Planning, Politics and Public Opinion in the 1975 Refugee Resettlement Program

Edwin Donald Miller
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by

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Few events in recent American History have elicited as much emotionalism and controversy as the fall of South Vietnam. Although American troops had not fought in the country since 1973, Americans in the spring of 1975 were acutely sensitive to the rapidly declining military situation and the plight of thousands of Vietnamese refugees. In March and April, efforts by President Gerald R. Ford to secure emergency military aid for the Saigon government created a furor among politicians and the public. Polls showed that a majority of Americans felt further military aid to Saigon would only prolong the suffering of millions of indifferent Vietnamese who did not care if they lived under communism. Following the fall of Saigon on 29 April, the President's decision to resettle thousands of "high risk" and other Vietnamese throughout the nation again caused many Americans to react in a way which the President said did not seem appropriate for a nation of refugees.

Although difficult to discern because of their closeness, historians cannot overlook nor avoid the events of 1975. Basically, it can be generalized that political factors and public opinion played important roles in the aid, evacuation and refugee issues. Public opinion greatly limited the options of the President, State Department, Defense Department and the Congress in foreign policy making, in evacuation planning, in the debate over military aid to Saigon and in planning for the refugee resettlement program.

The writing of this "instant history" encountered numerous obstacles. In many cases, primary sources were not available and many
sources that were used obviously were not the most reliable. With these limitations in mind, this writer hopes to have illustrated how public opinion to a degree influenced the policy making process of the American government by placing constraints upon the complex political system.

Many individuals have helped me in the preparation of this paper. Foremost are Dr. Robert David Ward, my major professor, who offered scholarly advice and criticism, and Captain David Firster, an Army intelligence officer, who offered much needed analysis of the military situation in South Vietnam. Dr. Howard C. Thomas, Jr., a State Department official who served from 1966 to 1975 in South Vietnam, also provided invaluable insight. And, Professors Clement Charlton Mosely and J. Perry Cochran deserve appreciation for serving on my reading committee and for the criticism they provided.

             Edwin Donald Miller
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CHAPTER I
THE VIETNAM DILEMMA

Will some future poet write (of) 'the click heard round the world?' That click would be the sound made by some rifle hammer striking an empty chamber the day that the last round of ammunition had been spent by those fighting for their freedom in Southeast Asia.--General George Brown, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.¹

The rapidly declining military situation in Vietnam and Cambodia of April 1975 came at a turbulent time in American history. Faced with double-digit inflation and an unemployment rate fluctuating between six and nine percent, Americans for the most part reacted suspiciously, if not bitterly, to attempts by President Gerald R. Ford to convince the Congress to appropriate emergency military aid to America's Southeast Asian friends who were struggling for their survival. Americans felt that further military aid from the United States to the two hopelessly corrupt dictatorships would only prolong the suffering of millions of indifferent Vietnamese and Cambodians who did not care whether they lived under communism. Moreover, the nation appeared war weary—tired of a 10-year war that still had no end in sight, had cost 55,000 American lives, $150 billion and had led the nation to the worst economic slowdown since the Great Depression of the 1930s.

Public opinion clearly did not support the President's seemingly incessant requests for military aid. A Louis Harris poll conducted in the last week of March, a week when South Vietnam's President Nguyen Van Thieu attempted to consolidate his military forces, showed that 68

¹ Newsweek, March 31, 1975, p. 16.
per cent of Americans opposed additional military aid for Cambodia and even more, 74 per cent, opposed further aid to South Vietnam.²

On 28 April Time magazine correspondents reporting on the "mood" of the nation expressed this anti-war sentiment of most Americans. James Bell relayed feelings from the South:

This region, where Presidents from Eisenhower through Nixon received their strongest and most lasting support for the war in Vietnam, has had it. As far as the South goes, the long and painful episode ended with the return of the last American prisoner of war. So Southerners generally say no to further military aid for Vietnam or the involvement of the U.S. Army, Air Force or Navy. They are, of course, for the evacuation of Americans but are nervous about the deployment of large numbers of Vietnamese.³

And, Benjamin W. Gate reported on Midwestern views: "Even the President's hometown paper, the Grand Rapids Press, accused Ford of 'perpetuating the frauds (of the past.)'"⁴

And, from the West, Time's Jess Cook reported similar views:

This side of the Rockies, most people make it clear that they have heard it all, viewed it all and read it all before...There is little enthusiasm for giving even humanitarian aid.⁵

For the Congress, the decline of Vietnam came during an era when it was attempting to reassert its power over the Executive branch. Perhaps rejections of President Ford's requests for emergency military aid to Saigon signified defiance, rather than moral conviction, to the Executive who, Congress believed, had used the Vietnam War to usurp

²Ibid.
³Time, April 28, 1975, p. 12.
⁴Ibid.
⁵Ibid.
congressional responsibilities. However, reports concerning the sad state of affairs in Saigon—the corruption at high levels and the abandonment of one billion dollars worth of United States supplied military equipment by fleeing South Vietnamese troops—greatly distressed the Congress which wanted to end this long national nightmare. Nevertheless, in the face of such obvious adverse public and congressional feelings, both President and State Department appeared to continue to push Congress for military aid so the Indochina war could be continued.

Debate Over Military Aid

In December 1974 Communist forces consisting of both North Vietnamese Regular and Provisional Revolutionary Government troops launched a relative weak, but psychologically effective, offensive in South Vietnam. The offensive did not surprise many who felt that Congress in 1973 had shirked America's responsibilities as guarantor of the Paris Peace Accord by passing legislation which prohibited the President from using American military forces to retaliate against Communist forces that disregarded the Accord. Now, a year and a half after enactment of the legislation, North Vietnamese forces were able to move large numbers of troops into the South and launch an offensive without worrying about American intervention. As Communists pushed southward, Thieu's military advisors made a tragic blunder by overestimating the enemy's strength while underestimating the abilities of South Vietnamese military forces to stop the insurgents. As a result,

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6 Interview with Dr. Howard S. Thomas, State Department, by E.D. Miller at Fort Indiantown Gap, Pa., December 20, 1975. (Hereinafter cited as Thomas interview.)
Thieu's advisors on 15 January urged him to abandon the high plateau area of the country—nearly one half—and to consolidate his disintegrating forces.

Thieu waited until 10 March when Communist forces launched an unexpected attack on Ban Me Thout in the central highlands before undertaking the ill-timed and unplanned withdrawal. The President, in the face of this first major Communist attack, ordered his forces to move southward in defense of Saigon and the Mekong Delta which contained the bulk of South Vietnamese, the economy and rice land. However, the hastily executed move caused panic among smaller South Vietnamese military units whose commanders perceived the withdrawal as a rout caused by overwhelming Communist forces.7

The climax of the debacle came around 31 March with the fall of Da Nang. In an attempt to keep thousands of Vietnamese out of Communist hands, the United States decided to stage a massive evacuation. The evacuation, the largest ever planned, called for a massive movement by air and sea of some 500,000 Vietnamese to Phu Loc and the port cities of Cam Ranh Bay and Vung Tao. Thieu planned to use his troops to hold back Communist advances at the ancient imperial capital of Hue while South Vietnamese and Americans undertook the difficult evacuation.

The premature withdrawal of the Army's elite airborne division and marine units from the Hue area caused confusion and troop morale to sag.8 Instead of withdrawing his disorganized units first, Thieu decided to leave them in contact and instead pull back his best forces

7 [Jacksonville Journal, May 3, 1975.]
8 [Thomas interview.]
to protect Saigon and himself from possible coups. In hopes of rallying his troops, Thieu told them that the battle would be the most decisive in Vietnamese history. His troops felt differently. Within hours after the evacuation began, Thieu's troops began to abandon their weapons and defensive positions. The evacuation turned into a tactical nightmare as mobs of troops and civilians descended upon the evacuation planes and ships.

The resulting confusion allowed amazed North Vietnamese leaders to move all but two or three of their divisions—numbering about 20—from the north into the void created by the disintegrating Army of South Vietnam. As Thieu's units continued to needlessly and prematurely crumble, often without Communist pressure, the South Vietnamese president was unable to stabilize the declining military situation because he failed to tell his generals explicitly what his strategy involved. Orders from Thieu to the field changed by the hour. First he told his commanders to withdraw; then to defend in position; then to attack the Communist forces.

President Ford, in the wake of these setbacks, proposed to Congress an emergency military aid bill consisting of $722 million, hoping that Saigon, with additional military aid, could stop Communist advances. During the week of 23 March, and despite an intensified Easter offensive launched by the Communists, Congress ignored the President's plan to resupply Thieu's forces and instead passed a $3.7

9 Ibid.
10 Ibid.
billion foreign aid bill that reduced Ford's request for aid to Indochina by $449.8 million. Both houses then adjourned for two weeks without voting on the emergency aid.

With Da Nang lost, the President warned the Congress during a joint session on 14 April that the United States could not abandon its friends while American adversaries supported and encouraged theirs. He further said:

The chances for an enduring peace after the last American fighting man left Vietnam in 1973 rested on two publicly stated premises: First, that if necessary, the United States would help sustain the terms of the Paris Accord it signed two years ago; and the second, that the United States would provide adequate economic and military assistance to South Vietnam.¹¹

The President explained that North Vietnam had violated the Paris Accord by introducing more than 350,000 troops, virtually its entire army, into the South while the United States reduced economic and military aid to South Vietnam. Ford considered this the coup de grace because, with this move, the United States had signalled its increasing reluctance to give any support to South Vietnam which was struggling for its survival.

The President again urged Congress to grant his $722-million request for emergency military assistance and additional humanitarian aid to help ease the suffering of the people of Vietnam. He also

¹¹Congressional Record, 94th Cong., 1st Sess., H2683. In 1974, the Congress cut the Administration's aid request to Saigon from $1.4 billion to $700 million.
called for Hanoi to honor the 1973 Paris agreement and asked the signatories, including China and the U.S.S.R., to use their influence with North Vietnam to bring about a halt to the fighting. The Congress, however, ignored the President's plea. Ford probably knew the Congress would refuse to grant his emergency military aid request. In January, he had first requested $300 million in emergency military aid for South Vietnam and the Congress refused. Faced with the refusal, Ford and his aides argued before congressional committees and in speeches that South Vietnam needed the aid to "stabilize" the military situation long enough to permit a negotiated peace and allow for the safe evacuation of Americans. Ford told newsmen attending a meeting of the American Society of Newspaper Editors on 17 April, "I am absolutely convinced if Congress made available $722 million in military assistance in a few days the South Vietnamese could stabilize the military situation in South Vietnam today."  

Faced with consistent congressional refusals in March and early April, the President realized he had no funds for emergency military aid except a $200-million contingency fund proposed by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. The panel told Ford he could use half of the amount for humanitarian aid to Cambodia and South Vietnam and the other half for evacuating Americans from South Vietnam. Meanwhile, the House International Relations Committee proposed a similar $327-million fund. The proposals irritated the President who aides said

claimed that no funds would be better than the trifling amount authorized by the committees.13

The Congress during the two months of debate over the aid proposals firmly stood its ground. Representative Thomas J. Downey, New York, exemplified the anti-war sentiment which prevailed in the Congress. Testifying before the House Defense Subcommittee on Appropriations which was considering the President's request, he asked: "My God. Why are we still there? Why are we still financing the almost inconceivable suffering that the people of Vietnam have endured?" Continuing, he told the subcommittee:

Almost a third of the Vietnamese population are refugees. In the years of fighting 860,000 'enemy,' 165,000 ARVN and 300,000 civilians (have been) killed. Proportionately it is as though 20 million Americans died in the war instead of 55,000.14

In the Senate, Mark Hatfield, Oregon, also exemplified the anti-aid sentiment. He told his colleagues on 10 April:

The ugly agony of Indochina is made all the more torturous by the delusive refusal of this nation to accept the culpability for decades of a morally indefensible policy whose final failure is now being revealed.15

Later the same day, Representative Robert L. Leggett, California, echoed the Senate reaction. Speaking to his colleagues, he branded Ford's request for additional military aid to Saigon as "absurd" and

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13 Florida Times-Union, April 16, 1975.
14 Congressional Record, 94th Cong., 1st Sess., E1432.
15 Congressional Record, 94th Cong., 1st Sess., S5637.
said that in the past year the United States had given Saigon two and 
one-half times as much aid as North Vietnam had received from the Soviet 
Union and China combined. Citing Pentagon figures, he said American 
military aid to South Vietnam during fiscal year 1975 totalled $1 billion. 
Further citing his objections to Ford's proposal, he said: "We have been 
engaged in a program of military aid to North Vietnam, giving them free 
major pieces of military equipment that have never been fired and only 
dropped once."16

Even Republicans in the Congress, although generally not agitating 
against Ford, conspicuously avoided comment on the President's request 
for emergency aid. General William C. Westmoreland, commander of 
American forces in Vietnam from 1965 through 1968, emerged as one of 
the few politicians to voice disgust with the Congress. He told an 
interviewer from the New York Times:

For the life of me, I can't understand why the people of 
the United States are not incensed about Congress and 
the mockery Hanoi has made of the Paris Peace Accord, 
why we Americans don't see our moral obligation.17

By 21 April, poor strategic planning and leadership in Saigon, 
combined with the refusal of the United States Congress to grant 
emergency military aid, had caused the situation in South Vietnam to 
reach the crisis stage. The resignation of Thieu that day signified 
that the end would come shortly.

