It was over Saigon.

Q: How near Saigon was the AAA?

A: It was over Saigon. I don't know what part of the city it was.

Q: Where'd he drop the bombs?

A: He dropped the bombs on the AAA emplacement.

Q: Where was that?

A: I don't know what part of Saigon. It was in Saigon, as I recall it.

(This is not a verbatim transcript)

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Q: But the others, there were some SA-7s fired at the helicopters?

A: There was SA-7 fire. There was one helicopter that reported being fired on by three SA-7s and all three missiles did not hit the target.

Q: Was it full of evacuees?

A: I don't know. I reported that yesterday and I don't recall whether it had evacuees in it or not. At any rate, the helicopter was not hit.

Q: What time did you report that?

A: I don't know. Sometime over the past forty-eight hours. I can look that up. I've got three transcripts and then a couple of times I came into the press room and reported on it.

Q: Is that the only time the SAM-7s were fired that you know of?

A: That I know of at the moment, yes.

Q: Any other SAMs fired?

A: The SA-7 as you all probably know is that shoulder weapon operated by two men.

Q: Wasn't there SA-7s fired against two South Vietnamese planes?

A: There was. I haven't been able to check on this, I heard that there were at least two South Vietnamese planes - one was a boxcar - that were brought down apparently by an SA-7; I haven't been able to check that out.

Q: With the possible exception of the Marines leaving the Embassy last night there was no other time that we think South Vietnamese fired on American planes or helicopters?

A: I don't even know that the fire yesterday was by South Vietnamese.

Q: That was a possible exception. There was no report otherwise?

A: There's no record that I know of even indicating that.

Q: Charlie (Corddry, Baltimore Sun) has something in his story this morning saying that the Marines had to use teargas in an exchange of small arms fire at the Embassy last night between our guys and South Vietnamese. You have no record of that?

A: I tried to get additional information on that, it is still not available.

Q: You say it is true that Marines had to fire on South Vietnamese?

A: I did not; I said I tried to get information on that before I came in here. There's still not any information aside from what you were given yesterday as to what happened but I am still trying to get additional details on that.

Q: Were there any Marines in the final hours of the evacuation hurt?

A: Apparently not. I've asked for a report on that. The indications are there were no casualties.

Q: I don't know what information was given on these Marines. Late last night were you saying that they did use teargas and exchange small arms fire, the last few getting out?

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A: I don't know. I'm sure there's a complete report about what was given out last night but I've not seen it yet.

Q: I'm not sure there was a complete report, that's why I'm asking.

A: I say a complete report on what we had available which was not much.

Q: Could I make a suggestion? I don't want to make too much of it but I think it's important. There are those of us who spent the whole day here yesterday and found that information was being put out but not generally. In other words, if information came out, it was given piecemeal and no copy was made of it, no distribution was made generally to the group after the 9:00 a.m. press conference. From 9:00 until zero, which is right now, we got no printed or written statements as to what was put out.

A: That's right. My recollection, Lloyd, is that after 9:00 which I gave out was just recapping what I'd given out before and putting it into some semblance or order but I'll be glad to go over the whole thing with anybody that wants to and get it all on the record.

Q: Was there an interruption of the airlift during the afternoon because of weather or crew fatigue for an hour and 20 minutes?

A: The interruption was, remember these pilots had been flying for 14 hours, many of these hours in darkness and maneuvering at low levels over a city with which many of them were unfamiliar and with SA-7s firing on occasion and putting down on home rooftops. It was quite a remarkable venture and I think there are probably a lot of dramatic details of this that are not yet told and hopefully we will get them in due course. Remember this was probably the greatest helicopter evacuation in history. Over 7,000 people were taken out.

Q: Is that over 7,000?

A: Over 7,000 people were taken out by helicopter alone.

Q: How many Americans and how many South Vietnamese?

A: There were 1,000 Americans.

Q: The question earlier was whether or not there'd been any interruption.

A: I addressed myself to it. I said there had been an interruption that might have been to give the crew a little time to rest up and a lot of other things.

Q: How long did it last?

A: I believe it was about two hours.

Q: About what time was it?

A: It was in the early afternoon, our early afternoon. I can nail that down for you. I don't have it here.

Q: Were there any other third country nationals taken out?

A: I don't know. They're scattered over quite a few ships and a lot of people were taken aboard ships from various types of seaborne craft that put out from Vung Tau beach.

Q: Is there any chance that some third country nationals are aboard those ships?

A: It could be. We don't have the information on it and it's very

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difficult right now to get all the information, all the details at once from the ships because their communications, as you can understand, are being pretty well taxed. We did work overnight making sure where there were correspondents aboard ships that they were given some priority so that their copy could get out. As you probably have been noticing this morning, the stories are coming off the ships and particularly the BLUE RIDGE where several days ago we had put a pool of reporters and photographers. Their copy has begun to come through starting yesterday and I think there'll be more and more coming.

Q: Could you tell us how many got out by boat and taken aboard American ships?

A: We now estimate the total evacuees aboard Navy and MSC ships, including the 7,000 plus that came aboard by helicopter is at 25,000 people. Of these, 1,000 are Americans. Eighteen thousand got there by surface craft of one kind or another.

Q: They were all picked up?

A: They were all picked up.

Q: From Vung Tau and other spots along the coast; barges, sampans and whatnot just coming out?

A: And rafts and whatnot.

Q: But that's still going on, isn't it, that pickup operation?

A: I understand that it has not ended yet and that's why some ships are there and a good many other naval craft are pointed eastward at the moment.

Q: When did they start picking up this 18,000?

A: It's been going on, but in large numbers, the past couple of days since the helicopter airlift began.

Q: Do you have a total figure on the number of people that have come out of Vietnam in the last three weeks?

A: I'll take that question. I've got it somewhere. I don't have it here.

Q: What happens now to these 18,000 unsolicited evacuees by boat? Do they get taken to Guam or wherever else out of Vietnam?

A: The first thing that's going to happen, they're going to move some of the refugees around so they can organize it better on the craft. The redistribution and consolidation of the refugees, which is to insure maximum safety and the health of the refugees, is now going on. Generally, the ships are expected to sail to Subic where the refugees will be either transferred to an airlift or other ships and would have to be reprovisioned for sailing to other ports. Some of them will undoubtedly go to Guam; some will go direct to Guam and this is being worked out now.

Q: What are the conditions on those ships; that's an awful lot of people for even ten or twelve ships, isn't it?

A: That's right.

Q: What are the conditions? Are they like the ships that came down from Danang and the North?

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(This is not a verbatim transcript)

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A: I would doubt it. Remember these ships were prepared to take on the refugees.

Q: 25,000?

A: No, they weren't prepared to take on that many but they were prepared to handle any contingency situation I would guess. I haven't heard any reports and I haven't heard any complaints from the ships either.

Q: Could we get a rundown again of the ships that were involved in this operation?

A: We could get that. I thought you all had that.

Q: Are there any ships pointed at South Vietnam to pick up any additional refugees?

A: We'll have to wait for that information but I'll get it for you.

Q: What's the total now, the number of those evacuated? Would it be 40,000 plus 25,000?

A: I said I would get a recap of those figures for you.

Q: Are these 18 to 25,000 mainly on MSC ships?

A: A lot of them are.

Q: Secretary Kissinger mentioned a figure of 55,000. Was he including these 18,000?

A: I don't know, I assume he was. I don't know what figure he was working with but when we get the total figure if it's close to that figure, then obviously he was.

Q: The people that were airlifted, were they taken to the carriers or transport ships?

A: They were taken mostly to the carriers for obvious reasons -- they could land easier. But some of the other ships had helipads and they were taken there. You know what happened on the BLUE RIDGE; they had a little problem.

Q: Most of the people were evacuated by helicopters are on the carriers now then, right?

A: They were aboard the carriers and I don't know whether there's been any redistribution yet. There must have been some.

Q: How many ships are still standing off the South Vietnamese coast?

A: I don't know how many are standing off and how many have set sail, but I'll try to get that.

Q: They are staying in international waters?

A: Yes.

Q: What authority is the Defense Department relying upon to continue this evacuation effort now that all the Americans have been withdrawn?

A: I don't know whether they are continuing the effort. There's no law that says you can't pick up somebody who is in distress on the high seas.

Q: Presumably these 18,000 that were picked up were anybody who appeared

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to be picked up. There was no blue slips from the Embassy saying that they fit into one of the immigration categories?

A: They were undocumented, if that's what you mean, many of them. Incidentally that will have to be a job that will be taken up when they reach a port; that is, separating the documented people, the ones who have passports and the papers are all in order from the others. Of course, that's what the Interagency Indochina Committee will be handling. They're meeting every day and reviewing the whole situation.

Q: Is there any possibility that there are Americans still in Saigon who could get out for one reason or another and who wanted to get out?

A: The only ones that I know of were a couple of United Press correspondents and they had a special problem of not being able to reach the Embassy. As far as I know, they are still there.

Q: No U.S. employees or others that you know of that did not get out?

A: No.

Q: No DAO people or Americans?

A: No.

Q: How many landing zones and how did they organize this thing in the first place?

A: I wanted to get more detailed information. I thought you'd be interested in this (photo) -- this is the Embassy compound area. The U.S. Marine guard had to remove some trees from this area here, which is you see 95x115 feet, next to the Embassy and this for the CH-46 and CH-53 landings. I think that even an expert helicopter pilot under good conditions would consider that not an overly ample landing site. Can you imagine doing that in the bad weather they had there during the night and at night and then of course on the roof over there?

Q: How large is the roof?

A: The roof is half the size of this little yard -- 45 ft. by 70 ft. I do not know whether they used this site over here.

Q: What's that site?

A: This site looks like a parking lot.

Q: That's going beyond the Embassy compound wall?

A: Yes. I don't think they used that. The roof could not take the CH-53s because they couldn't stand the weight.

Q: How did you get the picture?

A: Charlie (Corddry), this was the picture I examined down in the National Command Center when I was there keeping in touch with what was going on and I saw Secretary Schlesinger and General Brown referring to this and so this morning before coming in here, when I was looking over my notes, I sent somebody down to ask if I could borrow the picture and here it is.

Q: Now while that gets us that far, how did it get to the NMCC? Is it an old picture or is it one made yesterday and transmitted here sometime?

A: No, I've seen this picture for a week.

Q: How many other landing zones were there?

MORE

(This is not a verbatim transcript)

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A: That was it and here is the picture of the DAO compound out at Tan Son Nhut. This is the compound area here and here's the baseball field. Some of you probably know this area pretty well. I think that most of the landings were here in the tennis courts. I'll leave these here or keep them in my office if any of you want to examine them more closely.

Q: Can we get copies of those?

A: It'll be easier for me to get you copies of this area rather than this copy. It is one of those bureaucratic things. These belong to the Command Center but I can get similar type photographs if you want them. If you do, please let me or my secretary or Commander Hamilton or DDI --

Q: Is there any word on the two missing crewmen?

A: They are still considered missing in action. Their names are: Capt William Craig Nystul. He makes his home in Okinawa-Japan.

Q: Do we have a stateside?

A: No, we just have his next of kin as his wife -- Carol Una Nystul -- who lives in Okinawa. The other crew member is 1st Lieutenant Michael John Shea. He lives in El Paso, Texas. Next of kin is his wife -- Jennifer Claire Shea, El Paso, Texas.

Q: Are these Army types?

A: No, these are Marines.

Q: They're still listed officially as missing in action?

A: They're reported as missing. They were half of the crew of a CH-46 helicopter Marine Corps -- and it went down near the carrier HANCOCK. The other two Marine crewmen aboard the helicopter were rescued.

Q: Do you have ages on these guys?

A: No, I don't.

Q: Were there passengers on those?

A: No, there were not.

Q: They were on their way out?

A: That would be the assumption.

Q: We were told it was a rescue chopper, wasn't it?

A: Then it was.

Q: How much ordnance did the U.S. Air Force expend there?

A: I don't know, but it's a good question. I'm sure we'll come up with a statistic on that at some point in time.

Q: These 18,000 refugees were undocumented? That is any refugee who could make --

A: Not necessarily. I just assume a good many of them were.

Q: Is that what we're doing? We're assuming that these were just anybody who could make it out to the U.S. ships?

A: That's right.

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Q: At what point did that policy begin?

A: I don't know that it was established policy but they were there and they were on the high seas and they were rescued from whatever craft they were on.

Q: Are they still coming?

A: I've heard but haven't been able to check it officially that some of it is still going on but I don't know to what degree.

Q: How many miles off South Vietnam are those ships?

A: Beyond three miles.

Q: Beyond three -- would it be five, ten?

A: I said beyond three.

Q: Why do you say three miles? Is the international waters of Vietnam?

A: Because I asked somebody how far out the ships were and they said beyond three miles. They were at varying distances from land as any flotilla would be.

Q: In other words, the DoD still regards three miles as the territorial limits of Vietnam?

A: If you're asking me, that's a legal question; I'll be glad to get an answer for you.

Q: How many fighter planes and other air cover protection planes were involved in this operation? What Services were involved?

A: The Navy, Marines and Air Force were very much involved. There were 120 U.S. Air Force planes involved.

Q: From Thailand?

A: Thailand.

Q: You're talking now about fighter type planes rather than transports?

A: And tankers. Remember, hours before this operation began U.S. Air Force tankers had to prepare for and position themselves and many of the fighter planes that provided air cover for the helicopters remained in the air for considerable amount of time as a result of this air refueling capability mostly by the Air Force.

Q: This had to be planned several days ahead that you were going to airlift them out, this could not have been a last minute decision for Option IV.

A: It was a last minute decision for Option IV. But these four options had been available to Ambassador Martin for a period of time and the military was aware of it and obviously had to prepare for any of the contingencies presented to them by the selection of any of the options, all of which were exercised up to and including the final option which was known as Option IV.

Q: Option I, you wouldn't have had to have air cover?

A: That's right. Option II called for a military response and so did Option III and obviously, Option IV.

Q: How long were the tankers on station, circling in the area to be used, a week?

A: No, but they were prepared to move on short notice.

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Q: How long would it have taken them from their bases in Thailand to their positions for the operation?

A: It would depend on which bases they came from but they were in position when they were needed; let's put it that way.

Q: There was a lag of about almost two hours between the order to begin Option IV and the time --

A: To be precise, it was an hour and 50 minutes.

Q: Is that accounted for by what you just described?

A: I would think that a large part of that was required because it took that long to get everybody positioned including the air cap.

Q: Including the tankers and air cap?

A: Mostly the air cap.

Q: How many Navy planes were involved?

A: It was closer to 150. Involved is a tricky word; let's say were available for participation. I'm covering myself in case some of them never took off.

Q: What kinds of aircraft were involved in the cover?

A: You know there was an F-14; F-4s, A-7s.

Q: How many were airborne over South Vietnam?

A: Most of them were at some time or another but not all at the same time.

Q: Those figures do not include helos?

A: That figure does not include helicopters. My recollection is that there were 81 helicopters. Incidentally, while we're on the subject of helicopters, quote a few of those were U.S. Air Force helicopters that operated from the carrier MIDWAY. As a minor footnote in history, this is the first time that Air Force helicopters operated operationally off a carrier.

Q: What was the reason or can you explain for the delay in landing of the helicopter that you spoke of yesterday?

A: No. The information I gave you at the time was accurate and still is.

Q: You also said that questions are being asked, or an effort being made to find out what happened. I assume the effort is still going on?

A: Yes, quite naturally there was an effort at the time to find out why it was issued, where it came from and together with a number of other things on this whole successful operation it is being looked into and perhaps they'll come up with some answers for you.

Q: What order was given to ships still lying off the South Vietnamese coast as to what type of refugees were picked up?

A: I don't know, but I'll be glad to try to find out.

Q: Would you, and get more precise information on this, how many ships; how long they're going to stay on station?

A: Most of them, I've already told you, are going to head toward Subic because they're needed.

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Q: You also said a certain number of ships had remained there to pick up people.

A: For a matter of a short period of time, I'm talking in terms of hours, or maybe a day or something. Because they aren't all going to steam back to Subic.

Q: How do the ships establish that the people they are picking up are high risk Vietnamese, the ones that we've said that we were going to evacuate?

A: I'll check into that, but I don't know whether you apply that rule to somebody who is on a small boat on the high seas and asks for help.

Q: Can you tell us how things are going at the three bases here in this country where they're taking in the refugees and are they going to ship these 25,000 to these bases eventually?

A: Some of the refugees have already been taken to Camp Pendleton but these are the evacuees, I should call them, that have come here by fixed wing aircraft. I have requested and it's been carried out that competent, high level military personnel be assigned to handle the public affairs situation at these camps. If you want the names of these officers in charge, I would suggest you call DDI. They've got the names. There's a Lieutenant Colonel Art Brill, a very competent officer at Pendleton; Col. Ryock at Camp Chaffee; and Major Smith at Eglin. Eglin will probably be the last to take in some of these people; it's unfortunately a place where they would have to erect mostly tents. They don't have the same barracks capability as Chaffee and Pendleton.

Q: Is the plan to go to Pendleton, fill it up and then move to Chaffee, fill it up and then move to Eglin?

A: That's the general thinking but you really ought to go to the Interagency Committee headed by Ambassador Brown to get more precise information on that, except for day to day information at the camps and then we've got these PAO setups there and they'll later be assisted by State Department people to handle the aspects of it that are non-military oriented.

Q: What is the Defense Department reaction to the military defeat in South Vietnam and the surrender of the South Vietnamese government?

A: For the first part of your question, I would address you to the statement of Secretary Schlesinger that he transmitted to the Armed Forces yesterday and which you condensed so well in your broadcast this morning.

Q: As the record now stands, the only time that our forces used any fire was the F-4 dropping bombs; if that is not correct, I hope you will correct it for the record and let us know.

A: I don't know whether there was any small arms fire returned. That might be a little difficult to establish for a couple of days, but eventually you'll get all of that information. The only incident was the one you referred to, offhand of a fighter plane returning any fire.

Q: There was an F-4 that returned fire against the SA-7 missiles that were fired at that helicopter you said. So it was two F-4s that actually --

A: I don't believe I said that.

Q: You told me yourself that there were three missiles fired at a helicopter,

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he called in an F-4 who went down to try and suppress fire against whoever was --

A: I don't know whether he fired or not.

Q: You don't know whether he actually fired or not, but he was called in.

Q: What service was the F-4 that was fired on and fired back? Was that Navy or Air Force?

A: I'll have to find that out for you.

Q: I'd appreciate it if you would because there seems to be some doubt in some quarters whether this airplane actually did, as the saying goes, expend ordnance.

A: Where does the doubt come from?

Q: I'm not going to tell you that; it may be that I've been ^{to} the wrong Service.

A: I can tell you that was officially notified that they dropped bombs, so let's clear up that part of it. Maybe it's the Service that wasn't able to tell you.

Q: How many of the South Vietnamese planes landed in Thailand?

A: I made a note of one other thing that I wanted to tell you. There were 72 planes, mostly Vietnamese operated -- one of them was Air America; I don't know who operates them -- that flew to Thailand with approximately 2,100 people.

Q: Mostly C-130s?

A: There were 13 C-47; 27 F-5s and so forth. I don't have a complete record so let's just stand on that.

Q: How many C-130s?

A: I don't have any record of a C-130.

Q: What's happening to the aircraft?

A: I haven't any idea.

Q: Has any other country either volunteered or shown a willingness to discuss settling on permanent basis Vietnamese refugees other than the U.S.?

A: That would be more of a matter to address to this Interagency Committee and possibly to the State Department.

Q: I was just wondering whether you'd heard anything?

A: No, I haven't heard anything at all; it's a little early for that.

Q: Did you say that more Vietnamese aircraft went to other countries besides these in Thailand and the approximately 18 helicopters you discussed yesterday going to the ships offshore?

A: No, I have no knowledge of any other aircraft.

Q: Still about 18 helicopters that came to the ships offshore or have there been some more?

A: I can't even verify the 18 except I did mention 18 yesterday; I don't know whether there were any additional ones.

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Q: Did you say the F-14 did not return fire?

A: I have no knowledge that it did, so I assume it did not. I'm sure I would have heard that it had.

I mentioned a little earlier about the refugees that were evacuated and have arrived at various bases on the West Coast during the past 24-36 hours now totals 1,700 from Indochina; arriving on 12 MAC C-141s and two commercial MAC charter aircraft. Of these, 437 are presently at Camp Pendleton and the remainder are either enroute to Pendleton or in the case of persons with immediate sponsors have been relocated.

Q: Is the United States still flying reconnaissance flights over South Vietnam?

A: I don't know.

Q: Can you confirm or deny that Ky is on board the MIDWAY?

A: He's on the BLUE RIDGE -- and Ambassador Martin. I understand that Ambassador Martin was to hold a press conference aboard the BLUE RIDGE this morning.

Q: Did Ky fly out with Martin at the very end?

A: I don't think he did, I have no knowledge that he did.

Q: Would you establish whether we are still flying recon flights for us please?

A: I don't know whether we discuss operational questions like that but if we do, I'll get it for you.

Q: In the past Mr. Schlesinger has openly acknowledged we were flying unarmed recon flights.

A: There are times when one abandons rules and he's in a position to do it.

Q: General Sidle mentioned it here about a week ago.

A: I will check it. I'm not denying you the information and I'm not assuming that I know what the proper rules are but I will find out about it and tell it to you if I can.

Q: That hour and 50 minute delay you referred to before --

A: There wasn't an hour and 50 minute delay; it took an hour and 50 minutes before they took off from the carrier.

Q: You spoke of tankers (inaudible) do you mean positions in the air or just getting ready to take off?

A: Both.

Q: Who gave the order on that and why?

A: The operation was under CINCPAC.

Q: I'd love to know why it would have been necessary for a 500-mile an hour tanker to take off from Utapao hours before any evacuation had been ordered.

A: I didn't say that they took off hours before the evacuation order.

Q: You implied that.

A: I said before the evacuation started, that's what I meant to say.

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Q: The order for evacuation was at 10:51 p.m. local time. If they were several hours earlier -- let's say 7:51, which would have been some time before the order --

A: If it's of importance for you to know exactly when they took off, I'll be glad to find it out. Conceivably one of them could have been ordered to take off the minute it looked as though there was the possibility of having a large scale chopper evacuation.

Q: You implied before that the helicopters were delayed for two hours in order to give the tankers and air cover time to get over the scene.

A: I said that was part of the reason why. I don't know enough about carrier helicopter operations to know precisely why. That information is probably very easily available and I'll be glad to get it for you if you want it. They also had to deploy search and rescue choppers; that probably was a factor.

Q: Can't we simply find out when the tankers took off?

A: They were on station throughout the operation and if it's all that important to find out exactly what hour they were on station, I'm sure that I can get that information for you.

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(This is not a verbatim transcript)

DoD Morning News Briefing
Monday, April 28, 1975, 11:15 a.m.
(Maj. Gen. Sidle)

Announcements:

1. On the Hill: Assistant Secretary of Army for Financial Management Mr. Hall is at an open session of the House Government Operations Subcommittee on Army Procurement of Computer Systems. We have a statement.
2. No speeches.
3. I noticed seven of you took advantage of that AWACS flight this morning. At 2:00 o'clock this afternoon there will be a ground orientation which will be open to the media. Details at the Air Force Desk.
4. Last night the Norwegian Chief of Defense General Herman Zeiner Gundersen, arrived in Washington. He's visiting the U.S. as a guest of General Brown. There will be an arrival ceremony for him tomorrow at the River Entrance and then he's going to pay courtesy calls on the Service Chiefs of Staff and Mr. Ellsworth, ASD/ISA. Then he's going to see some of our installations around the country.
5. I know you're all interested in what's coming out of Saigon and I'm sorry to say I can't give you much on that. We're having trouble getting information that we can rely on. We do know that we can confirm that there were at least four A37's that did bomb Tan Son Nhut. They destroyed some Vietnamese Air Force planes. No U.S. They destroyed part of the base ops area. Those of you who have been there know where that is. Who Flew them? We don't know. The most reliable report we have is that there actually weren't any U.S. aircraft on the ground at the time of the attack although one C-130 was definitely coming in and he was waved off and returned to Clark. The Air Base was closed and there is one report in just before I came in that it's reopened and also one report just before I came in that it wasn't. So I give you that and you can take your pick. My guess is that it's probably reopened, but we don't know that yet.

The rumors about strafing the palace, we can't confirm. The report we have on that says specifically they can't confirm it. The gunfire heard downtown is also in the same status. There has been some shooting in downtown Saigon, but nobody seems to know what it is at this point. Remember now, we're down now to much smaller group than we were before and it's a little harder to get the information over there.

Q: Is the DAO office closed?

A: As far as I know, it is not closed.

Q: Is it closing today?

A: I can't answer that, I don't know.

Q: How big is it now?

A: I don't have the exact figure. I can get that for you after the briefing.

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Q: Has there been any order at all to pull the remaining Americans out -- just leave today?

A: I'll take the question, I think the answer is no, not yet. As you know, we're thinning down and have been for a number of days.

Q: Is there any confirmation to the report that the A-37s were chased back to Phan Rang?

A: No confirmation of that. In fact, no confirmation that had anything to do with Phan Rang except a couple of press stories. We don't have anything official on that at all.

Q: Were any A37's captured on some of the fields that they (NVN) took?

A: Yes, indeed. A couple of dozen at least. So you can build a case either way on this; that's the thing that makes it hard to come up with an answer without any information.

Q: How many Americans left in Saigon?

A: The latest figure we have and we're running about 12 hours behind, was about 900. I think it was 870. That's a hazy figure because it changes every hour on the hour, but they are guaranteed down below a thousand, that I know.

Q: Has there been any change in the resources available for a military style of evacuation, if that is necessary, that we have out there?

A: Afloat?

Q: Yes.

A: No change on the Afloat. As you know, we've got a new squadron of 130's over there that has arrived at Clark Air Base.

Q: Where'd they come from?

A: They came from Little Rock Air Force Base in Little Rock.

Q: A squadron?

A: A squadron between 14 and 16.

