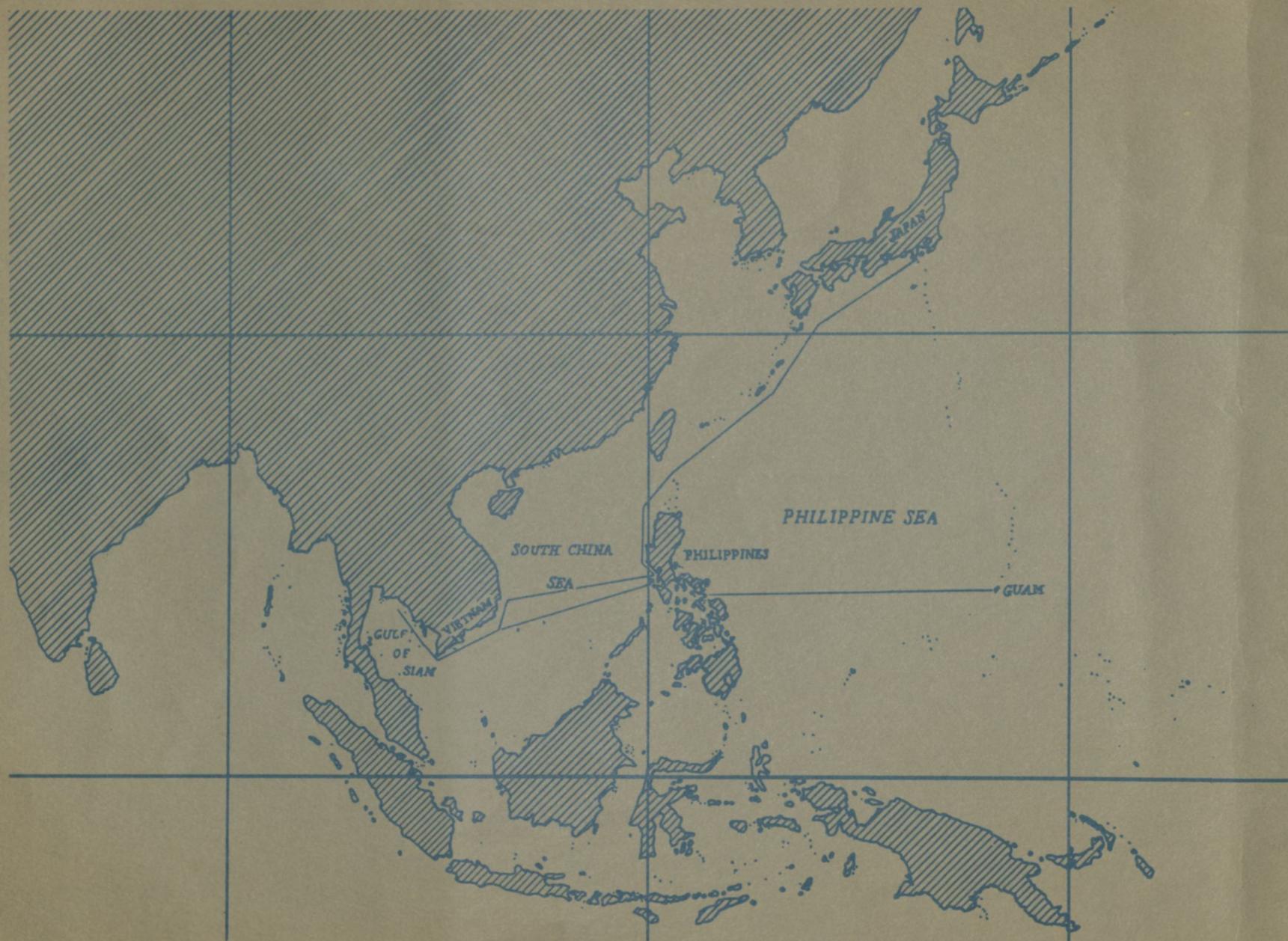
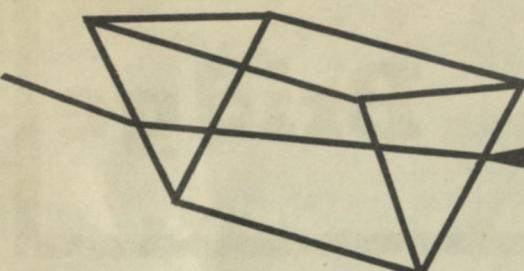


**SPECIAL**





# SPECTRUM

## SPECIAL

Volume 1 Number 3

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LTJG Bill Harlow

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JO3 Alan Weston

JOSN Randy Dodson

**MIDWAY PRINT SHOP**

L11 Ken Dorsey

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LISN Paul Stone

SA Rick Peterson

AA Ken Kunz

**MIDWAY PHOTO OFFICER**

CWO4 D. F. Sheehan, officer-in-charge

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This special edition of SPECTRUM covers Midway's participation in Operation "Frequent Wind." The regular features of Spectrum will return in the August edition.



