

AIR AMERICA SVND EVACUATION SUMMARY

HR70-14

1. IN EARLY APRIL 1975 THE AAM SVND EVACUATION CONTINGENCY PLANS WERE FAIRLY WELL FINALIZED. THESE PLANS INCLUDED COORDINATION WITH THE [DAO EVACUATION COMMAND CENTER (ECC)] AAM [CAPTAIN FILIPPI] WAS THE PRIMARY COORDINATOR BETWEEN AAM AND [ECC.] AAM [CAPTAIN MARIUS BURKE] WAS THE MAN ASSIGNED TO ORGANIZE AND FORMALIZE THE AAM EMPLOYEE EVACUATION PLANS, AS WOULD RELATE TO GETTING THE FOREIGN EMPLOYEES FROM THEIR LIVING QUARTERS TO THE AAM [SN] COMPOUND FOR ONWARD EVACUATION OUT OF VIETNAM. IN MY JOB CAPACITY, I HAD DEALINGS WITH ALL FACTIONS OF THE COMPANY/EVACUATION/CONTINGENCY PLANS.
2. IN MY SUPPORT TO [CAPTAIN FILIPPI] AAM PROVIDED THE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO THE SETTING UP OF AN ALTERNATE FLIGHT WATCH FACILITY AT AN OFFICE NEARBY THE [DAO ECC.] AAM WOULD PROVIDE THE PRIMARY VHF/AM AND VHF/FM RADIOS IF AND WHEN THE AAM OPERATIONS FUNCTION COULD NOT OPERATE, WE ALSO PROVIDED THE [DAO ECC] WITH OUR ICCS COLORED DAYGLO GREEN PAINT, SO THAT THEY COULD PAINT THE LETTER H ON THEIR DESIGNATED ROOF TOPS. THESE LZ PADS WERE TO BE UTILIZED FOR ALL THE U.S. MISSION PERSONNEL PICKUP POINTS IN THE CASE OF AN EVACUATION.
3. [CAPTAIN FILIPPI] ALSO BROUGHT A GROUP OF [THREE U.S. MARINES] TO MY OFFICE ON OR ABOUT 25 APRIL. THE [MARINE] OFFICER IN CHARGE WAS INTERSTED PRIMARILY IN THE PERIMETER SECURITY OF THE AAM COMPOUND. HE STATED THAT HE WOULD BE THE OFFICER RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING SECURITY OF OUR FACILITY AND THAT UPON THE EVACUATION OF OUR AAM COMPOUND, HIS [U.S. MARINE] GROUP WOULD DESTROY (BLOW UP) THE AAM FACILITIES. WE DISCUSSED THE WEAK POINTS IN OUR PERIMETER, SUCH AS THE COMPANY PASSENGER TERMINAL BUILDING AND

GATES. ALSO WE AGREED THAT THE ROLLING GATES UTILIZED ACROSS OUR SOUTHWEST TAXIWAY ENTRANCE WAS A WEAK POINT THAT WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO SEAL OFF FROM REFUGEES AND/OR ARMED DESPERATE VIETNAMESE MILITARY PERSONNEL. IT WAS DECIDED THAT AAM WOULD USE METAL CONEX CONTAINERS TO BARRICADE THE TAXIWAY AND PLACE A DOUBLE ROW OF CONCERTINA WIRE ON TOP OF THEM TO STEM INFILTRATION. THIS WOULD BE DONE AFTER OUR FIXED WING AIRCRAFT HAD DEPARTED OR IF THE AIRPORT CONDITIONS PREVENTED OUR FIXED WING AIRCRAFT FROM TAKING OFF. IN PREPARATION WE LATER POSITIONED ABOUT 10 CONEXES NEAR THE TAXIWAY AND SOME 4 ROLLS OF CONCERTINA WIRE. THE TERMINAL BUILDING WOULD BE PLANNED TO BE BLOCKED ON THE RAMP SIDE BY VEHICLES AND THE ENTRANCE GATE FROM THE STREET TO OUR EMPLOYEE VEHICLE PARKING LOT WAS TO BE BARRICADED BY THE 2 ISUZU BUSES OPERATED BY AAM. [THE MARINE OFFICER] SAID HE WOULD LIKE ME TO MAKE THE NECESSARY PREPARATIONS AND HE WOULD RETURN IN A FEW DAYS TO SEE WHAT PROGRESS WE HAD MADE. HE NOR ANY OF THE OTHER [MARINES] EVER VISITED ME AGAIN AND I HEARD NOTHING FURTHER ABOUT THEIR PLANS.