Q: Could you give us the total of available 130 and 140 aircraft?

A: I'll take that. I can get you the total of what they're using. Of course, it's a great number available.

Q: I mean what's available at Clark being used right now?

A: OK. I'll take that. I just don't know.

Q: There was a report this morning that they're flying only propellered aircraft instead of jets.

A: I understand that they're not flying anything at the moment that we can confirm. You're talking about into Tan Son Nhut.

Q: In or out?

A: My information is, and again I want to double check it, that that is correct.

Q: Are they flying any C-5s?

A: No C-5s, 130's only.

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Q: Why is that?

A: They are less susceptible to being shot down, that's the main reason and we had quite a bit of experience in that.

Q: When did you take the 141's out?

A: This is very recent.

Q: Is that the reason why the additional C-130s were ordered?

A: I can't answer that. That was not evident, but it makes sense.

Q: Is the Marine level about 6,000?

A: That's a pretty good figure.

Q: There are still five carriers, right?

A: Five carriers. These are the ones we talked about the other day. You know when they get themselves into a configuration where you have a battalion landing team plus helicopters, it adds about 800. We were running, you recall, at about 4,000 and it worked its way up to 5,000. Counting all these other fellows, it gets up close to 6,000.

Q: Any of the Marines gone ashore to augment the Embassy guards?

A: No, we shipped in the 40 that we talked about Friday to augment the Embassy guards.

Q: What's the total?

A: About 40 additional Marines to augment the Embassy guards.

Q: Those are the ones that are mentioned in the paper this morning that are in the DAO?

A: These are the only Marines that we've sent in were the 40 that I announced to you on Friday; it brings the total --

Q: Some guy in Saigon interviewed Marines in the DAO cafeteria?

A: The DAO is part of the Embassy.

Q: I think you mentioned the other day that if we couldn't fly into Tan Son Nhut that conceivably we would use helicopters going into downtown or some other area; have we done any of that at all?

A: No. You know if worse comes to worse that's the last thing we do.

Q: Do you anticipate that in light of the apparently confused but nevertheless dangerous situation in Saigon where there's been some bombing and some firing in town, that there will be a substantial pullout of the remaining 870 or so Americans today?

A: I can't comment on that. That's a decision that's going to be made somewhere else.

Q: Our people in Wiesbaden were contacted by someone close to the NATO command and were briefed on a directive entitled MC-14-4 from the military committee discussing the change of NATO's strategy along lines of the Schlesinger doctrine. I was wondering if you could give me anything on that or direct me to where I can find out about that?

A: I'll take the question, I had not heard about this.

Q: The other thing along those lines that I've talked to a couple

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of people about here, there seems to be some bickering or argument between U.S. and Germany in particular, command people in NATO around the idea of limited nuclear war versus the other strategy. Do you have anything on that?

A: Again, let me take the question. As you may recall, there have been discussions of this type going on between the various members of NATO for as long as I can remember but I don't know of anything recent.

Q: Has there been any ground fire at Tan Son Nhut at any of the American planes?

A: We've had the five reported incidents (that we've reported) and we have been unable to confirm any of them.

Q: Which were these five -- I'm sorry I missed those?

A: This was spread out over last week. There were two one day and then there were two another day and there was a lull and then there was one. I don't remember the exact dates, but we can get all that.

Q: Are there 57s down there?

A: Not confirmed. It looked like 57 or maybe even something less but we just haven't been able to confirm that they were actual attacks on the aircraft.

Q: Any damage?

A: No damage on any aircraft to include this morning.

Q: Was there a 36-hour interruption of the C-130 operations this past week because of the Guam fillup?

A: I understand there have been no interruptions of C-130s into Tan Son Nhut.

Q: There was a report in the paper over the weekend.

A: That did not appear in any of our documents.

Q: Is the reason for the removal of the C-141s from the airlift the fact that SA-7s are now close enough to hit them?

A: That's not the reason. There are probably two reasons; I'm speculating but it makes sense. The island hopping that's going on with the refugees is better done by C-141s and charter aircraft because they are longer legged by far than the 130. The 130 is ideal for the Clark-Tan Son Nhut hop not only because it can make the round trip without refueling but because it's also less impervious to any ground fire that might come up. That hasn't happened yet except in these five cases I mentioned. But the real reason I'm not actually aware of. I can confirm, however, that they have terminated 141 operations into Tan Son Nhut.

Q: When was that done?

A: That's very recent, over the weekend.

Q: The situation around Tan Son Nhut has not deteriorated any? It is at the same level of danger as early last year?

A: You can't really say it's deteriorated but it wasn't really very good to start with.

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Q: Has the airlift continued of arms and ammunition under the fiscal '75?
A: I'd have to take that, I don't know.

Q: Do you have any information that Saigon is completely cut off except for Tan Son Nhut now -- all the highways around the city?

A: I'll have to take that question. That would not be surprising at this point but I don't actually know that they're all cut off. You'll recall on Friday we mentioned that they were attempting to cut off route 15. I can't confirm that that was successful but you could estimate that it probably was because it was a long way down from Saigon, where they were doing it.

Q: Do you know where the bases are that have been selected for the refugees?

A: As I mentioned last week this planning program is obviously getting close to the end and I really expect we'll have an announcement on that today. I don't have it now. (FYI: Fort Chaffee, AR: Eglin AFB, FL; and Camp Pendleton, CA.)

Q: What's the status of Vung Tau now?

A: Vung Tau is threatened, we can confirm that. It's still not yet been attacked but we do know that the enemy's in a good position to attack it.

Q: Let me ask this about Vung Tau -- are all the roads to Vung Tau cut?

A: Actually Route 15 was the only road left open and if that's been cut, then they are but I can't vouch for the fact that it's cut.

Q: What about the Saigon River?

A: That's not cut, of course, but it's cutable.

Q: Is any traffic moving down the river?

A: No U.S. traffic; I don't know about South Vietnamese.

Q: Are there still three U.S. ships in Saigon?

A: No. Friday we announced their departure and I want to apologise on that incidentally. I was informed that there were no refugees aboard any of those ships. Turns out there were 675 on board one of them; the other two were in fact without refugees.

Q: So there's no U.S. shipping in Saigon?

A: No U.S. shipping in Saigon.

Q: There's no way we can take people from Saigon out to Vung Tau by water?

A: Not on U.S. bottoms. We could move them back in, of course; there's always that option; we don't have any there.

Q: Are we taking refugees from Vung Tau?

A: There's one shipload from Vung Tau that went to Phu Quoc over the weekend on board a U.S. charter.

Q: Is this the one that went from Saigon or did it take on additional passengers?

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A: No, I can get you the name. The American Challenger loaded approximately 8,600 refugees from the Vung Tau area and sailed for Phu Quoc and should be there by now.

Q: When was that?

A: It was over the weekend; I don't actually have the date, it was either Saturday or Sunday.

Q: Last week there were a total of five, six or seven, depending on who you listened to, merchant ships that were in Saigon at the beginning of the week and then all left. This 675 is the total taken out?

A: They went out on one called the Green Wave and that was the only one that took refugees. Remember Friday I was going to check one of them, turns out I checked the wrong one because the Green Wave was one that we thought was empty but had 675 aboard.

Q: The ships that were in earlier in the week and left earlier in the week did not carry refugees?

A: The Green Wave was one of the six and that's the only one that carried refugees.

Q: These are the first South Vietnamese refugees evacuated by sea?

A: Evacuated from Saigon.

Q: I mean that have been taken away from South Vietnam aboard ships.

A: You mean coming out from South Vietnam; yes, that's correct.

Q: Are those ships still standing off of Vung Tau?

A: That's correct.

Q: How many?

A: There wouldn't be any change from the figure I gave you last week, 10 or 11. One of them is down in Phu Quoc and one's gone to Subic so it would be nine logically. I count nine standing reasonably near Vung Tau.

Q: What's the delay? These ships have been standing there for some time.

A: I cannot answer your question.

Q: There've been five ships there for about a week; are we processing, are we selecting the refugees?

A: I cannot answer that.

Q: You said you had 200,000 refugees in the city.

A: You're making a lot of assumptions I'm not sure whether they're true or not; in any case, I can't answer your question. If you'll recall the announcement last week by the Attorney General after the approval of the Senate Judiciary Committee was that certain types of refugees would be authorized for return to the United States and I presume that this type was not present in large numbers in Vung Tau.

Q: About how many refugees are there on Phu Quoc and what's happened? Are they just piling up there or what?

A: I'll have to take that; I don't remember the number. Phu Quoc of course

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was designated by the South Vietnamese Government as a relocation site but I think I can get a number on that.

Q: Have you received any reaction from the populace around these bases that are under consideration for reception centers? Has DoD gotten any complaints?

A: I don't think that they've had time to react because there's been no announcement as to which ones are being officially considered. You may recall there was a thing in California I'm really not familiar with but that was in general terms.

Q: You listed a few that became officially considered as of the time you listed them.

A: I was listing ones that would fit the bill, but I remember I made it quite clear this was just examples. I shouldn't have done that because everybody thinks that's official and it's not official and I said it wasn't official at the time. I shouldn't have done that, because everybody thinks that's official. It's not official.

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Q: There seems to be a lot of bad reaction from people at Fort Smith, Arkansas, about the use of Chaffee, would that have any direct bearing on what bases would be used and would not be used?

A: I am not familiar with the bad reaction. The newsmen that I talked to from there did not indicate that. I'm not saying it isn't true, but I just don't know about it.

Q: Is there any sort of an intelligence assessment in the building either from Saigon or our own military experts, on what the North Vietnamese might do? Is there a feeling that they want to attack Saigon, they want a military victory or ...

A: I can't answer that. We, of course, don't come up with an official projection on that.

Q: Based on intelligence analysis of the fragments of the rockets that hit Tan Son Nhut, any estimate as to what kind of rockets they were, what distance they were fired from?

A: I can get that. I don't have it, but I'm sure we do have that.

Q: (Inaudible) artillery shells?

A: No, it was listed as rockets.

Q: Did it surprise anybody that the North Vietnamese were able to fly in the A-37s so quickly...

A: This has not been confirmed that these are North Vietnamese.

Q: Are the Americans in Saigon safe?

A: I can't answer that either.

Q: You said they weren't from Phan Rang.

A: I said, we didn't know.

Q: Do you have any idea where they might have come from?

A: It's going to depend on who was flying them.

Q: Do you have the information which indicates what direction they came from?

A: If we do, we'd have a better feel for it. We just don't have enough information.

Q: Any markings on the planes at all?

A: They were marks of the South Vietnamese air force but you know if they took some of those planes that they captured up north, they probably wouldn't change the markings.

Q: What's the level of fighting Monday as compared to...

A: It's up.

Q: Up over yesterday.

A: Yesterday, also was the same as today. Much heavier than last week.

Q: What are the closest North Vietnamese troops to Saigon?

A: They're closer. I don't have any specific figure. What's happening, of course, is as always, some smaller units are getting in closer than the

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larger units and the reports we have don't make that very clear just how close anybody is. One report talked about the outskirts of Saigon, but you know that's not a very definitive term. We do know that the evidence indicates that attacks are imminent on Bien Hoa and Long Bien, probably Tan An down in the south. Tay Ninh is under attack today.

Q: When you add it all up, is this the push?

A: We can't be sure yet. It's the same old thing. It's looking more like it, but we can't be sure yet if this is another lunge or whether they're just going to try to keep going.

Q: Last week I think you indicated that an attack could come on Saigon at any minute. Is there any more imminence in the pending attack on Bien Hoa, Long Binh, than there was last week?

A: It's certainly more imminent on the attack on Long Binh and Bien Hoa. In the context that you're asking the question, yes.

Q: What are the signs that it's imminent? How do we know that?

A: Because of the intense enemy activity in the surroundings. There's a great increase in probes; the attacks by fire, Bien Hoa reported a thousand rounds, I don't know what kind of rounds, but a thousand rounds yesterday.

Q: On the air base or in the Town?

A: In the area. They didn't specify.

Q: If you can't answer the question about whether the Americans are safe or not, why aren't they being taken out?

A: I can't answer the question, we'd have to go through quite an exercise of what do you mean by safe, etc. It's just not that easy.

Q: The question directly then, why aren't the Americans in Saigon being taken out.

A: This is a question that would have to be addressed to the State Department. This is a decision made by the Ambassador, as you know, and I just can't answer that.

Q: Is this the first intelligence you've had that the North Vietnamese or South Vietnamese are flying these A-37s around occupied territory?

A: Of course the South Vietnamese have A-37s.

Q: I understand that, but the ones that were captured. I think we admit that we're running reconnaissance over South Vietnam, right?

A: Unarmed.

Q: The first intelligence we have that those fields, I'm sure they've kept them under surveillance, have been flying those planes, test flights or orientation flights?

A: Should these turn out to be piloted by North Vietnamese, that's going to be one case. There were some reports that the North Vietnamese were playing around with some of the A-37s in some unknown fashion. I regret I can't really answer that factually, I don't know whether it is or not.

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Q: What air field was this that the North Vietnamese were playing around it?

A: The DaNang area.

Q: What do you mean playing around?

A: I don't know what I mean, that's why I used those words. This is a very hazy report and I just can't make anything of it because our information isn't that good.

Q: Flying them or on the ground or...

A: Taxiing them up and down and that sort of thing. The best answer to the question is I don't know whether it is or not.

Q: Where did the hazy report come from?

A: These come out of a mixture of sources, I'm really not able to say.

Q: When was it?

A: Last week.

Q

Q: Was it through any sort of aerial surveillance that we determined this?

A: I don't know the answer to that.

Q: Have we confirmed or solidified the figure of how many aircraft they took that were intact that might be used for attack on Saigon?

A: We don't have a firm figure. I think probably I am going to be able to give you and estimate pretty quickly on the total number involved, but how many are flyable, this is where we don't know.

Q: Do we know how many of the South Vietnamese went back and destroyed?

A: No, this is one of the problems why we can't answer the other question.

Q: As a military man, can you give us your judgment based upon the information reaching the Pentagon about the military situation in Saigon, your judgment whether or not the remaining Americans there should be taken out, from a military view point of view with the next day or two?

A: I really can't do that because this just isn't my area of responsibility, it's State's. I can give you a judgment but there's no reason for me to get involved in this as an individual because it's not any of my business.

Q: Now that the planes are bombing the airport, whether North Vietnamese or South Vietnamese, there's a danger of attack upon any of our aircraft going in to take out Americans, would we have the right to use fighter escort for any aircraft that will be called in to take out any Americans now?

A: My understanding is that when the evacuation, as such, is ordered, that the answer to that is yes.

Q: Bring us up to date on the number of divisions that the NVA has...

A: It's gone up to 15.

Q: You had it up as high as 16.

A: No, remember we said 14 and I mentioned the other agencies were thinking that manifest had gone to 15 or 16, now the Defense Department's position is that it's 15.

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Q: In MR III?

A: Around Saigon, Yes.

Q: Did you suggest or say that an attack on Saigon was imminent?

A: No. The question was when did I think it would take place and I said it could take place anytime from now ...

Q: He said why do you think that attack was imminent?

A: We were talking then about Bien Hoa and Long Bien.

Q: The new division came from where?

A: It came from the north.

Q: Can you identify it?

A: I will but I don't have the number right now.

Q: In view Congress hasn't passed the legislation giving you authority to use troops in the evacuation effort, where would you get your authority to use air cover?

A: The question I was addressing was the evacuation of Americans. We have the authority for that.

Q: What impact has the congressional failure thus far to pass the authorizing legislation had upon your evacuation plans?

A: I don't think its had any because we hadn't gotten into position where this would come into play.

Q: Who makes that decision to evacuate?

A: The Ambassador is the key man.

Q: How many South Vietnamese refugees have we taken out?

A: As of this morning its around 40,000, probably a little over that. I don't have the exact figures.

Q: Could you get us a breakdown of where they are?

A: No, but there are about 20,000 on Guam. I'll have to take the question.

Q: Plus how many Americans?

A: About 7,000 roughly.

Q: That includes the 678 that left Vung Tau and went to Subic?

A: That includes everybody.

Q: If an announcement is to be made of a total evacuation, would you anticipate that it would come from the White House or State Department?

A: I would anticipate from State Department.

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Q: Where would the refugees from Phu Quoc go?

A: I don't know; that's a South Vietnamese problem. They were evacuated by the South Vietnamese.

Q: In other words, these are people who aren't relatives or worked for the U.S.

A: You'll recall these are people that came mostly out of the north.

Q: I'm talking about the ones that you took this weekend from Vung Tau to Phu Quoc?

A: This is the same category that we took to Phu Quoc in the first place. These are people who came from the north, maybe not as far north, they are refugees coming down south. They are not in our category.

Q: They will not be going to the U.S.?

A: They will not.

Q: Are most of the high risk Vietnamese now out of Saigon?

A: I can't answer that. I don't know what the figure. You recall the estimates on the high risk category are pretty wide. I don't know who would know the answer to that question but we certainly don't here in Defense.

Q: I thought you said to an earlier question that ships weren't taking more because there weren't any large numbers left?

A: No, I didn't say anything like that. I said I didn't know.

Q: Would you please notify us when Gen Homer Smith, DAO, leaves Saigon, if he hasn't already left Saigon?

A: He has not left. We'll notify you as soon as we can. Remember, this is a State Department announcement.

Q: But he's your man?

A: Yes, but he's working for State.

Q: Have the carriers been moved in closer to shore or are they being moved in closer?

A: No. There's been no significant change in the disposition according to the information I have. Looks about the same as before.

Q: No change in numbers.

A: No change in numbers.

Q: No new ships?

A: No new ships.

Q: About 40 ships?

A: A little over 40 ships.

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Q: What about helicopters?

A: The same as before -- 70 odd.

Q: What's the cost of the operation?

A: I don't have that. That will take a while. You know, how do you cost it? You can take it two ways -- one your paying a sailor for sailing around on ship whether he's out in the South China Sea or the Atlantic Ocean. It's no easy thing to cost. You have to figure what are the additional costs.

Q: You say you heard a report that Ton Son Nhut may be open?

A: Right.

Q: Can we automatically infer that if Tan Son Nhut is technically open U.S. C-130s will be flying in?

A: I think that would be very safe.

Q: The program has not been suspended in any way?

A: It's not been suspended.

Q: Is there a diminished evacuation capacity by using only C-130s vs. 141s or C-5s?

A: Probably, but I don't know that it would be very significant because we've got more C-130s now.

Q: You would know whether C-130s now are going -- still going in

A: It takes us a little while to hear, but we will know -- yes we will be able to tell you if its open.

Q: I thought you said early on that as of now they weren't going in?

A: I said I had two conflicting reports --

Q: I thought you said that the C-130s, even though there were conflicting reports . . .

A: I didn't mean to say that because if it opens up they'll be going I'm sure of that. There's been no order to cancel, that's what I'm saying.

Q: What about an order to suspend?

A: That's a different thing because if the airbase is closed then you can't fly into it, that's a different set of circumstances.

Q: Was there an order to suspend the airlift this morning?

A: The airbase was closed, yes and that automatically suspended the flights.

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Q: Do we have the military capability as the matter stands right now to get all the Americans out safely?

A: Yes, let's put it this way, if worse comes to worse and we have to go in with helicopters to get them we have enough helicopters to do it.

Q: That's not responsive to the question.

A: That's the best I can do, I think it's responsive.

Q: You have enough of other things, like Marines?

A: We think so, We've answered this question about 10 times but it's going to depend on the situation, but we do have the potential to do it, yes. You can certainly visualize a situation where it might be very difficult.

Q: That includes aircover and men on the ground?

A: That would cover the whole bit.

Q: We are not now providing aircover for any flights?

A: That would take us into Vietnam where we're not allowed to go without one of two things happening. One, we'd have to consult the Congress. If the final evacuation is ordered then we have the authority to do this to rescue Americans.

Q: That's only the final evacuation?

A: Right.

Q: Now if we wanted to send them in under the current circumstances of course this would be a little different.

Q: What is the general distance from the ships into Saigon for helicopter flights?

A: About 100 miles -- a little less in some cases, a little more in others.

Q: The present intention, if you have to go to a helicopter evacuation would be from the carriers, into Saigon, back to the carriers.

A: I really wouldn't want to comment on that but the logic is almost unassailable. We're not supposed to go into details.

Q: What was the distance from the carriers in the gulf of Siam into Phnom Penh?

A: About the same. I think the shortest flight there was closer to 80 miles.

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Q: Has General Ky flown out on a C-130 or 141?
A: I have no information on General Ky at all.

Q: How about his family?
A: I'll check that, I don't know.

Q: There's a report.
A: I saw that report but it was not confirmed. Of course she undoubtedly fit into the category, but I have not seen anything official on that.

Q: Can you detail the fighting at Tay Ninh right now? What's happening?

A: It's under ground attack.

Q: By how many divisions and
A: I don't know that, sizeable is the word we got.

Q: Artillery into the town.
A: Artillery attacks by fire and an infantry attack?

Q: Is the infantry in the town?
A: No report that they're in the town but that they are attacking.

Q: Is it holding?
A: Holding as of the last report.

Q: Is that the only place that there's a sizeable attack?
A: At the moment.

Q: How many government troops were at Tay Ninh do you know?
A: I don't know that.

Q: Haven't they removed the ARVN division?
A: It's my understanding that the ARVN 25th division had been removed from there but that left behind territorial forces and possibly a couple of ranger groups. I'll take the question, I don't know the answer.

Q: Can I make the request that if and when we get into this evacuation which I expect we're going to have to cover in large measure out of Washington, that the Pentagon be ready with the information of what's going on in the operation.

A: We're prepared to do our best.

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Q: You mentioned the SA-7s before, are the SA-2s being moved in?
A: Nothing new on that, I did check that this morning?

Q: Why are the C-130 less susceptible -- they can take off with shorter

A: Let me take that, I'm not an Air Force officer, I don't know. I do know that their engines are harder to put out of commission and that may be the answer but let me take that.

Q: How difficult is it to fly an A-37, is it conceivable that a North Vietnamese pilot without any training from the United States could fly one of those airplanes?

A: I'm sure it's conceivable. I better take that question.

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(This is not a verbatim transcript)

*Capt. Barber
Nance*

DoD Morning News Briefing
Friday, April 25, 1975, 11:15 a.m.
(Maj. Gen. Sidle)

Announcements:

1. On the Hill: Mr. Vernon McKenzie, PDASD/H&E, appears before an open session of the Subcommittee on Monopoly of the Senate Select Committee on Small Business; the subject is drug procurement. A copy is available.
2. Speeches: Navy Secretary Middendorf will speak in Norfolk, VA, today and New Orleans, LA, tonight. He's going to be the principal speaker at the Navy League in New Orleans. The text of his speech will be available. Then he's going to Newport News, VA, tomorrow for the keel-laying of the nuclear submarine BIRMINGHAM and the launching of the nuclear submarine BATON ROUGE.
3. Mr. Clements is going to Florida tonight and he will watch the Polaris missile test off Cape Canaveral, Florida, which takes place tomorrow.

Q: What's special about the Polaris test?

A: He has not seen one.

4. We have a list of Air Force general officer assignment changes.

5. The Commander-in-Chief Pacific, Admiral Gayler, has announced that he's ordering about 600 Army men and women in 200-person increments to move from Hawaii to Guam. The idea is to make the transition more comfortable and orderly for refugees from South Vietnam who are coming into Guam. We have a copy of that announcement.

Q: What are their specialties?

A: There's going to be some military police, medical, and various other skills that you need for taking care of refugees.

6. General Jones, Chief of Staff of the Air Force, will visit Iran. He leaves April 26 and he will be hosted by the Imperial Iranian Air Force. He's going to visit some of their installations and hold discussions with them and U.S. military personnel.

7. I know you're going to ask me about any changes in the force structure in Southeast Asia so I want to announce that the cruiser OKLAHOMA CITY, flagship of the Seventh Fleet is now in the South China Sea and Admiral George B. Steel, II, the Seventh Fleet Commander, is on board. The reason of course is the majority of the Seventh Fleet's ships are in the South China Sea.

8. You asked me about the LONG BEACH the other day. It is no longer in the area. It's in the Western Pacific so that the one cruiser in the fleet sailing around the South China Sea is the OKLAHOMA CITY.

9. We have augmented as of a few hours ago the guards at the Embassy in Saigon with approximately 40 more Marines. These are individuals, not a unit.

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Q: Where did they come from?
A: They came from the HANCOCK via helicopter.

Q: How many Marines are there now?
A: It's over 100.

Q: Eighty was the figure we had last week.
A: You can add --

Q: Did it happen today?
A: Yes, it would be today their time.

Q: Any special reason?
A: No, they requested a little reinforcement of the guard detachment.
It's just a prudent, precautionary measure.

Q: Who?
A: The Ambassador.

Q: Do you know what kind of weapons they brought along?
A: No, just the normal individual weapons.

Q: Why this precautionary measure?
A: I have no explanation for that other than it seems logical to me.

Q: To beef up security?
A: It's purely for security.

Q: Are they in uniform and plain clothes?
A: In uniform.

Q: Why would it be more logical today than yesterday?
A: That's a tough question. You remember we did the same thing in Phnom Penh. We brought in 15 or so there.

Q: Are they expecting an attack on the Embassy?
A: We have no information that would lead us to believe that. It's been done before though, you recall.

Q: How soon after we reinforced the Embassy in Phnom Penh that we evacuated it? One day?

A: Oh, no, it was longer than that. Several days.

Q: They went in in plain clothes?
A: No, they went in in fatigues, I thought. Anyway these Marines went in in fatigues or whatever uniform they're wearing out there.

Q: Can you tell us where the HANCOCK was at the time it happened?
A: South China Sea. No, I don't know, but it had to be close enough so that they could fly. I wouldn't draw any particular conclusion from this at all. It's something the Ambassador asked for and we provided.

Q: You said just a minute ago that we did this in the last days of Phnom Penh; well, are we in the last days of Saigon?

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A: I'm not prepared to say that, no. That may be, but I don't have any forecast.

Q: Is there any particular threat to the Embassy today as opposed to last week? Has something new been discovered?