16Congressional Record, 94th Cong., 1st Sess., S5637. 
As Communist troops moved near Saigon in preparation for massive attacks on the capital city, the American Congress sat back and silently awaited the fall of South Vietnam. The issue by now had developed into a political "hot potato." The Congress wanted to avoid the issue as much as the President intended to force the decision on aid upon the Congress. Despite token rhetoric concerning the consequences of a fall of South Vietnam, it appeared that President Ford was more interested in making sure that Democrats in the election of 1976 would not blame him for losing Southeast Asia. At the same time, Congress avoided the moral side of the Vietnam issue by refusing to realize the critical role that the United States had in the enforcement of the Paris Accord. Sensing the anti-war sentiment, however, Congress had nullified the Nixon Doctrine and unilaterally changed America's foreign policy toward Asia. The tragic part was that the Congress, in hopes of avoiding the political issue, failed to allow the political process to work because it refused to allow a vote on the President's request. Congress never voted on Ford's request for $722 million in emergency military aid and the President acquiesed to the will of the people. Politically, the issue evolved into an acceptable stalemate with neither Congress nor the President held to blame for the fall of Indochina.

Planning for Evacuation

With the aid controversy raging in Congress, the State Department reluctantly and half-heartedly began making plans for withdrawal of Americans and "high risk" Vietnamese. The first indication the Department planned to evacuate refugees came no earlier than late March. Although the
military situation did not appear hopeless, the Department discreetly ordered its embassy in Saigon to start providing weekly status reports regarding the total numbers and welfare of Americans and others for whom the United States had emergency evacuation responsibility. The "others" which the order did not clearly explain included a broad category of Vietnamese which the State Department felt it had a moral obligation to evacuate because of possible reprisals by a new Communist regime. For example, these refugees included close friends of American citizens, Vietnamese employees of the United States government and their families, ranking Government of South Vietnam officials and their families. To the Saigon Embassy, the State Department order also appeared ambiguous because it lacked the necessary criteria for explaining how many "others" the embassy could designate for evacuation. Besides, Ambassador Graham Martin felt there was no reason to evacuate Americans, let alone Vietnamese, because he believed that the American government would change its mind on the aid issue if the situation reached the critical point.

While Thieu's decision to surrender the northern half of his country to Communists left hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese homeless, the resulting panic in Washington left Martin in rage. The State Department ordered Martin to discreetly suggest to non-official Americans that

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18 The President's Advisory Committee on Refugees, "Background Papers," May 19, 1975. (Hereinafter cited as Advisory Committee, Papers.)
19 Ibid.
20 Thomas interview.
they consider sending out their dependents and to designate "high risk" Vietnamese for evacuation. Martin refused, arguing that such a move could prematurely cause the Saigon government to collapse.

Meanwhile in Washington, less than two weeks after the Da Nang debacle, the President for the first time publicly indicated that he might authorize the evacuation of Vietnamese refugees. Ford, in his State of the World Address on 10 April, told the Congress:

I must, of course, as I think each of you would, consider the safety of nearly 6,000 Americans who remain in South Vietnam and the tens of thousands of South Vietnamese employees of the United States Government, of news agencies, of contractors and businesses for many years whose lives, with their dependents are in very grave peril. There are tens of thousands of other South Vietnamese intellectuals, professors, teachers, editors and opinion-leaders who have supported the South Vietnamese cause and the alliance with the United States, to whom we have a profound moral obligation.

In prefacing his remarks about refugees, the President asked Congress to make a decision on aid by 19 April and revise laws to cover evacuation of "those Vietnamese to whom we have a very special obligation and whose lives may be in danger, should the worst come to pass." In Saigon, a demoralized Thieu considered the speech important because of what it did not offer: Ford would not unilaterally provide military equipment, let alone American troops, to prevent a Communist takeover in South Vietnam.

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21 Advisory Committee, Papers. 
22 Congressional Record, 94th Cong., 1st Sess., S5933. 
23 Ibid.
The following day Cambodia fell to Communists without a tear or eulogy from either the Congress or the President. The lack of emotion gave a preview of the presidential indifference which would greet the fall of Saigon two weeks later. Ford conspicuously failed to mention even the prospect of a fall in his State of the World Address the night before. Instead, he waited until 12 April to inform the Congress.

Ford explained in a letter:

On Friday, 11 April 1975, the Khmer Communist forces had ruptured the Government of the Khmer Republic (GKR) defensive lines to the north, northwest, and east of Phnom Pehn and were within mortar range of Pochentong Airfield and the outskirt of Phnom Penh. In view of the deteriorating military situation, and on the recommendation of the American Ambassador there, I ordered U.S. military forces to proceed with the planned evacuation...24

Ford explained that the first elements of the United States forces entered Cambodian airspace at 8:34 p.m. (EDT) on 12 April. This emotionless response, together with refusals by both Ford and the Congress to use American troops to stop the Communists, signified that the President was willing to accept the congressional decision to alter United States foreign policy toward Southeast Asia and to give up America's quasi-sphere of influence there.

Two days later, 14 April, the State Department began to hasten evacuation plans and conveyed to its embassy in Saigon a limited parole authority for "high risk" Vietnamese which the State Department obtained

24Congressional Record, 94th Cong., 1st Sess., S5934.
from the Attorney General at the urging of the President. The authority allowed the admittance into the United States of about 70,000 Vietnamese who had relatives, either aliens or citizens, living there.25

As late as 15 April, almost a week following the fall of Cambodia, the military situation around Saigon appeared so delicate that presidential aides told newsmen Ford and the Secretary of State felt that the Saigon government would see any effort to withdraw Americans as the final American abandonment of the Saigon government. Both reportedly feared such an act would also provoke hostile action by South Vietnamese troops or citizens against Americans still in South Vietnam. At the same time, Ford may have felt to ask for anything less than $722 million in emergency aid, although realizing that his request was futile, would have signalled his willingness to abandon Saigon and would have hastened the fall of Saigon.

Meanwhile, the news media learned of plans to evacuate refugees by force if necessary. Newsweek reported that the President had approved a plan, code named Operation Talon Vise, to withdraw up to 200,000 South Vietnamese who had been associated with the American effort in Vietnam. This number included a select group of political figures, military men and civil servants whose lives would plainly be threatened if the Communists took power. The plan called for the use of helicopters to pick up evacuees from outlying areas, including a

25Advisory Committee, Papers.
small number of Vietnamese who had worked for the Central Intelligence Agency's Phoenix Program, which had liquidated thousands of Vietnamese who had worked for the Viet Cong. The plan called for the evacuees to fly out of Tan Son Nhut airport, located near Saigon, or sail by ship from the port city of Vung Tau, 40 miles southeast of Saigon. The plan frightened the Pentagon, Newsweek reported, because it feared such a plan would create a logistical nightmare and that it would take at least six divisions of American troops to secure the airport, and deal with panicky crowds. Also, the Pentagon feared the possibility that American troops would have to fight their way in and out of the nation against Viet Cong, North Vietnamese Army troops and perhaps vengeful South Vietnamese.26

On 17 April, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, attempting to calm emerging anti-refugee sentiment, "clarified" the President's State of the World Address statement which hinted the United States would accept refugees from South Vietnam. Before a meeting of the American Society of Newspaper Editors in Washington, Kissinger said:

If the worst should come to pass and if it were not possible to stabilize the situation, we feel we have a moral obligation to help in the evacuation of those whose association with us now endangers their lives.27

26 Newsweek, April 21, 1975.
By this time the President realized the worst had already come to pass and that Congress would not appropriate funds for emergency aid. At the same time Ford foresaw the development of another sticky political situation—the refugee problem. The following day, 18 April, Ford announced the creation of a special Inter-Agency Task Force consisting of 12 governmental agencies which would coordinate the evacuation of Americans, Vietnamese and third-country nationals. Ford also charged the Task Force with handling refugee and resettlement problems.28

To coordinate activities within the Task Force, Ford appointed Ambassador L. Dean Brown as his special representative. Brown, formerly ambassador to Senegal, The Gambia and Jordan, quickly assembled a small staff of officers from various governmental agencies and began planning for the evacuation, staging areas in the Western Pacific, and reception centers in the United States.29

In Saigon, Ambassador Martin did not appear as pessimistic as Washington officials. He continued to believe as late as 21 April that Thieu, with military aid from the United States, could save South Vietnam and that a premature evacuation of Americans and Vietnamese could tip the balance against Saigon. Therefore, he vetoed proposals to start moving Vietnamese embassy employees quietly from Saigon.30

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28 Inter-Agency Task Force on Indochina Refugees, "Report to Congress," June 15, 1975. The 12 agencies included Departments of: State; Health, Education and Welfare; Treasury; Defense; Justice; Interior; Labor; Housing and Urban Development; Transportation; Agency for International Development; Office of Management and Budget; Central Intelligence Agency.
29 Ibid.
30 Newsweek, April 21, 1975.
Congress and Evacuation

As the military situation reached the critical point on 24 April, congressional disgust with the military aid controversy seeped into State Department efforts to evacuate Americans and Vietnamese from South Vietnam. Only five days before the surrender of Saigon, Representative John L. Burton of Colorado reported to the House there had been a decline in the evacuation of Americans. Burton told the House that on 21 April the State Department evacuated only 574 Americans and 369 dependents and far less on 22 April—only 354 Americans and 225 dependents. The slow evacuation left in danger some 2,243 officials and their dependents, Burton said. He also told his colleagues that he feared a fall of South Vietnam would give Ford the excuse to intervene with American troops to evacuate Americans who were stranded in the country.31

In the Senate, Dick Clark of Iowa echoed Burton's disgust with the State Department evacuation efforts. He told the Senate on 28 April:

In spite of the increasingly dangerous situation, the number of Americans being brought out has slowed to something less than a trickle. The net reduction is 65 American citizens. In the meantime, more than 6,600 South Vietnamese were evacuated in the same period.32

31 Congressional Record, 94th Cong., 1st Sess., E2022. Burton failed to mention that many Americans resisted leaving the country until the last minute.
32 Ibid, S6882. One major obstacle, however, was the fact that the Saigon government was extremely reluctant to grant exit visas. The 6,600 figure included orphans and Vietnamese dependents of Americans.
Clark said that during the 48-hour period the State Department had reduced the number of Americans remaining in South Vietnam by only 141, leaving 950 still here. At the present rate, he said, evacuation would take two weeks to complete.

The same day, one day before Saigon fell, Speaker of the House Carl Albert read a letter from President Ford which notified him that Ford intended to authorize the use of Indochina Postwar Reconstruction funds to finance the evacuation from South Vietnam of certain South Vietnamese and nationals from other foreign countries.33

Seeing the approaching end, Ford made one last feeble attempt to secure additional emergency aid. In addition, the President said he did not believe the $70 million authorized by Congress for resettling 70,000 refugees would sufficiently cover costs for evacuation and resettlement of possibly 140,000 South Vietnamese. Stressing the need for additional funds, he warned the House:

The failure to evacuate these people from South Vietnam would leave them in danger of harm, perhaps even death in the face of Communist aggression, and would cause serious question in the eyes of other nations regarding the U.S. government's humanitarian conscience toward those with whom it has been closely associated and allied with for many years.34

At the Pentagon, officials believed the State Department had dodged the evacuation issue too long. In the next to the last week

34Ibid.
in April, Defense Secretary James R. Schlesinger had dispatched 44 American naval vessels, 6,000 Marines, 120 Air Force combat and tanker planes and 150 Navy planes in anticipation of the final evacuation. Nevertheless, Ambassador Martin in Saigon continued to argue that the final withdrawal of Americans from Saigon would trigger panic in Saigon and hasten the fall of the Government of South Vietnam.35

As Communist forces approached within artillery range of Saigon, the State Department finally, but tragically too late, defined several categories of Vietnamese targeted for evacuation. On 28 April Washington authorized the embassy to evacuate:36

1. up to 4,000 orphans.

2. 1,000 to 75,000 relatives of American citizens or permanent resident aliens.

3. 50,000 "high risk" Vietnamese, including past and present American government employees; officials whose cooperation was necessary for the evacuation of American citizens; individuals with knowledge of sensitive government intelligence operations; vulnerable political or intellectual figures; Communist defectors; employees of U.S. firms operating in Vietnam; employees of voluntary agencies; certain labor officials; and participants of U.S. government sponsored programs.

With a final massive evacuation planned, Congress reacted to the President's plan for bringing thousands of refugees into the United States. Despite an obvious moral obligation to evacuate thousands of "high risk" 

35Thomas interview.

