

OPERATION FREQUENT WIND: EVACUATION DURING THE

# FALL OF SAIGON

On April 30, 1975, the last of America's military left Vietnam. U.S. combat operations stopped in 1973, but Marines were providing protection for U.S. embassy personnel. The frantic final days of the South Vietnam regime were perhaps emblematic of the U.S. involvement in the war. Individual heroism saved countless lives, but a stubborn reluctance by U.S. Ambassador Graham Martin to believe that Saigon was about to fall made the evacuation more chaotic than needed. It is perhaps fitting that a war that saw the emergence of the helicopter as a predominant U.S. weapon also saw the final days dominated by the use of helicopters.



The iconic photo, above, is not at the U.S. embassy. It shows an Air America Huey loading Vietnamese on the roof of an apartment building near the U.S. Embassy. Shown is CIA officer O.B. Harnage helping move evacuees into the chopper.

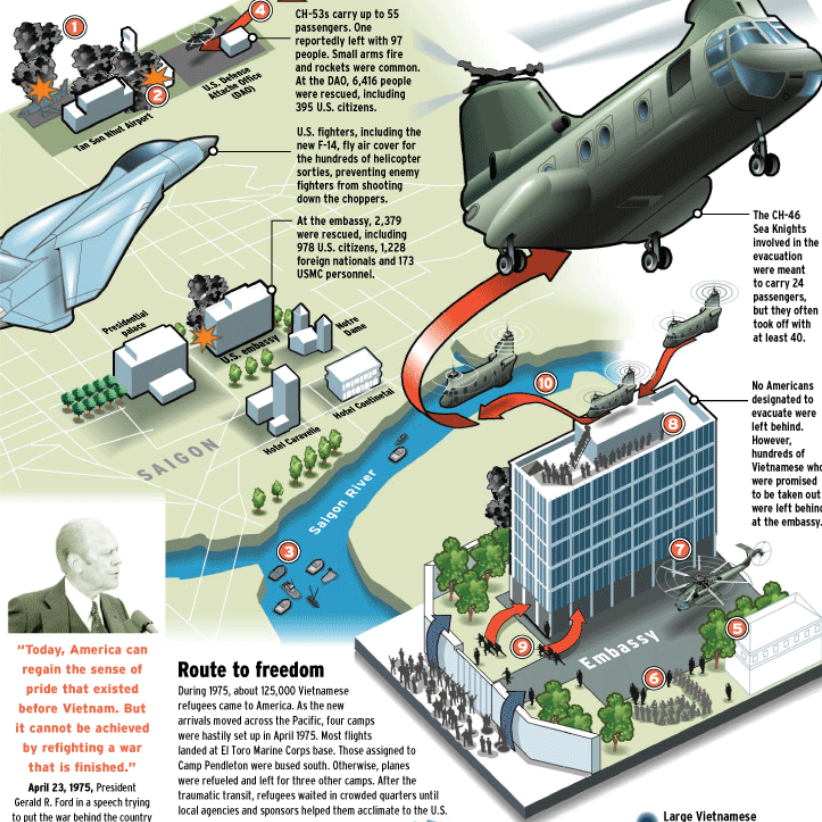
PROFILE OF THE EVACUATION

<b>130,000</b> Total evacuated in April	<b>40,000</b> Evacuated April 26-30	<b>45</b> U.S. Navy ships in the South China Sea	<b>682</b> U.S. sorties, including 360 at night
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HELICOPTERS USED

<b>34</b> CH-53 Sea Stallion	<b>29</b> CH-46 Sea Knight	<b>8</b> AH-1 Sea Cobra	<b>6</b> UH-1 Iroquois
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## America's last days in Vietnam



**"Today, America can regain the sense of pride that existed before Vietnam. But it cannot be achieved by reighting a war that is finished."**

April 23, 1975, President Gerald R. Ford in a speech trying to put the war behind the country

### Route to freedom

During 1975, about 125,000 Vietnamese refugees came to America. As the new arrivals moved across the Pacific, four camps were hastily set up in April 1975. Most flights landed at El Toro Marine Corps base. Those assigned to Camp Pendleton were bused south. Otherwise, planes were refueled and left for three other camps. After the traumatic transit, refugees waited in crowded quarters until local agencies and sponsors helped them acclimate to the U.S.



Sources: Dept. of Defense, www.fallofsaigon.org, SEARAC, The Associated Press, The New York Times, BBC News

Photo: The Associated Press

Graphic by SCOTT BROWN/Contributing Artist