A: I don't know of anything new.

Q: Did they land at Tan Son Nhut or directly at the Embassy?

A: I do not know that either; I didn't check that.

Q: Do you know how many helicopters they used?

A: I understood it was one. You can squeeze into one on those big jobs.

Q: Are there Marines anywhere else in South Vietnam?

A: No, I've given you the total changes; one was the OKLAHOMA CITY; one was the Marines.

Q: How many Marines on the OKLAHOMA CITY?

A: Well, they have a regular complement but it's small. I don't know what it is.

Q: Is the figure now 4 or 5,000 in the South China Sea?

A: We've said that you may speculate. It's over 4,000. I have not confirmed what it is since then, but obviously you can draw reasonably correct conclusions.

Q: Can we assume that the HANCOCK is about 100 miles off shore?

A: I don't know where it is now. It wouldn't have to stay there. I wouldn't want to speculate on that at all; obviously, it has to be within range, but I think some of those choppers can go 150 miles without any trouble.

Q: Well, that's what I am talking about.

A: You can draw your own conclusions. I don't know whether it makes any difference. I just don't know the answer. It would have to be within that radius.

Q: Was there a large group of Marines on the LONG BEACH before it pulled out?

A: No, just a normal complement.

Q: Would it be similar to the numbers on the OKLAHOMA CITY?

A: Yes, the OKLAHOMA CITY did not bring in a big batch of Marines. ?

Q: The OKLAHOMA CITY just replaced the LONG BEACH?

A: In essence.

Q: Have there been any further reports from Tan Son Nhut of aircraft being fired on?

A: There was one more report by an incoming pilot today, just the same as the others. We don't have the details. He reported that he thought that he had been fired on -- about 11 rounds -- while on his landing approach. Upon landing there was no damage.

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(This is not a verbatim transcript)

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Q: What kind of plane?
A: C-130.

Q: What kind of pilot?
A: U.S. Air Force.

Q: Have all the firings been at incoming aircraft?
A: At least four were incoming but I don't know about the fifth.

Q: The other day you were asked what your reaction would be if during the evacuation from Tan Son Nhut American planes were fired at. I think you were asked if air strikes might take place and you said you'd take the question.

A: I've done some research. The instructions to the commander in the field are that he is to take whatever steps are necessary to get the people out so that you could find it impossible to give you a specific answer to that. You can draw all kinds of logical conclusions.

Q: You said your feeling was that you would have to.
A: Exactly right and that's still my feeling but I'm not the commander in the field. He's the guy that's going to make the decision.

Q: Who is the commander that makes the decision?
A: If and when this kicks off a man will be designated, but I don't know who that will be. The commander in the field will almost certainly be the commander of the Marine amphibious brigade there.

Q: That's assuming you're going to put Marines in.
A: That's right and that's why it's hard to answer these questions at this time. I was assuming that that was the question.

Q: You say the commander will have the discretion to call in air?
A: You have to do it that way; you can't dictate from here how you are going to do it in detail. There's just no way.

Q: You were here in the McNamara period?
A: The Department of Defense in those days made a rather strong effort to try to dictate everything but actually they couldn't, even with all that control.

Q: You could if you set up a proposition; if American planes during evacuation come under attack, you are hereby ordered to have air strikes against the SAM-2s or whatever.

A: No, that is not the way you do it. You leave it to the discretion of the man in the field. You have to give him guidelines such as no unnecessary force and things like that. It would be very dangerous for anybody in Washington to tell the man in the field how to do the details of his job. It just won't work that way.

Q: Do you have any information that the SAM-2s are any closer, within the 20 miles?

A: No, sir, we're just where we were yesterday on that -- no change.

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(This is not a verbatim transcript)

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Q: You aren't worried about the SAM-2s; aren't you worried about the SA-7?

A: The SA-7 is probably a more serious worry. The radar guided 57 is a worry too.

Q: Do we have any information that they are bringing in more SA-7s?

A: No, there's really no indication of that.

Q: You always have this discretion.

A: Sure. We had that discretion all along for Americans.

Q: The only thing you got from Congress was this additional discretion with regard to the evacuation of South Vietnamese?

A: Yes. The rules are the same.

Q: The SA-7 shot down an A-37 about a week ago. Have there been any firings by SA-7s in that area?

A: I haven't seen any reports of that but let me take the question.

Q: How many Wild Weasel aircraft do you have in Thailand?

A: I am not permitted to comment on that.

Q: Is there a shortage of MAC aircraft or contract aircraft arriving in Tan Son Nhut to take out refugees? We had reports of fewer flights and the backlog has increased from 1,000 to 5,000.

A: I'll have to check that. I haven't heard any report of shortage.

Q: Do you have any airlift report for yesterday?

A: State Department would have to answer that.

Q: The ENTERPRISE is still in that general area?

A: All five of the carriers that we've been carrying --

Q: Are the F-14s being restricted to flights off the coast?

A: Yes, we're not invading the land space, the air space, or water space of the country.

Q: Even South Vietnam there's no F-14 flying in?

A: No.

Q: What is the heaviest weapons the Marines have at the Embassy?

A: I'll have to take that question. They have machine guns, hand grenades, rifle grenades, M-16 rifles. Whether they have mortars or not, I don't know.

Q: How many bases are being looked into as possible camps for the Vietnamese that will arrive in the U.S.?

A: This is a planning process that we are going through now. Nobody has been alerted or anything like that. Each Service has been asked to come up with where they think they could take how many, that sort of thing. For instance, there are a number of Army bases that are used by the Reserve Components, primarily, that do have space available.

Q: Would Fort Chaffee be one of them?

A: Fort Chaffee would be one of them that they should be considering

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because that's a sizeable camp and more than a division was there when it was active. It does do a big business in Reserve Component training. There are a number of National Guard brigades and sizeable U.S. Army Reserve units every year. In fact, it gets used by somebody almost every weekend. But it's sufficiently big that it could be used for refugees as well without interfering with the training unless it got overloaded. I think right now they have the capability of feeding 20,000 people. With a little bit of reinforcement it could be more than that. I know this because it was one camp that I used in my last assignment for the training of Reserves.

Q: What would be total capacity of the Army?

A: I'll have to take the question.

Q: What other camps are being considered?

A: I don't know but there are a lot of logical ones such as Camp Roberts, CA, Camp Pickett, VA - two that come quickly to mind along with Chaffee.

Q: All Services are included?

A: Yes, all Services have been asked to look into this.

Q: Have more C-130s been moving to Guam, the Philippines or Saigon now that civilian planes have been barred from landing at Tan Son Nhut?

A: No, not yet. The thought crossed my mind as you asked the question that maybe some will be but I don't have any information at this moment.

Q: When you say that all Services have been asked --

A: They weren't given any figures. The way you do it is you ask for their capacity and where would you house this capacity, what would it cost you in terms of dollars and what would you need in terms of beds, food, medical care, etc.

Q: How many camps can the Army come up with?

A: I don't know.

Q: Have you been given a certain number to come up with?

A: No, just the other way around. It was "what have you got that can be used."

Q: By when must this information be in?

A: Not a particular deadline but they asked for it as soon as possible.

Q: This is for Ambassador Brown? —

A: It will go to him, yes.

Q: I asked for a cost figure on this operation yesterday.

A: I don't have it, it's still working.

Q: When does Guam reach its capacity? You said the other day that it has a capacity for several thousand and now they have 9 or 12,000.

A: I was talking about covered shelter, not counting tents.

Q: In counting tents, when does Guam reach its capacity?

A: Guam has been told to prepare to take 25,000 and be ready to take another 25,000.

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(This is not a verbatim transcript)

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Q: Can Guam do it?

A: I'm sure that it can; they'll need assistance, of course.

Q: 50,000 would be there at one time; you won't move in 25,000 at a time?

A: I'm not saying that will actually happen. The instructions are for 25,000 and maybe for another 25,000.

Q: Who is coordinating this?

A: The State Department.

Q: Can you tell us anything about the military situation? Is there still a lull?

A: It is almost exactly the same as it was yesterday. There's a little action. I gather the emphasis today is a little further to the west than it was yesterday. I'm talking small actions.

Q: Any idea of the long-planning, the same as yesterday?

A: I have no different answers to give.

Q: The lull is continuing?

A: The lull is continuing.

Q: Any idea yet on the number of deserters that have turned themselves in?

A: No, we're looking into this.

Q: I was told last week that there were only five deserters on the books.

A: That we carried.

Q: I didn't believe it then and I don't believe it now. They stuck to it yesterday and I think somebody's --

A: I think this is a technical problem.

Q: That's right, the same old business.

A: As all of us know, there are more than five there. I don't have any idea how many.

Q: Pass the word back to those people who are giving me that mickey mouse answer that it just won't do.

A: I don't think we're going to know the answer to that until if and when everybody's out; then we'll know.

Q: You'll know if you have people taken into custody.

A: As I just said, there are some turning up; I don't have a figure on it. More than five.

Q: More than five?

A: They're going to be dealt with by the Service concerned and as we discussed the other day, I really don't have anything to add to that. I'm sure they're going to have to do it on a case-by-case basis.

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(This is not a verbatim transcript)

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Q: You said there are more than five turning up; you don't know how many?

A: I don't have a figure.

Q: Do you have any idea how many were turned over to military control? Are they just turning into the Embassy and coming back on a flight?

A: I'll take the question. I don't know. It has to be somewhere along the line, whether it's in Tan Son Nhut, or Clark or Wake or Guam or whatever, I don't know.

Q: On Guam again, how long can 25,000 be accommodated there if you have this kind of information and then if they gather additional, when are they going to move from Guam?

A: We don't know. We can undoubtedly accommodate them for a long time, as long as they want us to. It won't be the Sheraton-Hilton, but it would be at least liveable.

Q: Are the plans to move them all by ship?

A: I don't know that either. I doubt if that kind of decision has been made. The plan right now is to move them up by air. Now if it got to be a big problem, ships are always available.

Q: The VC News Agency reported that the port of Danang is now open to foreign ships. Do you observe already some foreign ships, for example, Russians or Chinese, in that water?

A: No, I don't have any report on that, but I must say I haven't checked that either. So let me take that question.

Q: We asked yesterday if there was any kind of ship movement.

A: I know the answer was no yesterday, but I don't know what the answer is today.

Q: Have they moved combat aircraft into the South.

A: No.

Q: We asked yesterday about the reconnaissance flights?

A: Reconnaissance flights are, at the request of the South Vietnamese Government, being flown unarmed over territory and under the control of the South Vietnamese Government. That's a little hazy, I'll grant you.

Q: Who is flying them, Americans?

A: The same as we've been doing all along.

Q: We have been doing this all along?

A: For sure, we've announced that a number of times -- over South Vietnam.

Q: The last time we asked there were 130,000 North Vietnamese troops against 60,000 South Vietnamese troops; has that changed at all?

A: I don't think my official figure's changed. It could have actually gone up some on the North Vietnamese side. I don't have a change. Let me take that question too. I think it's probably pretty close. It might have gotten up to 140,000. I don't know. I'm just guessing at that.

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Q: Still the 14 divisions?

A: The Department of Defense intelligence analysts' position is 14. I've heard from other sources some other agencies think it might be 15 or even 16; we're saying 14.

Q: Those two units from the South, have they moved up more and changed their position?

A: Inchng forward would be the way to handle it, but the ones from the South are still partially in III Corps and partially in IV Corps.

Q: On these camps that are being looked at for possible centers, were any figures given to commanders like 175,000, 150,000?

A: No, that's the point I'm getting at. They didn't work it that way. They worked it the other way; they said, "How many can you accommodate?" and then as I said with cost, and people, etc., will be needed.

Q: Where is the money coming from? Is this out of the allegedly humanitarian money that Congress is voting now would it come out of the Defense budget?

A: State would have to answer that, but that seems to be the logical solution.

Q: Have they moved towards Vung Tau?

A: Yes, there have been some reports of some moves in the direction of Vung Tau. As far as it's actually being cut off yet, I'm not prepared to say that, but they're getting pretty close to Route 15 which comes down from Bien Hoa to Vung Tau.

Q: How important would that be if they cut it off?

A: Not particularly.

Q: In terms of the sealift?

A: In terms of the sealift it would be important, if they got to the Saigon River. But those of you who've been over there know that they have to come through the Rung Sat anyway, which is almost impossible to keep clear if somebody wants to go shoot a RPG7 at you, they're going to be able to do it unless they're unlucky. It took us a great deal of effort to get that place so that they couldn't do it back in the mid-60s. And every now and then back then with a major effort going on, they still snuck through and either hit a ship with a mine or with some sort of weapon.

Q: Has there been a great gathering of refugees at Vung Tau already?

A: There has been a sizeable increase in the population. I don't have a figure. I just have seen several figures, but they vary quite a bit from something like 75 thousand to around 200,000. I don't know what the figure is.

Q: Of refugees there? And no movement at all to load them on the boats standing off Vung Tau?

A: None that I know of.

Q: Are we going to?

A: I can't answer that.

Q: Are we going to, or are the boats going to stand there and the refugees stand there?

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(This is not a verbatim transcript)

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A: I don't know where they'd take them. This might be a different kind of refugee. I don't know the answer to that. That ought to really be addressed to State.

Q: The three ships are still in Saigon?

A: No, they left. They left last night our time, about the middle of night and are now standing off Vung Tau. They did not take people.

Q: We have ten standing off Vung Tau now?

A: We've got either ten or eleven in the general area. When you say standing off Vung Tau. I visualize looking out over the horizon and there sits a ship. They're not that close but they're in the area.

Q: Ten?

A: Ten's a good figure. It might be 11.

Q: Can you remember the language or approximately the purpose for looking at these bases to find out, was it for temporary housing before resettlement?

A: That's the idea; for temporary housing without any limitation or time frame being put on the temporary.

Q: Prior to resettlement?

A: I think you could draw a parallel between what we did with the Hungarians back at Camp Kilmer. We just kept them until we got them all worked out which took several months, as I recall.

Q: Can we presume that once Congress gives final approval of this evacuation money, and authorizes the use of troops, etc., that the sealift operation will begin?

A: I don't think you could assume anything. As I said before, this is being played by ear.

Q: Is that what they're waiting for?

A: Based on the context of your question, I don't think that's the point. I wouldn't draw that conclusion.

Q: Is not the sealift ban in effect, by the way the legislation is now phrased?

A: Since the signals on this are being called by State, I recommend you ask them. All I know is we don't have any instructions to do anything.

Q: Do we have Americans in Vung Tau to take out?

A: Probably. We've got some in Can Tho so we ought to have some in Vung Tau.

Q: But not necessarily?

A: We had as of yesterday. The Consulate's down in Can Tho.

Q: Bien Hoa too, but there's nobody in it apparently.

A: Probably not.

Q: In other words, you have no standing order that when Congress acts to go ahead with it?

A: That's my point. The planning on this would be done by State.

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11.

Q: Have you had any success in rounding up by some means biogs of some of the North Vietnamese generals working or running these divisions in the South?

A: No.

Q: You don't have any mastermind, in effect?

A: There obviously is one. I haven't pursued this. We probably could find out who the big commander is down there. I just haven't looked into it on that basis. Let me do that and see if there is something we can say on it.

Q: You mentioned the Army bases; do we have any Air Force or Navy installations that --

A: I'm not that familiar with them, but they've probably got something similar to the Army's. I do know the Air Force had one, it may have been deactivated, but Ellington Air Force Base in Houston, for example, was in the same status as Fort Chaffee. It was used by the Reserve and Air National Guard for training purposes. It does have barracks; it does have buildings but I don't know whether the Air Force is considering that as one of them or not.

Q: Wasn't there a large AF base closed in Puerto Rico?

A: Yes, but this is up to the Services to come back with what they think they can handle. There's no point in our discussing it at this point. Wait until they come back.

Q: How about Camp Atterbury?

A: That's another one.

Q: Is Chaffee a good one? Is there just a skeleton force there?

A: It's an inactive post in which we keep a small regular Army caretaking contingent because of all the use that I mentioned by the Reserve and National Guard. Fort Chaffee happens to be in excellent condition, I know from having been there just eight months ago. I don't know the status of any of the others.

Q: Do you have anything to add to your asphyxiation bomb statement of yesterday? Do you have any numbers? Did you say that the concussion would kill people at 200 yards?

A: No, I did not. I said the radius of effect was 200 yards but it was not an anti-personnel weapon, so we didn't go into that. The only thing I found out in addition to that was that the aerosol is called "combustible, ethelene oxide" which is a kind of gasoline type of thing. What it does is form a cloud of vapor which is ignited and then the down pressure is sufficient to explode mines and boobytraps. The actual radius effect of the igniting portion is about 50 feet. So these stories about it being terribly wide area weapon is just strictly a lot of baloney. This is, as I said yesterday, about a two hundred yard radius of total effect and that's the pressure effect.

Q: Is the Pentagon denying the North Vietnamese charge that the South Vietnamese have used this?

A: No, we are not denying the charge that they've used it. We are denying the charge that this is an inhuman, illegal weapon.

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(This is not a verbatim transcript)

12.

Q: Have they used it?

A: I haven't been able to find that.

Q: The charge was that they used it at Xuan Loc.

A: What we said yesterday, remember, that it was available and it's quite possible that they used it but it is not the weapon that they call it. There is no comparison between a huge area killing weapon and this little thing.

Q: (inaudible)

A: We bought in 1973 some 4800, to be given to all of the Services for further tests. My understanding from the Air Force is that it isn't worth much. I did not check the Navy or Army.

Q: Why did we produce only 650 up to FY 1973 --- (inaudible)

A: I do not know the answer to that.

Q: Has a decision been made to transfer large numbers of Vietnamese to camps in this country or is still --

A: It's all planning; there's been no firm decision.

Q: So you're examining it, they haven't said we're going to do it, now find us a spot?

A: Exactly, they have not said that.

Q: Is there a limit on the type of South Vietnamese you are flying out?

A: Ask State. This was covered in a message that they put as a release.

Q: (inaudible)

A: I have no official information on that. I've seen the press reports. I know of nothing official.

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(This is not a verbatim transcript)

DoD Morning News Briefing
Thursday, April 24, 1975, 11:15 a.m.
(Maj. Gen. Sidle)

Announcements:

1. On the Hill: Dr. John J. Bennett, Acting ASD(I&L), in open session before House Appropriations Defense Subcommittee on defense procurement policy. There will be some Army witnesses this afternoon.
2. Speeches: Admiral Holloway, CNO, and General Cushman, Marine Commandant, speaks before Navy League Convention in New Orleans, LA.
3. The loading for a routine amphibious training exercise will begin tomorrow in San Diego, California. This thing's been scheduled for many months. It has no connection with Southeast Asia and these exercises go on down there off San Diego quite often. The troops will start loading aboard the transports tomorrow, April 25. So when you start getting stories about the First Marine Division being embarked for Southeast Asia, they will not be true. They are coming out of Camp Pendleton and the exercise will involve about two dozen ships. It'll be basically the Fifth Marine Amphibious Brigade out of the First Marine Division.

Q: Two thousand?

A: A brigade-size that'll be, what you might say a reinforced regiment, that'd be closer to 5,000.

Q: Where will the exercise take place?

A: Off the California coast.

Q: Are they going to have an amphibious landing on the California coast?

A: That's what they normally do; I didn't look up the scenario.

Q: Is this a training exercise?

A: It's a training exercise.

Q: Is it desert training or just amphibious?

A: Not desert, no desert.

Q: Do you have a nickname for it?

A: Exercise "Bell Buster." It was originally announced on the 18th of April.

4. We have the recruiting results for March.

5. We have some additional announcements about the Army's affiliation program where they use a National Guard brigade and affiliate it to a division. Then that division monitors closely its training and its readiness so that if the division should go to war, it'd have the option of having an extra brigade with it. The details are in the release.

6. You asked me yesterday about the lift carrying capability of helicopters. It's interesting to know that there are so many variables it's hard to come

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up with a generalization but here's the standard: at a 90 degree temperature and at sea level and if the winds aren't bad, you can put a Marine or trooper with his equipment -- which would come to about 240 pounds, it would be less for others, the CH-46 can carry 16 passengers under those circumstances and the CH-53 can carry 37. Now as you can see, all of that is variable. Obviously, if you don't carry equipment, you can put more people on it, but as you go up in the air, you have thinner air, you carry less. The heat also has an effect -- 90 degree happens to be a good operating temperature for this area that we're talking about.

Q: Just as a matter of history, did the chopper pilots in the Vietnam War always get out and ascertain the standards before they lifted off?

A: We did pay close attention to several of these factors. Some of them were fairly standard such as if you're operating out of Pleiku you know what the temperature is most of the time although it did vary some there. You know what the winds were, but the chopper pilots were very careful to try to avoid overloading because that's dangerous. They don't like it any more than the guys that are riding with them. They do pay attention to these factors.

7. Yesterday I was also asked about the ultra lethal asphyxiation bomb. We did have in 1970 in Vietnam an experimental bomb we called a CBU 55. I'm sure some of you will remember, this was designed to create a high pressure explosion. What you did first was clear out a landing zone with whatever means you were going to use. Remember we had some extra large bombs we used for that, a "daisy cutter," I think some were called. Then you put in one of these things which created a high-overpressure which exploded any mines or booby traps that were in the landing zone. This is the only thing that story of yesterday might have been talking about.

This weapon had to be dropped out of a helicopter or a slow-speed fixed-wing aircraft. It was a cannister which had three other cannisters within. I won't go into all the details but what it did was create a heavy explosion with considerable down-pressure and it could be that's what the story yesterday was talking about. The chances of any of those being over there are kind of slim but it is possible there were a few there. Their shelf life is short, but as in anything else, some of them probably would still work. So we expect that's what it was. It's the equivalent of a 500 pound high-explosive, general purpose bomb but with the force aimed into the ground and it's quite possible that if some guy happened to be in the middle of that he could be asphyxiated because of the down blast effect. That's probably what they were talking about.

Q: They're saying in Saigon that these people could be asphyxiated within 200 yards.

A: I don't believe the area of effect is that big, but under certain climatic conditions that might be right. This bomb was designed for the normal size landing zone which would be smaller than 200 yards.

Q: Are these standard explosives or are they some kind of fuel oil or gas or something?

A: What happens is that the cannister ruptures, disbursing an aerosol cloud which is detonated and provides a blast effect equivalent to a 500 pound high explosive general purpose bomb, the difference being that the main blast is down.

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Q: It is cluster bomb?

A: It was a cluster bomb in that it breaks into three sub cannister. It's not cluster bomb in the sense that we talked about before, but it is a cluster bomb.

Q: What is in the aerosol, gasoline or --

A: I'll have to take that.

Q: (inaudible) Explosion versus little bomblets going off?

A: That's the idea.

Q: One time they were using a sort of a compressed gas the same kind that was used for household cooking.

A: There have been a lot of experiments. The big problem that developed with this one was that it was so inaccurate. One way of placing it was to kick it out the side of a Huey. That's factual and you've got to be pretty good at that. I suppose with enough practice you could get good at it. We did not use those to any great extent. It did work from the standpoint if you could get it on the target it would detonate the mines all right.

Q: Were these stopped in the 1970s?

A: All we did was test it; we never really used it and actually it was never tested as an anti-personnel weapon but obviously it has an anti-personnel capability, but not very good, actually. It'd be inefficient from that standpoint.

Q: Where was it tested, in South Vietnam?

A: In South Vietnam.

Q: What was it tested for to clear landing areas?

A: As I just said, I thought to get the mines and booby traps exploded. It wasn't used to clear the area; you have to use something else.

Q: It was pretty efficient to explode mines and booby traps in a small area.

A: If you're on a helicopter coming into a landing zone it's real comforting to know you're not going to jump out and land on a mine.

Q: It's to clear a landing zone.

A: Clearing in our terminology is when you knock down the trees and stuff; it's part of the clearing process.

Q: For helicopter landing?

A: Yes, part of the process, you've got to knock down the trees first, this isn't any good at that.

Q: Was it tested in combat or was it tested in a quiet area?

A: It was tested in combat; it was tested both ways.

Q: The Air Force said that they bought some of these things.

A: Yes, but there weren't many. It was a very small purchase and it was decided it wasn't really worth it.

Q: Do you have any reason to think this is what was used the other day?

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A: It's the only thing I can find that even begins to meet the description. And I found in looking it up that some people used to call it in slang -- it wasn't the official name -- call it an asphyxiation bomb and a depression bomb which were the words used so it leads us to believe that's got to be it.

Q: There's a small chance that they have these things, that's the word you used, "small chance?"

A: No, we know there are some there. Nobody knows how many. There can't be very many, and the shelf life is considered short. The chances are that most of them wouldn't work. This is really not an important factor is what I'm saying.

Q: What's the CBU designation stand for?

A: That's the cluster bomb. It's a bomb that breaks into three parts. Most cluster bombs, as you know, break into many more parts than that, but don't ask me why they named it that. I have no idea.

Q: Do you have anything on the fighting situation in Vietnam?

A: Let's get into that a little bit. The standard question you've been asking me is about SA-2s. We still don't have any information that would place them inside the 20 mile radius I mentioned. However, there are now a great number here and there of enemy troops within 20 miles.

Q: Twenty miles of where?

A: Twenty miles of Tan Son Nhut.

Q: You said a great number?

A: I don't have a number but there are a number of places where the enemy is estimated to be which would be inside a circle if you drew a 20-mile circle around Tan Son Nhut.

Q: But no SA-2s?

A: No indication of that.

Q: Could we say thousands of troops within the 20 mile circle?

A: I just don't have any figures on it; I guess that would be all right but I don't really know. I can't confirm it.

Q: What AAA weapons do they have within that circle?

A: We actually have no indication of any but they have with them the 57s and the 37s. We do not know for sure that they have the SA-7s but we're quite confident they do.

Q: Is the 37 radar guided?

A: The 57 is radar guided.

Q: What about the 37?

A: I'll have to take that. In some cases it is in some cases it isn't, I believe, but let me take that to make sure. Of course, you can fire it un-radar guided if you want to.