SPECTRUM is an official bimonthly publication of the USS Midway Public Affairs Office. It is produced in accordance with SECNAVINST 5720.44 and in compliance with NAVEXOS P-35. in the Midway Print Shop. Opinions expressed in Spectrum are not necessarily those of the Department of Defense, the Department of the Navy or the United States Government.



# View from the Bridge

Friends of Midway,

This is my first opportunity to write to you since I assumed command of Midway on March 26.

I know you have followed the ship in the news and through your Midwayman's letters during our involvement in the history-making events in Southeast Asia during the past two months. This special issue of Spectrum is a words-and-pictures report on our participation in "Operation Frequent Wind" -- the evacuation of Vietnam. For those aboard, it was an unforgettable experience. Let me describe for you the events of those two months.

We got underway from Yokosuka on March 31 on what was supposed to be a routine cruise with visits scheduled for Subic Bay in the Philippines and Hong Kong. Soon after leaving Japan, however, we got word that the military and political situation in Southeast Asia was deteriorating and our help might be needed.

Heading south, we picked up two squadrons of Marine Corps helicopters off the coast of Okinawa. We carried the helos and Marine crewmen to the Subic operating area where they were transferred to other carriers.

These Marines saw considerable action in the Vietnam evacuation and the preceding evacuation of Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

On April 15, we entered Subic Bay for a scheduled 10-day upkeep period in the Philippines. Just three days later, however, we were ordered to get underway and steam at maximum speed toward Vietnam. Before leaving port, we off-loaded over half of our aircraft and several hundred people to make room on board for our upcoming mission.

After steaming to a position off the tip of Vietnam, on April 20 we were joined by 10 Air Force H-53 helicopters. The Air Force helo crewmen -- from the 56th Special Operations Wing, the 21st Special Operations Squadron and the 40th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron -- were a great bunch of professionals. Together we spent the next eight days preparing for the operation that we knew would commence any minute.

During the week prior to the evacuation, a group of our sailors were selected and trained to help process evacuees upon arrival aboard Midway. The group, made up of petty officers and non-rated men,



were assigned to work on the flight deck and in designated refugee handling areas.

As predicted, the situation in Vietnam worsened and it became necessary for us to act. At 3:30 p.m., April 29, we received the signal to commence the evacuation operation that we knew by the code name "Frequent Wind". At that time nine Air Force helos left the deck of Midway bound for landing zones in Saigon.

The H-33 helos shuttled back and forth from Saigon to Midway until early the next morning, often staying aboard Midway only long enough to off-load the evacuees and refuel.

Once the evacuees were on deck, Midwaymen moved them quickly and safely, identifying and processing all who came aboard. Medical corpsmen were standing by to render any assistance necessary. Fortunately, most of the medical problems of the evacuees were limited to scrapes and scratches. One seventeen-month old child was treated and cured of viral pneumonia.

After receiving the refugees, our immediate

concern was to move them on to other ships so that we could make room aboard Midway for more refugees which we knew would come. The men of Helicopter Combat Support Squadron One, Detachment Two, working around-the-clock to transport the evacuees from our ship to the other vessels, did a tremendous job.

Despite the fact that evacuees were taken to other ships as soon as possible, many had to spend the night with us. Crew's berthing spaces throughout the ship were shortly jammed. The overflow crowd bedded down on mats on the ship's forecastle and in the hangar bay. The evacuees, numbering over 1,000, enjoyed Midway meals thanks to a superlative effort by Midway's S-2 Division.

While aboard Midway, all the evacuees were treated as guests. Our men made toys for the youngsters, and provided some of the adults with their own clothes when needed. The warmth with which our men greeted the evacuees -- providing compassion and assurance at a time when these people surely needed it -- was a source of particular pride for me. Midway pride is a very real thing to all of us.