4. [MAJOR (USAF) COOK] WAS THE MAN IN [DAO] WHO PROVIDED ME WITH THE 300 FUEL DRUMS AND ONE EACH [ESSO] REFUELER OF AVGAS AND ONE OF JP4. HE TOLD ME THAT [DAO EEC] WOULD ALSO HAVE A [ESSO] REFUELER OF JP4 PARKED IN THE [DAO] COMPOUND AREA.

5. WE IN AAM ALSO DOUBLED OUR DELIVERY SERVICE OF [ESSO MOGAS] TO ENSURE THAT WE WOULD HAVE MAXIMUM FUEL FOR OUR GENERATORS AND VEHICLES.

6. IN ADDITION WE OBTAINED AN EXTRA POTABLE WATER TRAILER FROM PAGE AND SERVICED IT WAS A STANDBY.

7. WE ALSO PURCHASED ABOUT 425 CASES OF MILITARY "C" RATIONS FROM PA&E IN CASE WE NEEDED FOOD FOR OUR EMPLOYEES. IN THIS SAME PURCHASE WERE NUMEROUS CASES OF OTHER CANNED FOODS THAT PA&E HAD FOR SALE. ALL OF THIS WAS STORED IN OUR SUPPLY AREA FOR POSSIBLE ISSUE/USE.

8. I HAD SEVERAL INFORMAL MEETINGS WITH THE THIRD COUNTRY NATIONAL (TCN) EMPLOYEES. I STRONGLY RECOMMENDED THAT THEY DOUBLE UP IN THEIR LIVING QUARTERS OUTSIDE THE TSN AIRFIELD. CAPTAIN BURKE AND I MADE SEVERAL FLIGHTS TOGETHER IN APRIL, ALONG WITH THE DESIGNATED SPOKESMAN OF THE FILIPPINOS AND CHINESE EMPLOYEES. OUR PURPOSE WAS TO DETERMINE WHICH TCNS LIVED WHERE IN TOWN AND WHICH ROOF TOPS WERE THE MOST SUITABLE FOR USE. WE FORMALLY IDENTIFIED 3 ROOFTOPS IN THE CHOLON AREA FOR THE EMPLOYEES LIVING IN THAT AREA AND WE IDENTIFIED 3 ROOF TOPS AROUND THE AREA OF TRUONG MINH GIANGTRUONG MINH KY FOR THE BALANCE OF THE CN EMPLOYEES. THOSE WHO WERE NOT REASONABLY CLOSE TO THESE ROOF TOPS, WERE TOLD TO MOVE IN CLOSER. THESE ROOF TOPS (LZ PADS) WERE THEN DESIGNATED FOR EACH EMPLOYEE, BY LOCATION, FOR PICKUP. A NAME AND ADDRESS LIST OF ALL FOREIGN EMPLOYEES WAS GIVEN TO CAPTAIN BURKE FOR PLANNING PURPOSES. THE MAJORITY OF OUR HELICOPTER PILOTS WERE GIVEN AREA FAMILIARIZATION FLIGHTS SO THAT THEY KNEW ALL THE DAO AND EMPLOYEE PICKUP PADS.

9. A VHF/AM AND VHF/FM (PORTABLE ) RADIO WAS GIVEN TO THE CHINESE EMPLOYEES IN CHOLON AND THE SAME WAS PROVIDED TO THE CN GROUP OR FILIPPINOD. THESE RADIOS WOULD ENABLE THEM TO HAVE RADIO CONTACT WITH THE AAM TSN OPERATIONS OFFICE AND WITH COMPANY AIRCRAFT AS MAY BE REQUIRED. EACH LZ WAS GIVEN A RADIO CALL

SIGN. [MR. P.Y. LIN ACTING MANAGER OF SUPPLY] AND MR. SAM TALAPIAN FOREMAN OF ELECTRONICS WAS DESIGNATED AS THE TCN GROUP SPOKESMAN.] IN ADDITION WE PROCEEDED TO PAINT THE AAM DAYGLO GREEN H ON THOSE APPROVED ROOF TOPS.

10. ABOUT THE MIDDLE OF APRIL, [CAPTAIN BURKE] AND I BECAME MORE CONCERNED ABOUT THE OVERALL WAR SITUATION AROUND SAIGON AND WE RECOMMENDED THAT ALL TCN EMPLOYEES MOVE INTO THE WAREHOUSE TYPE BUILDINGS BEHIND THE [FORMER CITCA HANGAR] WHICH WAS WITHIN THE AAM COMPOUND. A NUMBER OF THE TCN EMPLOYEES STARTED TO MOVE INTO THOSE ROOMS. ABOUT 23 OR 24 APRIL, I INSISTED THAT ALL TCNS MOVE TO THOSE BUILDINGS, AND I WAS ASSURED BY [MR. P.Y. LIN] THAT ALL THOSE EMPLOYEES LIVING IN CHOLON WOULD BE MOVED TO THE CITCA BUILDINGS BY THE NIGHT OF 26 APRIL, AS THE SECURITY OF THE CHOLON AREA WAS QUITE QUESTIONABLE.]