Q: Those are what -- antiaircraft missiles?

A: Antiaircraft guns. They fire shells or bullets.

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Q: How about this zoom 24, QUAD?

A: No information on that. Again that would be a logical one to suspect but we have no information.

Q: Do they have that at all? Do the North Vietnamese have that?

A: They have had the QUAD in their inventory in the past.

Q: No further indication that American planes have been fired on?

A: No, actually we don't even have any reports today.

Q: Is there any actual fighting going on?

A: There's about the same level as yesterday.

Q: Light?

A: It's light, it's in just about the same places. There isn't much going on to the east of Bien Hoa toward Xuan Loc, that's quiet. There is some fighting to the southwest and there's fighting on the northwest but nothing really big.

Q: Southwest, how close to Saigon?

A: I couldn't give you a figure; the fighting itself is probably about 15 miles, I think. But I want to try to avoid misleading you from the standpoint that there may be troops where there isn't any fighting that are closer than where the fighting is. The fighting is not very close.

Q: How long has the lull been going on now?

A: I guess about three days, hasn't it? We started talking about it yesterday.

Q: Do you have any information that a ceasefire is imminent?

A: I have no information on that at all.

Q: Any indication that they're holding off when they could march right through?

A: We really have no indication on what they're doing.

Q: Any indication that a surrender of Saigon is imminent?

A: No indication of that.

Q: Any indications of any supply problems or logistic difficulties?

A: I know that's being passed around as a possibility and it is, of course, a possibility, but we have no indication that that's the reason. You recall before they started they had, as we pointed out here many times, a tremendous stock supplies. It's true they've practically doubled the size of their force but our estimates were they had enough there for their original force, which was about eight divisions, to fight about a year. You know if you double it theoretically you've got six months. But there may be some local problem; it's possible.

Q: (inaudible) in MR III?

A: I'm talking about available to them in MR III.

Q: Let's put it this way, is there any military reason we know of why they wouldn't move on Saigon?

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A: The possibilities on the military side are the necessity to resupply, they have as I think I said yesterday, they have traditionally fought in kind of fits and starts because they go to an objective, stop, resupply, reorganize go on to the next one. The delays between these things in the past have been as long as a couple of weeks or only as long as a couple of days. The possibility that Warren raised is of course another possibility. We have no indication of that, that's what I'm trying to say. This is all very theoretical.

Q: Is there any bad weather condition out there, like heavy rains?
A: Nothing particular.

Q: The rainy season hasn't started?
A: It's going to start pretty soon but it hasn't really started.

Q: Are we still flying aerial reconnaissance over South Vietnam including those portions which are occupied?

A: Unarmed aerial recon, I'll take the question, it's a good question I don't know the answer. I would presume it's yes but let me take it.

Q: What's our situation as far as the number of ships we've got now off the coast is that still around 40?

A: There'd be no change in an overall figure -- around 40 is still about right.

Q: Any movement of Marines?

A: No additional movement of Marines.

Q: There was a UPI picture yesterday showing Marines in Hawaii, 1500 of them ready for movement.

A: That must be an old picture. Well, you remember, the last airplane of that battalion that we sent to Okinawa just left yesterday. They don't all get in an airplane at once and fly out.

Q: The question was whether there were 1,500?
A: I have nothing I can release on that other than what we talked about yesterday, the normal size.

Q: We were given strong indication that it was a normal size battalion which is between 800 and 1000.

A: Let me explain that a little bit. You have three terms to worry about, a battalion, a battalion landing team and a Marine amphibious unit. The battalion would run between 800 and 1,000. If you throw in the rest which makes it a battalion landing team that means it's got an artillery battery; it's got armored amphibious troop carriers, it's got a lot of other things. It adds on so you get up to around the 1,200-1,300 level. Then let's say you put helicopters on it, the air combat element it's called -- and as you recall we sent out one of those with the HANCOCK -- that adds another 300 or so more. So when you get up to a Marine Amphibious Unit you're up around 1,700-1,800. Now we've been trying to talk about battalion landing teams because in current circumstances the establishment of a Marine Amphibious Unit would be done more or less on the spot. So we're primarily carrying the troops as battalion landing teams.

Q: Could you tell us what was moved from Okinawa?

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A: It was a battalion landing team that moved from Okinawa and a battalion moved from Honolulu. It doesn't mean that some day that battalion won't become a battalion landing team.

Q: Somebody was telling me yesterday that the situation could come to head as early as this weekend. In other words, either there's some sort of a political stop or the North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong decided to go ahead. This apparently was the feeling among some people in the intelligence community although there's a number of different feelings. Do you get the feeling that we're coming close to --

A: If you want to talk in terms of enemy capabilities, they have the capability right now of mounting a massive attack, so they've got that option. But I think what you're talking about is the intentions. I would hesitate as a former intelligence officer to comment on intentions. It's a very dangerous thing to do, but they do have the capability of doing either of the things you said. As far as the official Defense position on this, we have none. It's not logical to have one.

Q: There's been some estimates though, but these days there's a lot of hedging of what the intentions are, but have you heard or seen reports that something could happen soon or this weekend?

A: I would say that something could happen any minute from the standpoint of capabilities. So you'd have to say that something could happen this weekend; we're not saying that it will, we aren't saying that it won't either.

Q: How many people are we lifting out of Saigon each day and how many are Americans and how many are Vietnamese?

A: Please ask Ambassador Brown at State Department this question.

Q: How many contract freighters are in the Saigon harbor?

A: Today we're down to three.

Q: We were told yesterday that all three left.

A: I checked that this morning and that's wrong. I heard that yesterday too, but as of an hour or two ago, there were three.

Q: Do you know what they're doing?

A: They're waiting for further instructions.

Q: What did the one take out?

A: As far as I can find out, it didn't take out anything.

Q: Where'd they go?

A: Out to sea.

Q: It's not standing off Vung Tau or some place?

A: I don't know actually, but it's standing off some place.

Q: Two left empty, is that right?

A: I'd have to check the first one.

Q: Yesterday's one went out empty.

A: That's the one I'm talking about. The one I don't know about, but

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I'm pretty sure they're both empty actually but I'll check that.

Q: Does Mr. Schlesinger have any response to the Dick Levine piece in the Wall Street Journal about his bad intelligence?

A: I'm not speaking for Mr. Schlesinger on this, but as I pointed out from this platform right after the first event, namely, that this year he estimated there would be a chipping away and that the main offensive would come next year, Just two paragraphs later he pointed out that he wasn't ruling out that the North Vietnamese would certainly exploit any opportunities they might develop. So I don't think that's all that bad.

Q: Looking from hindsight, is there any indication that they really improvised that; that they had not planned a major offensive this year but it opened up for them when the retreat came?

A: I think that is the conclusion that most of the analysts are reaching, that this is exactly what happened. They had a totally unexpected opportunity which they took advantage of.

Q: Just for the record, have we landed any Marines into South Vietnam or any Marines on those freighters in port near Saigon?

A: No, the only Marines in Vietnam are the ones who are guarding the Embassy in Saigon.

Q: Is there any indication of small boat activity on the part of the North Vietnamese off the coast?

A: There are some indications that the North Vietnamese are at least thinking about, and quite logically, using the ports that they've captured further south for resupply.

Q: Are they getting close to our --

A: We don't really have any indications of that. The indications are all logistical.

Q: What are the indications, can you detail that?

A: There have been a couple of ships at least that have moved down, at least as far as Chu Lai and we're expecting they'll be showing up further south than that.

Q: What kind of ships?

A: Logistical ships, cargo carriers, not large, but cargo.

Q: Are the South Vietnamese Navy challenging them?

A: No, I'm sure they're not.

Q: Any sign of Soviet, NVA ships going to Danang now that's open again?

A: I believe the answer to that is yes, but let me take the question.

Q: Mr. Schlesinger's visit today with French and German Parliamentarians, who's coming in today?

A: This is a bipartisan group which includes young French, German and American Parliamentarians who are interested in obtaining a better understanding of each country's legislative and political processes. There are no names. This is a group trying to find out how the other nation works. It's a program that has been going on since 1970.

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(This is not a verbatim transcript)

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Q: Can you tell us about his meeting with Defense Minister Dinitz of Israel?

A: No, I can't talk about what he said in there. I can reiterate his previously stated position and the President's previously stated position on the matter of support to Israel, namely, that the security of Israel would remain an objective of the United States Government.

Q: Is there any reason why his visit was not listed yesterday?

A: We're all trying to find out that happened.

Q: Have any MIGs shown up in the South today?

A: No.

Q: Any combat planes?

A: No combat planes.

Q: They're continuing courier flights?

A: Courier flights.

Q: Is there a Pentagon wrapup on the Soviet Navy exercise?

A: Nothing new really. I've asked them to let me know when the thing appears to be coming to an end, but it's still going on, in other words.

Q: Did we ever find out whether any of the carriers were engaged in this exercise; that is, the two helicopter carriers?

A: I'll have to check that.

Q: How about the number of helicopters? Were you going to look that up the other day?

A: I can't give you a number. In trying to add up what we've talked about so far, it would come to about 70. I can say that, but that's not exactly right. It's better than 70.

Q: 70 transports or?

A: Transports. Count them all, I'd get more than that.

Q: Why did you decide to give us that erroneous figure and tell us that there were more than that?

A: I'm not at liberty to give you the exact figure. We have from time to time mentioned certain numbers and if anyone added them all up he'd get around 70.

Q: Is that 25 percent of the total?

A: No, that's a close figure.

Q: How did you get to it?

A: This goes way back to when we were talking about the OKINAWA weeks ago.

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(This is not a verbatim transcript)

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Q: I've got 15 on each, is that wrong?
 A: There are others inserted in there. You don't have to take my figure. I'm not going to insist on it.

Q: Are most of these on the OKINAWA?
 A: No, they're spread around.

Q: Are they on more than the three ships -- OKINAWA, MIDWAY and HANCOCK?
 A: There are five carriers but the three that you mentioned are the principals.

Q: Let's assume that Tan Son Nhut is closed down. I've heard a figure that we could get out between 5 and 10,000 people a day from downtown, unless the troops were all over the place, using these helicopters. Is that accurate?

A: I'd say that would be high. As I said yesterday and I don't have an exact figure, let's say 1,600, that could be done in a day.

Q: 1,600 could be done in a day?
 A: Weather permitting, resistance permitting and all the variables would have to be right.

Q: Are we holding up on the evacuation of the South Vietnamese until we get Congressional approval?
 A: I recommend you ask that of State Department.

Q: Is there any cost figure you can put on the operation so far?
 A: No, I couldn't now. Let me take the question.

Chilton T. - So. China Sea - Bldg. 1381
1st Lt. Col. Kid - Chaffee
Wpt. Venor
962-2242/43/44
2545/2162

*Almonage -**Debuth**Mobile**Tuscaloosa
Barker County**501-484-0000**24 hrs. x 247**in house 2127**12*

(This is not a verbatim transcript)

DoD Morning News Briefing
Wednesday, April 23, 1975, 11 a.m.
(Maj. Gen. Sidle)

Announcements:

1. On the Hill today: Mr. Greenberg, Director of Manpower Programs (OASD/M&RA) is before the House Education and Labor Subcommittee which is conducting hearings on vocational, occupational and career education.

2. No speeches today.

3. There was a report that there would be a press conference here this afternoon at 4:00; that is totally untrue, unfounded without basis. The Federation of American-Arab Organizations is meeting with Mr. Ellsworth, ASD(ISA), in a closed session at 3:00 but there's no press conference involved.

Q: What's the subject?

A: What the Federation representatives want to discuss with DoD was not specified.

Q: Do you know anything about the Federation? Is it private or quasi-officials?

A: I think it's more private than anything else. We weren't able to find out too much about it but there are some American Arabs unofficial groups in the country and they apparently have formed into a Federation. I don't know how old it is but they did write in and ask to talk with a knowledgeable Defense official and Mr. Ellsworth agreed to talk to them. Subjects are unknown. I had breakfast with Mr. Ellsworth and he doesn't know what they're going to ask him.

4. Release on monthly strength figures for March.

5. Release on the new 8" major caliber lightweight gun of the Navy which has been fired successfully in its initial tests. They've been working on it for some years and it's designed to replace the 5" guns that are presently on destroyers. It's actually lighter and takes less shipboard space than the old 8" gun that was on cruisers. It's apparently a great weapon. It's automatic and permits a single operator to load and fire projectiles.

Q: It's not laser-guided?

A: I have nothing on that.

Q: Are the SAM-2s now within range of Tan Son Nhut?

A: Not that we could determine yet. I hate to say, no, but we don't have any indication that they are. That could happen at any time as you well know.

Q: Have any of the planes come under either missile or antiaircraft fire?

A: No planes have come under missile fire; we have four reports of planes possibly coming under some kind of ground fire. I brought one along and it's very hazy. For instance, and this is typical, "the pilot while turning to make his approach to Tan Son Nhut, he was quite

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aways out still, detected circular white muzzle flashes which appeared to be fired directly at the aircraft, but no tracer or air bursts showed up" -- which as you can see makes this a very hazy report. The people on the scene are convinced that none have actually been fired at yet.

Q: Are the planes following any special tactics going in and out of the airport?

A: I don't know; I know that we wouldn't be able to tell you what they were anyway.

Q: Why not?

A: Surely you know the answer to that.

Q: No, I don't.

A: If you're going to tell a guy who is maybe going to shoot at you how you're going to come into the airport, that's a very helpful thing to him.

Q: Are these white puffs similar to antiaircraft fire?

A: There are no puffs.

Q: What'd you say?

A: He saw flashes from the weapons.

Q: There were no hits though?

A: As I say, no hits, no tracers, no airbursts.

Q: Did some pilots report tracer bullets?

A: Some of them reported tracers but on further questioning it was determined they weren't necessarily coming at them. You know it's kind of hard to tell up in the air if you see a tracer going like this -- you know it is going to miss you but you don't know whether it's aimed at you.

Q: Did any one of those pilots hear typical antiaircraft type explosions?

A: We have no reports of that.

Q: Has there been any indication of damage; in other words, fragments?

A: No, not a one. We're treating this with considerable caution at this point. We don't want to say they weren't shot at but we sure don't have any hard proof that they were.

Q: None of the four report any airbursts?

A: That's right.

Q: Some of the four saw tracers?

A: Yes.

Q: When you say the SAM-2s are not within range does this mean none have been fired at incoming planes?

A: I'm saying we don't have any evidence. None have been fired.

Q: Do you have doubt that they could be within range if they wanted to be?

A: I would say they certainly could be. Needless to say, everyone's looking.

Q: How many evacuation flights were conducted there, for example, today

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Saigon time?

A: We have a little trouble keeping track of that since State is supposed to report on this. Not all of the flights are actually Air Force planes. You know there're some charters. Let me try to get an answer on that. I should think we'd be able to get one.

Q: Is it also correct that some of the flights are now going to Guam?
A: Yes, that is correct.

Q: Why is that?

A: State Department announced this morning that Guam was going to replace Clark as the central handling point at least for Vietnamese. Now that doesn't mean that some still won't go to Clark. The central, the basic point, will be Guam.

Q: What do you mean Vietnamese, that's all we're evacuating, isn't it?
A: We're evacuating Americans too.

Q: I see what you mean. The Americans might come into Clark but the Vietnamese will go to Guam.

Q: Are there still Americans leaving on their own, paying their own way, using commercial airliners?

A: There must be but I'll check that. I don't have any report on that. They're keeping track of everybody now, but I don't know --

Q: In other words, there are some Americans who might have left on commercial flights out of Saigon and they would have been included in any totals that are available?

A: Let me take the question; if you'd asked me last week I know last week that was true. They were keeping track of them so I presume they're still keeping track of them but I don't know that any are going that way now.

Q: Shouldn't all non-essential Americans be out by now?
A: I would think so; we're getting down.

Q: All that's going out now is Vietnamese?

A: No, I shouldn't have said, yes, to all; they're getting down to more essential as they thin out.

Q: But the heavy majority of people leaving now are Vietnamese?

A: I would say that's correct, but I would ask you to please ask your refugee questions of the State Department. We are only the executive agent on this. I'm not in a position really to answer the questions.

Q: There's one allied question, what are you doing logistically? You can't suddenly dump several thousand people on an island like Guam without preparing tents and making sure food is in there and medical supplies and the rest of it.

A: Of course, this isn't all that sudden. In other words, the Commander on Guam, Admiral Morrison, was informed that this might happen, and he has the capability to handle several thousand as far as housing is concerned right off the bat. Obviously if the number gets large, he will have to go into tents and I'm sure they can fly in the necessary supplies and so forth.

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Q: Are we now loading South Vietnamese on those five commercial ships that are in port near Saigon?

A: My information is we're not loading anyone on those ships.

Q: Are there five or four?

A: There are four there, five yesterday.

Q: Did one leave without South Vietnamese on it?

A: One left empty as I understand it. It didn't have any Vietnamese on it. I'll have to take the question.

Q: What are they there for?

A: As I told you yesterday, it gets into our many contingency plans and its "in case" proposition.

Q: To evacuate who?

A: It would have to be decided later. You can draw your own conclusion as easily as I can; it's all going to depend on the situation.

Q: Does that include some 100,000 South Vietnamese we're going to take out of there? Is the armada there to take out 100,000?

A: The armada is there to do what it's told to do when the time comes and I don't know whether that will be what it does or not.

Q: Can we find out what this armada consists of?

A: I understood we gave that to you yesterday. There are five aircraft carriers and seven ships with PHIBRON V. The total number of amphibious ships deployed in the South China Sea area is about a dozen. How many MSC ships available to assist possible evacuation of South Vietnamese? Ten MSC plus about a dozen foreign and there are several tugs and numerous barges. I gave you the commercial ships; that's about a dozen. There are more than a dozen destroyers.

Q: How about fifteen?

A: If you want to say fifteen, that would be reasonably close.

Q: What's the point in telling us the number of carriers but not the destroyers?

A: You can use as a rule of thumb; as you know, the carrier always takes two or three destroyers with them.

Q: How about the LONG BEACH?

A: I'll have to take that.

Q: Can you give us a total number of the Marines?

A: Again I can't give you a firm figure. PHIBRONs normally carry a battalion landing team which varies in size but if you figure 800 to 1000, that's the normal figure. So this PHIBRON V has embarked a Marine battalion landing team.

Q: Where did they come from?

A: Okinawa.

Q: You were going to give us the types in the PHIBRON so we could determine whether or not they could go up on the beach?

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A: Two LSTs; two LSDs; an LKA and two LPDs.

Q: How many people are now in your Defense Attache Office in Saigon?

A: About 150.

Q: Why are those transport ships near Saigon?

A: I can't tell you anything more about them. I told you that they are there in case they are needed. This whole fleet is there to be available if needed.

Q: Now that most of the Americans are there except to evacuate the South Vietnamese?

A: You can draw that conclusion. I'm just not going to predict what they are going to be used for.

Q: What is the total capacity of all the ships? How many human beings can that fleet take out of South Vietnam?

A: Let me take that question. It would depend on how far it's going; in other words, if you are going to move a ship from Vung Tau or Saigon to the Philippines, you could take a considerably larger number than if you're going to move them 1500 to 2000 miles.

Q: How many transport ships for human beings is in this whole fleet, do you have?

A: We can't use that as a figure because in our previous refugee efforts we used cargo ships as well as transports.

Q: For this purpose?

A: All of these ships are available for this purpose if we want to use them for it.

Q: Obviously you could take out about 100,000 people.

A: I would say that would be easy.

Q: Do you have anything on helicopters and Marines aboard the MIDWAY?

A: I don't have anything about Marines; the MIDWAY does have helicopters aboard. I know of no Marine movement to the MIDWAY.

Q: How many helicopters?

A: I can't say.

Q: What kind of helicopters?

A: Let me take the question.

Q: Any more Marine movements from Hawaii to Okinawa?

A: No.

Q: Or from the West Coast to Hawaii?

A: No movements of that type going on.

Q: The planes on the carrier, do they have the devices that seek out missiles and automatically fire the rocket to attack missile sites?

A: I don't know. I'll have to take that question.

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(This is not a verbatim transcript)

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Q: How many helicopters, round or precise figure, are available on these carriers for evacuation purposes?

A: Let me take that question; I know we can give you a round figure.

Q: Could you give a sort of general idea of their capacity in terms of personnel? The reason for my question is to determine if it's going to take one "fell swoop" or what?

A: It will take more than one "fell swoop." But as I mentioned yesterday, we can do that depending on the opposition. That's an easy day's job. You could do it in less than one day if it's organized and nobody is stopping you.

Q: You consider it one operation?

A: It would be one operation, same as at Phnom Penh.

Q: Was it the plan to stage out of Vung Tau if you have to use helicopters?

A: That is one of the contingencies, there are a number. Again, I don't want to get into the great variety involved. That obviously is a possibility but it's not required.

Q: This distinction between the evacuation long haul and short haul really isn't that important if you want to get people out.

A: It is on ships.

Q: Not if you want the people out, we can get them out.

A: Now you're assuming some sort of a system whereby they can get on board; oh yes.

Q: If there any problem in the Philippines about bringing more people in, is there a lack of capacity for additional staging?

A: Clark is not really a good place for any kind of a massive operation of that type. They can handle a couple of thousand. That was one of the main transshipment points for troops but they clog up pretty fast.

Q: Didn't the Philippine government also object to that?

A: I don't know about that; I'd have to check that. Maybe you should ask State.

Q: Can the F-14s be used operationally as a cover in assisting the evacuation?

A: Yes, surely, surely.

Q: We were down to 1,500 yesterday; is that 1,500 and holding?

A: Again, I refer you to the State Department for an accurate figure on that; don't know.

Q: Do you know if Americans are still coming out?

A: Yes, I can say that; that's a fact.

Q: Are there any movements of B-52s toward Guam?

A: I wouldn't comment on that anyway.

Q: Has there been any increase in the B-52s on Guam?

A: I know of no worldwide change in any B-52 setup.

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Q: Any increase in the number of planes in Thailand?

A: Again, that's the sort of thing I don't want to comment on.

Q: Have any Marines in the United States or Hawaii been alerted for movement within the next few days?

A: No orders have gone out of this building to alert anybody for anything.

Q: AFP reported from Saigon today that the South Vietnamese Air Force -- this is sketchy -- is using a sort of bomb now which is described as a compression bomb which creates a vacuum which suffocates people.

A: I saw that. I don't know of any bomb like that; the report I saw called it an "ultralethal, asphyxiation bomb" and that's a new one on me. As far as I know, we don't have anything like that in our inventory, so I viewed that report with some doubt.

Q: Napalm will have that effect?

A: Of course, but that wouldn't be a new ultralethal asphyxiation bomb.

Q: There have been previous reports that the Army or the Air Force has developed a weapon that sort of sucks the oxygen out of an area.

A: We had a bomb a while back that was -- as a side effect did suck some oxygen -- not enough to be used as a weapon itself but in order to facilitate the explosion of other bombs. That's not new. I don't remember the name of it; maybe that's what they're talking about. I'll take the question on that.

Q: You don't know what they're talking about?

A: No, I don't know what they're talking about.

Q: Could napalm asphyxiate?

A: If they mean napalm, everybody knows what napalm is -- they have napalm.

Q: If they had found a corpse that was asphyxiated and not burned, could napalm have done that?

A: Yes, but that's not a new ultralethal asphyxiation bomb.

Q: Is it true that the Defense Department has proposed a \$1.1 million "pamper fund" to find some way of taking care of generals and admirals now that they are being stripped of their enlisted aides?

A: As you phrase the question, I'm sure the answer is no because we have no funds earmarked to pamper generals. Having been keeping a 17-room house myself without any assistance, I can see the need for such a fund. Let me take the question.

I don't know about the money figure. There is a study going on to see if there isn't something that can be done to help the 55-year old housewife who has to keep a 17-room house without making her husband come home from work to help her -- there's a study on that -- I haven't heard a dollar figure but let me take the question.

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Q: Some time ago I asked why the Defense Department was closing down the Flag Officers Dining Room; that was a self-supporting operation? You never gave us an answer.

A: It was not self-supporting. However, let me bring you up to date on that. I have met with the Chairman of the Concessions Committee and they have provided me with the rationale on why they closed it down which I just received Monday and I'm studying it at the moment to see if we concur. You make a good point, there isn't any place to go unless they do something.

Q: Are you going to clarify the question as to what happens to the profits that they derive from the various concessions?

A: I'll check that. I was more worried about the other than that. As you know, the Welfare Fund business has been going on for a long time. I have not checked that.

Q: Is that justifiable?

A: That may be a matter of opinion.

Q: The fact that it went on a long time doesn't justify it.

A: No, I agree with that; just because it was good for our grandfathers doesn't mean it's good enough for us.

Q: How many Marines do we have on Okinawa now?

A: I'll take the question.

Q: It would be correct to say that the total number with this force is 5,000?

A: I don't want to go into numbers, but you're allowed to speculate.

Q: When PHIBRON V went out to the Pacific, it was supposed to rotate with existing PHIBRON forces. Has it?

A: No, they're both there.

Q: In the South China Sea?

A: The South China Sea area, yes.

Q: That's another BLT then?

A: No, that's the one we were just talking about -- same one -- not another one. There's no additional one. The only recent addition is the one I just mentioned; picked up by PHIBRON V.

Q: I'm confused as to what the existing PHIBRON was.

A: You'll recall the OKINAWA Task Force or whatever you want to call it had a Marine BLT that was associated with the PHIBRON. That's the normal way these fellows are used. The only thing we did differently on this one is that we had those 700 that we moved down for the evacuation with the BLUE RIDGE group.

Q: On that South Vietnamese bombing, they do use American supplied napalm, don't they?

A: They have that.

Q: Do I gather correctly from your earlier statement that there is no movement of either ships or planes or men other than what we already have in the South China Sea for possible evacuation?

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A: The question I answered was on new alerts. There is of course a continuing movement of airplanes, back and forth. I wouldn't want to answer your question yes, flat out.

Q: I understand that, but put aside airplanes, there are no other ships or Marines being moved down toward that area?