36Kennedy Subcommittee. It is doubtful whether earlier planning by the State Department would have allowed a large number of Vietnamese to leave. The Government of South Vietnam, until shortly before the collapse, insisted on the normally long and costly procedure for exit visas.
Vietnamese who had worked for the United States Government at one time, there ensued a heated debate. Numerous politicians feared unemployed refugees would only add to the nation's failing economy and social problems while others noted that the French still had problems with the 27,000 Vietnamese refugees they evacuated after their defeat at Dienbienphu in the 1950s. Twenty years later about 500 Vietnamese still lived in a temporary camp about 80 miles from Bordeaux.\(^{37}\)

Robert C. Byrd of West Virginia, reflecting the mood of the Senate, said he had "serious reservations" about the President's plan.\(^{38}\) In a speech on 28 April he told his colleagues:

> The United States currently has a jobless rate of 8.7 per cent, the highest since 1941, and our overall economic picture—the recession, inflation, national debt, gross national product—is far from bright. Adding well over 100,000 South Vietnamese to that picture will not help the United States.\(^{39}\)

> The Senator asked: Where would the evacuation line be drawn? Should the government evacuate all Vietnamese who worked for or with Americans in South Vietnam? Should the United States evacuate all who had a connection with the South Vietnamese government? Or should it evacuate only high-ranking officers of the armed forces? Or should the United States seek to provide asylum for all who fought against the Communists? He added:

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\(^{37}\)New York Times, April 29, 1975

\(^{38}\)Congressional Record, 94th Cong., 1st Sess., S6882.

\(^{39}\)Ibid.
If large numbers are endangered, then other countries as well as our own should open their gates to them, especially those countries that have cultural similarities to Vietnam. The State Department—to say nothing of the United Nations—ought to be moving in that direction.\textsuperscript{40}

In the Senate, on the other side of the controversy, Senator Hugh Scott of Pennsylvania emerged as the President's defender and primary backer concerning evacuation planning and the resettlement effort. Scott told his colleagues on 28 April:

I would like these people coming to the United States to feel that we want them, that we welcome them, that we are glad they were able to escape to freedom. But I do not want to be part of any of this niggling or nitpicking about 'Don't send them to my state.' I would be glad to see them come to Pennsylvania and to be a part of our life, and we will welcome them.\textsuperscript{41}

Scott told the Senate that America had always opened its heart—to the Hungarians, to the Cubans, to refugees from Bangladesh, Nigeria, India and "to all parts of the world that had seen suffering, to displaced and oppressed people."\textsuperscript{42} Chastising those who voiced displeasure with Ford's plan to bring such a large number of refugees to the United States, he said: "I am not going to ask others to do what I am not willing to do myself. I think it is sufficient to mention this simply because I do not want to be in a position of a politician telling other people what to do."\textsuperscript{43}

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid.
Scott's offer, perhaps to his dismay, became an offer too good for the Pentagon to refuse. Following the opening of the three refugee camps in Arkansas, California and Florida, the Pentagon would grasp hold of Scott's "Open Heart" rhetoric and announce the decision that a camp would open in Pennsylvania.
CHAPTER II
PLANNING FOR REFUGEES

We were aware very early...the government as a matter of policy was going to evacuate, or try to evacuate, some people...we were getting figures at that time up to a million and a half—Anthony Auletta, Department of the Army planner.¹

In April, as Communist forces captured provinces north of Saigon and the President and Congress squabbled over the military aid issue, the Department of Defense alerted the Army that it would have total responsibility for caring for as many as 1.5 million refugees should South Vietnam collapse.² Faced with the possibility of such a logistical nightmare and armed with scant information from the State Department concerning the scope of the refugee situation, the Army's upper echelons reacted and set about making contingency plans to prepare dozens of Army posts across the nation as possible refugee camps. To say the least, the Army appeared hesitant about involvement in a refugee program. With fewer than 800,000 in its peacetime force, military planners realized that the Army could neither adequately continue its worldwide security missions nor maintain its readiness if it had to run such a large disruptive non-military mission. Historically, the Army had good reason for its reluctance about such operations. From the Civil War

¹Interview with Anthony Auletta, Office of Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations, Department of the Army, by E.D. Miller at Washington, D.C., July 24, 1975. (Hereinafter cited as Auletta, interview.)
²Ibid.
forward, the Army became bogged down with a series of disaster relief operations resulting from floods, tornadoes, hurricanes and earthquakes. Governors in many of these cases protested the interference, or intervention, of federal troops and Congress many times refused, or simply failed, to reimburse the Army for supplies it had expended during relief operations. In addition, such tasks invariably interrupted vital military training and affected preparedness. Nevertheless, despite these traditional reservations, the Army began to realize in the last weeks of April that the failing military situation in South Vietnam would again force it to become involved in a tremendous humanitarian undertaking but another disruptive non-military duty.

**Initial Studies**

As in the past, Army planners and leaders reacted pragmatically about participating in such a venture. Although most had a great amount of compassion for the refugees because they had fought in South Vietnam, they quickly realized that involvement in a long-term resettlement program would, as in the past, drain combat units of their manpower and perhaps create morale problems among troops. Many also felt civilians in non-military government agencies should take responsibility for any type of program which dealt with refugees. As a result of these fears and apprehensions, Army planners at the Pentagon considered requesting mobilization of Reserve units of selected reservists to help ease the burden. 

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3 Ibid.
As the evacuation from Saigon reached its peak on 28 April, Major General Charles R. Sniffin, Director of Operations at Department of the Army, sent Army Secretary Howard "Bo" Calloway a feasibility study concerning the use of Reserve civil affairs units to help supply, feed and clothe an unknown number of refugees. Sniffin outlined three possible ways that the Army could use the Reserves to help staff and run refugee camps if the task proved too large for the Active Army to handle. He first discussed the manpower problem. Selective mobilization of Army Reserve civil affairs units, Sniffin said, would solve this problem. Either the Congress or the President could approve mobilization under Sections 672 or 673 of Title 10, U.S. Code. Sniffin told the Secretary this course of action would provide the Army with the necessary manpower, but one important disadvantage "would be possible political repercussions accompanying selective mobilization for a Vietnamese related purpose." A second course of action Sniffin considered included using Reserve units during their annual training, usually a period of 12-14 days of summer training. This option was not only unfeasible but totally impractical since many unit personnel had unnecessary specialties such as finance and archives protection, the general said. The third option, which the Army ultimately would choose, somewhat because of political

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4Information Paper, Subject: Feasibility of Using Reserve Civil Affairs Units in Refugee Aid Program; from Maj. Gen. Charles R. Sniffin, Director of Operations, Department of the Army, through Chief of Staff, U.S. Army, to Secretary of the Army, April 28, 1975.

5Ibid.
pressure to get reservists involved, included using selected reservists who would volunteer for tours of duty of 90 to 125 days to augment Active Army forces. This option appeared to be the best, Sniffin told Calloway.

Sniffin's rationale for supporting the third option—if the State Department evacuated 1.5 million Vietnamese—proved realistic. In view of the heated debate over military aid to South Vietnam going on in the Congress, Sniffin realized that the Congress would never authorize mobilization of Reserves for a Vietnamese related action, unless the task of supporting refugees was too large for the Active Army.

Meanwhile, meager coordination between the Departments of Defense and State in the weeks prior to the fall of Saigon, apparently caused by outward antagonism between Secretaries Kissinger and Schlesinger, appeared to compound the Army's planning problems. Although the State Department appeared to hasten plans for evacuation of Americans throughout April, the Defense Department lacked adequate information and a realistic estimate of the number of Vietnamese refugees State officials wanted to evacuate. By the time the State Department did advise the Pentagon of its plans to evacuate only 50,000 refugees—rather than 1.5 million—it was already 22 April and the military situation around Saigon had reached the point that it appeared Saigon would fall any day.⁶

⁶Message. From Secretary of State to Saigon Embassy, Subject: Indochina Evacuees, April 22, 1975. Schlesinger was critical of the lag in evacuation planning. He believed that the State Department should have evacuated Americans and Vietnamese in March and early April before the situation reached the crisis stage.
Defense Department planners, somewhat deceived by this belated revelation, tentatively believed that such a small number of refugees would create few problems, and hence failed to adequately inform the three subordinate military services of the potential gravity of the refugee situation. Compounding the communications problem between the Defense Department and its services appeared to be the preparation of contingency plans for the intervention of American troops into South Vietnam to either stabilize the military situation or provide the large security force needed to secure harbors and airports for a massive evacuation, if the President authorized such moves. Pentagon planners engaged in making such plans therefore had little time to worry about plans for refugees camps. That was a bridge which could be crossed at a later time, if needed.

It was not until 22 April, one week before the fall of Saigon, that the Defense Department had enough information about State Department evacuation plans that it was able to determine that it would become involved in a refugee resettlement program. Only then did information trickle down from the Pentagon's upper echelons to the Army so it could issue guidance to its planning sections so they could deal with the developing refugee situation.  

Upon issuance of the Defense Department directive which recognized the crisis, the Department of the Army told its planning sections and

7 Ibid.
the United States Army Forces Command in Atlanta, Georgia, about plans by State Department officials in Saigon to move up to 50,000 designated evacuees to safe havens either outside the continental United States or to installations within United States territories.\textsuperscript{8}

With this initial guidance, it appeared to the Army that the State Department had drastically changed its plans to bring up to 1.5 million refugees into the United States and that the Department planned to open camps for only a small number of refugees outside the continental United States. Therefore, Army planners rationalized there was no immediate need to request mobilization of the Reserves or to assign a large number of Active Army units to run refugee camps. Of course, the Army realized it would participate in the program to a degree, perhaps by providing a handful of advisory personnel who had specialties in camp operations. However, to the Army the important point was that the State Department would locate the camps outside the United States and take responsibility for the operation.

The following day, 23 April, a telephone call from General Sniffin to Brigadier General William R. Todd, Deputy of Operations and Plans at FORSCOM, reinforced this assumption. Sniffin told Todd he had discussed the evacuation with a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff who

\textsuperscript{8}Ibid. FORSCOM was directly responsible for the Army's efforts in Operation New Arrivals, the code name for the resettlement program. FORSCOM fell directly beneath the Department of the Army in the chain of command and had command authority over all Active Army, National Guard and Army Reserve forces within the continental U.S., Hawaii and Panama. FORSCOM replaced the old Continental Army Command in a re-organization in 1972.
had told him there would be no refugee camps opened in the United States. Todd recorded the information in a memorandum:

To the extent possible, we will be using a major staging area on Guam to handle up to 50,000 evacuees either in buildings or tents. They (the State Department) hope to bring, at least initially, to CONUS (Continental United States) only those who have some form of sponsorship in the United States. After medically checked and screened, they would be moved to the United States, hopefully, right to destinations. No major staging facility (would be needed) in CONUS.  

Todd added, however, that Sniffin personally considered this the "ideal case" and that Lieutenant General Donald H. Cowles, in charge of personnel operations at Department of the Army, wanted FORSCOM to prepare possible plans for handling a minimum of 20,000 refugees.

In anticipation of a last-minute order to open stateside refugee centers, FORSCOM went ahead and started preparing surveys on the capabilities of inactive camps around the nation to handle refugees. As a result, FORSCOM earmarked three sites which it felt could adequately house and support refugees. FORSCOM believed Camp Roberts, California, followed by Fort Chaffee, Arkansas, and Camp Pickett, Virginia—all inactive World War II camps--were the three best camps it could provide. In making its selections of sites, FORSCOM followed orders from Department of the Army to keep the camps located on the west coast and in the South because a warm climate would be best for Vietnamese. 

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10Ibid.
During the telephone conversation between Sniffin and Todd, the question of utilization of Reserves came up again and Sniffin queried Todd about the impact refugee camps would have on summer training. Sniffin also warned Todd of a possible requirement of providing Active or Reserve Component support to Guam and to "also think about the possibility of using reservists to help run the camps." Todd summarized the conversation:

J4 hopes that we will not have to establish this major facility in CONUS, but we feel, as prudent planners, (it would be best) to organize. Dollars for this would be provided. Strictly contingency planning at this point. With the 50,000 (at Guam) that will be handled, there are 1,000 Cambodians. It is hoped that any number over the 50,000 in Guam could be handled through the U.N. Refugee Control Apparatus, but there is little international interest in getting involved in this thing. That is one of the reasons they are using Guam. It keeps it OCONUS (outside of the Continental United States) and thus makes it more international than if they were brought into CONUS.