11. ON THE MORNING OF 29 APRIL WHEN WE WERE PREPARING TO EVACUATE ALL [TCNS] I WAS GIVEN A NAME LIST OF THE [TCNS] THAT WERE STILL HOUSED IN TOWN. THERE WERE [7 CHINESE IN CHOLON] AND [11 FILIPINOS IN THE TROUNG MINH GIANG AREA.] EVENTUALLY THE AAM HELICOPTERS PICKED UP ALL THE FILIPPINOS [AND 6 OF THE CHINESE] I HAD TALKED BY RADIO AT 1500L WITH [P. Y. LIN] AND CONFIRMED THAT THE SIX CHINESE IN CHOLON WOULD GO TO THE CHINESE HOSPITAL AND GET OUT THE SEVENTH CHINESE EMPLOYEE, [MR. W. A. PENG.] THEN THEY WERE ALL TO PROCEED TO ANY OF THE ALTERNATE ROOF TOP LZ PADS FOR PICKUP BY USING THEIR PORTABLE VHF/FM RADIO. IN THE END RESULT, I LEARNED A FEW DAYS LATER THAT [W.A.PENG] DID NOT GET EVAUCATED. THE REASON WHY IS UNKNOWN TO ME AT THIS WRITING. I SUGGEST THAT [P. Y. LIN] MAKE A STATEMENT ON WHY THEY DID NOT OR

COULD NOT GET [REDACTED] OUT.

12. IN RETROSPECT I WOULD SAY THAT AAM EVACUATION PLANS WENT FAIRLY SMOOTH AND THAT WE WERE VERY FORTUNATE THAT ONLY ONE EMPLOYEE FAILED TO GET OUT OF VIETNAM AND NONE OF OUR EMPLOYEES WERE INJURED. ALL OF THIS IS IN SPITE OF THE FACT THAT THE U.S. MARINES NEVER ARRIVED IN THE AAM COMPOUND, TO SECURE/ DESTROY IT.

13. I WENT BY AAM HELICOPTER, FROM MY LIVING QUARTERS [259 TROUNG QUOC DUONG] [TO AAM TSN] AT ABOUT 0930L ON TUESDAY 29 APRIL 1975.

14. WE OPERATED FROM [AAM TSN] UNTIL ABOUT 1230L AT WHICH TIME CEO GAVE THE ORDER TO EVACUATE THE AAM COMPOUND, DUE TO LACK OF SECURITY (NO U.S. MARINES) AND [VNAF PENETRATING OUR AREA WITH CARS, HONDAS, LOCAL DEPENDENTS, ETC.] CEO SAID WE WERE TO RE-GROUP AT THE [DAO ECC].

15. PRIOR TO ABANDONING THE AAM AREA, CEO APPROVED THE DISPATCHING OF AAM FIXED WING AIRCRAFT TO CARRY THE NON-ESSENTIAL EMPLOYEES TO FRIENDLY COUNTRIES. WE PROCEEDED TO LOAD ALL SUCH EMPLOYEES AND LAUNCHED THE AIRCRAFT ASAP. IN A SHORT PERIOD OF TIME, WE HAD ALL THOSE EMPLOYEES THAT WERE PRESENT AND SOME UNKNOWN LOCALS WHO INFILTRATED OUR GROUPS, ON THE FIXED WING AIRCRAFT AND AIRBORNE.

16. I MIGHT MENTION THAT IT WAS VERY DIFFICULT TO CONTROL THE BOARDING OF PASSENGERS AND TO DETERMINE WHO WAS AAM EMPLOYEE OR DEPENDENTS, BECAUSE WE HAD VERY LITTLE HELP AT THE AIRCRAFT ENTRANCE DOORS. I DON'T KNOW WHO, IF ANYONE DID AUTHORIZE THE DEPARTURE OF SOME OF THE AMERICANS, [I.E., CHARLIE MEYERS.]

[HARVEY KOHLER, DICK FISHER, GEORGE KELLER, ETC.] ON THE FIXED WING AIRCRAFT. WE COULD HAVE REALLY UTILIZED THOSE AMERICANS TO CONTROL PASSENGER LOADING, THE TAXIWAY GATES AND THE REFUELING PROBLEM.

