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VIET 3-31

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BY ALAN DAWSON

SAIGON (UPI) -- COMMUNIST GUNNERS FIRING FROM THE BEACHES TODAY FORCED A HALT TO THE EVACUATION OF REFUGEES FROM DA NANG, AND THE NORTH VIETNAMESE AND VIET CONG WARNED NO SHIPS OR PLANES COULD ENTER THE AREA WITHOUT THEIR PERMISSION.

U.S. EMBASSY OFFICIALS IN SAIGON SAID THE COMMUNISTS SUNDAY NIGHT SENT ROCKET-PROPELLED GRENADE FIRE AGAINST BARGES AND SMALLER VESSELS HAULING REFUGEES OUT TO U.S. CHARTER SHIPS OFFSHORE IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA.

THREE CHARTER VESSELS -- THE PIONEER CONTENDER, PIONEER COMMANDER AND TRANS COLORADO -- WERE OUT OF RANGE OF THE GRENADE ROUNDS BUT THEIR CAPTAINS WERE FORCED TO SUSPEND EVACUATION OPERATIONS.

ALL THREE SHIPS WERE SAILING SOUTHWARD TODAY TOWARD CAM RANH BAY WITH MORE THAN 20,000 REFUGEES ABOARD, EMBASSY OFFICIALS SAID.

THE COMMUNISTS TRIUMPHANTLY OCCUPIED DA NANG, THEIR GREATEST TROPHY IN 20 YEARS OF INDOCHINA WAR.

PICKUP 2ND PGH: THE FALL

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VIET 3-31

(PICTURE)

DAY LD

BY ALAN DAWSON

SAIGON (UPI) -- COMMUNIST FORCES OCCUPIED DA NANG IN TRIUMPH TODAY AND WARNED THAT ALL SHIPS AND PLANES MUST HAVE THEIR PERMISSION BEFORE EVACUATING REFUGEES FROM THE CITY, THEIR GREATEST TROPHY IN 20 YEARS OF INDOCHINA WAR.

THE FALL OF DA NANG LEFT THEM IN CONTROL OF 50 PER CENT OF SOUTH VIETNAM'S LAND AREA AND FIGHTING FOR ANOTHER 25 PER CENT AFTER THREE WEEKS OF RENEWED FIGHTING.

THE NEXT OBJECTIVE OF THE ADVANCING VIET CONG AND NORTH VIETNAMESE TROOPS APPEARED TO BE COASTAL QUI NHON, 250 MILES NORTHEAST OF SAIGON.

MILITARY SOURCES CALLED QUI NHON A "GHOST TOWN" SUNDAY BUT THE GOVERNMENT DENIED PUBLISHED REPORTS IT HAD FALLEN TO THE COMMUNISTS.

THE VIET CONG FLAG OF BLUE AND RED BARS WITH A SINGLE YELLOW STAR FLEW OVER BUILDINGS IN DA NANG, A MAJOR PORT AND THE SECOND LARGEST CITY IN SOUTH VIETNAM.

THE SAIGON GOVERNMENT PRESSED FOR U.N. INTERVENTION AND A CEASE-FIRE IN AN ATTEMPT TO FEED AND EVACUATE 1.5 MILLION PERSONS TRAPPED IN THE AREA.

A HANOI RADIO BROADCAST MONITORED IN SAIGON, HOWEVER, INDICATED THE NORTH VIETNAMESE HAD NO INTENTION OF AGREEING TO A TEMPORARY TRUCE.

THE BROADCAST GAVE A RUNDOWN ON AREAS CAPTURED BY COMMUNIST TROOPS -- 13 OF THE 44 PROVINCES -- AND SAID "THE LIBERATION FORCES WILL PROTECT THE LIVES AND PROPERTY OF THE PEOPLE."

COMMUNIST TROOPS AND TANKS BLASTED THEIR WAY INTO THE CITY 370 MILES NORTHEAST OF SAIGON LATE SATURDAY AND EARLY SUNDAY, ENDING A FIVE-DAY BLITZ THAT SPARKED A DESPERATE RETREAT BY 100,000 SOUTH VIETNAMESE SOLDIERS.

THE CAPTURE OF THE CITY WHERE U.S. MARINES FIRST WADED ASHORE 10 YEARS AGO GAVE THE COMMUNISTS CONTROL OF THE ENTIRE NORTHERN THIRD OF SOUTH VIETNAM AND AMOUNTED TO THEIR BIGGEST MILITARY VICTORY SINCE DEFEATING THE FRENCH AT DIEN BIEN PHU IN 1954.

SOUTH VIETNAMESE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER PHAN QUANG DAN ANNOUNCED THE FALL OF DA NANG EARLY SUNDAY AT A NEWS CONFERENCE CALLED TO DISCUSS THE PLIGHT OF NEARLY 2 MILLION WAR REFUGEES IN THE COUNTRY.

"THE CITY IS LOST," DAN SAID AFTER RECEIVING A PHONE CALL. "IT IS CONFIRMED."

HE SAID HE HAD ASKED THE UNITED NATIONS TO HELP WITH REFUGEES AND ARRANGE A CEASE-FIRE. FOUR U.S. NAVY SHIPS DISPATCHED BY PRESIDENT FORD FROM BASES IN THE FAR EAST STEAMED TOWARD SOUTH VIETNAM TO EVACUATE REFUGEES.

IN SAIGON, THE VIET CONG PROVISIONAL REVOLUTIONARY GOVERNMENT SAID "ALL BOATS AND PLANES, FROM WHATEVER COUNTRY, MUST ASK PERMISSION BEFORE ENTERING PRG TERRITORIAL WATERS."

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