At 3:00 p.m. the same day the magnitude of the refugee situation began to unfold. The military situation around Saigon had reached the crisis stage and Thieu had resigned as president. Communists now were demanding that Thieu's successor, Tran Van Huong, resign from office so that a more receptive president could be appointed to surrender the government. It appeared that Saigon could fall at any minute and that the Defense Department might need to take extraordinary measures and send

11 Ibid.
12 Ibid.
troops into Saigon to evacuate Americans and Vietnamese. Sniffin again telephoned FORSCOM and said his office was about to prepare a message which would provide FORSCOM with planning guidance concerning the refugee situation. Sniffin also said the State Department that day had firmly designated Guam as a safe haven capable of housing only 25,000 evacuees, instead of 50,000. In the meantime, 6,000 refugees had arrived at Clark Air Force Base in the Philippines and an additional 25,000 were on their way from Saigon to the Islands. In addition, demands by the Philippine Government to the State Department to move the 6,000 refugees out of the Islands immediately added to the mounting evacuation confusion. As a result, the Department re-routed all evacuation flights leaving Saigon to an already crowded Guam.13

At this point, the Army believed the only major problem it had to deal with concerned logistical support for the Guam operation. Department of the Army again told FORSCOM that it would need to provide only "housekeeping" troops, such as medical support and engineers to help organize and construct the camp on Guam.14 However, the following day, 24 April, FORSCOM received the first indication the Army would have to establish refugee camps in the continental United States. Early that morning, Guam reached an overflow population of 50,000 and the Saigon Embassy reported it had identified an additional 190,000 refugees it

13 Memorandum of telephone conversation. Subject: Planning guidance for Handling Vietnamese Refugees, April 23, 1975. Flights with passengers with major medical problems, however, stopped in the Philippines.
14 Ibid.
wanted to evacuate.\textsuperscript{15} Now, with 240,000 refugees expected, Department of the Army warned FORSCOM that the refugee situation in South Vietnam dictated the necessity to make contingency plans "to receive, process, billet and support evacuees at military facilities within the continental United States."\textsuperscript{16} However, the Pentagon again said it considered such a move necessary only "in the event that safe havens outside CONUS become saturated."\textsuperscript{17} If such a saturation developed, the State Department would retain responsibility for the evacuee program, and would exercise operational control through the Interagency Task Force which President Ford established on 18 April, Department of the Army told FORSCOM.\textsuperscript{18}

Faced with this developing situation, Army planners at the Pentagon the same day finally started analyzing the capabilities of the inactive installations—Roberts, Chaffee and Pickett—which FORSCOM had earmarked earlier as possible refugee camps. FORSCOM waited through the day for the message from the Pentagon which would order the establishment of the first camp at Roberts to handle 20,000 to 50,000 refugees. The message, however, did not arrive.

Also, in anticipation of a massive evacuation of 240,000 refugees from Saigon, the Department of Defense told the J4, the logistical

\textsuperscript{15}Message. Department of the Army to FORSCOM. Subject: Contingency Planning for Possible Army Support of RVN Refugees in CONUS, April 24, 1975.  
\textsuperscript{16}Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{17}Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{18}Ibid.
planning section of the Joint Chiefs, to make plans to move refugees to processing centers in the continental United States. In addition, the Department ordered the commander of the Military Airlift Command in the Pacific to prepare to transport refugees to ports of entry in the continental United States, if requested by the State Department.\footnote{United States Air Force, Air Force System Command Armament Development and Test Center, Eglin Air Force Base, Florida, "Operation New Arrivals: Phase I--The Buildup, 27 April-3 May 1975," Vol. I, July 1975. (Hereinafter cited as Air Force Historical Report.)}

Until now, planners in the office of the Joint Chiefs had based their planning for refugees on the assumption that the State Department would evacuate only a small number of refugees, and therefore, there would be no requirement to open a camp within the United States. However, the increasing realization that the State Department planned to evacuate more than a few thousand refugees and that the Army could not operate facilities by itself for possibly 200,000 refugees forced the Defense Department to tell the other services they too would operate camps.

On 26 April, the Department of Defense notified the Navy, including the Marine Corps, and the Air Force that they would share responsibilities with the Army. Because of emerging political sentiment against bringing refugees to the United States, the Defense Department apparently took the responsibility for selecting refugee camp locations from the hands of FORSCOM and moved it to the Joint Chiefs level. With this change, the Joint Chiefs ordered the Army, Air Force
and Navy/Marine Corps to each nominate two refugee centers capable of handling up to 20,000 evacuees. The Defense Department told the three military services that the camps they nominated should have the capability of receiving the first refugees either on 28 or 29 April.

With the two other military services now included in the operation, FORSCOM told the Department of the Army that it still considered Camp Roberts and Fort Chaffee its first and second choices for refugee camps. Department of the Army then forwarded the FORSCOM selections to the Joint Chiefs and made it clear that they had to quickly decide on camp locations because FORSCOM needed 48 hours to obtain clearances from the State of California for the use of Roberts. FORSCOM also needed the lead time to deploy Army personnel before the first refugees arrived. Department of the Army, in an effort to hasten the camp selections, told the Joint Chiefs it wanted "to address the matter immediately" and recommended that they arrange a conference with the other military services as soon as possible so camps could be selected.

The Air Force, also alerted by the Joint Chiefs that it should nominate two bases, set about selecting its sites. The Tactical Air Command Staff met at 4:00 p.m. on 27 April at the Pentagon and discussed the possibility of using airfields at Eglin Air Force Base, Florida, the world's largest and most vital to the Air Force, and Holloman Air Force Base, New Mexico.

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20 Message. From Joint Chiefs of Staff to Chief of Staff, Army and Air Force, Chief of Naval Operations, Commandant, Marine Corps. Subject: Evacuation of Refugees, April 26, 1975.

21 Message. From Department of the Army to J4, Joint Chiefs of Staff. Subject: Evacuation of Refugees, April 27, 1975.

22 Ibid.
Base at Alamogoreo, New Mexico, which could handle no more than 3,400 refugees.\(^3\)

The Air Force selected Eglin Auxiliary Field II, a 752-acre site located five miles northeast of Niceville and sixteen miles northeast of Fort Walton Beach, as its first choice. It considered the site its best possible camp because it provided an airfield, a road system, a 10,000-gallon water tower, an underground water and sewage system and an electrical power source. In addition, the camp could support 20,000 or more refugees, if needed.\(^4\)

On 30 April, the day after the last evacuation flight left Saigon, the Air Force Chief of Staff still had not informed the Eglin commander that his base would be used as a refugee camp. Feeling somewhat in the dark, Lieutenant General John G. Hudson, Vice Commander of Air Force Systems Command at Eglin, sent a message to the Pentagon and asked for an immediate determination on how many refugees to plan for and when they would arrive. Hudson complained:

> The number is critical in that we would choose a location other than Eglin 2 if the number were substantially reduced from our current planning figure of 20,000. Use of Eglin 2 will disrupt the base intrusion surveillance system testing now going on there and cause an impact up to half a million dollars in additional cost and a scheduled slip of about six months.\(^5\)

Later in the day, General David C. Jones, Chief of Staff of the Air Force, responded to Hudson's message and issued a directive to the

\(^3\)Air Force Historical Report, p. 1.
\(^4\)Ibid.
\(^5\)Ibid.
Eglin command telling him to establish the center. He told Hudson the first refugees could arrive at Eglin as early as 3 May and that he did not believe the refugee level would exceed 2,500 at any one time. The camp should reach full capacity by 5 May, Jones said. Likewise, the Marine Corps received similar instructions from its commandant to use Camp Pendleton, California, as a refugee center.26

With the decision made to use Camp Pendleton, compounded by pressures from aroused California politicians who did not want two camps in their state, the Joint Chiefs picked the Army's second choice—Fort Chaffee, Arkansas. In the end, the Army, the first to plan for refugees, came out with the worst deal. The Air Force and Marine Corps, in order to insure their short-term participation in such a disruptive non-military duty, appeared to have located their camps at two strategically important bases. At Camp Pendleton, the Marine Corps created tent cities to house the refugees during the summer months, knowing that such accommodations would prove entirely inadequate during late fall and through the winter. This in turn assured a pre-winter camp closure date. Likewise, the Air Force selected its largest and most strategically important base as its refugee camp and provided the refugees with the same temporary tent housing as at Pendleton. As a result, a refugee camp at the Eglin camp disrupted essential training and forced the Pentagon to realize that a camp could not operate at

26Ibid. Like the Army, Jones ordered the Eglin commander to provide billeting, mess ing, medical treatment, transportation, security, safety, morale and recreation services for refugees.
such a critical installation on a long-term basis.

In contrast, the Army made available its best installations to house refugees for an extended period. Although it selected three World War II vintage camps, the facilities were in excellent condition and capable of properly supporting the incoming refugee population.27

Reservists and Politics

Although most Army, Marine Corps and Air Force leaders considered the refugee program disruptive and non-military, a small group of politically active Army reservists felt differently. For this group, composed of about 7,000 reservists trained to deal with refugee problems, the resettlement effort offered an opportunity to aid them in their efforts to convince skeptical Army leaders of the viability of their specialties.28 In addition, the refugee program provided them a chance which they hoped to use to stop the Army from making further cutbacks in the civil affairs program.

Faced with the need to cut expenses since demobilizing its Vietnam wartime force, the Army decided to phase out its civil affairs program. In previous years it had closed the Civil Affairs School at

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27 Both the Marine Corps and Air Force indeed were the first to get out of the resettlement business. The Eglin camp closed in August 1975 while the Pendleton camp closed two months later. The Army expected its two camps to remain open indefinitely. However, both had closed by January 1, 1976.

28 Civil affairs specialties included: civil defense; public administration; education; finance; health, safety, welfare, legal; supervision of indigenous manpower; property control; food and agricultural management; economics and commerce; civilian supply; public communications; transportation; public works and utilities; arts, monuments and archives protection.
Fort Gordon and reduced Active Army civil affairs personnel from more than 1,000 to 119 individuals. In addition, the Department cut its civil affairs planning staff at the Pentagon from more than 10 to less than five during the previous years. Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger also considered the civil affairs force top heavy and needless. In 1974 he directed the phase-out of the program in the Army Reserve. However, strong political pressure by reservists upon politicians in the Congress prevented this. In the past, similar attempts by the Army to trim excessive fat from the Reserve program met similar opposition from the well-organized, politically conscious Civil Affairs Association. In addition, politicians, including Senator Strom Thurmond of South Carolina and Representative Robert L. F. Sikes of Florida, both major generals in the Army Reserve, proved sympathetic to civil affairs reservists and supported them in their fight against the Pentagon.

Although the refugee program clearly required civil affairs specialties, Active Army leaders were hesitant to bring politically conscious civil affairs reservists on board to help manage the two Army camps. However, faced with persistent political pressure, and the Active Army's desire to get out of the refugee program as soon as possible, the Pentagon acquiesced and included Reserve civil affairs specialists in the resettlement effort.

**Political Pressure**

In early April, as speculation from the State Department concerning the evacuation of 1.5 million refugees reached the Army, the handful of civilian civil affairs planners at the Pentagon appeared more
than willing to commit reservists to the refugee program. This handful of planners who depended upon civil affairs reservists and the one and only Active Army civil affairs battalion for their livelihood believed that if State Department estimates proved true, the Army would need to request the President or the Congress to mobilize the Reserves to help establish a series of refugee camps around the nation.\textsuperscript{29}

The group of planners in General Sniffin's office in April recognized that the Active Army could not adequately run several refugee camps since such a task would drain the Army of its strength and damage Army readiness. Sniffin, himself, concluded that the Army could use reservists with selected civil affairs specialties to augment the Active Army's only civil affairs battalion which had the responsibility of managing the refugee camp at Fort Chaffee.\textsuperscript{30}

However, Sniffin expressed reluctance about using the Army Reserve in the program. Part of the traditional hostility which had faced civil affairs during the previous 30 years—the belief that civil affairs reservists were too political and "civilianized"—probably influenced Sniffin. Nevertheless, although Sniffin believed it feasible to use either individuals or units in support of the operation, he did not recommend such a move. Instead, he told the Secretary of the Army that, "the lack of a need for full-strength units, and...for the present time..."

\textsuperscript{29}\textsuperscript{29}Auletta interview.

\textsuperscript{30}\textsuperscript{30}Information Paper. From Major General Charles R. Sniffin, Director of Operations and Plans, through Chief of Staff, to Secretary of the Army, April 28, 1975.
the lack of a requirement for selected individual reservists serves to demonstrate no justification for Reserve CA units or individuals in support of current refugee operations at Fort Chaffee."\textsuperscript{31}

In early May, when it became evident that the State Department had not evacuated anything near 1.5 million refugees, Sniffin again tried to prevent the use of civil affairs units and individuals in the resettlement program. However, the political possibilities of the program had tantalized some Reserve civil affairs officers who readily realized they could not let such an opportunity slip through their hands. As Active Army leaders attempted to drop the matter, this handful of reservists pressured their political allies—mainly Thurmond, Sikes and Senator John Stennis of Mississippi—to get reservists involved in the refugee operation. Sikes reacted quickly to the requests from reservists. Within two weeks after the first three refugee camps opened, the Pentagon reported that politicians had started to "persistently advocate" to Army planners that reservists should participate in Operation New Arrivals, the code name for the refugee resettlement program.\textsuperscript{32}

Congressman Sikes initially protested against establishment of a camp at Eglin Air Force Base, Florida, which was located in his congressional district, because he feared refugees would complicate the Florida unemployment problem. However, he changed his mind. Like Senator Hugh Scott, Sikes probably saw the economic boost the camp would bring to the communities which surrounded the Eglin camp.

\textsuperscript{31} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{32} Auletta interview.
Apparently on orders from the Secretary of the Army to involve civil affairs reservists in the program because of political pressure, Sniffin's office by 14 May had developed a plan which it hoped would satisfy the mounting political demands to use reservists. The plan called for the activation of 23 reservists who would volunteer for long-term tours of duty to form an ad hoc unit capable of replacing the Active Army's civil affairs battalion which FORSCOM had deployed to manage the refugee population at Chaffee.