A: None that I am aware of.

Q: Do you have a round number on the number of ships? Is it thirty? It's hard to add them up.

A: My adding came to around 40 adding up the figures I just gave you. Maybe a little more.

Q: Could you provide us an interpretation of the War Powers Act as to the limitations that exist or that are accepted by the Pentagon on the use of military force to protect an evacuation of American citizens? Specifically, as to what the limitations are on escalation; how far can the President go in supporting, with military force, such an evacuation?

A: You heard the President the other night. I don't think that's an answerable question. I think you'd have to wait and see what the circumstances were.

Q: Somebody has to have some idea --

A: This would be a command decision at the highest level when the time comes.

Q: In other words, the President of the United States is the one who decides how far he can go in escalating?

A: I am sure he consults before he decides, but that is his decision.

Q: And as far as you know, there is no limitation?

A: We've got to apply the rule of reason.

Q: Practical limitations as to what resources you have available?

A: I don't really think we could answer the question. The President said the other night the War Powers Act does permit him to take, I forgot what his word was --

Q: Something on precise limitation -- he didn't make it very clear.

A: I'm not very clear either. Why don't I take your question and see if we can give you an answer. From a practical standpoint, I think everyone has agreed that he has the powers to use some military force.

Q: There's no restriction that would prohibit the use of B-52 bombers, let's say?

A: I can hardly imagine a case where they'd do that, from a realistic standpoint. Let me take your question.

Q: In the case that may arise and appears to be the most imminent case, suppose the SA-2 fire on American evacuation planes and hit them. Would the President have the power to order retaliation strikes against those missile areas?

A: If an actual evacuation was taking place; you know what we're doing now is not called an evacuation; this is a thinning out. What took place at the end in Phnom Penh is an example of evacuation; that's what we're talking about.

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(This is not a verbatim transcript)

10.

Q: That still has to come, I presume.

A: Right. This is what I assume that Lloyd (Norman) is talking about.

Q: Suppose those planes or helicopters are fired on and hit; some knocked down; would we retaliate with airstrikes against missiles?

A: Let me take that question too. My own feeling is that we would have to; that would be a legitimate thing to do, but that's just me talking.

Q: You would have to define whether the planes are carrying Americans or South Vietnamese?

A: That's right, there are some tricky ramifications; let me take the question.

Q: Can you tell us the present stage of the fighting in Vietnam as to the threat to Saigon?

A: As we talked about yesterday, it's down towards the lighter end of the scale of light-moderate-heavy. There's actually very little change from yesterday. There is pressure being brought to bear actually in the number of directions from the Southwest -- very little from the east at this point and some from the northwest, but it isn't big at this stage. As we said yesterday, what's coming next we have yet to see.

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(This is not a verbatim transcript)

DoD Morning News Briefing
Friday, April 18, 1975, 11:15 a.m.
(Colonel Robert L. Burke)

Announcements:

1. On the Hill: You already know about DoD witnesses on the Hill which include today General Weyand and PDASD/Comptroller Erich von Marbod in closed session of the House Armed Services Committee.
2. Yesterday we advised you of Secretary Schlesinger's trip to the Army Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth. No text.
- Q: Is he there today?
A: He's there today speaking to the students.
3. We have today a release which announces that Secretary Schlesinger has accepted an invitation to be the speaker at the 1975 Air Force Academy Graduation which is June 4.
4. Release on assignments for flag and general officers.
5. We're also posting today a memo for correspondents which includes the text of a message that General Brown, Chairman, JCS, sent to Brigadier General William Palmer, USA, who is Chief of the Military Equipment Delivery Team in Cambodia. It says: "The superb performance and unfaltering dedication of all MEDTC personnel throughout the difficult and physically exhausting final months of U.S. resupply operations in Cambodia have earned the sincere respect and deep gratitude of all in the Washington area; while disappointment and a personal sense of loss is shared by all of you in MEDTC you may take pride in knowing that you left no stone unturned in the determined support rendered by your team. Please convey my personal appreciation and admiration to all who contributed so selflessly and untiringly to this demanding and well executed effort."
6. We are also releasing nine still photos that depict assistance rendered by the USS DURHAM in evacuating refugees from the Phan Rang area about two weeks ago.
7. We also have a release in which the Secretary of the Navy announces that the mothballed aircraft carrier the ex-USS YORKTOWN, known as "The Fighting Lady of World War II," will be preserved as a Navy museum by the State of South Carolina. It will be located in Charleston.
8. You asked yesterday about the current Soviet naval exercise. You will recall that in April 1970 the Soviets conducted an extensive naval exercise in the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans and in the adjoining seas and also in the Mediterranean, the Black and Baltic Seas. That exercise, named "OKEAN" (Russian for "ocean") was designed to test the powerful and modern navy that had been built during the 1960's and to emphasize to all that the Soviet Union was a great maritime as well as land power. Surface ships, nuclear and conventional submarines, aircraft and amphibious forces were tested during two weeks of maneuvers.

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The Soviet Navy is conducting a major world-wide fleet exercise that analysts estimate now includes more than 200 ships and could go even higher before it is completed.

The exercise is presently taking place in the North Atlantic, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean Sea and the Pacific Ocean.

An April 10 TASS announcement said the Soviet Union would conduct naval exercises on the "high seas" during the month of April. No official word of the start of that exercise has been made.

But, since the TASS announcement, numerous large combatant naval ships (cruisers and destroyers) and some submarines have been observed departing their homewaters or normal operating areas and entering the North Atlantic, North Sea and Pacific Oceans.

The large number of supporting auxiliaries being deployed, coupled with the deployment of long range reconnaissance aircraft to the Caribbean and West Africa indicate that the naval exercise is world-wide.

Participating in the maneuvers are some of the newest and most heavily armed surface ships in the Soviet Naval inventory; such as KARA and KRESTA II class cruisers and KASHIN, KRIVAK, KILDIN and KANIN class destroyers.

Long range strike, antisubmarine and reconnaissance aircraft and a large number of all types of submarines will also probably play roles in the exercise. In the last two days, several large reconnaissance bombers have been noted flying over the Norwegian Sea.

At least two groups have been observed in the Atlantic, one north of the Portuguese Azore Islands and one to the south of Iceland. An additional task force is operating in the Norwegian Sea northeast of Iceland while a task group, composed entirely of warships, is operating in the central Mediterranean. Four separate groups are operating in the Pacific Ocean with one group southeast of the Kamchatka Peninsula, one to the east of Japan, one northeast of the Caroline Islands and a final group just south of the Sea of Japan.

The roles the various task groups will play and the overall theme of this extensive Soviet naval exercise has not been determined; however, it is likely that the experience gained "OKEAN" 1970 will provide a framework to test and evaluate new weapon systems, tactics and doctrine developed since 1970. Anti-submarine, anti-carrier, anti-shipping, anti-aircraft, amphibious, and convoy operations are expected to be conducted by the surface, subsurface and aviation branches of the Soviet Navy.

Q: Has there been any reaction from our Navy to what's going on? Any movements? Are we tracking them or whatever?

A: We're keeping track of what they're doing, yes.

Q: How many do you count in the total eight deployed areas?
A: It's now more than 200 ships.

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Q: It's now more than 200, right?

A: Yes.

Q: So it's larger than 1970?

A: It appears so.

Q: Does that include the Indian Ocean which you don't have marked there?

A: Yes, it does. It includes the North Atlantic, the Indian Ocean, the Med Sea and the Pacific Ocean.

Q: Do you characterize this as a show of the flag?

A: I wouldn't want to characterize it.

Q: Could you itemize what's in the Indian Ocean? You mentioned some Soviet ships there yesterday.

A: We can't right now, but we will try to keep track of this and see if we can give you additional information as it develops.

Q: Has the Indian Ocean reports expanded beyond the 20 or so that you mentioned the other day?

A: No, it's still the same as it was yesterday. It has not changed.

Q: Other than the larger number than the 1970 exercises, have any indication of any great changes or major changes in the Soviet Naval Fleet in any certain directions they've taken; cruisers or carriers?

A: You know on the basis of this exercise, I don't think anyone could answer that question. There was a booklet that was put out by the Navy last year which you probably have seen. It is called "Understanding Soviet Naval Deployment." We do have one at the Navy desk in DDI. It might answer some questions as far as the general trends are concerned.

Q: Where are the MOSCOW and the LENINGRAD and the KIEV operating?

A: We'll check and see if we can get answers.

Q: Does that more than 200 include submarines?

A: Yes, it would.

Q: Do you have any idea how many?

A: I don't have any idea; we've never been able to be very specific with regard to submarines.

Q: Back to those two little tugs, Soviet tugs northwest of the Hawaiian Islands, are they still there or just where are they?

A: We haven't gotten an answer to that. I think Lloyd (Norman, Newsweek) asked yesterday.

Q: The ENTERPRISE I understand sailed from Manila after arriving and spending one hour there on what had been announced as a five-day visit; what was the reason for that rapid departure?

A: I don't have any reason to give you. We said yesterday the ENTERPRISE was in the South China Sea. She went into Manila; stayed for a short time and left.

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Q: And she is now?

A: In the South China Sea.

Q: Accompanied by?

A: There was at least one destroyer with her; I don't have the name, and we can get that for you.

Q: The LONG BEACH did not leave with her?

A: No, LONG BEACH is still at Subic.

Q: Do you know which carrier is in Subic?

A: The MIDWAY and the OKINAWA are still at Subic. The ENTERPRISE, as we've said, is at sea, as is the CORAL SEA. The HANCOCK is still at Singapore.

Q: The four amphibious ships are still as they were yesterday?

A: Yes, in Subic and at Hong Kong.

Q: The North Vietnamese, have they flown combat aircraft down into South Vietnam to those airfields as yet?

A: Down to the airfields that lie in MR I and MR II?

Q: Yes.

A: I haven't seen any reports that they have. We are aware that they have flown other kinds of aircraft but you're talking about fighter aircraft and bombers?

Q: Yes.

A: I'm not aware that they have flown fighters or bombers into those fields.

Q: Can you give us an update on the SAMs that were mentioned by the General?

A: I'll be glad to check and see. I don't have any information on it myself.

Q: Can you give us the order of battle now for MR III and what additional North Vietnamese divisions have moved south?

A: The 312th and the 320B divisions are now apparently in MR III.

Q: Bringing them to what -- nine total?

A: No, it would be seven.

Q: Weren't we told eight last week?

A: If you count MR IV that would be three additional, there are three in MR IV.

Q: And the others are deployed as we had them last week?

A: That's essentially correct. We have said that there is some southward movement of those units.

Q: Which divisions were mainly engaged at Xuan Loc, or have been engaged in Xuan Loc on the NVA side, and hasn't one of them been counted temporarily out of action?

A: There were reports that elements of the 6th, 7th and the 341st

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divisions were involved in the fighting at Xuan Loc. I haven't seen any report which specifically indicates that one of them would be ineffective but it would not be surprising considering the intensity of the fighting that took place.

Q: General Weyand said that the other day.
A: Yes, I was told.

Q: I wondered which one?
A: I don't know; we'll see if we can get that.

Q: Is there evidence of a move to cut Saigon off from the rice bowl area?
A: The North Vietnamese divisions that have been in the MR IV area in the vicinity of Route 4 have constituted a threat to that area for some time now.

Q: Which divisions are they?
A: That would be the 4th, the 5th and the 8th.

Q: The third?
A: The third, remember there were two divisions; one was up in Binh Dinh in MR II and the other one was down in MR III.

Q: And one of which you're now calling the 4th?
A: No, the 4th we've carried there in MR IV.

Q: There are no additional troops down there?
A: I don't have any indication of large size units down there, but of course there has been infiltration from North Vietnam which has been coming down into both the northern and southern parts of South Vietnam. It would be expected that some of those infiltrators, which may include small units, have moved into that area. It would not be surprising. I don't have any specific information on it though.

Q: Can you give us a rundown again of the MR III -- beside the 312th, the 320B? What do you have?

A: These are all NVA Divisions: the 3rd; the 6th; 7th; 9th; 341st; 320B and 312th.

Q: What did you mean when you said some southward movement of units?
From where to where?

A: We've been asked for some time about the movement of North Vietnamese divisions that were located in MR I and MR II into MR III. From time to time we've reported that they have and I just mentioned two this morning. We have been detecting movement of other divisions south but I don't have anything additional at this time.

Q: Do you have any information on the sapper unit that is supposed to be in Saigon constituting a threat there? I've even seen it identified with a number.

A: There has been for a long time a sapper command in the MR III area which some people have counted as a major unit and others have not. It is still in that area.

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Q: Has that been infiltrated into the city?
A: I don't know.

Q: Has there been any movement of a North Vietnamese unit into the Tay Ninh area where the South Vietnamese were supposed to pull out an armored division to reinforce Xuan Loc?

A: There have been North Vietnamese units in Tay Ninh Province for some time.

Q: No indication that they're taking advantage of the movement of the South Vietnamese armored division away from them?

A: I just don't have any detail on that. I think you mean an armored brigade.

Q: I thought it was an armored division.

A: There is no armored division in the South Vietnamese Army.

Q: Can you confirm these reports that we've been seeing and hearing this morning about the North Vietnamese being so close to Saigon, say five-six miles and so on?

A: I have seen the news stories, but I don't have that kind of detailed information. I haven't seen that indication.

Q: Are you getting any reports of fighting breaking out in Laos?

A: I haven't anything.

Q: Do you have numbers to go with these divisions? What's the balance of manpower there now?

A: I'll see if I can get something on that for you.

Q: Any word on the outlying cities in Cambodia, whether they have given up to the Khmer Rouge or are still holding out?

A: No, I don't. The information we are getting is very sketchy and I don't know the status of all those government enclaves which existed before yesterday.

Q: What was the decision as to the airdrops in Cambodia after the surrender?

A: Yes, there were airdrops after the apparent surrender time. The Phnom Penh airdrops took place around 10:00 o'clock a.m. Cambodian time. Those were four rice drops, and there were six other airdrops at other Government positions around the country. The last one was about 3:30 in the afternoon.

Q: Are there any pockets of resistance anywhere in Cambodia any more?

A: I was just asked that. I don't know. The reports are sketchy and I'm just not sure whether there are still places that are resisting.

Q: What was the apparent time of surrender that you were talking about?

A: I believe the first broadcast came before 9:00 o'clock a.m.

Q: Then there's a total of seven airdrops?

A: A total of ten after that time; four were into Phnom Penh and were rice and the other six included rice but I don't know whether it also

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included ammunition or other supplies and they took place at other locations.

Q: The airdrops have stopped?

A: Yes, the airdrops have stopped.

Q: The U.N. said it got an announcement from its man in Phnom Penh which gave the time that the resistance stopped as three hours after the last airdrop.

A: I can't help on that, I just don't know. I am told that there was a broadcast in the morning that came out of Phnom Penh that referred to a capitulation, but exactly how much credibility was given to that under those confused circumstances, I don't know.

Q: Was that on the 18th of April, Cambodia time?

A: No, it was the 17th, Cambodia time.

Q: Has there been any change at all in the alert status for Marines on Okinawa or have any moved to the Philippines, or any more on ships? Has there been any movement at all of the Marines?

A: The Marines in that area are essentially in the same places they were yesterday. I believe there were two Marine security detachments put aboard two USNS vessels -- the GREENVILLE VICTORY and the KIMBRO and those are off the coast of Vietnam. You remember we used those to evacuate refugees from the coast before.

Q: Weren't they taken off?

A: You see one/^{or} the great advantages of Marines is that they're mobile, you can move them around.

Q: When were they put on? Apparently they're getting ready for another evacuation.

A: Within the last day or so.

Q: Where were they taken from?

A: I believe they were taken from the Subic area which is where the rest of the Marines are.

Q: They were part of the detachment there -- the 700 that came down from Okinawa or the 1500 that were brought down later?

A: I don't know if it would be relevant to trace them like that because they're all capable of performing the same type of missions.

Q: It's not a new group from Okinawa?

A: No.

Q: How many?

A: The last time I think we said the detachment would be 40 or 50 or somewhere in that area. I assume it's similar to that.

Q: Are these ships standing off the coast of Vietnam?

A: No, I don't know that they're standing off, but they're operating off the coast.

Q: We're not hauling refugees out of there anymore, are we?

A: Not now.

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Q: Why were the Marines put back on it then? They were originally put there to maintain order among refugees?

A: Sure. As you know, Phan Rang has, within the last day or so, apparently been taken over by the North Vietnamese forces in that area and whether there are some refugees to be evacuated from that coast down to the Saigon area, I don't know. I suspect that it's a precautionary measure just on these two ships.

Q: Are the South Vietnamese still moving people out of Phu Quoc?

A: I think the movement down to Phu Quoc that our ships have been involved in was ended several days ago. They off-loaded all of those people that were going to Phu Quoc. Whether the South Vietnamese are doing some movement with their own ships, I just don't know.

Q: Do we have any shore-based personnel at Vung Tau?

A: You mean Marines or people like that?

Q: Marines or Navy people ashore.

A: I doubt it very much, we can check and see. I think we have no one ashore there.

Q: Did the ENTERPRISE just pick up equipment or people in Manila?

A: We'll see what we can get for you on the ENTERPRISE. I don't think that she did, but we'll check and see.

Q: I'd like an explanation of why she sailed so soon.

A: You know to answer that you've got to cover what she's doing now and what the plans are for her and we won't be able to do that, as usual.

Q: What is the status of the evacuation? How many did we get off and how many are still there?

A: Are you talking about from Vietnam?

Q: Yes.

A: You should ask the State Department about that. A working figure has been about 4,000. What the number now is, I don't know.

Q: Several days ago I asked for a definition of "minimal number" of Americans in South Vietnam. Do you have an answer on that?

A: No, but if there were to be an answer on that, State Department would have to provide it, not us.

Q: Do you have any evidence of massacre by the North Vietnamese of people who were friendly or worked with Americans in areas already taken over by the NVN?

A: There have been a number of messages on that, I have not seen the details myself. There have been reports of a number of incidents which do indicate that the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong forces that have moved into those areas have carried out some apparently bloody reprisals. We'll see if there is anything we can get for you.

Q: Do you have any figures on people involved?

A: No, I have not seen the details but am aware of the reports and we'll see what we can get to give to you. I don't personally know what numbers are involved.

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Q: Do you have the areas involved?

A: I don't know if any of these reports are confirmed. Some of them are from pretty reliable sources. I don't know the areas. But we will try to provide whatever kind of specific details are available.

Q: Are any South Vietnamese businessmen traveling back and forth between Saigon and Danang? Is there any contact between the commercial contacts?

A: I think you would want to ask State about that.

Q: How many NVA divisions are now in the South?

A: The latest figure that I have shows that there are still 20 North Vietnamese divisions out of the 22 that they have. What we've seen is a movement southward of the ones already in South Vietnam.

Q: Is this in the last few days?

A: I've just given you two this morning that we know are in MR III. There have been indications for some days that some units have been moving southward.

Q: Have elements of the two remaining NVN divisions moved southward?

A: I don't have anything on that subject that I can discuss with you right now.

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(This is not a verbatim transcript)

DoD Morning News Briefing
Thursday, April 17, 1975, 11:15 a.m.
(Col. Robert L. Burke)

Announcements:

1. There's been a change in the schedule of some of our people on the Hill today: Secretary McLucas and General Jones, who were scheduled to testify this morning at a closed hearing on the B-1 bomber will be testifying at 2:00 p.m. today before the Senate Armed Services R&D Subcommittee. We'll have a prepared statement from Secretary McLucas. Also postponed until 2:00 p.m. is the appearance of Mr. Aldrich of PA&E who will be testifying on the U.S. strategic bomber force. We expect to have a statement this afternoon from him.
2. RADM Hart, OSD I&L, has been postponed until 1:30 p.m. before the Senate Government Operations Committee on Federal Energy Conservation. We'll also have a statement from him later today.
3. Statements by Secretary McClary and Dr. Cowan who are testifying this morning have already been released.
4. DASD Minton Francis speaks this evening up at West Point. We have copies of the text in DDI on a hold for release this evening.
5. Yesterday, as you probably know, the White House announced the resignation of Under Secretary of the Army Herman Staudt, effective April 30.
6. The White House also announced the retirement of Judge Quinn, Judge of the U.S. Military Court of Appeals, effective August 28, 1975.
7. We have a release this morning announcing the retirement of Lt. Gen. Richard Seitz, who is Commanding General of the XVIII Airborne Corps at Fort Bragg. He's been there since July 1973 and he'll be retiring July 1. He'll be replaced by Maj. Gen. Hank Emerson, who is now Commanding General of the 2nd Infantry Division in Korea. That also includes General Emerson's appointment to the grade of Lt. Gen.
8. Tomorrow Secretary Schlesinger will be traveling to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, where he will address students at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College.

Q: When were the last airdrops in Phnom Penh?

A: The last airdrops were April 17. There were ten altogether in Cambodia; four at Phnom Penh. I don't have a breakout of what was in each of these drops but I do know that the four at Phnom Penh contained rice.

Q: Do you have a time as to when the last one was made?

A: No, I don't. We can probably get that.

Q: Do you have any tonnage yet?

A: No, we might be able to get that. If you like, I can summarize what's happened since Eagle Pull in the way of airdrops. There have been a total of 57 airdrops throughout Cambodia since the Americans were evacuated.

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Of those 57 my figures show that 19 were in the Phnom Penh area.

Q: When was the last airdrop before the surrender, do you know?

A: It was on the same day as the surrender. I don't know whether it was before or after.

Q: There's the possibility that we were dropping in supplies after the surrender?

A: Since I don't know what time they dropped them, you know I can't deny that.

Q: The way we got the story from Cambodia is that the Khmer Rouge were inside the city when we were making drops, is that correct?

A: I just don't know whether that happened or not. Since it was rice, I'm not sure it matters that much.

Q: Have the airdrops definitely ended?

A: I'll check and see.

Q: It was only rice; there weren't any arms dropped?

A: On the last day the only airdrops into Phnom Penh were rice.

Q: That isn't necessarily the case with the others?

A: Not necessarily, that's right.

Q: Could they continue supporting say other areas where they're still holding out?

A: I don't know, I'll check.

Q: You really can't say whether the airdrop has halted?

A: No, I can't.

Q: Why can't you?

A: I just don't have that information right now.

Q: What is the Pentagon's reaction to the fall of Cambodia?

A: Any official comment on that would come through the State Department.

Q: Militarily how do you view the fall --not from a diplomatic point of view?

A: I'll take the question.

Q: How much is left undelivered from this year's appropriation?

A: The best estimate is about \$6 million, somewhat less probably, in military assistance to Cambodia remains undelivered.

Q: Can that now be transferred to Vietnam?

A: I don't know.

Q: We would like to know what happens to it now.

A: OK, we'll check. The reports that our people are getting on this are somewhat sketchy and not yet complete so I'm not sure of the exact figure but it's somewhere in that area.

Q: Do you have the total as to what we put in there?

A: We can get that for you.

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Q: \$275 million was the appropriation this year?

A: We can get you a summary of what was authorized.

Q: There's a story this morning which quotes a secret report which was made up by two members of the mission that went with General Weyand who are members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. They came back with the report that the situation in South Vietnam was irretrievable no matter how much aid we give them. Do you know if that report exists and is that true?

A: I would think that you want to ask the people who wrote the report. All I can do is point to General Weyand's testimony on the Hill which you are aware of.

Q: It seems to be at variance with what General Weyand said and I simply want to know if the Pentagon knows whether the report exists, whether there is knowledge of the report here and whether there's any concurrence with that kind of a report.

A: Whether there's concurrence, you've already heard Secretary Schlesinger and General Weyand give their views on that subject. I think that answers itself. So whether there's a report that exists or not, I'll be glad to check and see. If it was a report done by somebody in Congress, I would think that they would be the best source.

Q: Secretary Schlesinger is not very clear as to what he expects to derive from the \$722 million. He's given a negative answer that if they don't get it, Vietnam will fall but he doesn't say what will happen if they do get it, except that he hopes it will stabilize the situation.

A: He's given a candid and honest evaluation of it as he sees it. If he is not precise and specific, presumably that's because the situation is not one that lends itself to easy predictions.

Q: Back to the Cambodian lift, I would like to have as soon as possible definite word on whether or not the airdrop has been halted and when was the last drop carried out in relation to the announcement that Cambodia was throwing it in.

A: We are working on that right now.

Q: Do you know if there are any U.S. military personnel in any place left in Cambodia?

A: To the best of my knowledge, there are not.

Q: Are the evacuation plans for Saigon now completed?

A: No, I think they are still working on them.

Q: Could we find out from Secretary Schlesinger when he plans to withdraw all of our forces from Thailand since they are no longer necessary? The only reason for the presence he said in this Defense Report was a hedge against North Vietnamese massive offensive. Since that has occurred and we have not reacted to it, there's no need for retention of say 200-300 airplanes and 23,000 personnel in Thailand.

A: We'll take that question.

Q: The New York Times quotes unnamed senators as saying the Pentagon told them yesterday to correct Secretary Schlesinger's statement that 3,850

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Americans remain in Vietnam. Is that true and if so what is the correct number?

A: I don't know whether there was a phone call or not. Did it say there was an error in the number?

Q: The number the Senator said was significantly higher.

A: We'll see what kind of a number we can get.

Q: Do you know about any North Vietnamese movements into Xuan Loc to reinforce the troops there?

A: From Northern South Vietnam?

Q: From other parts of the area that they have taken, down to Xuan Loc.

A: Let me say that we wouldn't be surprised if there were such movements down in that area.

Q: Are there movements or aren't there?

A: I don't want to say any more than that.

Q: The other day General Weyand said the defense at Xuan Loc effectively put a North Vietnamese division out of action. Could you expand on that? Does that mean it's ineffective, it's destroyed, it's dispersed, it has to be replaced? What does that mean?

A: I didn't hear that part of the testimony but I presume what he was talking about is that when a unit loses a significant number of personnel and equipment it tends to degrade that unit's capability to function in the immediate future as an effective fighting unit. I presume that's what he was talking about.