Early on the morning of April 30, the last Ameri-

cans were lifted from Saigon to safety. We continued to receive evacuees, however, as thousands of Vietnamese fled their homeland on their own. The sky was full of helicopters, many carrying entire families searching for refuge. Forty-five UH-1 "Huey" and three CH-47 "Chinook" helos landed aboard Midway. The "Hueys" carried as many as 50 people each. These evacuees received the same hospitable treatment as those who had arrived aboard the Air Force helos.

It was on this day that a Vietnamese Air Force major, piloting a Cessna 0-1 "Bird Dog" observation plane with his wife and five children aboard, landed on Midway. The courage and skill that the major demonstrated in making his first carrier landing a successful one captured the admiration of Midway's crew and for most of us, was the highlight of the eventful period of Operation Frequent Wind.

At the end of the evacuation operation, we departed our station off Vietnam for the Gulf of Siam. We were in the gulf on May 3, 4, and 5, and took aboard 52 Vietnamese aircraft which had escaped before the country fell. We also made an unscheduled pickup of 84 more evacuees, who had attempted to reach safety in a fishing boat designed for far fewer passengers. We took them aboard, as their boat was in imminent danger of sinking.

We then proceeded to Guam, arriving on May 11. There we off-loaded the 52 aircraft received in the Gulf of Siam, and the helicopters which had flown aboard in the evacuation. Our 84 unexpected guests rescued from the fishing boat also departed in Guam, a major center for evacuees. Our assignment finished, we left Guam the next day.

On May 20, after 32 consecutive days at sea and at anchor without liberty, we entered Subic Bay, and the crew enjoyed three well-earned days of rest and recreation.

Because of Operation Frequent Wind and related events, we returned to Yokosuka May 29, one week later than originally planned. All in all, we spent 54 of the 60 days away from Yokosuka at sea.

Many of our wives and families were disappointed when the evacuation of Saigon forced us to cancel our visit to Hong Kong. Their disappointment was short-lived, however, when they learned of the part their husbands and sons played in Operation Frequent Wind.

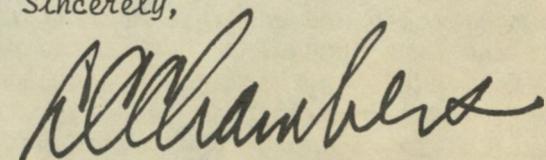
The story of Midway's participation in Operation Frequent Wind is covered in the following pages. It is the story of our ship's role in one of the most successful large-scale rescue operations in recent history.

The performance of our men throughout was extremely magnificient. For me, as the new commanding officer, it was gratifying. All the good words I had heard about the ability of Midway's crew before taking command were borne out. Our men responded to unique situations with poise, determination and skill.

As Midway family and friends, I am sure you share my pride in the tremendous job our crewmen performed.

Until next time, I remain

Sincerely,



L. C. CHAMBERS  
CAPTAIN USN  
COMMANDING OFFICER



*USS Midway  
&  
Operation  
Frequent Wind*



Twenty-four days before Operation Frequent Wind began, Midway received a taste of things to come when two Marine helicopter squadrons embarked aboard for three days. Light Squadron 367 and Attack Squadron 369 were on the move in anticipation of events in Vietnam, and Midway transported them from their home base in Okinawa to the Subic operating area off the Philippines. The squadrons left Midway for the carrier USS Hancock and the amphibious assault ship USS Okinawa, and later played a key role in the evacuation of refugees from Saigon.





