

Report Dated April 4, 1975, From President Gerald R. Ford to Hon. Carl Albert, Speaker of the House of Representatives, Consistent With Section 4(a)(2) of the War Powers Resolution, Relative to the Transport of Refugees From Danang

APRIL 4, 1975.

Hon. CARL ALBERT,
Speaker of the House of Representatives,
Peking, China
(C/O Ambassador Bush).

As you know, last Saturday I directed United States participation in an international humanitarian relief effort to transport refugees from Danang and other seaports to safer areas farther south in Vietnam. The United States has been joined in this humanitarian effort by a number of other countries who are offering people, supplies and vessels to assist in this effort. This effort was undertaken in response to urgent appeals from the Government of the Republic of Vietnam because of the extremely grave nature of the circumstances involving the lives of hundreds of thousands of refugees. This situation has been brought about by large-scale violations of the Agreement Ending the War and Restoring the Peace in Vietnam by the North Vietnamese who have been conducting massive attacks on the northern and central provinces of South Vietnam.

In accordance with my desire to keep the Congress fully informed on this matter, and taking note of the provision of section 4(a)(2) of the War Powers Resolution (Public Law 93-148), I wish to report to you concerning one aspect of United States participation in the refugee evacuation effort. Because of the large number of refugees and the overwhelming dimensions of the task, I have ordered U.S. Naval vessels to assist in this effort, including Amphibious Task Group 76.8 with 12 embarked helicopters and approximately 700 Marines. These naval vessels have been authorized to approach the coast of South Vietnam to pick up refugees and U.S. nationals, and transport them to safety. Marines are being detailed to vessels participating in the rescue mission. The first vessel entered South Vietnam territorial waters at 0400 a.m. EDT on April 3, 1975.

Although these forces are equipped for combat within the meaning of section 4(a)(2) of Public Law 93-148, their sole mission is to assist in the evacuation including the maintenance of order on board the vessels engaged in that task.

As stated above, the purpose of the introduction of United States Naval vessels into Vietnamese waters is to assist in an international humanitarian effort involving vessels of several nations, including both military and civilian craft. The United States participation in this effort includes the charter of commercial vessels, the use of Military Sealift Command vessels with civilian crews, as

well as United States naval vessels with military crews. This effort is being undertaken pursuant to the President's constitutional authority as Commander-in-Chief and Chief Executive in the conduct of foreign relations and pursuant to the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended, which authorizes humanitarian assistance to refugees, civilian war casualties and other persons disadvantaged by hostilities or conditions relating to hostilities in South Vietnam.

You will appreciate, I am sure, my difficulty in telling you precisely how long United States forces may be needed in this effort. Our present estimate, however, is that this operation may involve the presence of United States Naval vessels in Vietnamese waters for a period of at least several weeks.

Sincerely,

GERALD R. FORD.