

DETACHMENT VICTOR  
Amphibious Evacuation Security Forces  
FPO San Francisco 96602

6/DAG/trd  
30 May 1975

From: Officer in Charge  
To: Officer in Charge, Amphibious Evacuation Security Forces

Subj: After Action Report; submission of

2130: 22 Apr. Arrived SS PIONEER CONTENDER from USS DUBUQUE. Met with ships captain, G. L. FLINK, and Marines boarded. Marines birthed on upper decks of superstructure; CWO RUSSELL and I given small cabin.

23 Apr to 27 Apr. Routine established and plan of the day posted. Working parties organized to build latrines and inventory 13 conex boxes of refugee rations. Classes conducted in first aid, code of conduct, interior guard, crowd control, and rules of engagement. Physical Training also conducted. Rapport established with ship's officers and crew. Watches and posts established and contingency planning continued. No significant incidents for period reported or witnessed.

1800: 28 Apr to 1800: 29 Apr 1975.

1810: 28 Apr. The USS VANCOUVER (LPD) launched an LCM-8 loaded with 44 Vietnamese refugees. Because of garbled radio traffic with the VANCOUVER, we were not prepared to take on refugees. As a result, we were forced to embark the Vietnamese via the ensigns ladder. White caps made the transfer a risky operation at best. Compounding the problem was the presence of numerous small children - one only 45 days old. Although time consuming, the operation was uneventful with no injuries incurred.

1930. The USS VANCOUVER launched a second LCM-8 with 23 Vietnamese, 4 Philipinos and an American Embassy Official by the name of James E. PARKER aboard. Embarkation this time was accomplished by means of a boom and a cargo net. Again, no injuries were incurred. The refugees were lowered into number four hold (forward) and water provided. One woman complained of bleeding (it was later learned she was 3 months pregnant) and was sent to sickbay for observation. By morning, the bleeding had stopped and she was returned to her family.

2100. Mr. PARKER briefed the ship's master, the first officer and myself on the events preceding the embarkation operations. PARKER had been working in Can Tho and had become

impatient with the delay in evacuation of Class A refugees (refugees who would be executed in the event of a VC/NVA take-over). After obtaining permission for the American Ambassador in Saigon, PARKER used Air American helicopters to fly his charges from Can Tho to our anchorage, approximately 12 miles off the coast of the delta.

0930: 29 Apr. The refugees were provided with 325 grams of pre-cooked rice each and canned milk for the children. They were also re-supplied with water. The Vietnamese men all spoke English and displayed a familiarity with American idioms and customs gained only after long association with Americans. Jim PARKER was unable to contact the USS VANCOUVER for transportation back to Can Tho and was thus unable to evacuate the additional one hundred or so Vietnamese still remaining at his compound as planned. The two refugee stowaways, smuggled aboard the ship in Saigon, were turned over to me, bringing the total on board refugee count to 69.

2200: 29 Apr. Two LCM-8s were sighted off the fantail. As the crafts came along side it was learned that they carried both American and Vietnamese. A cargo boom and net were used to embark the 276 people aboard the two LCM-8s. The 18 Americans embarked were from the American Consulate at Can Tho. Mr. MCNAMARA, the Consulate General was among those taken aboard. The refugees were housed in #4 hold; the embassy staff were given deck space on the fantail. The three ranking members of the staff were given bunk space on the officers level. In addition, 6 Marines from the consulate were embarked to include 1 Staff Sergeant, 3 Sergeants and 2 Corporals. Staff Sergeant HASTY and his men were billeted on the superstructure with the rest of the detachment. All those embarked were fed. Since the crews of the LCM-8s were a loose coterie of Philippine Nationals and Americans, Mr. PARKER volunteered to take charge of the two craft and follow the SS CONTENDER from our present anchorage off Can Tho to an area off Vung Tau as per instructions received from MSC Saigon.

1000: 30 Apr. Arrived at a holding area approximately 12 miles off Vung Tau and were joined by 3 other ships; 1 LST, 1 DD, and the USNS SGT MILLER. From my position, the SGT MILLER appeared to be taking on refugees from a barge and numerous small boats. At about 1400, I noted artillery fire impacting on fringe of the holding area approximately 1 mile away. The fire seemed to come from one gun of 105/155mm. Of the 10 or 15 rounds I saw fall, there appeared to be no attempt to adjust range or deflection, as all rounds impacted in the same area. Nevertheless, the four ships in the holding area lifted anchor and moved to an area approximately 5 miles further out to sea. As the ships moved off, they were followed by three large barges which were pulled by tugs and numerous small fishing boats. Prior to departure a tug came along side and all American passengers were debarked except Mr. PARKER who still had charge

of the 2 LCM-8s. Most of the weapons confiscated from the Americans were reclaimed; extra weapons and ammo were left aboard and were later policed up and secured. Mr. PRICE, MSC embarked.