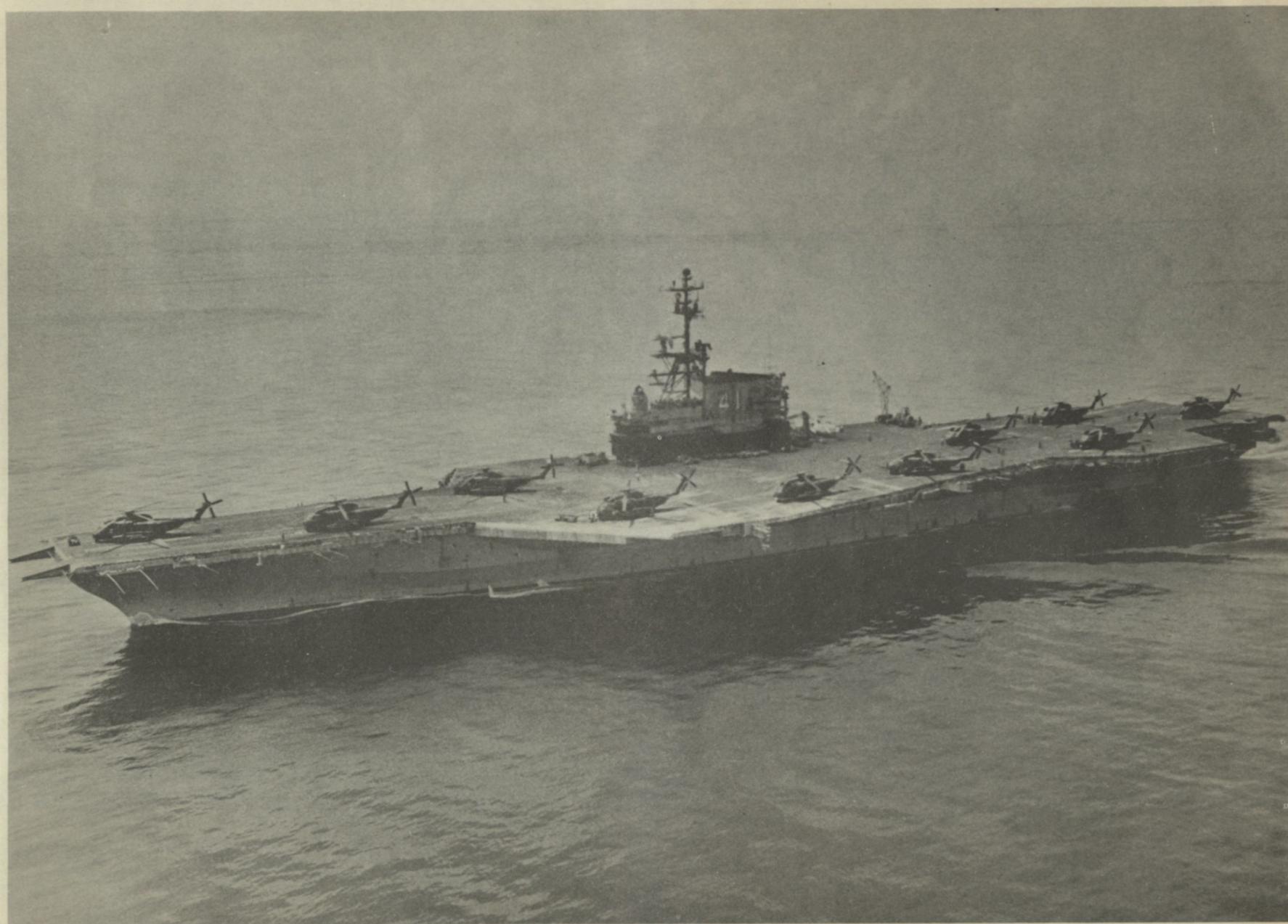
# U. S. Air Force

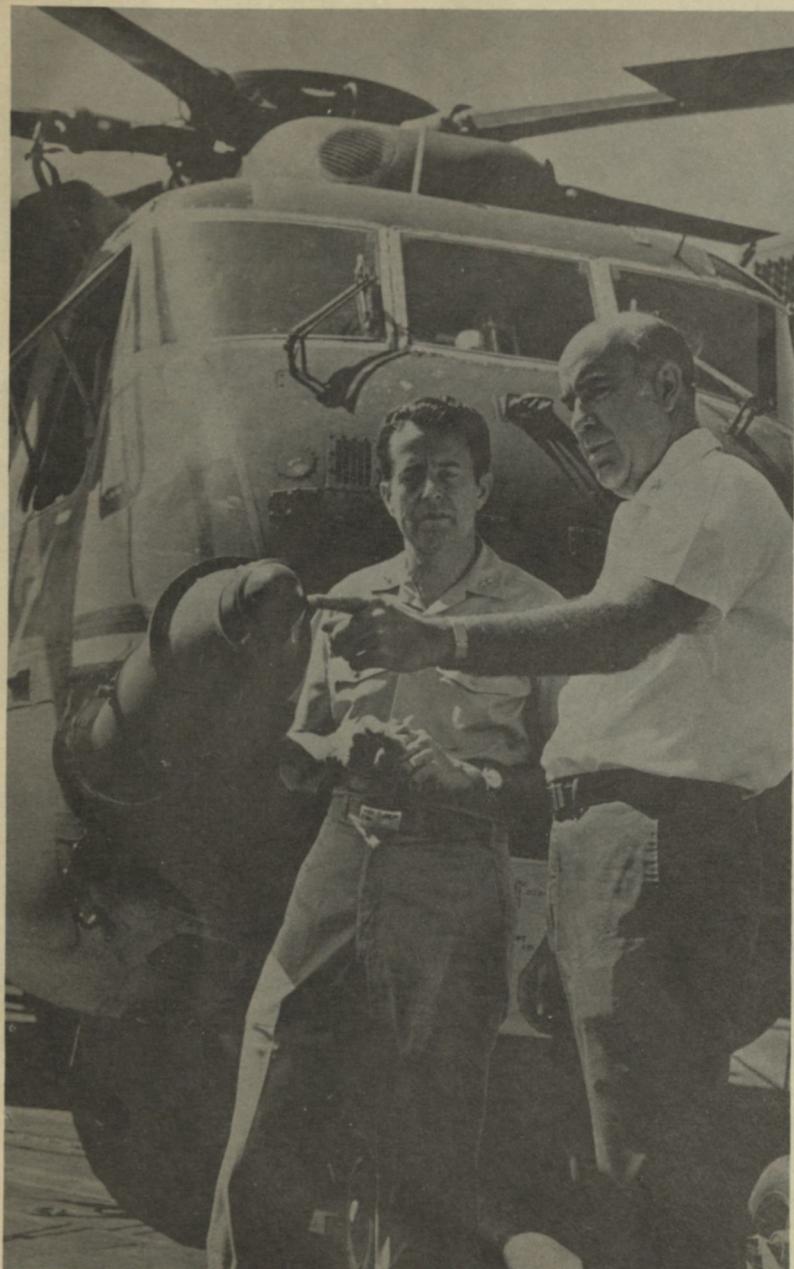
56th Special Operations Wing