This token civil affairs force failed to satisfy Sikes who continued to pressure the Army for involvement of at least 100 reservists at each of the three refugee camps. The Army, despite this useless organization which it had developed for political reasons, made several attempts to explain to the Congressman that the Chaffee camp needed only a handful of reservists. However, the Army's explanations did not satisfy Sikes. On 16 May, General Sniffin replied to an inquiry from General Weyand's office from Sikes concerning the possibility of deploying a 121-man Reserve civil affairs unit from Pensacola, Florida, to the Eglin camp for a two-week period. Sniffin explained the Army's plans to use only specialized reservists, rather than entire Reserve units at Fort Chaffee. He also said the Army had not identified a need for civil affairs reservists at the Air Force camp. The explanation

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[33]It was somewhat of a white elephant organization because it included some useless specialties such as information officer, attorney, public welfare officer, four education personnel. These specialties were not necessary because other Federal agencies provided personnel with these specialties.

[34]Pensacola fell within Sikes' congressional district.
again did not satisfy Sikes who continued pressing for involvement of at least 100 civil affairs reservists at each of the camps.

Three days later, Major General Frank A. Camm, Acting Deputy Chief of Staff of Operations and Plans at Department of the Army, told FORSCOM it appeared Fort Chaffee could use 40 civil affairs reservists. The Army apparently made this move in hopes of stopping the political pressure exerted by Sikes. Camm also believed that the Army could further pacify Sikes if it could convince both the Marine Corps and Air Force to use 20 reservists at their two camps.35

Meanwhile, Brigadier General James W. Cannon, commander of the newly formed task force operating the refugee camp at Chaffee, indicated he wanted nothing to do with plans to bring civil affairs reservists to his camp. General Todd, attempting to soothe Cannon, told him that he fully understood his fears that units could not adequately handle the camp operation. Nonetheless, he told Cannon, "there is a great deal of pressure brought to bear on the Army staff" to get reservists involved. Despite Cannon's mild protest, FORSCOM decided to bring the reservists to active duty.36

As a result of this decision, FORSCOM on 20 May asked civil affairs units across the nation to find enlisted and officer personnel who would volunteer for duty with the refugees.37 Response to the query indicated

35Message. From Camm to Major General Jeffrey C. Smith, FORSCOM Chief of Staff, May 19, 1975.
that more than 100 volunteers were willing to enter on active duty for one, two or three months to provide civil affairs specialties.

Meanwhile, Sikes' office told the Chief of the Army Reserve that the congressman still wanted at least 100 reservists, rather than 27, used at the three refugee camps and the scheduled new camp at Indiantown Gap. The Army concluded that it could accommodate Sikes if it increased the requirement at Chaffee and Indiantown Gap to 30 reservists each, and, hopefully, send 40 reservists to the other two camps.

The Army then contacted both the Marine Corps and Air Force and asked if they could use 20 Reserve civil affairs personnel at both Camp Pendleton and Eglin Air Force Base. But neither the Air Force nor the Marine Corps accepted the offer. On 20 May, the Air Force explained to the Army that because of the limited size and duration of the Eglin operation, the base commander did not feel he needed Army civil affairs assistance. Likewise, on 29 May, the Marine Corps rejected the Army's offer. The Marine Corps explained that it did not need Army civil affairs personnel because the Pendleton camp already had Marine reservists with civil affairs expertise helping run the camp.

When both the Marine Corps and Air Force refused the offer, the Army decided it could not justify activating 100 or more reservists for use at its two camps and stood firm against additional pressure from Sikes. However, the Army did bring on active duty two increments consisting of

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39 Ibid.
31 reservists to supervise the housing, inprocessing, and feeding of refugees at Chaffee and Indiantown Gap. Officially, the Army made the decision to ease the burden placed upon the Army's only civil affairs battalion. Unofficially, however, it appears the Army made the decision to ease the pressures from a persistent congressman and politically conscious reservists.

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40 Planners also claimed the plans to use reservists were "coincident with limited but persistent expression of congressional interest." Information Paper. Special Operations Division, Operations and Plans, Department of the Army. Subject: Operation New Arrivals, June 4, 1975.
CHAPTER III

AMERICAN OPINION

The people of Arkansas might as well realize what they are sacrificing, bringing these people over to this fertile country. The day will come when there will be booby traps in the Ozarks and sampans on the Arkansas River.—David Dahlem, Fort Smith, Arkansas, resident.¹

With plans made to open three refugee camps in the continental United States, the belated evacuation of American and Vietnamese refugees from South Vietnam entered its final stages. In the eight days prior to the collapse of Saigon, United States planes evacuated nearly 40,000 Americans and South Vietnamese from Tan Son Nhut airbase near Saigon. But, during the last week the airlift became increasingly dangerous as artillery and rockets fell on the airport. During one day of this last week, Communist artillery hit an American evacuation plan, setting it afire on the runway at the airport. A short time later, Communist artillery killed two American Marines who were guarding the United States Defense Attache's compound at the airport.²

On 28 April, Lieutenant General Brent Scowcroft, Ford's Deputy Assistant for National Security Affairs, interrupted the President during a meeting on energy policy and told him that Option Four—a helicopter airlift—appeared to be the only way to complete the evacuation from Saigon.³ Ford waited several hours before making the decision. Finally, Major

¹Southwest Times Record, letter to the editor, Fort Smith, Arkansas, May 4, 1975.
²Time, May 12, 1975.
³Newsweek, May 12, 1975.
General Homer Smith, the United States defense Attache in Saigon, reported that evacuation planes could no longer use the airport. Smith then told Ford the situation was out of control.\(^4\) Fifteen minutes later United States Ambassador Graham Martin telephoned the President and told him Option Four was the only way out of South Vietnam. At 10:51 p.m. on 28 April, the President gave the order which signalled the beginning of Operation "Frequent Wind," the most dangerous of the four evacuation plans.

At 1:08 a.m. the next morning, Kissinger telephoned Ford to report that the Navy had launched a wave of 81 Marine helicopters from ships of the Seventh Fleet off the Vietnam coast to Saigon to start the hasty pullout. Meanwhile, in Saigon embassy officials established landing zones at Tan Son Nhut airport and on a tennis court near the Defense Attache Office. Landing two at a time, the helicopters unloaded Marines--about 860 in all--to reinforce 125 Marines already on the scene to pick up an expected 4,500 refugees and evacuees.\(^6\)

By nightfall the Navy had completed its evacuation from Tan Son Nhut. However, refugees designated for evacuation at the American Embassy still awaited pick up. As the Navy undertook this task, rain blanketed the city, reducing visibility to about a mile. Helicopter pilots relied on flashlights and flares fired by Marines within the embassy compound to locate landing zones and evacuate stranded Americans.

\(^4\)Ibid. Options One, Two and Three all included the use of transport aircraft to evacuate Americans and Vietnamese.  
\(^5\)Time, May 12, 1975.  
\(^6\)Ibid.
and Vietnamese. Through Tuesday night, thousands of Vietnamese who feared they would be killed by Communist victors tried to scale their way over the ten-foot barbed wire covered wall which encased the embassy compound. To hold back the crowd, Marines used tear gas and rifle butts.\(^7\)

At 5:00 p.m. Washington time—5:00 a.m. in Saigon—Kissinger telephoned the President and told him that Ambassador Martin was then closing down the embassy and destroying its communications equipment. Twenty-two minutes later the Marine Corps completed the evacuation. By 7:50 a.m. Marines had evacuated 1,373 Americans and 5,680 South Vietnamese from Saigon—more than the Pentagon had originally intended to remove at the last minute.\(^8\)

Although the embassy officially had completed the final evacuation, tens of thousands of Vietnamese continued to head out to sea to escape Communist forces. For two days American ships lingered off the coast of Vietnam, plucking men, women and children from rafts, sampans and fishing boats. At night the mass of candles and lanterns burning on the water looked like a densely populated city from the air, one newsman reported.\(^9\)

Officially, Washington did not know exactly how many Vietnamese had left South Vietnam. Officials at first guessed that the total neared 50,000. During the next few days the figure changed almost hourly.

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\(^7\)Florida Times-Union, April 30, 1975.  
\(^8\)Jacksonville Journal, April 30, 1975. The week before, however, about 40,000 Vietnamese had been evacuated by airplane. The total evacuated by the United States reached about 80,000.  
and by 5 May the State Department claimed that as many as 127,000 Vietnamese might need sanctuary in the United States.

Congress sharply criticized the last-minute evacuation and Senator Edward M. Kennedy, Chairman of the Senate Refugee Subcommittee, accused government officials of "catastrophic bungling."\(^\text{10}\) Ambassador Martin, a bitter-end supporter, reacted to the charges by blaming the federal government for the fall of South Vietnam. In his first news conference following the evacuation aboard the USS Blue Ridge, he told reporters, "There was no reason to have had to leave Vietnam this way—if we had done as a nation, I think, the things we had said we would do and were basically doing for the first year after the Paris agreements."\(^\text{11}\) He also said there were two sides to the whole story: "The Washington side and our side."\(^\text{12}\)

Meanwhile, as refugees headed toward staging areas in the Pacific, the three military services frantically prepared the three bases which the Defense Department had designated as resettlement centers. At Eglin and Pendleton, the first camps scheduled to open, Marines and Air Force personnel erected hundreds of tents and worked around the clock setting up mess halls and other facilities for the expected refugees. At Chaffee, primarily a summer training camp for reservists, soldiers prepared old World War II wooden barracks. To staff the camps, officials from the Immigration and Naturalization Service, Health, Education and Welfare, and State Department arrived and prepared to screen and process

\(^{10}\text{Ibid.}\)
\(^{11}\text{Honolulu Advertiser, May 1, 1975, p. 1.}\)
\(^{12}\text{Ibid.}\)
refugees. Workers from voluntary agencies also arrived to find refugees homes in American communities.

Opening the Camps

When the White House announced the opening of the three camps, politicians and residents in California, Florida and Arkansas reacted bitterly to the President's plan to bring refugees into their states. In all three states Americans, fed largely by rumors, misinformation and outright bigotry, protested against the refugees. Thousands of citizens in the three states called or wrote politicians in Washington. In California, Representative Thomas M. Rees said he had received some of the dumbest phone calls he had ever received. He added, "They think of the Vietnamese as nothing but diseased job seekers...If Americans had thought that way in 1912, I wouldn't be here today. That's the year my father came over from Wales." Representative Norman Y. Mineta also of California said he had heard from some constituents who wanted to be helpful, but added he had received "some vitriolic messages with strong racial overtones."

The State Department, in an effort to relieve the fears, told Congressmen from the three states that only 50,000 "high-priority" Vietnamese refugees would enter the three resettlement camps and that the federal government would pay the total cost of the resettlement program. They also claimed that refugees would pose no health hazards to local communities.

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13 Honolulu Advertiser, April 30, 1975, p.2.
14 Ibid.
Meanwhile, rumors continued about the number of refugees which the President planned to bring into the nation. James A. Hayes, a member of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, recalled that on 21 April federal officials had told him of plans to evacuate from 600,000 to one million refugees from Saigon. Representative John B. Moss of California, senior member of California's congressional delegation, attempted to get a clarification of the situation and arranged a meeting between the delegation and Ambassador Brown who was in charge of the refugee task force. Following the meeting, Moss told newsmen the delegation did not find Brown's plans desirable. However, Moss said the ambassador did assure the congressmen that the government would divide refugees evenly among the three reception centers and resettle them evenly throughout the nation. Brown also assured Representative John Paul Hammerschmidt of Arkansas, whose district included the Chaffee camp, that the only demands the refugees would make "would be on the hearts of the people there who I think you will find will be swarming out there to see what they can do."