Q: Can you comment on New York Times story about General Weyand testifying that the Pentagon was considering establishing a corridor from Saigon to the sea to evacuate thousands of Vietnamese and could involve a Marine division of 20,000?

A: That was in his testimony on the Hill, was it?

Q: I'm asking.

A: I'll be glad to find out what General Weyand said but we're not going to talk in any detail about any contingency.

Q: Could you give us a layout on where the carriers and some of the other ships are in the South China Sea or Subic or wherever they may be?

A: The MIDWAY and the OKINAWA are both at Subic. The CORAL SEA and the ENTERPRISE are both in the South China Sea; the HANCOCK is in Singapore.

Q: Is the HANCOCK on its way back home?

A: No, it's at Singapore.

Q: The story when it left the West Coast was that after completing its mission it was going to return to be retired. Now the question is whether its going to Singapore is an indication whether it's on its way back home for retirement.

A: I'm sure we would announce that when we can.

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Q: What's happened to the Marine battalion that was on the OKINAWA and its supporting ships?

A: I don't know this for sure but I assume they're enjoying some liberty.

Q: Are there plans to ship out other Marine units to replace them?
A: I don't want to get into that.

Q: How many Marines do they have now in that area -- all the guys on board the ships and the ones at Subic?

A: No change.

Q: About 4,000, is that what you're saying?
A: Yes.

Q: Those 700 Marines that were dispersed as ship guards, where are they?

A: They are no longer on any of those ships. We can probably find out specifically where they are.

Q: They're no longer on those four Navy transports?
A: They may be on the amphibious ships, yes.

Q: Well, that was the last location, I think, where they were.
A: That's the last place I had them.

The DUBUQUE and the BLUE RIDGE are both in Subic, and I'll check for you on the DURHAM and the FREDERICK; they're both in that area, I'm not sure exactly where they are.

Q: What about that battalion that went to sea from Subic a week ago Wednesday -- somewhere on the HANCOCK?

A: Those Marines may be with these amphibious ships that we've just mentioned. We can find out for sure.

Q: Do they still have the Marines on board the HANCOCK?
A: The Marine helicopter squadron, as far as I know, is still with the HANCOCK.

Q: What ships did you say were with the OKINAWA at Subic?
A: The BLUE RIDGE and the DUBUQUE.

Q: How about the ships that were accompanying the OKINAWA all that time it was in the Gulf of Thailand; there were about six weren't there?
A: You mean destroyers and support ships? Most of them are at Subic.

Q: Can we get a rundown on the number and type of ships at Subic now?
A: Yes, we can do that.

Q: Can you tell us about the Soviet Fleet exercise in the Indian Ocean, Sixth Fleet area, Mediterranean, elsewhere?

A: The total number of Soviet ships in the Indian Ocean now is 22, that includes eight combatants and 14 support or auxiliary ships. The U.S. has three ships there.

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Q: Is that a sizeable increase from say previous weeks?

A: It seems to me that it is but we can check on what it has been. In the Med, the Soviets have about 55 ships, about half of which are combatants.

Q: How many now are involved worldwide in the exercise?

A: We'll see if we can get something for you by tomorrow on that. The exercise was recently announced by Tass, as you know.

Q: When was that?

A: Tass reported it would be conducted this month. I'm not sure when they announced it. As you'll recall five years ago about this same time of the year the Soviets held a worldwide exercise called OKEAN which involved a large number of ships and also included Soviet air defense and long range aircraft participation. During those exercises they employed naval and merchant ships and they had antisubmarine and amphibious landing operations. We'll try to give some kind of a report tomorrow on what is involved in this one.

Q: Do the Soviets have a name for this, if you don't mind being a Soviet spokesman?

A: They may very well have but I haven't seen it.

Q: Can you tell us where the two Soviet tugs are that were reported 750 miles from Hawaii?

A: We can get it for you; I don't have it with me.

Q: The Glomar Explorer left port again; does anybody know where it's going?

A: The Glomar Explorer does not appear on my list.

Q: Do you have any figure on the number of American evacuees from Saigon yesterday?

A: No, I don't.

Q: How are they being evacuated?

A: My understanding is that they are coming out on MAC aircraft, MAC charter and commercial aircraft.

Q: Are these MAC charter or MAC aircraft per se?

A: Both kinds. And there are also regular commercial flights. They are coming out all three ways.

Q: There was a report the other day of 900 departing. Do you have any update?

A: I don't know that we can give you a daily update on the number coming out. There have been people coming out as I think we've told you that were associated with a RIF program, that was a few hundred people. Then there is the additional removal of people that you know about that's going on. But we'll see if we can get you a figure.

Q: The President said yesterday that he was ordering the removal of all non-essential people which would mean that there will be some 2,000 leaving in a week. So if we can get figures on a daily basis, that would be helpful.

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A: I don't know if we can do that but we'll see if it's possible.

Q: How many U.S. military remain in Vietnam?

A: There are not very many military personnel. We can get that.

Q: How about military related in the sense of providing maintenance, etc.?

A: Civilian contractors that are associated?

Q: How many considered essential?

A: The determination probably has to be made in Saigon as to who is and who is not essential, and I don't know how they are going to break it down.

Q: How many Americans could be lifted out in one helicopter evacuation if we wanted to?

A: How many balls of string would it take to reach the moon? It depends on how big the ball of string is.

Q: There's a limit as to how many helicopters you can send.

A: It depends on factors such as how many helicopters you have available, the distance that they have to fly.

Q: We know the distance we have to fly and we know the helicopters we have available, how many people can we fly out in one operation?

A: You're assuming that the helicopters that are available are the ones that are there now? What you're asking about is the kind of thing that goes into contingency plans and while I can talk to you about how you plan these things, I don't want to talk about how we in fact are thinking about doing it and I don't want to give you the impression --

Q: Are you assuming it's going to be a helicopter operation?

A: I think the question assumes that. There are other means that could be used.

Q: Have any new helicopters, other than the ones that have been there for the past two or three weeks, have any new ones gone out?

A: Not to my knowledge.

Q: Have any new ones gone to Utapao or anyplace?

A: I doubt that very much; I don't think they've added any helicopters out there anyplace in any significant number.

Q: Is there any protection being offered in any form by the South Vietnamese Government or the United States to these people who are being evacuated now?

A: In what sense?

Q: In the sense that there's a lot of discussion about anger toward people leaving that there's the possibility the South Vietnamese might turn on the Americans who are leaving, is there any of that going on and are they being protected in any way?

A: I just don't have any kind of answer to that. I don't see any indication that the South Vietnamese feel any anger toward the Americans who are there

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who might be leaving. We've had a pretty close relationship for a long time with those people and I just don't think that that's part of the problem but we can see if we can find out for you what kind of security arrangements might exist.

Q: How many MAC, chartered flights do you have daily from Saigon?
A: I just don't have that figure.

Q: I'd like to find out how you can outfit a new ARVN division for \$36 million while it costs at least three times that much to outfit an American division.

A: It varies from one division to another even within the American Army. An armored division's cost compared to a light infantry division would not be comparable.

Q: Would you say these divisions are less well equipped and smaller, as far as inventory goes, than a U.S. division?

A: We'll just have to see what kind of equipment is provided to the divisions that would make it possible to constitute that kind of a saving.

Q: If this is being done on an austere basis then we should say so otherwise you'll be asked by Congress one of these days why we can't equip our divisions for \$36 million.

A: I'm certain that the kind of equipment and the mission of the U.S. and ARVN divisions are just not comparable at all. But we'll check and see what we can turn up on that.

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(This is not a verbatim transcript.)

DoD Morning News Briefing
Monday, April 14, 1975, 11:30 a.m.
(Colonel Robert L. Burke)

Announcements:

1. On the Hill: List of witnesses is on the wires. We will have copies of the statements by Martin Hoffmann, General Counsel, and Dr. Currie's when the committees release them. Also one by Mr. Brehm, ASD/M&RA.
2. In your package is a release that has to do with the Secretary of the Army's approval of plans to realign some Army National Guard units. You'll remember back in December the Army announced that it had received a joint proposal from Pennsylvania and New York to realign their Army National Guard units. Today the Army is announcing that the realignment has been approved. This realigns some of the division's command structures so that the 28th Infantry Division, for example, is made up solely of units within Pennsylvania; 42nd Division will include only units in New York, etc.
3. You have the schedule for the Secretary today. Tomorrow night he will be speaking at the Overseas Press Club at the Biltmore Hotel in New York City. There's a dinner at 7:30 and his speech is scheduled for 8:30.

Q: Do you know if he'll appear on the Hill tomorrow?
A: I don't think so. We'll be watching that.

Q: Who will represent the Defense Department before the Stennis Committee?
A: We'll check and see.

4. You have copies of the message that Secretary Schlesinger sent early Saturday morning to Admiral Gayler following the departure of the last helicopter from Phnom Penh to the Task Force. The message reads as follows:

"I know that all Americans share the pride and gratitude that we feel in the Department of Defense over the successful rescue operation which the forces of your Command have just completed in Cambodia. The professional skill and dedication of those who carried out this emergency rescue operation marked by great precision and the necessary precautions to avoid civilian casualties, were exemplary. Well done."

5. On Saturday we produced a transcript of a press conference that Admiral Gayler had in Honolulu to answer questions about the operation. I think you have that.

Q: Are you still airlifting supplies into Cambodia?
A: No, John (Finney, NY Times), there's no airlift into Cambodia. There are some flights into Cambodia which are airdrops. The last airlift was Friday, Cambodia time, which included 50 flights. Since that time there was one airdrop on Saturday -- that is, April 12 -- and six airdrops on April 13, and ten airdrops on April 14.

Q: Does it say what they're dropping?
A: No, I don't have a breakout of what they're dropping.

Q: Who's doing it?
A: It's being done by C-130s flown by Bird Air.

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Q: Is this at Phnom Penh?

A: To the best of my knowledge, it is not at Phnom Penh at this time.

Q: Are they going to the airport or to the city itself?

A: Not into the Phnom Penh area at all; it's other locations.

Q: Do you know what the total tonnage was on all these drops?

A: No, I don't.

Q: Where are the locations?

A: I don't have that.

Q: Can you get that straightened out?

A: We'll see if we can get that.

Q: Was it in the area?

A: It's not in the Phnom Penh area. It's in Cambodia at some of the other places where Government forces are.

Q: Is that in Battambang or other places like that?

A: Yes, but I don't know whether Battambang is one. We can check and see.

Q: Is it food or ammunition, or what?

A: I just said I don't have a breakout.

Q: Did you say that these were not in Phnom Penh?

A: For the fourth time, they're not in Phnom Penh.

Q: Can you explain why not Phnom Penh?

A: I'll check.

Q: Are these supplies getting to the forces in Phnom Penh by some other way?

A: No, I don't think so. They're intended for other Government forces in Cambodia which are operating at other locations. Not at Phnom Penh.

Q: How many troops are we talking about?

A: I don't know.

Q: Is the fighting still going on in Phnom Penh?

A: Apparently it is.

Q: Do you have any means of reporting from the ground down there?

A: We don't have anybody on the ground. I don't know what kind of details are available out there. I don't have any here at this time.

Q: Are you saying the Government forces are still resisting in other areas?

A: Yes.

Q: And the Pentagon believes that they are sufficiently organized to resist so therefore we're continuing the support of that resistance, is that right?

A: Yes, that's right.

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Q: Have these forces fighting in other locations been supplied by airdrops before now?

A: All along, yes. In fact, Bird Air has been using airdrop in addition to the airlanding for some time.

Q: Could you say how long this mode of supply to these forces has been going on and at what frequency?

A: Well, it's been months that this has been used, but I don't have any details on it. But we will see what we can get.

Q: Do we have anybody on the ground in any of these other areas that we can contact?

A: No.

Q: How do we know then what they want or what they need? How is the communication conducted?

A: I'll be glad to check and see.

Q: Do you know when the airdrops into Phnom Penh will start?

A: No, I don't.

Q: Any plans along that line right now?

A: I'll check and see.

Q: Who decided that airdrop should begin -- Bird Air, the Pentagon or Department of State, or who?

A: I'm sure it was done by everybody involved in it in view of the estimate of the situation at Phnom Penh, at the airfield.

Q: Did you say these airdrops have been going on all along?

A: Yes, the Cambodians also were airdropping supplies with C-123s.

Q: Why do we all of a sudden start counting them if they've been going on all along?

A: We've been counting them all along; you've been asking us the daily figures about flights that landed -- airlanded at Ponchentong -- and that's what we've been giving you.

Q: We've never been given any figures on airdrops up until this weekend.

A: We have never tried to conceal the fact that there were airdrops throughout the period.

Q: Has there been any movement of ships or planes down to Clark or southern South China Sea for evacuation purposes?

A: We have had for some time a number of Seventh Fleet ships in that area. I'm not aware of any movement of airplanes down for evacuation purposes.

Q: What about the ships that left from Hawaii, I don't know whether it was five or seven, about a week ago that was supposedly a normal rotation? Have the ships that they were going to replace returned or are they staying over there?

A: These are amphibious ships you are talking about?

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Q: Yes.

A: We'll check and see.

Q: Has the OKINAWA returned to the North Pacific?

A: The OKINAWA and the MIDWAY are in the South China Sea; they are not together, I'm just telling you that they are both in the South China Sea; so is the CORAL SEA. The HANCOCK which participated in the evacuation of Phnom Penh is in the Gulf of Thailand and the ENTERPRISE is in port at Subic.

Q: Has there been any additional movement of Marines into the general area of Subic Bay, Indochina, etc.?

A: No.

Q: In other words, we're still at approximately 4,000 Marines in the general area?

A: That's right.

Q: When does the ENTERPRISE go back to Subic?

A: We can check. I don't recall. You mean between now and last Friday?

Q: I think the last time you had it reported in --

A: She was in Subic on the 11th.

Q: Last Friday there were four amphibious ships with BLUE RIDGE, I believe the command ships, with HANCOCK; is that still the case?

A: The composition of the task groupings varies from day to day, and I really don't want to get into it. There are other ships with the HANCOCK.

Q: Can you tell us where those four amphibious ships are?

A: Some of them are in the South China Sea and some are still in the Gulf of Thailand.

Q: Which are where -- the DURHAM, the FREDERICK, BLUE RIDGE and DUBUQUE?

A: The DURHAM and FREDERICK are in the South China Sea. BLUE RIDGE and DUBUQUE are in the Gulf of Thailand.

Q: Can I broaden that earlier question? Is there any movement to include Army troops as well?

A: Not that I'm aware of, but we'll check.

Q: What's the official number of Americans in South Vietnam?

A: The last figure I recall is around 5,000 but we'll have to check. State can tell you that definitely. We'll be glad to take the question but I just don't know. I recall something around 5,000.

Q: As of when?

A: I heard that figure the end of last week. I'm not telling you that's an accurate figure; I'm saying I'll check it.

Q: Some Administration officials indicated that the level of Americans in Vietnam would be drawn down to a minimal level -- what is a minimal level?

A: We'll take the question.

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Q: The Cambodians, Battambang in particular, were getting supplies by road for a long time; is that still going on?

A: I don't know whether it is or not; we'll check that.

Q: There were reports about a week or so ago that Nha Trang after being abandoned by the South Vietnamese, and the North Vietnamese failing to come in, that some South Vietnamese troops had gone back into Nha Trang. Do we have any idea who controls Nha Trang?

A: To the best of my knowledge, it is not in South Vietnamese hands.

Q: The AID money for Cambodia was supposed to have been depleted this month; is it all gone now or close to all gone?

A: No, it's not.

Q: How much is left?

A: We'll see if we can get a number.

Q: Those ships with the OKINAWA, are they within helicopter flight of Saigon? Are any carriers within helicopter flight of Saigon?

A: I've already said that the OKINAWA was in the South China Sea and, as you know, she came from the Gulf of Thailand. I think I'd rather just leave it at that.

Q: Isn't she bound for Subic Bay?

A: The OKINAWA is enroute to Subic. Admiral Gaylor said that in his news conference.

Q: Is there any money left or any stocks left for Cambodia?

A: The previous estimates that we had were that the stocks were not expected to last past this month, April, as I recall, was our best estimate. There are stocks on the ground. There are still stocks available. I don't know what the current estimate is as to when they might run out but we'll see if we can get an estimate -- that's all it would be of course.

Q: Are they still studying the evacuation plans for Saigon?

A: Yes.

Q: Have they come up with you know like one, two or three?

Have they eliminated any, have they accepted some or what's the status?

A: You mean like option one, option two, or option three? I have no comment on that. I can't discuss those kinds of things.

Q: How far is it from Subic Bay to the Gulf of Thailand?

A: I haven't the foggiest idea.

Q: Do you think a ship could get there in a day or a half day? The point of the question is we were told the HANCOCK was off Subic Friday and now we're told it participated in the evacuation Friday night.

A: I don't recall what we said on it Friday.

Q: You said it was in the South China Sea.

A: If we said South China Sea, that is consistent with her being able to participate in the evacuation but if we said Subic, that's obviously indeed in error.

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Q: Did the HANCOCK lift people out of Phnom Penh?

A: There were 12 helicopters from the HANCOCK that went into Phnom Penh. The HANCOCK at that time was in the Gulf of Siam (Thailand). There were 12 helicopters from the USS OKINAWA. Most of the evacuees were taken to the OKINAWA. I believe that the Marine ground security force came from the HANCOCK to Phnom Penh and returned to the HANCOCK. (Note: The Marines came from the OKINAWA but were picked up and taken to the HANCOCK by helos from the HANCOCK.)

Q: Do you have a unit number?

A: I don't have it with me but we can get that for you.

Q: It was stated here that the HANCOCK only had Marine helicopters but no combat troops. Is that in error?

A: My recollection is that of these 1500 Marines that came from Okinawa that were loaded aboard ships, some of those went aboard HANCOCK and we said that.

Q: When did the HANCOCK go into the Gulf of Siam?

A: We can probably get that. I don't know right now.

Q: This breakdown on helicopters raises a point. We've been asking how many helicopters are on the HANCOCK and we got different figures -- 15 - 18. Appearing in the Congressional Record is a statement that lists 12 helicopters on the HANCOCK. Why are we given these vague figures? The info is here but we don't get the precise information.

A: I understand and appreciate your problem. I recall reading at 2:00 a.m. in the morning wire stories on the number of evacuees and noting that you could take any figure between 250 and 300 and somebody just used it and each add was changing the number. But as far as the number of helicopters aboard the HANCOCK, 12 is to me a new number. I was not aware that there were only 12 and our information was that there were more than that. We'll be glad to see if we can sort it out.

Q: If you look in the Congressional Record, you will see that the text of the President's notification to Senator Stennis says 12.

A: We'll look at it and see if we can learn something about our own system.

Q: These are the ones that the HANCOCK picked up in Hawaii?

A: Yes.

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(This is not a verbatim transcript)

DoD Morning News Briefing
Wednesday, April 9, 1975, 11:15 a.m.
(Maj. Gen. Sidle)

Announcements:

1. On the Hill: General Weyand at 11:00 o'clock this morning will be at the National Security Council. At 2:00 o'clock he goes before the House International Relations Committee and at 4:00 o'clock goes before House Appropriations Committee. This morning Mr. Ahearne, Principal Deputy (M&RA), appeared before the House Government Operations Subcommittee on policies for personnel assignments and contract personnel overseas. Admiral Train is before House Armed Services Subcommittee on the Energy Independence Act of 1975. Frank Zarb of the FEO and Navy witnesses will also be there.

We will have several more statements which will be said before an open session of the Senate Armed Services Military Construction Subcommittee considering the Fiscal '76 program. These statements will probably be released about noon and they include Dr. Curreri, who's the President of the Uniformed Services University, General Warren, General Ken Cooper of the Army Engineers, etc.

2. We have the transcripts of General Weyand's news interviews after his testimony yesterday.

3. Release on two flag officer changes today to announce: Admiral Mack, Superintendent of USNA, will retire as a Vice Admiral on 1 August. We don't have an announcement as to who will take his place.

4. Secretary Schlesinger is also announcing that the President is nominating RADM Parker B. Armstrong for appointment to the grade of Vice Admiral and assignment as Director, Research, Development, Test and Evaluation, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations. He's presently serving as Deputy Director.

5. General Brown is back in the Pentagon today after his trip.

6. We have the attacks by fire on Pochentang yesterday: ten 105's, fourteen 107's. I don't have today's.

7. Another question you were interested in yesterday - we have taken the Marine detachment off the TRANSCOLORADO and we've put a detachment on the KIMBRO. Otherwise there isn't much change from yesterday in all those.

Q: 1500 are still in Subic?

A: I'll have to check that.

Q: Do you have the boxscore on these supply flights?

A: Supply flights yesterday, we had 53 and apparently the temporary closing of Tan Son Nhut had no effect on this. We tried to run that down this morning but it apparently did not have much effect.

Q: The 9th or the 8th?

A: That's the 8th. I don't have the 9th. I have neither the rounds fired nor the flights for today.

Q: The figure that's being quoted as General Weyand's recommendation

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on military aid is 500-550 million to South Vietnam. Is that generally correct that that is the --

A: I don't know the answer but we certainly couldn't comment on that until the President makes his address.

Q: People are already commenting on that; it's on the public record now. The reason I'm asking is that there were officials yesterday who were suggesting that what Weyand recommended was a whole range of military aid figures and not the figure that he thought was most appropriate wasn't \$500-550 million. Is that correct?

A: I didn't notice that. All I noticed was that General Weyand said that he couldn't talk about it. So if he can't talk about it, I don't see how I could talk about it.

Q: I'm asking you to talk about it in a negative sense in terms of what was attributed to him as accurate.

A: I have no information that he said that; I have no reason to think that he didn't say it either. I mean I haven't heard before that he had said it. I'm bound to "no comment" on it.

Q: Have we ever had any estimates as to how much equipment was really lost in this retreat? Was it a billion dollars?

A: We're still working on that; I expect we're going to have a figure before too long.

Q: Would this loss have any effect on the revision of the \$300 million extra that had been requested some weeks ago?

A: You could logically say that it might. It would perhaps not be the same \$300 million, but I don't know the answer to that. All of this is going to become clear here in the next couple of days, but it isn't right now.

Q: Is there any estimate to what the Vietnamese need urgently now; whether they need replacement of artillery, tanks, etc?

A: As you know, we are delivering what the Defense Attaché says they need urgently now and as we've discussed before, we've put in 105 howitzers; we've put in APCs, consideration communications gear, etc. Those have been the kind of added starters that have been the result of this thing we've talked about the last several days.

Q: Did you ever get a breakdown on the \$175 million; how much went to what?

A: No, I think Bob (Burke) mentioned yesterday that although all of this has been obligated, a great portion of it can be reprogrammed and of course, that's also going to wait this decision on the NSC meeting today and the President's decision on what's going to happen. So there's really nothing that we could say about that. You could say that most of the \$175 million is still available for reprogramming.

Q: What's the evaluation as to whether the ARVN are regrouping and stabilizing their positions and showing any improvement in morale?

A: That's pretty hard to talk about at this point because there hasn't been any real test in the South yet. Needless to say, we're hopeful.

Q: The attacks on Saigon don't represent a test?

A: Not yet. I couldn't get any information on the Xuan Loc attack;

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the one at Tan An was defeated, the enemy was driven away. It was not a big attack. I don't think either one is. I'd say you have to wait a little bit on that.

Q: Any information on North Vietnamese aircraft that have been moved to the South and how many?

A: We have no indication that any combat aircraft have been moved to the South.

Q: What other aircraft have been moved?

A: We have no indication that any aircraft have been moved to the South. We do have indication there have been some administrative flights over the DMZ.

Q: They haven't moved helicopters or transports?

A: Nothing but administrative flights. Now these administrative flights could be by helicopter or fixed wing.

Q: In other words, they bring people in and then bring them out -- That's an administrative flight?

A: Right, that's movement of people, primarily.

Q: There's a story today that some North Vietnamese are moving some PT boats with rocket missiles on them to areas near South Vietnam, I think is the way it was phrased.

A: I wouldn't argue with that.

Q: They're not PT boats, are they?

A: No, I think it's a mixture.

Q: What about movement of aircraft from North in North Vietnam to more southerly areas in North Vietnam?

A: I'll have to take that question, I could answer it as of two days ago but I can't answer it as of today.

Q: Do you know how many PT boats, where they were moved to and whether they --

A: I don't have the details.

Q: Are they considered to be a threat to the evacuation ships?

A: No, because we haven't any evacuation ships up that far north.

Now a potential threat, obviously they're a potential threat.

Q: To ships?

A: To any kind of shipping.

Q: Are they in South Vietnam areas?

A: I don't think so but I'll take that question.

Q: Where are they again?

A: They've moved south but the actual location south I don't have.

Q: Can you say whether any of the recent captured airfields like Danang, airfields near Hue, Quang Tri, Pleiku, Kontum, other airfields further south have been used in any way by the North Vietnamese?

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A: My recollection is that Danang has, but let me take it and give you an official answer.

Q: There were reports from Saigon that they had moved some helicopters in there; were those incorrect?

A: My information is that they are incorrect. They've moved them in but not to stay. This doesn't mean it isn't going to happen, we're talking on a day-to-day basis on this thing. What I've said is that we have indications that there were administrative flights, both helicopter and fixed wing, and that's all I can say about that at this point.

Q: Have they flown any of those aircraft which they captured intact, ready to fly at Danang, for instance?

A: I can't necessarily accept your premise but I'll have to take the question.

Q: How many flights, over 10, under 10, over 50, what?

A: I don't have that either.

Q: Do you have any information that the F-5 which bombed the presidential palace yesterday landed at U.S. Air Force Base in Thailand?

A: I haven't heard of that. I can answer that I have no information on that that leads to that conclusion.

Q: The Viet Cong announced that he landed at one of the fields in their area.

A: He landed in their area?

Q: Do we have officially any details on that?

A: No. I think your best choice there is your Saigon Bureau, they surely have it.

Q: An administrative flight is what, just a movement of officers or what?

