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(U) History Today - 29 April 2014

FROM: Center for Cryptologic History | Run Date: 04/29/2014

(U) In the spring of 1975, as the South Vietnamese military crumbled under North Vietnamese attacks, a relative handful of NSA employees in Saigon continued to provide SIGINT support to the Americans still in country, mostly in the U.S. embassy.

(U) The personnel got reservations on the earliest flights possible to send their families out of the country. They themselves, however, stayed on as long as possible and resisted suggestions that they depart. More than once the senior NSA official had to issue a blunt order to a subordinate to leave the country.

(U) Four NSA personnel were still working in country when intercept in April made it clear that the final North Vietnamese assault on Saigon was imminent. The information showed that the attack would begin in the area of Tan Son Nhut airbase -- where the NSA personnel were located -- although the timing was uncertain because leaders of the Communist forces were themselves not sure how soon they could be in position to commence.

(U) The senior NSA person was astounded to find that this SIGINT warning was not being accepted in the U.S. embassy. Senior people there believed that the enemy was engaging in communications deception to intimidate the South Vietnamese.

(U) The attack began at Tan Son Nhut with an aerial bombardment on April 28, followed by artillery.

(U) The last group of NSA personnel was evacuated by helicopter to a U.S. ship on April 29. They found that only a few of their South Vietnamese colleagues escaped; most were left behind.

(U) The senior NSAer from Saigon recalled, "...it is clear that there was much about the ending that left bitterness in our mouths. But when I look back, I'm glad I was there for the end. As long as I live, I will ever be grateful and immoderately proud of the NSA people who were there, doing the best they could because it was worth doing."

(U) Discuss historical topics with interesting folks. Visit the Center for Cryptologic History's blog, [History Rocks](#) ("go history rocks").

(U) [Larger view of photo](#)

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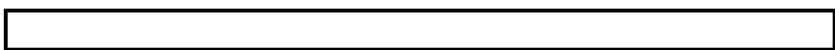
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