Protests against the refugees also came from Florida, not only because of fear of disease and more unemployment, but because of inadequate housing facilities at Eglin. Senator Lawton N. Chiles, Jr., the junior Florida senator, said the federal government had not consulted members of the Florida delegation about designating the air base a

17 Ibid.
18 Ibid.
refugee reception center. He added:

It seems to me like they could have found another base more adaptable to the program—an old base where they have some housing...We feel like in Florida we did our part for refugees. We've got 400,000 Cubans. You might say there was some logic to our having them because Miami is so close to Cuba, but my understanding had been the Vietnamese would be resettled in Southeast Asia.19

He also said Floridians wondered how long the refugees would remain in Florida. Added Chiles, "Some of our Cuban people were supposed to resettle, too, and they would carry them off, but they'd home (return) right back to Miami."20

Officials, meanwhile, moved to stop fears that many Vietnamese suffered from diseases which could infect the nation. Dr. Theodore Cooper, a physician designated by the President to be Assistant Secretary for Health and head of Public Health Service, said that the refugees posed no more of a problem to the health of Americans than the thousands of other travelers who entered the country from the Far East every year. He also reported that only a handful—80 or 90 out of a total of 34,000 received on Guam and five out of 3,500 at Wake Island—required hospitalization.21

At a hearing before Senator Kennedy's subcommittee on 30 April, Assistant Secretary of State Philip C. Habib reflected the federal government's continuing uncertainty about the size and nature of the

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19 Ibid.
20 Ibid.
21 Honolulu Advertiser, May 1, 1975.
resettlement problem. Habib admitted officials still did not know the precise number of refugees and remained unsure of how many refugees other countries would accept. He also estimated the cost of the refugee program during the first six months would include $55 million for the evacuation by air and sea; $30 million for setting up and operating staging areas in the Pacific and the United States; $75 million for food, electricity, water and other needs of the refugees; $2 million for clothing; $25 million to cover resettlement costs and perhaps $95 million in federal payments to state and local governments for extra welfare and social services costs; and unspecified additional sums for such purposes as resettling some refugees in other countries. In all, he said costs would range from $300 million to $350 million for the first six months. He also said that he would not quarrel with Senator Kennedy's estimate that the cost for a one-year resettlement program might be $500 million.\textsuperscript{22}

The first refugees arrived on 2 May at 9:23 a.m. in 56 degree temperature in Arkansas. Prior to their arrival, camp leaders went out of their way to assure Fort Smith civic leaders that refugees would not create health or economic problems for the local civilian community. Donald McDonald, the chief State Department official at the camp, told the leaders they had no reason to fear the refugees. He also said that 80 per cent of the refugees had a fair knowledge of the English language; that 60 per cent were women, 25 per cent were children; and that most had middle, upper middle class and professional backgrounds.\textsuperscript{23}

\textsuperscript{22}Ibid. Kennedy made the estimate in his report on the refugees which was released June 9, 1975, also.
\textsuperscript{23}Southwest Times Record, May 2, 1975.
The Ford administration on 3 May acknowledged that the number of fleeing South Vietnamese refugees had risen to about 120,000. The same day the President authorized entry for the 30,000 additional refugees heading for the Philippines by boat. As a result, the anti-refugee sentiment again flared. Public officials whined about the cost as they received letters of protest. A Gallup Poll conducted in the first week of May reported that a majority of Americans, 54 per cent as compared to 36 per cent, did not want the refugees to enter the nation.

In Hawaii, Patricia Stillman, reflecting the anti-refugee sentiment, wrote to the Honolulu Advertiser:

> Are the tens of thousands of refugees entering this country the same people who bought their way out of the Vietnam military, ran the black market there, trafficked in drugs, and are now prepared to buy their way into the United States? They can't all be wives and children of American servicemen or United States overseas citizens. If they have resources, why was that not used in their war against Communism? Why should it be more difficult for a U.S. draft dodger to reenter this country than any number of Vietnamese who avoided their draft?

Back in Barling, Arkansas, near the Chaffee camp, Mrs. Johnnie Calhoun told newsmen she and her neighbors would be out with protest signs to meet refugees at Fort Smith. She added, "They say it's a lot colder here than it is in Vietnam...with a little luck, maybe they'll take pneumonia and die." Also in Niceville, Florida, near the Eglin camp,

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restaurant cook Bob Whitfield, commenting about the recession and the state's 6.1 per cent unemployment rate, said, "Everybody is thinking, why are they coming here?"²⁸

Politicians in Hawaii feared that the federal government would open a camp there to house refugees because of the warm climate and because of the Oriental culture. Governor George Ariyoshi, the first Oriental to hold such a state office, although not mentioning racism, said he was more concerned with unemployment and health problems than humanitarian need.²⁹

By 4 May mail and telephone calls to congressmen were still running heavily against allowing South Vietnamese refugees into the United States. Representative Bill Alexander of Arkansas received 10 letters in one day which an aide described as "most emotional."³⁰ Senator Thomas Eagleton of Missouri received 100 letters with about 95 of them against admission. Senator James Buckley of New York received 200 letters with two-thirds against admission. Of the total, an aide to Buckley said, 10 per cent were hard core racists and another 25 per cent were biased against Asiatics.³¹

Representative Robert L. F. Sikes of Florida also received a large number of telegrams, all against admitting refugees. And Senator Richard Schweiker of Pennsylvania said he received nearly 2,000 letters and that the vast majority of them were critical, the primary reason being jobs.³²

³⁰Ibid.
³¹Ibid.
Letters to the Southwest Times Record, a daily newspaper near the Chaffee camp, reflected the anti-refugee sentiment. Phillip Brown, a Fort Smith resident, wrote to the editor, "If President Ford is so set in his ways that he feels we need to bring all these refugees into our country, let him send them all to his home city and state of Michigan and let his own take proper care of them all." David Dahlem, also of Fort Smith, wrote to the editor, "The people of Arkansas might as well realize what they are sacrificing, bringing these people over to this fertile country. The day will come when there will be booby traps in the Ozarks and sampans on the Arkansas River."

California officials, including Governor Edmund G. Brown, Jr. and both United States Senators voiced alarm at the planned influx of refugees into their state which had a 7.3 per cent unemployment rate. Brown told newsmen that "California's first obligation is to its own citizens." Mario Obledo, California's Secretary of Health and Welfare, cabled Secretary of State Kissinger and warned that the state could not afford to absorb large numbers of homeless refugees since it already had "952,000 unemployed; 2.4 million receiving some form of medical or welfare aid; 4 million near the poverty level; and 20 million paying taxes as close to the maximum tax as is acceptable in free enterprise."

Such worries did not remain unique to California. Chicago's Mayor Richard Daley commented that "Charity begins at home."

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33 Southwest Times Record, May 4, 1975, p. 4.  
34 Ibid.  
36 Ibid.  
37 Ibid.
However, Guam's Governor Ricardo Boradallo endorsed a resolution passed by the island's legislature which offered homes to 25,000 refugees. Sociologists seemed confused about the anti-refugee sentiment. Americans in the past generally had welcomed refugees. David Riesman, a Harvard sociologist, told the *Washington Post* that Americans were full of self-pity. He added:

> We are justifying our grievances by striking out at others. The national mood is poisonous and dangerous, and this is one symptom, striking out at helpless refugees whose number is infinitesimal...this is the same country, after all, which absorbed 400,000 displaced persons from Eastern Europe after World War II. It took in another 200,000 East Germans who were fleeing from a Communist government in the early 1950s. It celebrated, almost euphorically, the arrival of 40,000 Hungarians—'Freedom Fighters,' the last in the anti-Soviet uprisings of 1956. In addition, during the last 15 years, America absorbed at great expense more than 675,000 refugees from Castro's Cuba.

Some sociologists speculated that the reason for the anti-refugee sentiment was latent racism aimed at Orientals which the sorry climax in South Vietnam brought to the surface. Others, however, offered more complicated theories about public frustration. Anitai Etzioni, director of Columbia University's Center for Policy Research, told the *Post*:

> Obviously, people are different with nonwhite races. It's widely suggested that we would not have dropped the atomic bomb on a white country. People in California have often talked about being overrun by the 'yellow hordes.' The color line has often affected how Americans feel about things.

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38Ibid.
39*Honolulu Advertiser*, May 3, 1975, p. 3.
40Ibid.
Nathan Glazer, co-author of the book Beyond the Melting Pot, believed a change in the way Americans saw America's role in the world caused the anti-refugee sentiment. He added:

With the Hungarians and the Cubans, it was 'fighting Communism' and people supported that in the 1950s and the early 1960s. Now they've given up on that view...I don't think we feel on the same side politically as the South Vietnamese. The press has been so hostile to them--they've been described as corrupt, so unable to defend themselves.  

The press, sensing that Americans were acting out of character, quickly reacted to the anti-refugee sentiment. The New York Times told its readers in an editorial on 3 May that America's better instincts were on trial. The paper said it saw no way to shed the responsibility, proclaimed throughout the nation's history, for providing a haven to those fleeing from persecution and conquest. The Times also said it was easy to be cynical about the agility with which some of Saigon's political and economic elites used to get themselves and their wealth out of South Vietnam, but added:

To focus on a handful of such individuals is to distort the wider reality. The bulk of the immigrants have arrived here penniless, fleeing for their lives in search of freedom. Hard-pressed immigration authorities are nowhere near providing a breakdown of occupations; it is nevertheless evident that among the refugees are many thousands of persons capable of making a genuine contribution to American society once they find themselves.  

42 Ibid.
The same day the Tulsa Daily World in Oklahoma also reacted to the anti-refugee sentiment. An editorial said:

In a nation that spends multi-millions of dollars on dog and cat food, it sounds odd to hear someone complain that 'we can't afford' to help out a few thousand refugees from South Vietnam.\(^3\)

An editorial in the Honolulu Advertiser also chastised those Americans who did not want the refugees to enter the nation. An editorial on 3 May said:

The ironies are striking: many Americans were willing to send their sons to die in the cause of defending the Vietnamese from communism, now many Americans seem unwilling to welcome those Vietnamese people who have fled communism...One can debate all sorts of things--the flaws in our past policy, the corruption of some among the refugees, the legality of their evacuation, etc. But anyone who doesn't feel this nation has some continuing obligation for our past role has missed a major lesson of Vietnam.\(^4\)

Meanwhile, the Congress rejected the President's proposal for a $327-million bill to provide funding for the resettlement program. Opponents of the bill claimed that if Congress passed the bill, which Ford proposed before the fall of Saigon, they would permit the President to send American troops back to Vietnam. Others expressed concern that some of the aid destined for refugees that the United States had left stranded in Vietnam would fall into the hands of the conquering Viet Cong and North Vietnamese forces. Ford reacted strongly to the

rejections and urged the House to quickly approve new legislation which would provide assistance. He also said "to do otherwise would be a repudiation of the finest principles and traditions of America. Ford said, "The vote does not reflect the values we cherish as a nation of immigrants. It is not worthy of a people which has lived by the philosophy symbolized in the Statue of Liberty. It reflects fear and misunderstanding rather than charity and compassion."45

Ford told the press he was "damned mad" about the reaction of Americans and Congress toward the refugees. In the following days, the President and his staff made painstaking efforts to convince the public and the Congress that refugees would not add to the nation's woes. At the same time, Americans of a more humane stock rallied to be heard. Letters to the editor in Arkansas newspapers clearly reflected the new emerging sentiment of a segment of the nation's society which favored the refugees. A letter from Jennie Hopkins of Fort Smith said, "I can't help but remember that this great country of ours was founded by refugees from other countries who came here to escape persecution."46 Farris Rogers, also from Fort Smith, wrote, "These people being brought here are coming because they cannot stay in their own land because of their friendship with us."47 And Nan Bartlett of Fort Smith wrote, "Our nation is preparing to celebrate 200 years of freedom. And the sounds being made by some Fort Smithians sound as though they have forgotten why that first war was fought."48

45Southwest Times Record, May 2, 1975, p. 1.
46Southwest Times Record, May 6, 1975, p. 6.
47Ibid.
48Ibid.
Once the administration had convinced Americans that refugees would not take their jobs and that the federal government would incur all expenses for the resettlement program, apprehension melted away and Americans began to warm to the plight of the refugees.\(^4^9\)

\(^4^9\)Politicians also sensed this change of sentiment and passed the Indochina Migration and Refugee Assistance Act of 1975 which the President signed into law on 24 May 1975. The act allocated $508 million for the resettlement program, including $72.1 million for the daily maintenance at Department of Defense reception centers and $84.4 million for evacuation costs.
...the local climate is one of watchfulness and quiet apprehension.—Brigadier General James W. Cannon, Commander, Task Force New Arrivals.¹

Senator Hugh Scott's "open heart" speech before the Senate on 28 April, in which he said he would welcome refugees settling in Pennsylvania, made the Department of Defense realize it had a political friend.² The fact that the Senator publicly offered refugees a state welcome appeared somewhat unusual to the Pentagon. In California, Florida and Arkansas, where the Pentagon opened refugee camps, governors and politicians voiced skepticism and hostility to the resettlement program mainly because they feared refugees would inflate state unemployment rolls and increase social problems. In contrast, Scott, the minority leader in the Senate, emerged as an ally of President Ford's resettlement effort who willingly chastised politicians for their unhumanitarian attitudes. Confronted with this latent political hostility toward the resettlement program, and the need to open a fourth refugee camp, the Department of Defense remembered Scott's friendship and offer.

Planning the New Camp

From the beginning, FORSCOM and Department of the Army considered Camp Roberts, California, as the Army facility which could best

² Congressional Record, 94th Cong., 1st Sess., S6882.
support refugees. However, the political decision by the Joint Chiefs to use Camp Pendleton and not open Camp Roberts forced the Army to use its second choice—Fort Chaffee, Arkansas.

Even after the Army opened its Arkansas camp, FORSCOM again insisted that it considered Camp Roberts its first choice, if a need for another camp developed. Despite FORSCOM's strong feelings about Roberts, General Sniffin's office on 13 May, two weeks after the opening of Chaffee, asked FORSCOM to determine if Fort Indiantown Gap could house 20,000-50,000 refugees for a long-term period.  

FORSCOM became somewhat disturbed by this apparent political move which seemed to ignore weeks of sound planning. Nevertheless, faced with objections, Department of the Army ordered FORSCOM to look at Fort Indiantown Gap and determine if the camp could open within a 10 to 14-day period. Department of the Army again, perhaps to soothe FORSCOM, hinted that Army personnel would establish the camp, but hopefully, a federal agency would take over camp operations. While making its assessment, the Pentagon told FORSCOM to look specifically at the old post hospital; facilities for language and skill training; schools for children, either on or off post; airport facilities located within a 50-mile radius; and the climate of the area.

