

EVACUATION OF [SAIGON] 28 APRIL 1975 - 4 MAY 1975

AT 1330L 28 APRIL 1975 I DEPARTED SAIGON [V01] IN HELICOPTER [N8514F.] THE OTHER CREWMEMBERS WERE [CAPTAIN RON GOODWIN] AND [E/A CUONG.] [14F] WAS TO ACT AS [SAR BIRD] FOR THREE AIR AMERICA HELICOPTERS EVACUATING [47] PEOPLE FROM CAN THO (V17) TO A SHIP OFF THE SE COAST OF VIETNAM.]

MY FIRST CONTACT WAS WITH [HELICOPTER 110 (TAYLOR AND WEISS)] THEY WERE SHUTTLING EVACUEES FROM [CAN THO TO THE U.S.S. VANCOUVER LOCATED ON THE 120 DEGREE MAGNETIC BEARING FROM CAN THO AND ABOUT 10NM OFFSHORE.] THEY STATED THE NUMBER OF EVACUEES WAS MORE [LIKE 200.] [I THEN SARED FOR HELICOPTER 105 (HITCHMAN AND GEHRING)] [CAPTAIN HITCHMAN STATED THE EVACUATION OF CAN THO WAS POORLY ORGANIZED AND COULDN'T POSSIBLY BE COMPLETED ON THE 28TH.] HE ALSO SAID HE DIDN'T KNOW THE TOTAL NUMBER OF EVACUEES BECAUSE THE CUSTOMER COULDN'T GIVE HIM A DEFINITE FIGURE. I TOLD HIM OUR OPERATIONS IN SAIGON HAD BEEN INFORMED THERE WERE ONLY [47 PEOPLE] TO BE EVACUATED AND THE CHIEF PILOT EXPECTED THE EVACUATION TO BE COMPLETED AND THE HELICOPTERS BACK IN [SAIGON] BY DARK. HE SAID [SAIGON] HAD BEEN MISINFORMED BY THE CUSTOMER. I THEN RELAYED THIS TO THE [ACP/RW. THE ACP/RW STRESSED TO CAPTAIN HITCHMAN] TO INFORM THE [CAN THO CUSTOMER OF THE URGENCY OF COMPLETING THE EVACUATION ASAP BECAUSE OF THE LARGE HELICOPTER REQUIREMENT TO EVACUATE SAIGON.] ALL THIS TIME HELICOPTER 104 (CASH AND WOOD) WAS BRINGING CUSTOMER DESIGNATED EVACUEES FROM OUTSTATIONS INTO CAN THO.]

LATER, OPERATIONS INFORMED US THE [COCKPIT CREW OF 14F] WAS SCHEDULED TO REPLACE THAT OF 110 THE 29TH.] SINCE WE WERE

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ALREADY IN THE AREA, WE SWAPPED [HELICOPTERS ABOARD THE VANCOUVER.]  
[CAPTAIN GOODWIN AND MYSELF WERE NOW IN 110 WITH F/M JOHN  
DIMANDAL.]

IT WAS SHORTLY AFTER THIS THAT THE [OM, REID CHASE] BROADCAST  
ON COMPANY VHF THAT [TAN SON NHUT AIRPORT] WAS UNDER ATTACK BY  
[A37S AND ROCKET AND ARTILLERY FIRE.] HE ADVISED THE [4] HELICOPTERS  
OPERATING IN THE CAN THO AREA TO RON THERE.] I RELAYED THIS  
TO [HELICOPTER 12F (BURKE)] AT THAT TIME ENROUTE TO [VUNG TAU (V05)]  
WITH AN INOPERATIVE VHF RADIO.] HE ELECTED TO [RON WITH THE U.S.  
FLEET] AND I REMAINED AIRBOURNE UNTIL HE REPORTED LANDING ON  
[THE U.S.S. BLUE RIDGE.] DURING THE NIGHT [CAN THO TWICE CAME  
UNDER MORTAR AND ROCKET ATTACK] BUT NONE OF THE ROUNDS LANDED  
NEAR US.

THE MORNING OF THE 29TH OUR DEPARTURE WAS DELAYED BECAUSE  
THE CUSTOMER HAD TO RELOCATE HIS EVACUEES OUTSIDE OF TOWN FOR  
PICKUP. THIS WAS TO AVOID BEING MOBBED BY THE LOCAL POPULATION.  
SAIGON OPERATIONS DIRECTED ALL [4] HELICOPTERS] TO WORK OUT OF  
[CAN THO] UNTIL THE EVACUATION WAS COMPLETE. ENROUTE FROM  
[CAN THO TO THE SHIP, [NOW THE BARBOUR COUNTY] WE LISTENED TO  
AIR AMERICA'S WOES IN SAIGON: INCOMING ON OUR RAMP AND  
SURROUNDING AREA, VNAF PILOTS STEALING OUR HELICOPTERS AND  
MOBBING ONES WE HAD MANNED.