17. SHORTLY AFTER ARRIVING AT AAM [TSN] I WAS NOTIFIED THAT VNAF PILOTS WERE STEALING OUR [GFE UH-1H HELICOPTERS] FROM THE ICCS RAMP. TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE THEY STOLED [FIVE (5) UH-1H AIRCRAFT] FROM THE ICCS/AS RAMP AND [ONE AAM 204B] HELICOPTER FROM THE AAM RAMP ITSELF. THESE VNAF PEOPLE WERE WELL ARMED AND DESPERATE.

18. WITH THE INCOMING ROCKETS AND VNAF INFILTRATING OUR RAMP AREA, THERE WAS NO TIME TO COLLECT OR DESTROY ESSENTIAL RECORDS. WE WERE HOPEFUL THAT WE COULD RESECURE THE AAM COMPOUND AND OPERATE FROM IT, ONCE THE MARINES ARRIVED TO SECURE THE AREA. IT WAS PLANNED AND I WAS SO BRIEFED [BY DAO AND THE U.S. MARINES] THAT THE AAM COMPOUND WOULD BE SECURED BY THE [U.S. MARINES] AND UPON OUR DEPARTURE, THEY WOULD DESTROY (BLOW UP) THE AAM FACILITIES. UNFORTUNATELY FOR ALL CONCERNED, THE U.S. MARINES DID NEITHER.

19. UPON ARRIVAL AT THE [DAO ECC] [DICK WENGENROTH, STAN HUSTER, RON LIETCHY, PAUL DISCIULLO AND MYSELF] ASSISTED THE AAM HELICOPTER PILOTS WITH THEIR ARRIVALS AND DEPARTURES, AT THE DAO TENNIS COURT PADS.

20. [AAM CAPTAIN FILIPPI] TOLD ME THAT WE NEEDED TO OBTAIN [JP-4] FUEL FOR THE HELICOPTERS AND HE ASKED ME WHERE WAS THE [DAO FUEL TRUCK]. I EXPLAINED THAT I KNEW [DAO USAF MAJOR COOK] HAD AN [ESSO JP-4 FUEL TRUCK] AS PART OF THE [DAO ECC PLANNING] BUT I WAS NOT INVOLVED IN THEIR [DAO] PLANNING. NOT KNOWING WHERE THE [DAO FUEL]

TRUCK WAS POSITIONED, [DICK WENGENROTH] AND MYSELF TOOK A [DAO TRUCK] AND HOTWIRED THE IGNITION AND PROCEEDED TO DRIVE AROUND THE [DAO BLDG.] [5000 COMPOUND] BUT WERE UNABLE TO FIND THE [JP-4] TRUCK. THEN I ASKED [CAPTAIN FILIPPI] TO OBTAIN A FEW U.S. MARINES FROM ECC AND WE COULD GO TO THE AAM RAMP AND BRING OUT SOME OF THE [225 DRUMS OF JP-4] WE HAD THERE. CAPTAIN FILIPPI COULD APPARENTLY GET NO U.S. MARINES DESIGNATED FOR THIS ASSIGNMENT. SO I WENT AND GOT ONE OF THE AAM PILOTS TO FLY OVER THE DAO AREA, WITH DICK WENGENROTH AND MYSELF SEARCHING FOR THE [JP-4 TRUCK.] WE SPOTTED IT AT THE LOT AROUND THE CORNER OF THE BX STOP AND SHOP BUILDING. WE RETURNED TO THE ECC AND ATTEMPTED TO LOCATE THE [JP4 TRUCK] IGNITION KEYS. NO ONE KNEW WHERE THE KEYS WERE, SO WE FLEW TO THE BX LZ PADS AND WALKED TO THE LOT WHERE THE [JP4 TRUCK] WAS PARKED. THE LOT GATE HAD A PADLOCK ON IT WHICH WE BROKE OFF. WITHIN ABOUT 20 MINUTES WE HAD HOTWIRED THE [JP4 TRUCK] IGNITION WIRES, BUT THE TRUCK BATTERY WAS SO WEAK THE ENGINE WOULD NOT START. WE CONSIDERED TOWING THE [JP4] TRUCK USING A NEARBY TOW TRUCK, BUT AS THE [JP4 TRUCK] WAS A HYDROMATIC IF WE COULD NOT START THE [JP4 TRUCK] ENGINE, THEN WE WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO PUMP THE [JP4] FROM THE TRUCK. WE THEN RETURNED TO [DAO ECC BY AAM HELICOPTER.] WE COULD NOT FIND ANY [DAO] VEHICLES WITH A LARGE ENOUGH BATTERY TO SUIT THE [JP4] TRUCK NEEDS. SO AGAIN WE FLEW TO THE BX LZ PADS WITH THE THOUGHT OF TAKING THE BATTERY FROM A [NEARBY ISUZU] BUS AND USE IT FOR THE [JP4 TRUCK.] THIS TIME [STAN HUSTER] ACCOMPANIED [DICK WENGENROTH] AND MYSELF. WE SWITCHED THE BATTERIES, ONLY TO FIND OUT THE BUS BATTERY WAS DEAD. WE THEN WENT BACK TO [DAO ECC] AND AGAIN