Having received the request, Major General Gordon J. Duquemin, in charge of operations and plans at FORSCOM, quickly informed the

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4Ibid.
FORSCOM Chief of Staff that "FORSCOM's answer is no." He said he considered the hospital "so-so" and that the post lacked schools for children, on and off post; that Harriburg, located 16 miles away, had only a marginal airport; and that the climate appeared too cold for Vietnamese.

Meanwhile, the same day the Chief of the Army Reserve at the Pentagon prepared a memorandum for General Sniffin's office concerning the impact a new refugee camp would have on Army Reserve annual training. Of the three camps under consideration, the Army Reserve believed opening a camp at Roberts would affect summer training least because it would have to move only 3,340 reservists to another camp during the 31 May to 2 August training period.

The Army Reserve considered Pickett, with 3,150 Reserve personnel scheduled for training between the period 18 May and 30 August, the second best choice for a new refugee camp. In addition, it considered Indiantown Gap, with its 7,797 reservists scheduled for the 4 May through 30 August training period, the worst choice for a new camp.

At the same time, Sniffin's office asked the National Guard Bureau to conduct a survey concerning the impact a new refugee camp would have on Guard training. The Bureau, however, reached opposite conclusions to those of the Army Reserve. Indiantown Gap had 7,545 National Guardsmen scheduled for training while Picket had 7,588 and Roberts had 7,233. Brigadier General Joseph R. Jelinek, Deputy Director

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5Ibid.
6Ibid.
of the Guard, said movement of Guard units to other sites definitely would create problems and recommended Fort Indiantown Gap as the Guard's first choice. The Guard considered Pickett the second best choice followed by Roberts.8

Planners also brought the Army's personnel office into the planning. The office said it had no objections, from the manpower viewpoint, to any of the three installations because selection of any post ultimately would require the Army to provide personnel. Citing the shortages of Army cooks which the Chaffee camp had created, the office told Sniffin's office it should consider the use of contracted civilians to ease some manpower shortages.9

Although the Army worried about the impact on Reserve training, it considered the public affairs impact more important in the selection of its second camp site. The Pentagon felt that of the three posts under consideration it should select the post that appeared in the best physical condition. Adding that television coverage at Fort Chaffee showed a well-maintained post, Sniffin's office said, "to show any other image has the potential for public affairs problems."10 In short, the lower the state of repair of the post, the greater the public affairs problem, the Pentagon felt.11

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10Memorandum. Impact analysis made by Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations and Plans, May 13, 1975(?).
11Ibid.
From the community relations viewpoint, Department of the Army concluded that California would pose the greatest problem because the governor of the state already had one refugee center which he disliked. To put a second refugee center in California for an extended period "would add fuel to an already smoldering fire," the office said.\textsuperscript{12}

The office also considered Virginia, the location of Camp Pickett, a potential problem. Senator William S. Scott, the junior senator from the state, was the only senator who had voted "nay" on the Senate resolution which welcomed the refugees, and the Army considered Senator Harry F. Byrd's position on the refugees questionable. However, the situation in Pennsylvania looked different. Sniffin's office said:

On the other hand, Pennsylvania's Senator Scott(R), Senate Minority Leader, has suggested the possible use of Indiantown Gap Military Reservation (IGMR) for refugee reception. This would indicate political cooperation for use of IGMR. IGMR is in a somewhat remote section of Pennsylvania and no significant public affairs community relations impact is anticipated. Of the three posts under consideration, IGMR is the most favorable from the PA viewpoint, followed by Pickett and Roberts.\textsuperscript{13}

On 14 May, the day after Department of the Army ordered FORSCOM to look at Indiantown Gap, Eric von Marbod, Deputy Assistant to the Secretary of Defense, assumed Defense Department leadership in the refugee Task Force. The same day he visited Indiantown Gap with a party of four, including a Vietnamese physician. At von Marbod's request, the post commander, Colonel Ervin Johnson, escorted the group on a tour

\textsuperscript{12}Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{13}Ibid.
of the post. Following the visit, Johnson told FORSCOM that von Marbod appeared pleased with what he saw and spoke in terms of housing 15,000 refugees at the camp.\(^{14}\)

Apparently von Marbod had made the decision to use Indiantown Gap before he arrived at the installation. Johnson said von Marbod told him he thought the Army would receive an order to establish the camp on or about 19 May, which would allow about 10 days to build up the camp's cadre. Von Marbod also believed the Army could work out any difficulties with Reserve training by rescheduling or relocating it.\(^{15}\) He also indicated that a small military cadre of about 200 would suffice for support of the operation and told Johnson he hoped the State Department could quickly take over the refugee camps and resettlement program.\(^{16}\)

It appeared to Johnson that von Marbod felt that the Defense Department would select Indiantown Gap as the fourth camp. Colonel Johnson reported to General Todd at FORSCOM that von Marbod told him that Senator Scott made an offer to house refugees at Indiantown Gap to the President and the Secretary of Defense. He also said that the camp facilities, including barracks, mess halls, clubs, and the gymnasium favorably impressed von Marbod and his group. Johnson said von Marbod believed the facilities at Indiantown Gap were better than those at Chaffee. Johnson also reported von Marbod believed the best way to

\(^{14}\) Message. From Todd to Cannon. Subject: Possible Establishment of Refugee Camp at Fort Indiantown Gap, May 14, 1975. Johnson was an Active Army officer.

\(^{15}\) Memorandum. From Colonel Ervin Johnson to Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations and Plans, FORSCOM, May 15, 1975.

\(^{16}\) Ibid.
provide cadre, about 200, for the new camp would be to transfer them from Fort Chaffee directly to Indiantown Gap. The Adjutant General of Pennsylvania, Major General Harry J. Meir, reacted furiously to von Marbod's visit and said he would see General Walter T. Kerwin, Vice Chief of Staff of the Army, "to get this stopped." Johnson summarized about von Marbod's visit:

In each area Dr. Hung (the Vietnamese physician) wanted to know the location of the chapel and was highly impressed with chapels visited. In the worst areas we pointed out the undesirability and in each instance the reactions were the same, "completely satisfactory and much better than tents." Although no commitment was made by Mr. von Marbod, he implied that the facilities were much better than he expected and that we could surely accommodate 15,000. Although Lieutenant Colonel Wampler (deputy post commander) and I continually pointed out certain cautions, there was no doubt in our minds that he intended to use this installation to house 15,000, although he did not say so directly.

Johnson also said he had indicated his apprehensions about the ability of post personnel to adequately support refugees to von Marbod, but von Marbod continually reiterated that he would try to get experienced Army cadre from Chaffee to support Indiantown Gap. When Johnson explained the northern location of the camp, the cold winters and that the camp had to heat as early as late September, von Marbod said that "too far north was foolishness" and that the Army could heat buildings. He also said, because of the heavily populated northeastern United States, the State Department could easily find sponsors for

17 Ibid. Meir was a political appointee of Gov. Shapp. He naturally reflected the response of his employer.
18 Ibid.
refugees in that area. Johnson added, "He (von Marbod) also stated that money was not a problem and that we could hire off the street without regard to Civil Service registers...Conclusion: We just bought 15,000 Vietnamese refugees and may receive a cadre of only 200.19

The following day, 15 May, FORSCOM acquiesed to the political decision and accepted the fact that the Pentagon planned to open Indiantown Gap as the next camp. Taking a more positive approach, FORSCOM operations and plans analyzed the capabilities at the proposed camp and concluded that it could accommodate at most 26,000 refugees, and about 2,900 Army personnel who would run the camp. In addition, engineers could renovate the installation's 883-bed hospital, FORSCOM said. 20 FORSCOM considered the climate, although not the best, acceptable for Asians. The annual temperature averaged 50 degrees, and ranged from a low of 27.6 in February to a high of 73.3 in July. FORSCOM also considered the old World War II built facilities basically in good condition, as compared with those at other inactive installations, and believed it would take a minimum amount of time to prepare them for refugees.

In addition, the Pentagon believed the close proximity of Harrisburg would provide a source of civilian employees and family housing for government and military personnel. Indications from Senator Scott that Governor Milton J. Shapp would willingly have refugees

19 Ibid.
at the installation also meant he would willingly waive the 90-day notice required to revoke the lease of the camp to that state, FORSCOM felt.21

Opening the Camp

The same day FORSCOM, armed with the official news that Department of the Army had selected the camp, started formulating an operations plan to prepare the camp. On 16 May, General Sniffin informed FORSCOM that General Cannon and an advance party would depart Fort Chaffee for Indiantown Gap not later than 20 May to establish a new camp to house 14-15,000 refugees.21

Four days later, 20 May, Cannon and his advance party departed Chaffee for Indiantown Gap. By 22 May all military personnel from the Chaffee camp had arrived at Indiantown Gap and started forming a Task Force to provide logistical support at the camp. About 2,000 military personnel—somewhat more than von Marbod anticipated—had arrived at the camp to prepare it for the first refugees within a week. The first refugees arrived on 28 May and the camp population reached 15,000 within seven days.

Although the local residents around Indiantown Gap did not react as negatively as those at Fort Chaffee did, they clearly did not offer an "open heart" invitation to the Army or the refugees. As the

21 Message. From Department of the Army (General Sniffin) to FORSCOM. Subject: Task Force New Arrivals (Fort Indiantown Gap, PA), May 16, 1975. General Cannon, Commander of III Corps Artillery at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, was deployed by FORSCOM, along with the 46th General Support Group at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, to Chaffee to form a task force. The task force directed the logistical operations at the camp, including feeding, housing, medical care and recreation.
Army expected, local leaders worried about the camp's 15,000 refugees affecting the state's unemployment situation. Governor Shapp, unlike Senator Scott, reflected these fears and appeared apprehensive about bringing refugees into Pennsylvania, fearing political repercussions from the state's unemployed.

General Cannon reported to FORSCOM on 2 June, a few days after the camp opened, his impression of Shapp's reaction following the Governor's six-hour visit. Cannon reported:

He (Shapp) seemed particularly concerned about the potential health hazards associated with such a large group of Asians (15,000). His tour of the hospital and concurrent discussions of health and disease problems...did much to ameliorate his fears that typhoid, leprosy and other exotic diseases would pose a threat to the local population.\[^{22}\]

Cannon said Shapp emphasized that the federal government had unilaterally decided to open a refugee camp in Pennsylvania without his counsel and that it (the government) would likely have some problems. Cannon reported the Governor generally said to him:

We Pennsylvanians will tolerate this effort and, to a degree, will support it. However, don't visit your problems on us and conduct the affairs of the camp with as little disruption of normal activities in the local area as possible. Don't threaten our health, don't tax our water system and don't pollute our streams with sewage.\[^{23}\]

\[^{22}\text{Op cit, Cannon Message.}\]
\[^{23}\text{Tbid.}\]
The same day, Shapp, Cannon and Richard E. Friedman, the Senior Civilian Coordinator at the camp, met with local officials for a two and one-half hour session. Following opening remarks by Shapp, Friedman spoke of the nature of the civilian effort involved in resettling the refugees and evacuees. Cannon also answered questions from the floor. Local politicians generally asked about the size of the refugee population and how long they would stay; the effect they would have on local unemployment; the types of diseases they had; how much money they had; opportunities for employment for local people; opportunities to provide contract goods and services; and security restrictions on the post.

Following the meeting, Cannon told FORSCOM that the local leaders did not react spontaneously nor did they appear eager to help by volunteering their time, effort, or talents. Cannon concluded:

"I am not at all certain that we have the full support of these local leaders. In the event decisions are made to increase the size of the refugee population here, these men will have to be carefully informed at the earliest possible time. My assessment is that they will not react to such news in a very positive manner. Basically, the local climate is one of watchfulness and quiet apprehension over the situation. Because of this attitude among the leadership, we could be in for some difficult days ahead, particularly if FIG (Fort Indiantown Gap) turns out to be a long-term operation or if a decision is made to increase the number of refugees housed here."

Despite the initial apprehension over the new refugee camp, Pennsylvania politicians at the federal, state and local levels

24Ibid.
eventually profitted greatly from the resettlement program. Scott it appears was one of the few politicians to foresee that he could use the plight of the refugees—coupled with a large injection of federal funds into the state's economy—to his political advantage. Superficially, Scott's "open heart" welcome appeared humanitarian in nature. More importantly, however, Scott may have decided he could use the refugees and the Pennsylvania camp to help ensure his re-election in 1976.25

Governor Shapp, on the other hand it appears, at first did not realize he could use the camp politically. Nor did he realize the exact scope of the $508-million appropriation for the program. Although Shapp never publicly admitted it, the program brought more than $6 million directly into the state's economy and virtually eliminated the unemployment problem in communities surrounding the camp which included Harrisburg, the state capital. It also brought scores of dignitaries to the camp and publicity which Shapp needed in his race for the Democratic presidential nomination.