21st Special Operations Squadron

40th Aerospace  
Rescue & Recovery Squadron

April 20, 1975





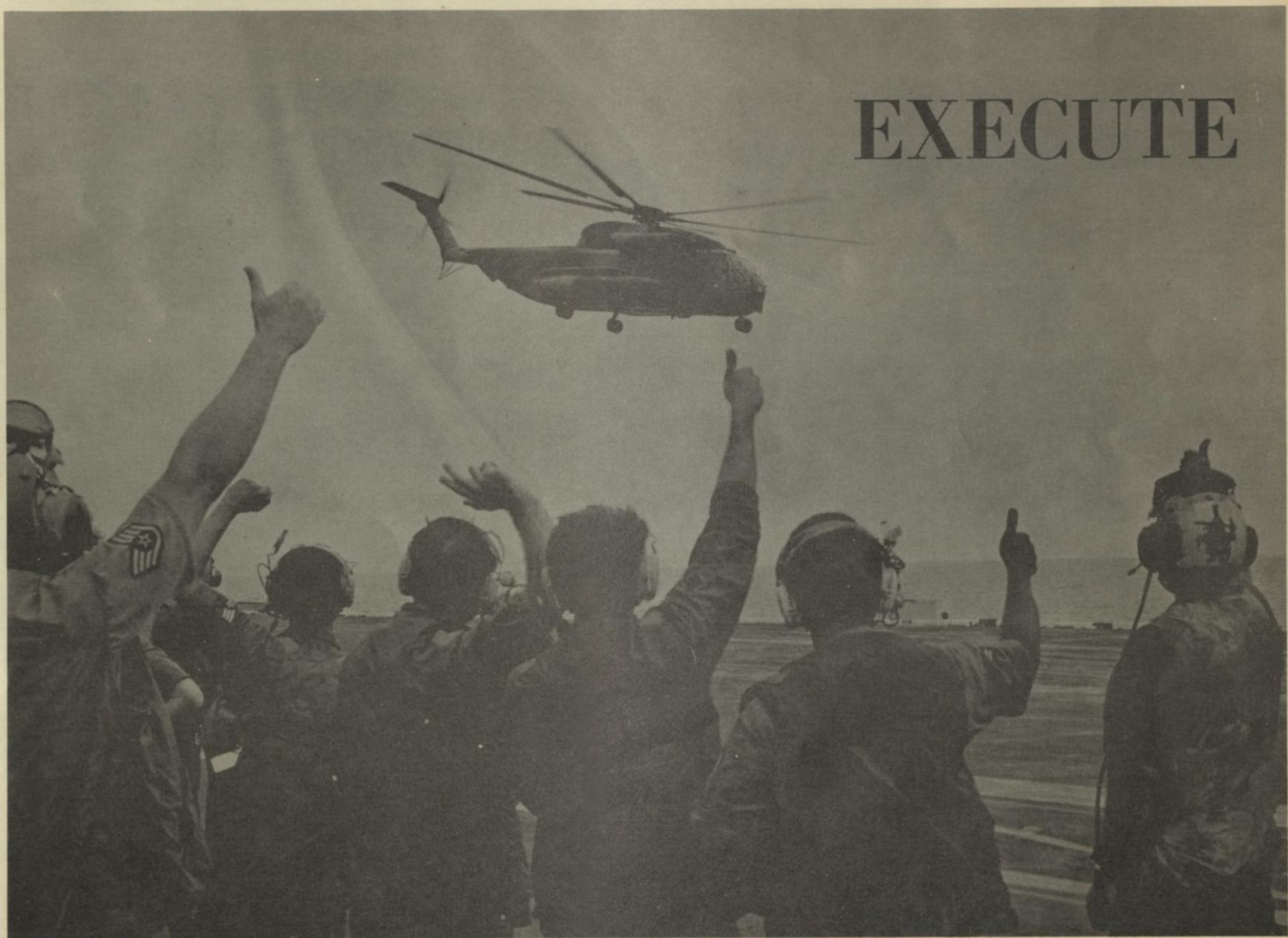
Ten Air Force helicopters and their crews arrived aboard Midway on April 20. During the evacuation, the Air Force helos transported many evacuees from Saigon to Midway.

