



Super mild
Partly cloudy and
continued warm
through Thursday.
Low in upper 60s to
low 70s, high in mid
to upper 90s. SW
winds 10-15 m.p.h.
Weather map, data,
Page 2-A.

St. Petersburg Times

Florida's Best Newspaper

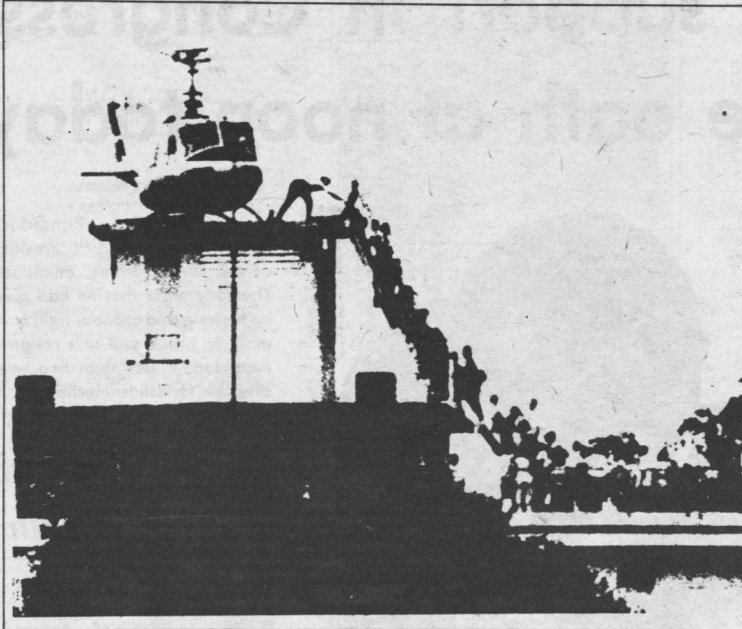
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VOL. 91—NO. 280 64 PAGES

Saigon surrenders to Hanoi; the longest U.S. war is over



'Copter to the rescue

The helicopter, which carried many Americans into battle in Vietnam, was also the escape vehicle Tuesday as Saigon. This Air America helicopter is picking up evacuees from the roof of a building in downtown Saigon. A crewman helps them up a ladder.

UPI

By GEORGE ESPER

SAIGON (AP) — South Vietnam unconditionally surrendered to the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese today, ending 30 years of warfare.

President Duong Van "Big" Minh spoke to the nation only hours after an armada of U.S. Marine helicopters had completed an emergency evacuation of nearly 900 Americans and thousands of Vietnamese from the besieged capital.

Minh, a retired general and neutralist, was named president Monday in a desperate and unsuccessful attempt to negotiate a peace with the Communist leaders.

IN A five-minute radio address, Minh said, "The Republic of Vietnam policy is the policy of peace and reconciliation, aimed at saving the blood of our people. I ask all servicemen to stop firing and stay where you are. I also demand that soldiers of the Provisional Revolutionary Government (Viet Cong) stop firing and stay in place."

"We are here waiting for the Provisional Revolutionary Government, to hand over authority in order to stop useless bloodshed."

Gen. Nguyen Huu Hanh, deputy chief of staff, then went on the air to order all South Vietnamese troops to carry out Minh's orders. "All commanders must be ready to enter into relations with commanders of the Provisional Revolutionary Government to carry out the cease-fire without bloodshed," he said.

ASTHEY spoke, Saigon fell silent, and shellfire subsided along the northern rim, where Viet Cong gunners had been bombarding the airport.

Saigon police and militiamen remained at their posts, indicating that the Communist-led troops had not yet entered the city.

Some South Vietnamese officers complained that the evacuation of Americans had caused panic in the military, with many top army officers and most of the air force fleeing.

But it had been obvious that the capital would fall. More than a dozen North Vietnamese-Viet Cong divisions were riving Saigon, which was defended by less than one division of demoralized green troops.