JUST AFTER REFUELING ON THE [BARBOUR COUNTY 083 (HUFF AND  
FOOTE)] [A C-47] MAYDAYED WITH ONE ENGINE ON FIRE. [HE SAID HE  
WAS 15-20 NM SOUTH OF SAIGON AND REQUESTED THE RUNWAY CONDITION  
OF CON SON ISLAND (V32, SOMETIMES REFERRED TO AS V01A).] I  
WAS THE CLOSEST AIRCRAFT TO [CON SON] SO I DIVERTED IMMEDIATELY.

THERE I ESTABLISHED RADIO CONTACT WITH [JOHN FORD] WHO TOLD ME ONE STRIP WAS OPEN, THE RAMP COMPLETELY BLOCKED BY VNAF PLANES AND [AIR AMERICA CARIBOU 014] FIXED WING REFUELING IMPOSSIBLE BUT CHOPPER REFUELING OK. I RELAYED THIS TO 083 AND SARED FOR HIM WHEN HE LANDED. I THEN PICKED UP [CAPTAIN FRASER] AND [JORDAN OF 014] AND ARRANGED WITH [FORD] TO RETURN ASAP TO EVACUATE AIR AMERICA PERSONNEL AND THE [5] AMERICANS OPERATING THE LORAN STATION.] [14F] [AND 105] FOLLOWED ME FROM THE [BARBOUR COUNTY] BACK TO [CON SON.] MYSELF AND [105] EACH PICKED UP ABOUT [15 OF 083'S PASSENGERS.] [083] FIXED HIS ENGINE AND LEFT FOR BRUNEI WITH HIS REMAINING PASSENGERS.] [14F] PICKED UP [FORD, SOME OTHER AIR AMERICA EMPLOYEES AND THE LORAN PEOPLE.] THIS COMPLETED THE EVACUATION OF AMERICANS AND AAM PERSONNEL FROM [CAN THO AND CON SON ISLAND.]

[ALL THREE HELICOPTERS DROPPED THEIR PASSENGERS ON THE BARBOUR COUNTY, REFUELED ON THE FLEET NEAR VUNG TAU AND WENT TO SAIGON.] [CAPTAIN STADULIS] RODE WITH ME FROM THE [BARBOUR COUNTY TO THE BLUE RIDGE.] THE FOLLOWING HELICOPTERS WERE WORKING SAIGON WHILE I WAS THERE: [093 (STERGAR AND GENZ), 081 (VAUGHAN), 14F (TAYLOR AND WEISS), 105 (HITCHMAN AND GEHRING), 03X (FREEDMAN), 06X (COALSON), 13F (BRAITHWAITE), 12F (BURKE AND CARPENTER), 139 (STADULIS AND KENDALL).] THIS LIST IS PROBABLY INCOMPLETE.

SPENT THE ENTIRE TIME IN [SAIGON] SHUTTLING PEOPLE FROM ROOFTOPS TO THE [DAO] COMPOUND. I LANDED ON THE FOLLOWING PADS SEVERAL TIMES: [259 TROUNG QUOC DUNG (USAID BUILDING), 192 CONG LY (USAID BUILDING), THE USAID BUILDING ON LE VAN

DYET, BOQ#1 AND CAPTAIN GOODWIN'S COMPOUND.] WE HAD A CONSTANT PROBLEM GETTING AMERICANS TO BOARD OUR HELICOPTERS. MOST HAD NO IDEA HOW URGENT THE SITUATION WAS AND WERE STILL LOADING VIETNAMESE PASSENGERS ON US WHEN THEY SHOULD HAVE BEEN GETTING OUT THEMSELVES. WHEN MY FUEL GOT LOW I PICKED UP 10 PASSENGERS AT DAO AND HEADED DIRECTLY FOR THE FLEET. I SHUTDOWN ON THE FLIGHT DECK OF THE [U.S.S. HANCOCK] AT 1900L WITH 100 POUNDS OF FUEL REMAINING.

THE ONLY REGRETTABLE INCIDENT OF THE WHOLE EVACUATION WAS THE LOOTING OF EIGHT AIR AMERICA HELICOPTERS ON THE [HANCOCK] BY THE SHIP'S U.S. PERSONNEL. THIS OCCURRED THE NIGHT OF 29-30 APRIL 1975 AND WAS REPORTED TO AIR AMERICA, NAVY AND MARINE AUTHORITIES TO NO EFFECT. NONE OF THE STOLEN ITEMS HAS BEEN ACCOUNTED FOR.

THE [HANCOCK] ARRIVED IN SUBIC BAY 3 MAY 1975. WE FLEW OUR HELICOPTERS OFF THE SHIP AND PARKED THEM AT THE HELIPORT AT [CUBI POINT NAS.] WE WERE THEN PROCESSED THROUGH THE EVACUATION CENTER AT [SUBIC AND FLOWN TO MANILA] THE EVENING OF THE 3RD. WITH THE VERY KIND HELP OF THE U.S. EMBASSY STAFF [IN MANILA] THOSE OF US WITHOUT PASSPORTS AND SHOT RECORDS WERE ABLE TO OBTAIN NEW DOCUMENTS AND [DEPART MANILA FOR HONG KONG] THE NIGHT OF THE 4TH.

[CAPTAIN TERRY OLSON]  
AIR AMERICA, INC.