1600. Arrived at new holding area, secured the 2 LCM-8s along port side and took a large ammo barge loaded with Vietnamese refugees along the starboard side. The barge's demensions were 250' x 75' and carried about 4,800 people. Loading commenced about 1700 and ended about 0330 the following morning. Numerous small fishing boats also tried to pull along side the ship and the barge to off-load refugees. They were held off only by warning shots fired by selected NCOs. This was deemed necessary to avoid panic and overloading. In all cases, the warning shots were effective and the embarkation of refugees proceeded without incident or injury. ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~

~~\_\_\_\_\_~~. The barge was turned over to the captain of the tug as were the two LCM-8s. During the loading process, a female child was born in a makeshift dispensary set up in the deck house.

2100: 1 May. Took a LCM-8 along side loaded with Marines from C Company, 1st Battalion, 9th Marines. The platoon commander, a Second Lieutenant, was trying to find shipping for approximately 850 additional refugees - most of whom were ARVN troops who were suspected of being armed. The ships master, Captain FLINK, was disinclined to take additional refugees due to the load already on board. However, a duty officer aboard the USS BLUE RIDGE persuaded Captain FLINK to board the remaining Vietnamese. The refugees were loaded aboard a small coastal freighter, a large fishing boat and four standard sized fishing boats. The loading of this last group of refugees went without incident. The coastal freighter was loaded with approximately 500 Vietnamese Army Airborne Troops who had brought all their equipment and wounded with them. After the loading was complete, a detail of Marines was sent aboard the small freighter to dispose of the weapons and explosives and any other equipment that could possibly be used by enemy forces. Among other things, 4 cases of fragmentation grenades and 43 M-16s were thrown over the side. However the 15 AN/PRC-25s which were found were reclaimed and later turned over to the operations officer at Marine Barracks, Subic Bay. Also turned over were 2 M-79 grenade launchers left behind on the 2 LCM-8s.

2 May. Enroute to Grande Island, R.P. Routine established and head men (Vietnamese) for various holds and deck areas expanded to accomodate new refugees. Food and water details were appointed. Two more births, both females, occurred in Sickbay. HM 1st Class P. DAVIS was in attendance.

3 May. 1800 arrived Subic Bay and were tied along side pier by 2000. Ships captain ordered to off load 2000 refugees.

Total off-load was 2025 (additional 25 due to practise of not separating the extended family organization). Additionally, provisions were taken on to supplement the pre-cooked rice and other staples provided by MSC Saigon already on board. Provisions included canned meats and fresh fruits. Mr. PARKER off-loaded along with the 3 Philipinos and 1 Chinese.

4 May. 0200 departed Subic Bay for Guam. No significant incidents reported.

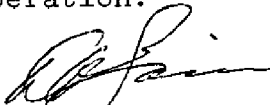
5 May. Enroute Guam. 1400: one ARVN Trooper running high fever do to infection resulting of large peices of shrapnel imbedded in his jaw. Radioed USS WHITE PLAINS for medical assistance. The surgeon was taken aboard by helicopter and operated on the wounded soldier. During the operation, a woman brought a sick newborn (2 weeks old) in, running a high temperature. I interrupted the operation when the baby started to turn blue. The surgeon started mouth to mouth, but was unable to revive the child. The child had aspirated and was later buried at sea with a Catholic Priest in attendance.

6 May. Normal routine - no significant incidents.

7 May. Arrived Agana, Guam at approximately 0830 and was docked pierside at 1330. Off-loading commenced at 1400 and ended at 1700. The Marines were off-loaded by 1900 and transported to Marine Barracks, Guam.

#### Summary

A total of 5,800 refugees were loaded between the 28th of April and the 1st of May to include 20 Americans, 3 Philipinos, and 1 National Chinese. Recorded were 3 births and 1 death. Retrieved were 15 PRC-25 radios and approximately 16 weapons. All reclaimed equipment was returned to U. S. authorities at either Naval Base, Subic Bay or at Okinawa. Aside from 22 cases of conjunctivitis (Pink Eye) no injuries were incurred by Marines. No significant problems were encountered in any phase of the operation; moral among the Marines remained high throughout. Additionally, no equipment was lost, however, all remaining medical supplies were turned over to Marine Barracks, Guam, for use in the refugee operation.

  
D. A. GARCIA  
Capt USMC

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