(See SURRENDER, 3-A)

On The Inside Indo-China

The 30-year war in text and photos, 4-Ax and 5-Ax

America's last war dead in Vietnam: 2 Marines, 2-A

Kissinger asks Hanoi not to destroy Saigon, 3-A

A reporter compares Vietnam now and then, 5-A

Aircraft carrier decks: Safety amid chaos, 5-A

Quiet day in Congress, 13-A

Editorials, columns, 16-A

Refugee effort detailed, 18-A

Last Americans leave Saigon

A decision without dramatics

By JAMES M. NAUGHTON

WASHINGTON — President Ford ordered the evacuation of the last remnants of the American presence in Vietnam after Ambassador Graham A. Martin reluctantly recommended, at 10:41 p.m. Monday, that "we should go with Option 4."

Option 4 was the plan for the immediate evacuation by helicopter of all remaining American citizens and as many South Vietnamese as possible.

Informed of Martin's recommendation by Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger, Ford gave the order: "Go ahead."

WITH THOSE two words, Ford set in motion Operation Frequent Wind, the military's poetic code name for the closing chapter of America's longest war, a tragic conflict that cost the nation more than 56,000 of its young men and 150,000,000,000 of its dollars, a war that alienated many for a generation and changed perhaps forever this country's foreign policy.

White House officials said Tuesday that there was no emotion and no dramatics as Ford yielded to the reality of imminent danger to the remaining Americans in Saigon.

"I think everyone understood the import" of the order to evacuate without having to state it, said White House Press Secretary Ron Nessen.

BASED ON accounts by Ford Administration officials, here is how the President decided on the action that he said "closes a chapter in the American experience."

(See DECISION, 3-A)



Vietnamese watch as helicopter leaves them outside U.S. Embassy

SAIGON (AP) — Dodging random shots fired by bitter South Vietnamese soldiers and fighting off desperate civilians, Americans left Saigon Tuesday in an armada of 81 helicopters guarded by 800 Marines.

Viet Cong gunners sent rockets hurtling into Saigon's Tan Son Nhut Airport early Wednesday as a rear guard of American Marines was evacuated from the rooftop of the abandoned U.S. Embassy in downtown Saigon.

THE SELLING continued after dawn and the Viet Cong claimed they had captured the big Bien Hoa Air Base 15 miles north of the capital.

Saigon's neutralist President-Duong Van Minh and his cabinet surrendered today to the Communists who were on the verge of a complete military victory.

Officials in Washington reported that about 6,500 persons, including nearly 900 Americans, had been airlifted to U.S. Navy ships in the South China Sea during the massive evacuation that began shortly before noon Tuesday — midnight Monday EDT.

THE CHOPPERS picked up the evacuees from the roof of the fortress-like American Embassy, the embassy parking lot, and the tops of one-time American billets.

After the final American retreat from Vietnam was completed, President Ford, in a statement issued by the White House, said the evacuation "closes a chapter in the American experience." In a plea for national unity in the post-Vietnam period, the President said:

"I ask all Americans to close ranks, to avoid recrimination about the past, to look ahead to the many goals we share and to work together on the great tasks that remain to be accomplished."

AMERICA'S 30-year involvement in Vietnam ended in tears, panic, looting and rage. Embittered Saigon soldiers, feeling betrayed by America's withdrawal, fired shots at buses carrying evacuees to the embassy and at the helicopters skimming overhead.

Thousands of civilians, fearing they would be killed by the Viet Cong victors, tried to claw their way over the 10-foot-high wall surrounding the gleaming white embassy building and its grounds.

(See AMERICAN EVACUATION, 3-A)

Ann Leaders	3-D	Movie, Theatre Times	9-D
Bridge	11-D	Outdoors	15-B
Business	7, 10 & 11-B	People	14-A
Classified	7-10-C	Public's Page	17-A
Comics	11-D	Radio-TV	12-D
Continued	10-D	Sketches	11-D
Editorial	16-A	Sports	14-C
Financial	8 & 9-B	Times Directory	10-D
Horoscope	11-D	Weather	2-A
Jumble	11-D		