A: It sometimes is a movement of things or people, that's what we call it. This is not a big thing at this point, I can say that.

Q: Do you know what small transport planes they might have or larger transport planes they might have?

A: I can get that for you. I don't have the designations. They do have some small transport planes.

Q: Those PT boats, are they Komar class and fire Styx missiles?

A: That's right.

Q: Do you have any indicator as to how the North Vietnamese are doing administering their new-found real estate?

A: No, not yet. This is a little early to get any hard information on that.

Q: Is there any information that there is a "bloodbath" in any of these areas?

A: We have no information, that's the problem. I'm not saying there is

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or there isn't, we just don't know.

Q: What about the orders to the U.S. ships in the area? Do they remain the same? That is to say they have been told to avoid situations of potential combat.

A: There is no change in orders to the ships.

Q: Are you saying that there is no information in this building regarding executions and political reprisals?

A: There may be some, I haven't seen it and when it becomes reasonably hard is when I'd see it. That's why I'm saying I don't think we have anything hard on it one way or the other. I'll take the question but I think we're too early. This sort of thing under the present situation obviously would have to filter in.

Q: There were people who came back with General Weyand who said that they had evidence of this political reprisals and so forth; it's known upstairs.

A: Well, it isn't known to me, I'm sorry to say but let me take the question.

Q: Do you have any preliminary findings on the C-5 crash investigation?

A: Not yet.

Q: No word at all. No evidence of an explosion?

A: We thought it was pretty well established that the explosion took place after it hit the ground, other than the so-called decompression explosion.

Q: Nothing to contradict that?

A: Nothing to contradict it yet, but of course they aren't through. They did find the box that recorded all the actions and commands but there's no report from the investigating group.

Q: Can you shed any light on Newsday story on the GAO report about missing equipment?

A: The best I can deduce is that this is a report that the GAO has given to us for comment about a week ago, and we have not yet commented on it. Consequently, I have no comment on it either. I think that's the report, it's a little hazy but I think that's the one. It does seem to add up to about \$200 million in a number of smaller items put together.

Q: Has the South Vietnamese Air Force mounted any attacks on any of the airfields or bases which they gave up, for instance Danang, to try to eliminate the equipment which they left behind?

A: I think the answer to that is yes, but I'll have to take that question.

Q: Can you give me as much detail as possible on what, based on the latest intelligence, traffic, etc., and what military analysts in the Pentagon say about what the North Vietnamese strategy is currently on the ground in South Vietnam? What do they think is going to happen? What are they doing right now?

A: I would hesitate to comment on that. The analysts have different positions and I think it would be unwise for me to discuss that at this point.

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Q: To discuss the possible options?

A: I think the options are reasonably obvious. This has been well discussed in many columns so far; they can rush South, attempt to overwhelm the Saigon Government as soon as possible; they can try to cut off supply and see if Saigon will wither on the vine thereby saving some combat; they can take time to mop up their gains in the north before they make a major effort South. There are several options open.

Q: Does it appear from intelligence traffic as if they're attempting to cut off Saigon from the south and isolate it?

A: It isn't clear yet, it just isn't clear.

Q: Are they moving any more units down from the North?

A: We mentioned the other day that there was reasonably good evidence that one division was moving into South Vietnam and that's as far as I can go with that.

Q: That'll be totaling what now, how many divisions?

A: The way I added up, it'll come to 18 divisions.

Q: They're saying 20, is that too high?

A: I know there aren't 20 in the country now, it's too high.

Q: Some people do say that?

A: They do say that but I don't. As you know, this is a very hazy area.

Q: We've been hearing figures all along of 21 North Vietnamese divisions total South and North. A fourth has shown up, is that an add-on?

A: We've been carrying 22 as long as I can remember -- I mean recently. Let me take the question but my understanding was that it was 22 total.

Q: Another division of what used to be independent regiments.

A: There's been some of that and that's probably been the source of confusion where they put together formerly independent regiments, and made those into divisions.

Q: After they were organized and all those regiments became divisions, supposedly had 15 in-country and 7 reserve, is the way I understand it.

A: That's the way I understand it -- 22.

Q: Then up until, well in recent days, I think the estimate's been that three and now probably the fourth of the reserve divisions have come in which would make it either 18 or --

A: We've put out a fact sheet some days ago which showed 18, and remember that included the 341st, which was a new one, and the 316th, which was a new one. What I'm saying now is that we have evidence that there is still another one.

Q: What number?

A: I don't have the number.

Q: Did the 968th count in the 15?

A: The 968th did count.

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Q: As one of the 15 or one of those strategic reserves?

A: Count it as one of the 15. If you recall, the 968th was reported moved into the Second Corps from Laos many weeks ago.

Q: You're saying three of the strategic reserves have come in?

A: That's what I am saying -- over the last several weeks.

Q: How many intact divisions do the South Vietnamese have now to oppose those people?

A: They've got seven, but they've got some division equivalents. Remember they organized a lot of their regulars into what they call Ranger Groups. The answer to your question is 7. There are four in Third Corps and three in Fourth Corps.

Q: So in terms of manpower, are they outnumbered two to one?

A: You're talking about outnumbered where? If you take all of Vietnam, as General Weyand did say yesterday, that --

Q: Let's say the Delta and the Saigon area, the Third Corps, if they have 7 divisions protecting that and you have to assume that 18 divisions are going to be --

A: I would just refer you to what General Weyand said on that. He gave between two and three to one in favor of the North Vietnamese, countrywide, that's what you're talking about, potential.

Q: As far as we know, the North Vietnamese still have four reserve division equivalents in the North?

A: Correct.

Q: What are the NVA assets in the Delta, as far as we know?

A: We credit them with three divisions down there.

Q: What does that actually mean in terms of an offensive there? There's a different terrain problem and they have more of a problem with monsoon and what not, don't they?

A: Yes, and of course the terrain down there doesn't lend itself to what you might call set-pace battles except in a few locations.

Q: You talked about cutting off Saigon from the South, it's really quite a different picture than anything that's happened up to now?

A: Of course, they've attempted to cut Saigon off from the south in the past on a number of occasions.

Q: They tend to set pace that way?

A: A lot of people say they're cutting it off when they cut Route 4 and of course that isn't correct.

Q: On these reserve divisions, a few days ago the indications were that two others were expected to move south -- at least two others. The confusion here that two others are indeed moving south but it's not clear that they're in the south yet?

A: I'm really not prepared to comment on that at this point.

Q: How recently did this one that's moving in or that's in the south, is it presently moving or did it move in in the last week?

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A: I think we first mentioned it from this platform about a week ago or so. It's reasonably recent.

Q: You said a lot of divisions are moving to the south; do you have anything on NVA divisions moving within Vietnam; any indication that they may be moving toward this?

A: This falls into your other question about the strategy. It isn't clear yet exactly what they are going to do. There is no indication at this point. That doesn't mean that it couldn't change overnight.

Q: Some of our people in Hawaii say that there were six vessels: the DENVER, DULUTH, ANCHORAGE, MOUNT VERNON, MOBILE and TUSCALOOSA, all LSD, LST and LTDs, departed Pearl Harbor Sunday night with confirmed orders to evacuate the South Vietnamese. Do you know anything about that?

A: I do not, but I will take the question. Of course, this could be part of the program we have going to be prepared for humanitarian reasons, to just be ready, but I don't know about that. I'll take the question.

Q: Confirmed orders to evacuate, you know, that seems to me as if --
A: I just don't believe that's correct, but I'll take the question.

I don't doubt that they may have moved, I don't know. But that kind of order wouldn't be the kind of order they'd get. That's not a normal order especially when they're shipping them out of Pearl Harbor. It's a long time until they get to the Western Pacific.

Q: What we ought to have provided for us very soon and preferably before the President makes his speech is what has the Navy done about getting all of those Navy ships out to Vietnam area after the President had ordered them.

A: Of course, I think Bob (Burke) covered that yesterday; there are a lot of ships out there.

Q: Not as impressively as you might.

A: What do you expect them to do, Lloyd (Norman, Newsweek)?

Q: Well, I expected a big white fleet moving up and down the shore.

A: The President said all available ships, get ready to assist.

Q: That sounded like a (inaudible)

A: That's your interpretation, I don't know that that's our interpretation.

Q: I don't know what that sounded like to you, but it seems like we would have more than a few ships standing off the Vietnam coast?

A: We think we're effectively carrying out the President's order.

Q: Any incidents involving our U.S. Marines on these merchant ships?

A: No, none reported.

Q: The Marines holding steady?

A: Still the same number.

Q: Are there any more ships due to sail out to the South China Sea or Vietnam waters?

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A: I'll take that question. I am not aware of any, but there are a lot of ships in the area. I think you all should understand there are an awful lot of Navy ships in the Western Pacific. If the situation should require it, they could beef it up in a hurry.

Q: Have we got any new estimate on the number of people evacuated?

A: I don't have it here; it's over 100,000. Let me take the question.

Q: What is DoD's reaction to the statement of the Prime Minister of Portugal that they would not allow us to use the Azores?

A: I can't comment on that. This is not an appropriate forum for comment on that.

Q: Are you referring us to the Department of State?

A: I'm not referring you to anybody.

Q: What Soviet ships are northwest of the Hawaiian Islands at the present time?

A: Those two oceanographic ships that you asked about yesterday are still about 750 miles northwest of Hawaii.

Q: Are they doing anything that we can detect?

A: I asked about that and we don't have anything to report except they're there.

Q: Is that in addition to the trawler or is that gone?

A: No.

Q: Are they stationary or milling around?

A: I'll have to take that question; I assume milling around. I can vouch for two Soviet ships, oceanographic trawler types, which are approximately 750 miles northwest of Hawaii. That's the extent of my information on that. One's called the MB-11 and one's called the MB-26.

Q: The MB-11 is the one that was in Hawaii before?

A: Could be.

Q: Are these Soviet boats that have moved a little bit south, are they the same Komar class?

A: Not Soviet boats, we're not talking Soviet boats, these are North Vietnamese boats we're talking about. I have no more to say on that subject except what I've said.

Q: Do we have any destroyers near the Tonkin Gulf?

A: No.

E N D

(This is not a verbatim transcript)

DoD Morning News Briefing
Tuesday, April 8, 1975, 11:15 a.m.
(Col. Robert A. Burke)

Announcements:

1. On the Hill: Statement from Lt. Gen. Fish, Director of DSAA, at closed session before Senate Appropriations Defense Subcommittee. That's available now. This afternoon we'll have statements from DoD witnesses appearing before an open session of the Senate Armed Services Military Construction Subcommittee. Witnesses include Perry Fliakas, DASD/Installations and Housing, OASD/I&L, and others. We'll release those when the Committee does.

Q: Is there any prepared statement on the Vietnam hearings?

A: General Weyand?

Q: Yes.

A: No, there is not. He of course, as you know from the wires, is on the Hill this morning.

2. Release on the announcement that the President has nominated Chaplain Orris E. Kelley for appointment to the grade of Major General and assignment as Chief of Chaplains of the Army. He succeeds Chaplain Hyatt who retires August 1. Chaplain Kelley is presently serving in the office Chief of Chaplains of the Army. Also, the President has named Brigadier General Henry Mohr for assignment as Chief of the Army Reserve. He's presently serving as Commanding General of the 102nd U.S. Army Reserve Command in St. Louis.

3. No speech texts today.

4. Someone asked yesterday about the status of the funding for Vietnam for the fourth quarter and we're told that as of 3 April all of the \$175 million fourth quarter funds have been obligated. Because of the fluid situation out there, there will undoubtedly be some reprogramming within this amount, but the exact breakout of the funds is a decision that's basically made by people out there in Vietnam.

Q: How do they do that? If they obligated it, they must have gone into certain pockets. How do they get it back?

A: I don't know the mechanics of it, Lloyd (Norman, Newsweek), but there is a way up to a certain point that they can adjust it.

Q: In view of the several plane loads of howitzers and other things that have gone out there in the last week, is there any way to tell how much of this \$175 actually has been delivered?

A: The best we can get right now, Fred (Hoffman, AP), is that only a small portion of the \$175 million fourth quarter money has been expended and delivered. Of the total \$700 million for FY '75 as of yesterday, about \$468 million had been expended and delivered. Of that \$468 million, the largest category of course is ammunition and about \$190 million represents ground ammunition.

Q: How much of it was air ammunition?

A: Air ammunition -- \$18 million, and \$55 million for POL. These figures all are part of the \$468 million. The rest represents materials, spare parts and a pretty good chunk of it for services.

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Q: Can you break this all out?

A: Further than this?

Q: Yes. Can you go down that list?

A: I don't have a breakdown for that last category. But we can probably get a breakdown on that.

Q: Is there any equipment, in other words, the howitzers that were sent out there, are they the first one-for-one replacement?

A: That would still be part of the \$700 million in any event.

Q: I just wondered because they were saying that there were practically no one-for-one replacements in the last year.

A: That would undoubtedly be part of this portion that I haven't broken down. We'll see.

Q: Materials, in other words, equipment, spares, etc.?

A: Yes, that would be part of the remainder.

Q: It's still 232 million then that can be reprogrammed?

A: How do you get that?

Q: \$468 from \$700. That doesn't include what was in the pipeline. As long as it hasn't been delivered, you can change what's in the pipeline.

A: I'm not sure exactly at what point, and I assume it varies with different kinds of shipments. I'm not sure at what point you cannot reprogram it. We can see what we can find out.

Q: In other words, if they order one hundred 105s and they decide instead to send them something like radios, the Army keeps the 105s and sends them radios in the same amount of money. Is that what you might call reprogramming?

A: I think that's right.

Q: So it really doesn't involve changing any contract?

A: There would be a contract involved with a supplier if it were coming from other than Army stocks and some of this does, including services. So it depends on what kind of item we're talking about and where it's coming from.

5. On the orphan evacuation, our information is that the total number that have arrived at Travis AFB, CA, is 193 orphans; they arrived on three C-141 flights. There are another 302 orphans enroute to Travis on a MAC charter DC-10 (Overseas National Airline) and are expected to arrive this afternoon our time. There are an additional 23 orphans still at Clark AB. The total is 518. In addition to those and that's the U.S. Government airlift, our figures show that on other airlifts -- two PanAm flights and one DC-8 World Airways -- there were 787. So if our figures are correct, the total moved to date is 1,305 orphans.

Q: Where did the civilian airlift go into?

A: I'll have to check.

6. The Phnom Penh statistics: the attacks by fire on Pochentong airport on April 6 was one 105mm round and twenty-four 107mm rounds; April 7 there were eleven 105s and twenty-seven 107 rockets. No report on April 8. The flights

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into Pochentong on April 8 were 41. We will give you a breakout later.

7. We have a fact sheet that is a partial report on the first portion of the refugee evacuation as it relates to the Military Sealift Command activities. We will try and keep you updated on this. As you know, when the decision was made to immediately provide American naval transports and contract vessels to assist in the evacuation of refugees, there were some ships under the control of the Navy's Military Sealift Command in and near Vietnamese waters and they were engaged at that time in the movement of cargo. So they immediately diverted to the evacuation of refugees and began what turned out to be an around-the-clock operation which according to the reports that are coming in, were, as you can imagine, somewhat difficult and under hazardous conditions. We have a brief fact sheet which you might be interested in.

Q: What about the Marines at Subic? Are they going aboard the DURHAM and the FREDERICK and what are they going to do and where are they going to go?

A: The Marines are at Subic but I'm not going to discuss where they're going or what they're going to do.

Q: How large a force did you say it was?

A: It's a battalion, about 1,500 Marines.

Q: From which division, is that the Third?

A: They're from the 9th Regiment on Okinawa.

Q: Are you ruling out the Marines will be put on board the contract ships?

A: No, I'm not ruling that out, that is a possibility. We have Marines on the following Military Sealift Command ships which are contract ships, the PIONEER CONTENDER; the TRANSCOLORADO; the AMERICAN CHALLENGER, and the GREEN PORT.

Q: Aren't those Marines supposed to go on the Navy ships?

A: Which Marines?

Q: The Marines now that are at Subic.

A: I've already said I'm not going to discuss where they're going, but I'm not ruling out the possibility that they may provide shipboard security on other civilian contract vessels as needed.

Q: Didn't they take Marines off of some of the Navy ships -- like the DURHAM and the FREDERICK and so on like that and transfer them to the PIONEER CONTENDER, the TRANSCOLORADO; the CHALLENGER and so on? Are these Marines at Subic replacements for these guys who were on the contract ships?

A: There are 700 Marines from the 1st Battalion of the 4th Marines and they're deployed like this: 500 aboard the USS BLUERIDGE and the USS DUBUQUE. The BLUERIDGE is at sea in the South China Sea; the DUBUQUE is in the vicinity of Phu Quoc Island. Of the remaining 200 of that 700, there is a security detachment of about 50 Marines aboard these four MSC ships: AMERICAN CHALLENGER; PIONEER CONTENDER; GREEN PORT and TRANSCOLORADO.

Q: Is that 50 each?

A: 50 each -- that gives you the 200 and add that to the 500 and you get the 700. Those four ships are located in the following places: the AMERICAN

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CHALLENGER is at Phu Quoc, as is the PIONEER CONTENDER and GREEN PORT; the TRANSCOLORADO is at or near Vung Tau.

Q: This figure of 50 you used points up an annoying habit you have around this place. I asked about this yesterday, the size of detachments; I was given a figure between 40 and 60. Why somebody couldn't have said at that time it was about 50. It's kind of needless waffling that's done.

A: We probably should do that, Fred (Hoffman, AP).

Q: So today you say 50?

A: I imagine that one of the things that causes us to do things like that is because those of us who have been on the other side of the world and have read specific numbers coming out of the Pentagon about our units and then finding that actually we had a little more or little less, that may condition some of those things. We really ought to for our purposes here come up with one figure if we know that it's about a ballpark figure.

Q: Are these replacements? Will there be replacements for the guys who have gone onto these ships?

A: The dispersal of the people, the Marines on these various ships, and among the amphibious ships, occurred last week and over the weekend, and this latest battalion constitutes a backup force which replaces, in part, some of them.

Q: I just want to raise the question; you know we asked yesterday and we were told that you would check on it and I think about half of the people sitting out here knew that the Marines were already in Subic and were reporting it and you know we didn't find out until 6:30 or 7:00 o'clock last night that they were there. If they're only on a humanitarian mission, why all the secrecy?

A: Well, it wasn't our intent to be secretive about it particularly since the move from Okinawa to Subic had been completed and so we'll just have to take a lump on that.

Q: When did it happen, Sunday, Saturday?

A: It was over the weekend, we can find out exactly when.

Q: What's the delay in dispersing the original 700 Marines that went there last week aboard the ships? That's the purpose to provide ship security, why have they only been put on four ships? Is it that difficult?

A: No, they're put on the ships where there is a need for them. There may be some additional deployment on other ships later.

Q: There was certainly a need for them on the GREENVILLE VICTORY?

A: That was what convinced us that there was a need.

Q: Are they armed by the way or are they just merely on with rifles?

A: The Marines that are aboard those ships?

Q: Yes, because I'm going to ask a nasty question right afterwards.

A: As far as I know, they have individual weapons but we can check and see.

Q: Are they carrying anti-riot weapons, teargas?

A: I don't know. We'll check and see.

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Q: My question is: is it that difficult to transfer them to the ships? Weren't they with the fleet before this incident on the GREENVILLE VICTORY? Weren't they on the BLUE RIDGE and DUBUQUE?

A: Yes, I believe they were.

Q: I am curious as to why they hadn't been put on the ships.

A: Why they hadn't been put on all of the ships?

Q: Yes.

A: My understanding is that they're already on the ships where it appears they're needed.

Q: They were originally brought down only on the Navy ships. They were brought down because they were needed because of the incident off Danang. You brought them down and you seemed to have kept them on two ships -- the BLUE RIDGE and the DUBUQUE and then you had another incident. It's not a big thing, but I'm just curious as to why the delay in their dispersal.

A: I'm not sure exactly when they were put aboard those four civilian ships, but we can check.

Q: You didn't plan to put them on board the contract ships until after the incident?

A: As I say to the best of my knowledge the initial thought was that they were only needed on those four ships and whether there is a different judgment right now I just don't know.

Q: You didn't put them on the contract ships until after there was disorder on the GREENVILLE VICTORY. The original announcement said the 700 Marines were to be disbursed among the four Navy vessels.

A: Amphibious vessels, right.

Q: There was no intention of putting them on the contract ships?

A: I don't think it was thought necessary at that time. Of course, events indicated that it was. I don't think the intention ever was to put them on all of those ships. They're assessing the situation to determine whether they think it's necessary and then putting them on those ships where they're needed, but not necessarily all ships.

Q: Are we going to maintain a force of Marines on one or two ships that are about 500 -- 1000 in case help is needed in the evacuation of Americans?

A: Are you talking about the amphibious ships?

Q: Any ships.

A: We'll just have to wait and see.

Q: Are the FREDERICK and DURHAM in Subic now?

A: Yes, they are and so is the carrier HANCOCK and the CORAL SEA is also in Subic.

Q: Where are those four destroyers you were talking about yesterday?

A: I don't know because I don't know which four destroyers I was talking about yesterday. If you're interested in which ships are at Phu Quoc and Vung Tau and places like that, we can probably give you that.

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Q: Are they changed from yesterday? You ran down those.

A: There is probably some minor change, but we can give you that after the briefing.

Q: Can't you just post it on the board?

A: Why don't we do that. That's the ships at Phu Quoc, Vung Tau and we can add Subic to it.

Q: What about the ENTERPRISE and the MIDWAY?

A: The ENTERPRISE and the MIDWAY are in the South China Sea.

Q: The MIDWAY was in the vicinity of the Philippines yesterday; is that still where it is?

A: I'll have to check and see whether she's still in that Subic operating area.

Q: Do you have any additional information on what caused the C-5 crash in Saigon?

A: No, we don't.

Q: Is there any sign of movement of either Soviet or Chinese ships toward this area off Vietnam in recent days?

A: Toward what area, do you mean off the coast of South Vietnam?

Q: Off the coast of North Vietnam.

A: We'll ask.

Q: Also is there any sign of replenishment ships from either the Chinese or the Soviet Bloc moving toward the northern part of South Vietnam where the North Vietnamese have taken over some of the port areas such as Danang?

A: We'll ask.

Q: You've had no word of their unloading equipment or anything like that?

A: I haven't personally, no. We'll ask.

Q: Might some of the Marines in Subic be loaded on the HANCOCK and the CORAL SEA?

A: I'd rather not discuss the future movement of the Marines at Subic.

Q: Since the HANCOCK is loaded with the big helicopters, is its primary mission the evacuation?

A: Of course, having helicopters aboard any ships, a carrier or any other ship, gives you an evacuation capability.

Q: Are any carriers being added to the CORAL SEA or have they been added to the CORAL SEA or will they be added to the CORAL SEA?

A: We'll ask whether they have been.

Q: There were about 300 Marines on the HANCOCK when we were last told; is that still true?

A: Those were the people from the helicopter squadron.

Q: There's no change then?

A: We can check.

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Q: Do you have any word as to whether any of those Soviet ships are still 600 or 700 miles away from Hawaii on that oceanographic study?

A: I'm just not briefed on it; we can check.

Q: What Soviet ships are in the vicinity of the Hawaiian Islands -- Northwest?

A: We'll check.

Q: Could you give us some kind of rundown on the kind of North Vietnamese forces they are bringing into position around Saigon, including aircraft?

A: Let me take that question. We do know that one of their divisions, the 341st Division, did move into MR III north of Saigon about a week or so ago.

Q: Have they used any of those airfields that they were developing in South Vietnam? Did they move anything into them? Is there any indication of them moving aircraft across the DMZ?

A: We'll check and see.

Q: Could you expand that to include mobile radar being moved south, plus aircraft?

A: OK.

Q: If you provide aircraft figures, make a distinction between airplanes and helicopters.

A: OK.

Q: That backup Marine Battalion, did you say could or will replace some of those 700 Marines on the ships?

A: I was asked if that was a possibility, and I said yes.

Q: They could?

A: I don't want to rule that out.

Q: How many troops have the North Vietnamese moved into the Delta? Any new divisions?

A: To the best of my knowledge, they still have three divisions in MR IV area.

Q: That's North Vietnamese?

A: North Vietnamese divisions.

Q: How many does the South have there?

A: That's also three.

Q: When did the third division come into MR IV?

A: It's been there.

Q: The North Vietnamese?

A: It has been there.

Q: Around Saigon, how much of each?

A: I don't have my figures with me but we can get that for you after the briefing.

Q: What else could the Marines at Subic do except provide ship security?

A: I'm just not going to discuss it.

E N D

(This is not a verbatim transcript)

DoD Morning News Briefing
Monday, April 7, 1975, 11:15 a.m.
(Colonel Robert L. Burke)

Announcements:

1. On the Hill: We have copies of a statement on CHAMPUS by the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary in H&E, Vernon McKenzie, to be presented before the House Appropriations Defense Subcommittee which meets in open session this afternoon. There are no other statements by Defense witnesses.
2. We will have copies of the transcript of SecDef's comments on "Face the Nation" yesterday.
3. We also have a release on the DACOWITS meeting which begins this week. Secretary McLucas speaks to them this morning. This is the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Service. The Committee will hold meetings both in the Pentagon and at the Hotel Washington until Thursday. All business sessions and briefings are open to the public. Anybody who wants to attend can contact the Executive Secretary of this Committee who is in OSD Manpower and Reserve Affairs Office.
4. We also have some flag and general officer changes.
5. A couple of things I would like to call to your attention: The Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for I&L has a new Charter with directives, etc. It has to do with a reorganization I think is of some significance to those of you who cover weapons acquisition. That's available at the Defense News Branch.
6. Also copies of the Defense Management Journal issue on transportation are available in DDI. It includes articles by former ASD(I&L) Arthur Mendolia and a number of logistical officials in DoD.

Q: Can you give us a rundown of U.S. Navy ships now in the vicinity of South Vietnam?

A: Would you also like me to include the civilian contract ships that are operating in that area?