At left, Rear Admiral W. L. Harris, former Commander Carrier Group Seven, confers on the flight deck with the senior Air Force officer aboard, Colonel Lloyd J. Anders (pointing). Top-level planning was vital to ensure the success of Operation Frequent Wind. Following Frequent Wind, Admiral Harris, who served as commanding officer of Midway in 1971-72, assumed his present duty as Commander Attack Carrier Striking Force Seventh Fleet.

Below, an Air Force enlisted man enjoys some Midway chow and conversation. The Air Force personnel spent the prelude to Frequent Wind learning about carrier life.

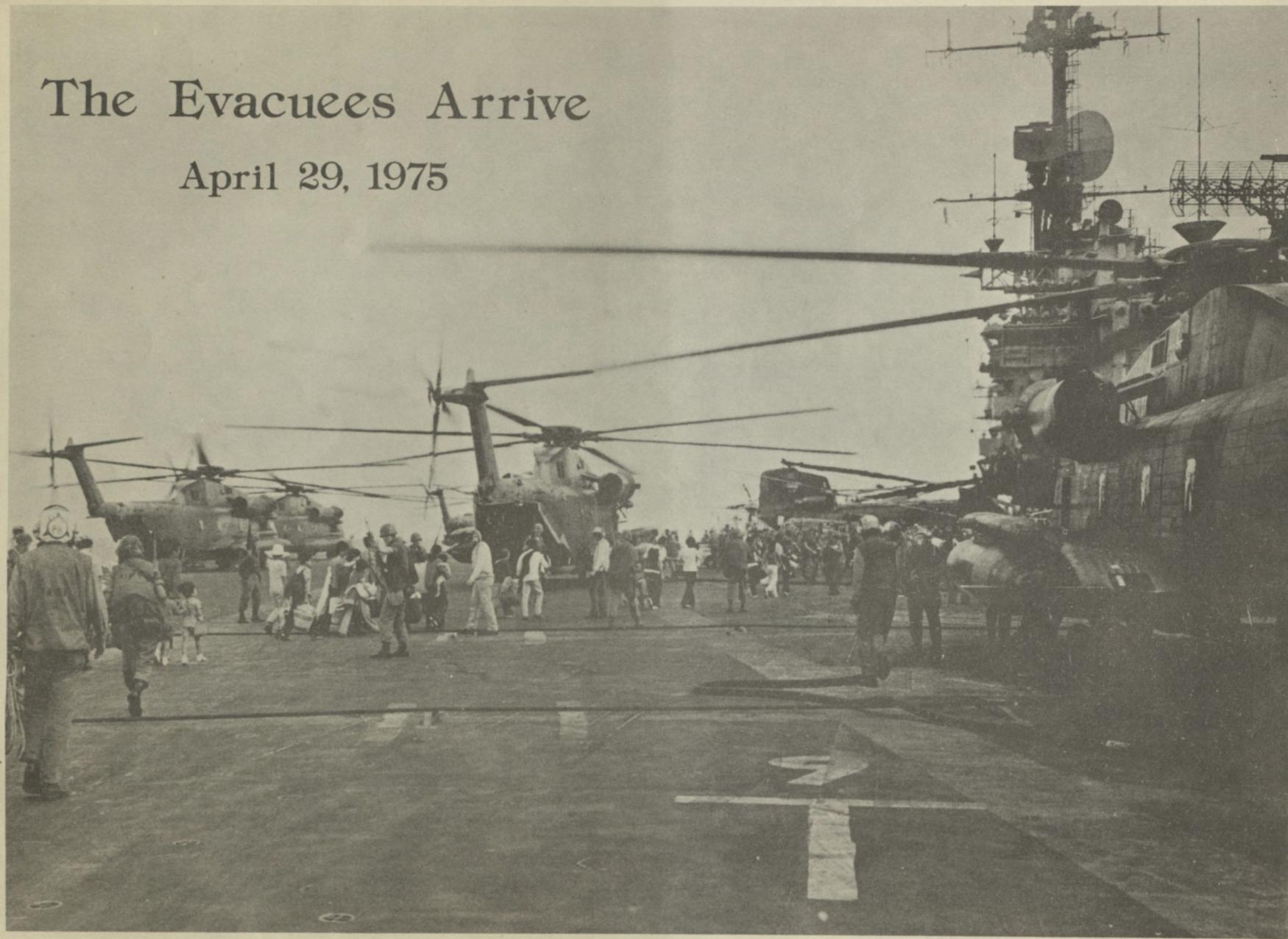


# EXECUTE



# The Evacuees Arrive

April 29, 1975





Above, tired but safe, an elderly Vietnamese woman holds on to the arm of Petty Officer Third Class John Baudin of VA-93 for support as she crosses the flight deck. Many of the evacuees carried with them their only remaining possessions from their homeland.

At right, Midwaymen carry a Vietnamese woman by stretcher from a rescue helicopter. She was one of approximately 300 refugees who received minor medical attention aboard Midway. The majority of the evacuees were in good health. During the evacuation, Midway's medical department was augmented by two surgical teams from the U.S.







# The Faces of Frequent Wind





Each of the 3,000 evacuees who came aboard Midway had a story to tell. Among them was this woman and baby and at right, Father James J. Devlin, a Jesuit missionary. Father Devlin, chatting with Commander James J. Hower, commanding officer of VA-115, had been working in Vietnam for nearly five years, and said he left the land and people with considerable reluctance.