The decision to use Indiantown Gap instead of Roberts proved a godsend for the Army. Unlike the Marine Corps at Pendleton, the Army experienced few public relations problems with Indiantown Gap. Undoubtedly, the Army would have faced the same problems the Marine Corps experienced at Pendleton had it used Roberts. Also, unlike California, where 25 per cent of the refugees settled because of the warm climate,
Pennsylvania with its cool climate did not experience a noticeable increase in its welfare rolls.

For the most part, the Army's apprehension and fear about Indian-town Gap did not turn into reality. Whatever anti-refugee sentiment initially existed quickly melted as the economic benefits became apparent to local Pennsylvania communities.

The second Army facility, situated in Pennsylvania Dutch setting in a valley at the foot of a small mountain, became an obscure, somewhat idyllic camp. It was free of the problems the Army feared most and at the same time served as a political tool for Pennsylvania politicians.
CHAPTER V

PERSPECTIVE

Vietnam has indirectly chosen our 1976 Bicentennial theme: Don't Tread on Me--1976; Don't Count on Me--1976.--Ronald P. Winner, in a letter to the editor, Time magazine. ¹

The events associated with the fall of South Vietnam brought vast changes in how the American public perceived the United States as a humanitarian nation and the role that the nation should play in international affairs. In foreign affairs, the public emerged for a time as an ex officio part of the foreign policy making apparatus. For the first time since the isolationist period of the 1920s and 1930s, the public had loudly voiced its opinions about America's international role. It had compelled Washington politicians to take heed of the wishes of millions who were thinking that isolationism--the traditional American approach to foreign relations--again might be the best policy.

Faced by these strong anti-involvement feelings, the Congress during the last months of the Indochina war found it politically necessary to discontinue military aid to the Saigon regime. Whether it realized it, Congress, by reaction to the public's wishes, emerged as an equal, if not a temporarily dominant partner with the Executive in foreign policy making. Although Congress did not totally usurp the President's constitutional prerogatives in foreign affairs, it had effectively limited his courses of action and options in Southeast Asia.

¹Time, p. 4.
Strong public disapproval of emergency military aid was something neither the President nor Secretary of State appeared to have expected. The isolationist and anti-involvement sentiment toward Southeast Asia, however, coincided with the President's long-range plans. Therefore, little harm to America's position as a world power resulted from the fall of Indochina.

Consistent refusals by the Congress to grant emergency military aid in 1975 nullified the Nixon Doctrine of 1970. The Doctrine, formulated to allow American troops to gracefully leave Vietnam, had proclaimed that the United States would provide the means, exclusive of American troops, to friendly nations so they could withstand Communist forces. Nixon's doctrine was pragmatic and in tune with political and economic developments in Asia during the 1970s. Specifically, the doctrine allowed the United States to take the first steps toward economic reconciliation with Communist China.

The events of spring 1975 marked an unexpected second step in the gradual transformation of America's Asian policy. During the aid debate, and despite rhetoric criticizing Congress for nullifying the Nixon Doctrine, it appears President Ford was not totally dissatisfied with congressional moves. During the previous 10 years, American involvement in Vietnam had hampered serious discussions between Washington and Moscow on detente, strategic arms control, European security and the Middle East. In addition, American involvement in Vietnam also had prevented the United States from devoting time to Soviet and Chinese
overtures to increase trade and technical collaboration. With the fall of Saigon, tensions began to slowly melt and President Ford started slowly changing the course of American foreign policy.

Secretary of State Henry Kissinger was not unhappy about these changes. He admitted that the United States in the 1960s probably had made a mistake by making a test case for American policy in Vietnam. He also said the United States could have come out in a far poorer position. The Secretary also gave a preview to what he called a "fascinating period" of realignment in Southeast Asia. He said Vietnam with its 42 million people and a good army, might become the major force in Southeast Asia. He said he also believed that Cambodia and Laos would eventually be satellites of Hanoi and that China and the Soviet Union would most likely compete for influence in the area. He also predicted that Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia would attempt to align themselves with Hanoi and that there might be a possibility that Hanoi might ask the United States to re-enter the area and help stabilize the situation. He also said China appeared afraid that the United States might leave that part of the world entirely and open it up to Soviet influence.

Political scientists saw the retreat from Southeast Asia differently. Many believed it was not only a blow to American idealism but part of a

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2 Alastair Buchan, Foreign Affairs, "The Indochina War and World Politics," July 1975. (Hereinafter cited as Buchan, "Indochina War."
3 Honolulu Advertiser, May 7, 1975.
5 Ibid.
larger process of a change in foreign affairs. Alastair Buchan, a professor of international relations at the University of Oxford, saw three significant results of the withdrawal of American presence from the area. These were:

1. The United States was once again, as in the early 20th century, a strong Pacific power, but not a dominant one.

2. A change in the structure of inter-allied relationships emerged with the fall of South Vietnam. American allies exercised, as a result of the withdrawal of American influence, more responsibility and initiative than a decade before.

3. A change in the economic and monetary relationships between the United States and other powers also resulted. A dwindling supply of raw materials, especially oil, for the United States caused this new economic approach toward foreign relations.

These three points signified one important thing, Buchan said—a change in the structure of world politics.

Earl C. Ravenal, a professor at John Hopkins University, saw the Vietnam issue differently. He believed the consequences of America's demonstrated failure to act—however justified and right the decision may have been—were more important than the consequences of the loss of Vietnam itself. He went on to say that Americans had rationalized the fall of Vietnam by creating excuses and avoiding the real reason—the failure to live up to commitments. He feared the success the American public had in Vietnam by constraining the Executive might evoke similar restraints, or obstructions, in similar future situations. Internationally, he feared that the collapse of South Vietnam not only

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6Buchan, "Indochina War."
destroyed the premises of the Nixon Doctrine, but provided an early clue to the instability of the present balance of power system. He said:

> The dilution of American guarantees makes it both more necessary and more feasible for allies to seek the protection of the adversary, to accommodate the adversary, to strike a posture of neutrality, to attempt equidistance between the great powers, or even to pursue self-reliance, perhaps to the point of acquiring a national nuclear force.  

The political scientists who made these predictions, however, overlooked two important points. First, they did not realize that the Nixon Doctrine was designed merely to get the United States out of Vietnam. Second, they did not realize that with the fall of Saigon, North Vietnam emerged as a potential replacement or quasi-agent for the United States in Southeast Asia. Although the United States was no longer physically in the area, the presence of a strong, possibly united, Vietnam could accomplish the goals which American foreign policy makers had spent more than 10 years attempting—to create a powerful force capable of keeping the Chinese from pushing southward. With the emergence of a powerful Vietnam, the United States could rely upon Hanoi's strong army and traditional Vietnamese-Chinese antagonism to keep Communist China from expanding its influence throughout Southeast Asia. After the fall of Saigon, Hanoi certainly had the war materials needed for such a task. With its victory on 29 April, the North Vietnamese inherited at least $5 billion worth of American military equipment.  

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8 Honolulu Advertiser, May 1, 1975.
Hanoi waged guerrilla warfare, but it also had the capability to conduct conventional warfare—something which American forces were never able to do.

In a conventional war Vietnam could send 1,000 or more tanks—five times more than Thailand and equally as many as Great Britain—into battle. In addition, the North Vietnamese could use more than 1,000 American artillery pieces; $1 billion in facilities at American-built bases like Cam Ranh Bay; $2 to $3 billion in combat weaponry ranging from fighter bombers to rifles; $500 million in spare parts, engines, fuels and lubricants.9

By December 1975, eight months after the collapse of Saigon, the President's designs for Asia finally began to appear in public. Following a visit to China, and speaking in Honolulu on 7 December, the President proclaimed what he called a new Pacific Doctrine of "peace with all and hostility toward none." The President, speaking on the 34th anniversary of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, called for a foreign policy based upon military strength and friendly relations with Japan, the People's Republic of China and possibly Hanoi. He said:

Let us join with the new and old countries of the Pacific in creating the greatest of civilizations on the shores of the greatest of oceans.10

The new alignment in foreign affairs and economic order conceived in 1970 with the Nixon Doctrine was becoming an embryo. President Ford,

9 Ibid.
in hopes of building upon the foundation, listed six points in his Pacific Doctrine. The most important included: American strength was basic to any stable balance of power in the Pacific; the United States must normalize relations with China; outstanding political conflicts must be resolved; a structure of economic cooperation reflecting the aspirations of all the people of Asia and Southeast Asia must be created.¹¹

The transition to a new Asian foreign policy was not totally without trauma for the American public. What appeared as a loss of Indochina, perhaps to some as a sellout to Communists, presented sticky political problems for the President. Publicly, both the President and the Secretary of State had to maintain an anti-communism stance. In addition, they felt compelled to chastise Congress for usurping Executive prerogatives in foreign affairs. In an interview shortly after the fall of Saigon, Kissinger said he doubted Hanoi would have staged it successful military drive on Saigon had Watergate not sapped presidential power and had Congress not enacted the War Powers Act. He said:

In January '73 we did not foresee that Watergate would sap the Executive authority of the United States to such a degree that flexibility of Executive action inherently would be circumscribed.¹²

He also said that he had not foreseen that Congress would pass a law prohibiting the President from enforcing the Paris Agreement of 1973. He added, "And while the United States may not have done anything anyway,

¹¹Ibid.
it made a lot of difference for Hanoi whether it thinks the United States probably will not or whether it thinks that we certainly cannot.\textsuperscript{13} Personally, the loss of Indochina to Kissinger may not have been as distasteful as the usurpation by Congress of the President's power in the field of foreign affairs.

President Ford, leader of the nation's morals and morale, also had a difficult task. The President realized he had the responsibility for soothing Americans concerning the Vietnam disaster, and scolding them for interfering in presidential affairs and persuading them not to want to revert to isolationism. In a speech at Tulane University on 23 April 1975 he told a group, "These events, tragic as they are, portend neither the end of the world nor of American's leadership in the world."\textsuperscript{14}

Although the Vietnam War did not end as gracefully as the President wanted, Ford believed that the nation came out of Vietnam with the "Best solution possible under the most difficult circumstances."\textsuperscript{15} However, the President warned Americans in an interview that in the case of South Vietnam and Cambodia that if he had had the opportunity to have made military assistance available, there might have been another ending to the situation.

While the President faced the difficult task of assuring other American allies that the United States would not abandon them, he also had to turn American public opinion away from the isolationist path.

\textsuperscript{13}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{14}Time, May 5, 1975, p. 20.
\textsuperscript{15}New York Times, July 25, 1975, p. 10.
In his efforts to do this, Ford rationalized the Vietnam experience by claiming that the nation had learned several lessons that it could apply to foreign affairs in the future. He said that despite Vietnam the nation still had to work with other governments that felt as the United States did. However, he added:

We cannot...fight their battles for them. Those countries who believe in freedom as we do must carry the burden. We can help them, not with U.S. military personnel, but with arms and economic aid so that they can protect their own national interests and protect the freedom of their citizens.16

This task proved more difficult than the President expected. In June 1975 a poll conducted by Time magazine showed that only one-third of Americans believed it more important than ever to live up to American commitments to send military equipment and aid, but not troops, to Israel in case of aggression.17 A Harris poll released on 19 June showed only slight difference. Because of the American experience in Vietnam, a 43 to 27 per cent plurality of Americans favored using American troops, air power and naval power to defend South Korea if Communist North Korea invaded it.18

The Domestic Side

Public opinion played no less of a role in domestic matters than in foreign affairs. Many of the constraints public opinion had placed

17Time, June 16, 1975. However, only 19 per cent thought that a lack of commitment by the American people was to blame for the fall of Indochina.
upon the President in foreign affairs also were present in the refugee resettlement program. Anti-refugee public opinion proved a potential political powder keg with which the President and his agents had to contend.

Much of the anti-involvement attitude of the American public emerged again when the President announced his plan to bring some 130,000 refugees into the United States. As a result, politicians had to weigh the public reaction as the President, State Department and Defense Department started formulating plans to deal with refugees. In evacuation planning public opinion had forced the President to consider the impact, especially the political effect, that as many as 1.5 million refugees could have on the nation's depressed economy. In this regard, fears that refugees would take jobs away from Americans and add to the nation's social problems greatly limited the President's options. Because of these domestic considerations, it appears Washington officials delayed planning for evacuation of refugees until the last minute. As a result, the number of refugees evacuated was about two-thirds less than it should have been.

Public opinion greatly influenced other government departments and political factions. Anti-refugee reactions limited the Defense Department in its plans to establish refugee camps throughout the nation and forced it to establish camps in areas of the nation that looked the most receptive. Also, to state and federal politicians the refugees and the resettlement program, for a time, looked like a touchy political problem. Those politicians who did not benefit from the program
criticized it; those who did praised it. Even a politically conscious faction or reservists within the Army attempted to use the refugees to their advantage. The group, acting as agents for a larger group of 7,000 attempted to use the program to intimidate the Pentagon into keeping what appeared as an obsolete Army program.

In short, the role public opinion played in the events associated with Vietnam and the refugees was significant. The American public, if only for a short period, made it known that it had a say in both domestic and foreign affairs. For the most part, its tool was simply the public opinion poll.
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