Q: That would be helpful.

A: At Newport, which is the port at Saigon, we have the GREENVILLE, VICTORY and the PIONEER COMMANDER. Both of these are civilian contract vessels.

Q: Will you make copies of this available?

A: I can try to do that. At Vung Tau we have two ships: One is the TRANSCOLORADO and the other is the SS GREEN WAVE.

Q: Those are contract ships also?

A: Yes.

Q: Are all of these cargo ships?

A: Yes. Off Phu Quoc Island we have the USNS MILLER and we have the contract ships GREEN PORT, PIONEER CONTENDER and the AMERICAN CHALLENGER.

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Q: What are the last two?
A: Both are contract ships.

Q: What is the MILLER?
A: It's a U.S. Navy ship.

Q: A transport?
A: Yes.

Q: That's a Military Sealift Command ship, isn't it? It has a civilian crew, does it not?

A: Yes, I think you're right. -- U.S. Navy ship as contrasted with the others which are civilian-owned ships. I assume you also want to know what ships are at sea and which ones are at Subic. At Subic we have the DURHAM, an LKA, and the FREDERICK, an LST, and the HANCOCK, which is an aircraft carrier.

Q: The DURHAM, wasn't it operating over the weekend off Saigon and went back to Subic?

A: It was operating at the end of last week off the coast of Vietnam. The ENTERPRISE and several escort ships, and the MIDWAY, both of which are carriers as you know, are at sea in the Western Pacific.

Q: Can you be more specific? Can you narrow that down beyond the Western Pacific? South China Sea, Gulf of Thailand? Are they within a few hundred miles of the Vietnamese coast?

A: We can check and see. I think you're correct.

Q: Are they within a hundred miles?
A: We'll try to narrow that down.

Q: Let's put it another way on this ENTERPRISE and MIDWAY -- have there been any change in their orders that would put them closer to Vietnam?

A: I'm not going to be able to answer questions about the orders that have gone to those ships.

Q: Even though they are on a humanitarian mission? I think it would help clarify an awful lot of misinformation that's going around if you would be more candid.

A: Well, we're providing everything we can, but we'll take the question.

Q: This may have some bearing on this issue, but this is a civilian-run department and we haven't had a briefing by the two highly paid civilians who run Public Affairs and according to my colleagues here, I have checked on it, close to a month and I understand it puts you in a compromise or any military person in a compromising position, but I think we're entitled to this kind of information. If it's policy information, I think we should get a civilian in here who can address it. There is an awful lot of conjecture and bad information going around with respect to the movement of American aircraft carriers. We are entitled to it.

A: Mike (Getler, Wash. Post), if you think that the misinformation that sometimes happens in periods like this results from the fact that there isn't someone else doing the briefing, I think that's --

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Q: No, I'm not saying it was coming from here; I'm saying let's get someone here who can be specific about it. I'm not saying that it's coming from here, it's coming from Saigon, from reporters.

A: You've been to these briefings for many years and I think you'll agree with me that what we can say about the operating orders of U.S. Navy vessels is limited no matter who's doing the briefing.

Q: Yes, but the situation really is different than the periods you're citing in the past when we were involved in the shooting war. This was supposed to be on a humanitarian operation here, but as we've gone through this drill even with this humanitarian operation going on, simple movements of ships in that part of the world (they're in a non-combat situation), I can see no reason why the establishment can't be more specific.

A: Part of the reason, Fred (Hoffman, AP), is that there's still a requirement to take into account operational security. We're talking about U.S. naval vessels.

Q: Nobody's attacked an aircraft carrier in 40 years.

A: We'd like to keep it that way.

Q: Have we ordered two U.S. aircraft carriers task forces to stand by off the coast of South Vietnam?

A: The only thing I can tell you is where the carrier task forces are right now and we'll take another look to see if we can be more specific.

Q: Where they moved in response to the President's directive of last week?

A: I'll take that question.

Q: What has been done in response to the President's directive of last week?

A: We've already reported the movement of the amphibious ships, the nine --

Q: They were there before --

A: We have, as I said last Friday, a number of Seventh Fleet ships that are in the area that are capable of carrying out whatever refugee evacuation requirements exist. They are in the area.

Q: I was told on background Saturday that the MIDWAY was heading for Subic and now apparently it is not heading for Subic. So that would suggest that it did get orders some time between Saturday and today to head for waters closer to Vietnam. Is that accurate?

A: I'll check and see.

Q: Can we have the components of the task force? Are there additional amphibious craft; are there Marine detachments with them, etc., beyond what is ordinary?

A: Yes.

Q: Can we also find out what the mission of these task forces are?

A: We'll see what we can do.

Q: You mentioned taking out some ships; what do you have left down there?

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A: If you are asking whether the amphibious ships remaining are currently engaged in evacuating refugees right now, they are not. They have picked up over 100,000 refugees. The exact number we don't have here. They're currently engaged in off-loading at Phu Quoc Island and in the vicinity of Vung Tau. As soon as they can get reorganized, we presume they will be evacuating more refugees.

Q: That wasn't just Navy ships; you're talking about contract ships?

A: The way they did this was to use the amphibious ships to pick up the refugees, they would transfer them to the contract ships which would take them to Phu Quoc or Vung Thau.

Q: Where were the bulk of the refugees picked up?

A: We'll try to get you a more precise answer but my information is that most of them were picked up from Cam Ranh Bay and south along the coast.

Q: You said the amphibious ships picked them up, is that right?

A: Yes.

Q: You mean the LST, for example, would go up on the beach to pick them up?

A: In some cases the refugees came out the amphibious vessels with small craft. In one case, the DURHAM, I think went up if not on the beach, then very close to the beach.

Q: She better not have gone on the beach if she is an AKA.

A: It's an LKA but I don't know whether they can do it or not.

Q: Can you add the CORAL SEA to your list?

A: We'll check on the CORAL SEA. (Note: CORAL SEA is in port at Subic Bay)

Q: The ships in Subic, DURHAM and FREDERICK, are they picking up Marines there?

A: I'll check.

Q: Do you know how many of 100,000 refused to go to Phu Quoc?

A: In the case of the GREENVILLE VICTORY, there was a case where the refugees did force the ship to be turned around.

Q: I believe there were two incidents.

A: Yes, and then there was another ship. The GREENVILLE VICTORY which was at Phu Quoc attempting to unload refugees was forced to proceed back up to Vung Tau. Our information was that there was force or threats of force. The ship went to Vung Tau, along the coast near Saigon where the refugees were unloaded. There was some similar difficulty aboard two other ships, the GREENPORT and the ANDREW MILLER. However, the crews of the ships persuaded the refugees not to do it. They did unload the refugees at Phu Quoc.

Q: Do you know how they forced the captain to turn around?

A: Some of them were armed but I don't know the exact details.

Q: Were there South Vietnamese Marines aboard in all three cases?

A: There were Marines along with the refugees on the GREENVILLE VICTORY. I don't know about the other two ships.

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Q: After the President ordered all available ships for evacuation, why did you pull the DURHAM and the FREDERICK off station?

A: And send them to Subic? I'll take your question.

Q: Where are the other two ships who were out there on refugee duty?

A: That was the DUBUQUE: that's off Phu Quoc also. BLUE RIDGE, that's also near Phu Quoc.

Q: Are there destroyers standing off shore to give protection, if necessary?

A: There are destroyers in the vicinity of the South Vietnamese coast.

Q: How many?

A: My figures show there are four.

Q: Is that independent of the task forces?

A: If you're talking about the ones that are at sea, with the MIDWAY and the ENTERPRISE, this does not include those destroyers.

Q: How many are with the MIDWAY and how many with the ENTERPRISE?

A: I'll take that question.

Q: How many U.S. Marines are there on these ships now? There have been some reports over the weekend that indicate that a number of Marines on these various ships runs substantially.

A: We'll take that question too.

Q: How close are the destroyers?

A: Outside of Vietnamese territorial waters.

Q: Is that three miles or twelve miles? Three miles, did we decide last week?

A: I think it's three miles.

Q: I heard on news reports today that Saigon was shelled with 50 or 60 shells; do you know what kind they were?

A: I understand there were rockets and mortars that landed in the vicinity of the oil depot at Nha Be.

Q: This was a news report that said Saigon was hit with 50 or 60 shells.

A: I don't have anything on it.

Q: General Brown was quoted in Djkarta today as having said that he believed that there was discussion in Washington of the possible reintroduction of American forces. Can you add to that? Is it true?

A: Secretary Laitin talked to General Brown in Djkarta about an hour ago because he read news stories on that. General Brown said that the use of military force is one U.S. option but he also said there is a law which prohibits it.

Q: The law says you can ask for it.

A: As you know, Secretary Kissinger on Saturday said that the National Security Council staff along with State and Defense people, are working on options which will be discussed at a National Security Council meeting this week.

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Q: Are you reopening the possibility that one option is a request of Congress for the reintroduction of some kind of U.S. military power?

A: No, I'm just telling you what General Brown said. As you know, yesterday Secretary Schlesinger on "Face the Nation" was asked the question about U.S. force. His words are, "I think the President's statement of March 6 was conclusive, at least for the time being. He indicated those forces would not return."

Q: Wasn't the White House even more emphatic last week than on March 6 following the interpretation that Schlesinger had not ruled out the possible use of U.S. force and the White House said flatly it wouldn't do that.

A: I believe they did address that last week. In any event, those are what people have said about it.

Q: But we do have Marines out there, you don't know how many, we've got Marines there; I am wondering if they're supposed to protect the evacuating Americans, they would probably have to land, wouldn't they, in South Vietnam to protect the evacuating of Americans? I am wondering if you have any idea what the situation is over there? Is it dangerous at this point? Should we have to land some of the Marines?

A: I don't think the Americans are in danger in Vietnam at this point. If you're asking if it is possible in the event that evacuation required using Marines to protect Americans, well, of course we have the capability to do that. That's one thing -- providing security forces for an evacuation, but if you're talking about the presence of these Marines out there being positioned now for some kind of reintroduction of U.S. military forces in Vietnam, that is not what they're there for.

Q: They're not there to take off refugees?

A: I think you've just introduced a third element. He was asking about whether we could use Marines -- would we conceivably use them to rescue Americans if that were necessary in the future? You raised the question of whether they could be used in evacuating refugees. Of course, we had all these ships out there last week and they'll be doing it again -- they'll be engaged in evacuating refugees.

Q: Isn't this described as a security function aboard the ship?

A: Sure.

Q: We're really talking about another kind of power.

A: I understand. There are two different levels here.

Q: I thought you said that wasn't what they were there for now, then what are they there for?

A: The Marines aboard the ships that we talked about last week being out there are there because they're providing shipboard security for the refugee evacuation.

Q: I'm not clear what General Brown is saying or what Mr. Laitin is saying General Brown is saying. Can I put the question frontally, is the reintroduction of U.S. military power one of the options now being considered?

A: By the National Security Council? The National Security Council, I understand, meets tomorrow.

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Q: What your answers have been is basically that General Brown says that it is an option, but he also said that there's a law prohibiting it. The law doesn't really prohibit it, it allows you to ask Congress and you went on to say as you know the Secretary states that on Saturday the United States is working on all these options. That leaves a clear impression with me that one of the options still ~~is~~ not foreclosed is some kind of reintroduction of U.S. military force presumably bombing. Is that the impression you're leaving ~~with~~ us with?

A: You're proceeding on what has been said to the conclusion that out of the NSC deliberations there is going to come some kind of a request to Congress for the use of force. Nobody has said that.

Q: I didn't say that. I said that that's apparently still one of the options. In other words, it has not been foreclosed despite what's been said in the past. Is that correct?

A: Mike, what is going on here is that people are trying to define a situation, not make policy statements. General Brown was defining a situation and the Secretary of Defense discussed the same thing yesterday.

Q: Well, he clearly must have said something unusual to have Mr. Laitin call him and I'm still not clear what he said from the playback that you've given us. It wouldn't make any sense to say that it's an option, but there's a law against it.

Q: If you're not in a position to address this, why don't we get Laitin or somebody down here who can--if you're foreclosed from talking at that level.

A: I'm not foreclosed from talking to you about it; I'm trying to explain what everyone else knows on it. The fact is that General Brown said that the use of U.S. military force is an option. He did not say that it was an option that anyone was going to recommend. He also noted specifically that there's a law that prohibits it. That's what he said.

Q: The question is whether it's a live option or just a theoretical option and why can't we get Laitin down here since he talked to General Brown?

Q: The question is this a like option or theoretical option and can't we get Laitin down here since he talked with Gen. Brown and let him give --

A: I'm giving you what Mr. Laitin and General Brown talked about.

Q: Is it an option being considered by the Administration to go and ask Congress for power to intervene militarily?

A: I don't think it makes much sense for me to try to predict what the National Security Council is going to try and do.

Q: I'm not asking you to predict, is it being considered?

A: We'll just have to wait and see.

Q: If Gen. Brown said that the use of military force was an option but it was now precluded by law, that is a statement of the obvious. The real question is did he say out there that the use of military force was being considered by the U.S.

A: He said it was an option.

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Q: He didn't say it was being considered?

A: My understanding is that he said it was an option, specifically.

Q: An option being considered by the U.S.?

A: I really don't know whether he said --

Q: But that is what news reports said --

Q: Did he speak out of turn again?

Q: It does create the impression that the Joint Chiefs of Staff, whom he represents and speaks for, have recommended such an option. That is the impression that we have to come away with from this discussion, that the Joint Chiefs of Staff have recommended this which may be discussed tomorrow.

A: Why don't I do this since I'm not satisfying your questions. We'll see if we can get a statement on it right after the briefing.

Q: Was Capt. Sid Wright with him?

A: No.

Q: There was no aide with him?

A: He had some staff personnel with him but Capt. Wright is here.

Q: Was it taped?

A: Not that I know of.

Q: You have not gotten a playback of what he told reporters?

A: No.

Q: There is ambiguity here that should be nailed down.

A: We'll see what we can do about a statement as soon as the briefing is over.

Q: Then we are precluded from questioning him?

A: I'll let him know of your interest.

Q: When does the Defense Department estimate that it's going to run out of funds, military aid to Cambodia, unless you get more from Congress?

A: It was sometime this month. I will check and see what the latest estimate is.

Q: When would the delivery of military equipment to Cambodia stop, understanding the time lag in the pipeline?

A: You mean if there is no additional funding? We'll have to take that question.

Q: Where is the OKINAWA, still in the Gulf of Siam?

A: Yes, it is.

Q: On Gen. Brown, this statement that comes along, will it indicate whether Gen. Brown said he volunteered the information or he made a statement in response to a question?

A: My understanding is that it was in response to a question.

Q: Regardless of what Gen. Brown did or didn't say, is the possible

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reintroduction of U.S. forces, in any form, a live option? Is it being considered?

A: There isn't any answer to that, I've said we'll see if we can get you a statement.

Q: Could we have Gen. Weyand come down and talk with us?

A: We understand your interest in this and we'll see what we can do about it.

Q: What's Gen. Brown doing in Djkarta?

A: I think we announced his trip but we will get you details.

Q: Has the Defense Department allocated the remaining \$175 million in military aid for South Vietnam?

A: The plan was for that to be obligated on the 31st of March. As far as I know, that has been done.

Q: I thought you were holding up while you tried to determine what to do.

A: There were some changes in what the funds were to be spent for. I'm not sure how much of that had to be revised. We'll see what we can find out on what the breakdown is.

Q: Do you have a schedule for General Weyand appearances before Congress this week?

A: I think there may be one available.

Q: When do they start?

A: I think tomorrow, but we'll have to check and see.

Q: Do you have any reports on the current combat situation in Vietnam and in Cambodia on number of shells, etc.?

A: For the Pochentong airport area: on April 4 there was reported one 105 round; 21 107mm rocket rounds landing in that area. The following day, April 5, another 105, just one round. 23 107 rockets. Nothing yet on April 6. The flights into that airport on April 5, there were a total of 48. On April 6, there were a total of 54. On April 7 a total of 49. We can give you the breakdown of DC-8s and C-103s later on.

As for the situation in South Vietnam, I understand that the level of fighting in the Military Regions III and IV is very low at the present time.

Q: Hasn't Nha Trang been retaken?

A: I understand that there are South Vietnamese troops in Nha Trang. Whether it was retaken in the sense of being seized, I really don't know.

Q: Was it ever occupied by the North Vietnamese?

A: There is some indication that it was not, but I don't know for sure.

Q: Are our ships in any way involved in transporting troops back up to Nha Trang?

A: No, they're not.

Q: How many reserve units from the North are in the South now -- reserve

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divisions?

A: Secretary Kissinger said last Saturday that there are now 18 North Vietnamese Divisions in South Vietnam.

Q: How many South Vietnam Divisions are there?

A: They started out with 13 at the beginning of this current offensive. The number of effective divisions presumably would be somewhat less than that. We know the 23rd Division, for example, took some losses at Ban Me Thout. What the current number is I'm just not sure.

Q: Do you have any estimate on the number of effectives the South Vietnamese military have?

A: No, I don't.

Q: Eighteen divisions are in the South, how about elements of reserve divisions in the South?

A: We'll check and see. That eighteen involved some of the reserve divisions.

Q: Full divisions or elements of those divisions -- reserve divisions?

A: I just wouldn't know whether the entire division is down there, but Secretary Kissinger said there are eighteen divisions which means major elements at a minimum.

Q: That group in Nha Trang, the cadets from the nearby military school?

A: No, it's not. I don't recall which unit is in Nha Trang, but it's not the cadets.

Q: Is there a stockpiling of cruise missiles in Somalia?

A: Secretary Schlesinger said in recent response to a question by Newsweek that the Soviets have built up and are still building a major logistical capability in the general area of the Persian Gulf. He said quote Soviet facilities at Berbera in Somalia are both impressive and growing. They are now it appears constructing a cruise missile support facility at Berbera on the Gulf of Oman end quote. I have no information to add to this.

Q: Do you have a Navy response on that CAO report on the Trident missile?

A: I don't have anything on that. We'll check and see after the briefing if there's anything new.

Q: Does the Secretary have any recommendations where we can dine today in the Pentagon. (Laughter) No, I'm serious.

A: I know you are, John (Finney, NY Times), and I didn't mean to laugh. I know that General Sidle took this on as a very high priority project when you brought it to his attention some time ago and I'm not sure of the outcome of his discussions on that subject. I'll get a report to you today.

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(This is not a verbatim transcript)

DoD Morning News Briefing
April 4, 1975, 11:15 a.m.
(Col. Robert L. Burke)

Announcements:

I want to go into the routine things before we get on to the subjects that I know you're most interested in:

1. The semi-annual meeting of DACOWITS will begin Sunday and run through Thursday.
2. We have an announcement on the organization of a committee which is related to the Defense Department's participation in the International Women's Year. Secretary Schlesinger has authorized the establishment of this committee, which will look into and stress equal opportunity for military and civilian women in the Department of Defense, encourage a more active role and recognize their accomplishments. It's being co-chaired by Georgiana Sheldon, Deputy Director of the Defense Civil Preparedness Agency, and by Major General Winant Sidle, USA, DASD(PA).
3. General Weyand has left Saigon, and he will be returning to the United States today. His schedule calls for him to meet with the President this weekend. I don't have any other details. You can check with the White House on that.

Q: He will go directly to Palm Springs then?
A: Presumably.

Q: Is he going to spend overnight at the Presidio?
A: I just don't have any details on that. He will not come here first.

4. We have the release on general and flag officers assignments.

5. I know you've had a lot of questions on what happened with regard to the C-5 accident. If you like, I'll go through what we know at this time. What I'm going to give you is based on preliminary reports.

There is an investigation of the accident going on, as there is in all cases where there is an aircraft accident. The pilot reported the aircraft had passed through 23,000 feet, outbound from Tan Son Nhut, where he experienced an explosive decompression in the cargo compartment and believed he lost his rear loading ramp and that the cover doors had blown open. He also said that he lost all elevator, rudder and flap control as well as his No. 1 and 2 hydraulic systems. He turned, using aileron and throttle and started a let-down to return to Tan Son Nhut. Seven miles out, at an altitude of 5,000 feet, with the field in sight, he lowered his gear and began to turn onto final approach, applying power. At this point the aircraft sink rate increased rapidly and it became obvious to him that he could not make the field. He made an emergency landing in the paddy fields approximately five miles from the end of the runway. The plane made a smooth touchdown, bounced across the river, touched down a second time, bounced again, the wings separated from the aircraft, and at that point a fire started and the plane came to rest in a field.

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At this time, there is on the ground at Saigon a C-9 medical evacuation aircraft which will be returning to Clark Air Base in the Philippines with 10 of the most seriously injured people. There are, of course, additional C-9s at Clark in case they are needed.

That is all the details I have on that accident.

Q: Is there any indication that the plane had not left Clark on time because of some kind of mechanical problem before it went to Saigon to pick up the orphans?

A: The basic reason why it didn't leave Clark on time, I'm told, is that it was requested by our people in Saigon to hold at Clark for some reason. While they were at Clark, they did some minor maintenance work, which included windshield change and radio repair. No major mechanical problems at Clark.

Q: Is there any evidence of any ground fire?

A: I haven't seen any evidence of ground fire. As I said, the thing is being investigated. We just don't know all those details.

Q: But as of now you're treating it as a mechanical malfunction rather than enemy action?

A: I don't think anybody's excluding any possibility, but right now we just don't know.

Q: But you haven't ruled out ground fire?

A: I don't think anything's been ruled out. This was only a few hours ago that it happened.

Q: Did it pass over Viet Cong territory?

A: No, the territory that it passed over is government controlled, but of course there have been instances in the past when there were North Vietnamese or Viet Cong forces in those areas. As I said, we don't have any indication that that was the situation.

Q: Can you clarify when you say "explosive decompression of the rear door?"

A: The speed at which it happened; it happened rapidly.

Q: It wasn't like a piece of explosive?

A: No, that's correct.

Q: Any indication why the rear door blew off?

A: We don't know at this time.

Q: There was a report that when the door blew off that some of the control lines in the tail were severed. Is that correct?

A: That could be. I just don't know.

Q: The doors physically blew off, not just blew open; they became separated?

A: I think that's correct.

Q: Any indication on how many survived the crash?

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A: I would rather not provide any information that I'm sure isn't correct.

Q: Will C-5 flights continue?

A: The original plan was to use C-5s and other aircraft to do this. That is still the case. I don't have any specific times as to when the next flight will take place, but the airlift will continue. We will use military aircraft, probably including C-5s and civilian chartered aircraft which we will charter. The idea is that they will go from Tan Son Nhut airport to Clark Air Base. There will be medical treatment, if required, at Clark, and then they will continue on from there on military or commercial aircraft.

Q: Is there a temporary hold on the C-5s at this time?

A: You mean grounded?

Q: Are they grounded temporarily?

A: No, they are not grounded. There were some questions that this might have had something to do with the wing; that is not the case. There is no indication whatsoever that this has anything to do with any wing problem.

Q: How many hours did this plane have on it?

A: We can check.

Q: What civilian charters are you talking to?

A: I don't have that, we can check.

Q: When the rear door blew off, were any of the passengers taken out of the rear by the decompression?

A: No, they were not.

Q: There is no indication that it had anything to do with the wings but yet you say the plane made a very rough landing, but the tragedy began when a wing fell off, right?

A: No. The problem was that when he had the decompression, he began to lose the capability to control the aircraft, to fly it.

Q: But once on the ground he didn't crash until the wing separated?

A: The plane crashed on the ground at a fairly high rate of speed, I'm not talking about a normal landing speed, it was going fast when it hit the ground, although it was in good position. As a matter of fact, from the initial reports, it appears that the pilot's action in getting this plane on the ground with no more casualties than occurred was a remarkable demonstration of flying skill.

Q: Earlier you said it made a smooth touch down, obviously, it was a fast, smooth landing. But at that point the wing came off after the first bouch.

A: It was after one of the bounces, that's correct.

Q: Did any of the crew survive?

A: Yes.

Q: Pilot?

A: Yes.

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Q: Any other crew members?

A: I believe so, but I don't know.

Q: Are we going to get names out of here?

A: We'll see what we can do.

Q: Has this problem ever happened before on the C-5, either during development or since?

A: No, it has not.

Q: No indication that it ever had decompression of the cabin?

A: No, to the best of my knowledge, previous crashes had nothing like this involved.

Q: Were there any indications that this might be a problem?

A: Not to my knowledge; we can check.

Q: You said previous crashes; we've been told there were no previous C-5 crashes.

A: There was one in September 1974 where there was an in-flight fire and a crash landing in Oklahoma. Then the other two were things that happened on the ground several years ago.

Q: What equipment was the C-5 flying into Saigon?

A: We can check and see.

Q: Do we have the pilot's name?

A: I don't have it; we can see if we can get it.

Q: The immediate cause of the crash was some unknown factor that occurred after he put the landing gear down. It was not the rear door falling off?

A: It appeared that once there was decompression he began to have trouble controlling the airplane. As I think I mentioned, "right after the decompression, the pilot lost all elevator, rudder and flap control, as well as No. 1 and No. 2 hydraulic systems."

Q: Does this mean the hydraulic lines were cut back there and therefore the elevator and rudder control went?

A: That seems reasonable that that's what happened but that is being investigated.

Q: On the C-5, your cargo doors are at the tail end. How does it sever the cables? Could something else have severed the lines?

A: You're asking me a lot of detailed questions and it's too early for me to have detailed answers but we'll take that question and see what we can get.

Q: How far out was he when the decompression occurred?

A: I don't have that here, but he was at 23,000 feet so he must have been some miles out from the airfield. We'll find out how far out.

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Q: There's still some confusion about the cause. Do you have anything else on what might have caused it?

A: No. Remember we're talking about a pilot that has lost his ability to really control the aircraft, so we just don't know.

Q: We're getting very technical here, but if he lost all elevator, flap and rudder control immediately after decompression, he couldn't have turned the plane around --

A: As I said at the beginning, what I'm giving you is based on preliminary reports.

Q: So there's no evidence of engine failure then, as far as you know?

A: No.

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