REQUESTED [CAPT. FILIPPI] TO PROVIDE US WITH A FEW U.S. MARINES SO THAT WE COULD OBTAIN JP4 FUEL DRUMS OR THE STANDBY [ESSO JP4] TRUCK FROM THE AAM COMPOUND. AS WE AGAIN COULD NOT GET ANY U.S. MARINES, FOR SECURITY WE ELECTED NOT TO RE-ENTER THE ABANDONED AAM COMPOUND FOR FUEL. LATER WHILE LISTENING TO THE AAM HELICOPTER PILOTS TALKING TO THE AAM OM AT [DAO BY RADIO,] IT WAS READILY EVIDENT THAT OUR PILOTS WERE CAREFULLY MONITORING THEIR FUEL ONBOARD AND PROGRAMMING THEIR ROOF TOP PICKUPS OF PEOPLE, TO ENABLE REFUELING AT THE U.S. SHIPS OFF [VUNG TAU,] WHERE THE MAJORITY OF THEIR PASSENGERS WERE BEING TAKEN. THE AAM HELICOPTER PILOTS DID A GREAT JOB IN FUEL MANAGEMENT AS WELL AS SOME "CAN DO" FLYING.

21. AS BEST I RECALL THE U.S. MILITARY HELICOPTERS STARTED ARRIVING AT THE [DAO BX] LZ PADS ABOUT 1500L. THE MAJORITY OF THEIR PASSENGERS WERE LOCAL REFUGEES WHO HAD BEEN PROGRAMMED OUT BY PRIOR [USAF C141 AND C-130.]

22. AT ABOUT 1615L CEO INSTRUCTED SOME OF US TO USE ONE OF THE TWO AAM HELICOPTERS AT [DAO] AND PROCEED TO THE [U.S. SHIPS.] THIS GROUP ALONG WITH MYSELF WAS DROPPED OFF AT THE [U.S.S. VANCOUVER, LPD-2.] THIS GROUP OF AAM EMPLOYEES CONSISTED OF [STAN HUSTER, PAUL DISCIULLO, RON LEITCHY, CAPT. CHESTER FOLCK, DICK WENGENROTH, E. L. ANGELES, VIC BALLESTEROS AND LATER WE WERE JOINED BY ED TWIFFORD.] THE VIETNAMESE FLIGHT MECHANIC WITH US ON [N47004] HELICOPTER WAS [MR. CAN (I BELIEVE)] AND HE WAS TAKEN TO THE REFUGEE SIDE OF OUR SHIP AND I NEVER SAW HIM AGAIN.

23. OUR SHIP, [THE U.S.S. VANCOUVER] FINALLY SAILED FOR [SUBIC BAY P. I.] ON 1 MAY ABOUT 1915L, AND WE ARRIVED IN [P. I.] ABOUT 2130L



ON 3 MAY.

24. ALTHOUGH WE WERE ALL PROCESSED THROUGH U.S. AND PHILIPPINE CUSTOMS AND IMMIGRATION BY ABOUT 2330L THE SAME NIGHT AT [CUBIC POINT NAVAL BASE GYM, WE WERE RETURNED TO THE U.S.S. VANCOUVER] FOR THE NIGHT BECAUSE THE WEATHER AT MANILA ELIMINATED US FROM FLYING THERE THAT NIGHT.

25. ON THE MORNING OF 4 MAY WE WERE FLOWN TO MANILA BY U.S. MILITARY HELICOPTER AND SENT TO THE [CARLTON HOTEL] TO CHECK IN WITH [CEO AND VP.] WE ARRANGED OUR OWN FLIGHT BOOKINGS AND FLEW FROM [MANILA TO HONG KONG] THE SAME AFTERNOON AND CHECKED INTO THE PRE-ARRANGED ROOMS AT THE [HONG KONG] SHERATON HOTEL ABOUT 1650L. [WE REPORTED TO THE AAM OFFICES AT THE PENINSULA HOTEL ON THE MORNING OF 5 MAY.]

[B. D. MESECHER]  
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