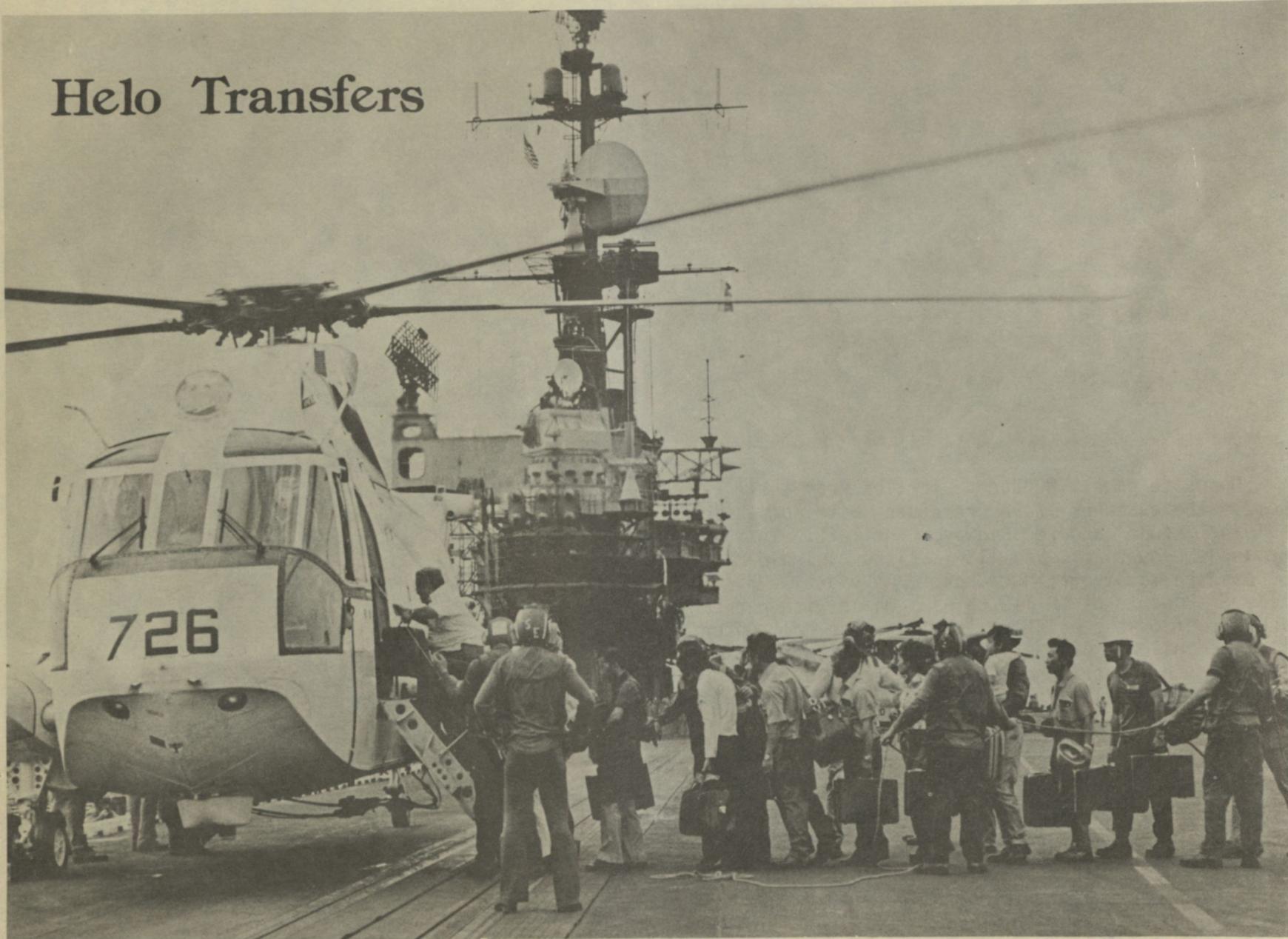
Opposite page: Hundreds of miles from their ravaged home, the evacuees were received with compassion and helping hands aboard Midway. At left, Third Class Armando Musquez of VAW-115 assists an old man walk across the massive flight deck. At right, Third Class Clay E. Roberts of VA-115 helps a woman with her baggage shortly after she alighted from a rescue helicopter.

The children of the Vietnam evacuation, victims of a tragedy they could not yet understand, were greeted especially warmly by Midwaymen. Above, Seaman J. J. Collura of Deck Department's Second Division befriends a pensive-looking young girl. At right, Executive Officer Commander Laurence H. Grimes, Jr., comforts a tearful youngster on the flight deck.

For the Vietnamese refugees of all ages who found temporary sanctuary aboard Midway, the kindnesses shown by the carrier's crewmen made their agonizing departure more bearable. For some, it was their first taste of American hospitality, and must have given them hope of better days to come.



## Helo Transfers





Much attention was focused on the work done by Marine and Air Force helicopters in the evacuation of Vietnam. However, Midway's own Helicopter Combat Support Squadron One, Detachment Two (HC-1, DET-2) also played a vital role in Operation Frequent Wind.

The Navy and Marine helicopters leaving Saigon ferried refugees to Midway and two other carriers, Hancock and Okinawa. The evacuees then had to be transferred to other Seventh Fleet vessels to make room on the carriers for the flow of refugees.

Aboard Midway, it was up to HC-1, DET-2 to keep the refugees moving. The four 13-passenger "Sea King" helicopters of HC-1, DET-2 flew both day and night to accomplish that task. In a 30-hour period, the men of HC-1, DET-2 logged a total of 60.9 hours of flight time, and transferred over 1,600 refugees and over 8,660 pounds of cargo belonging to the refugees.

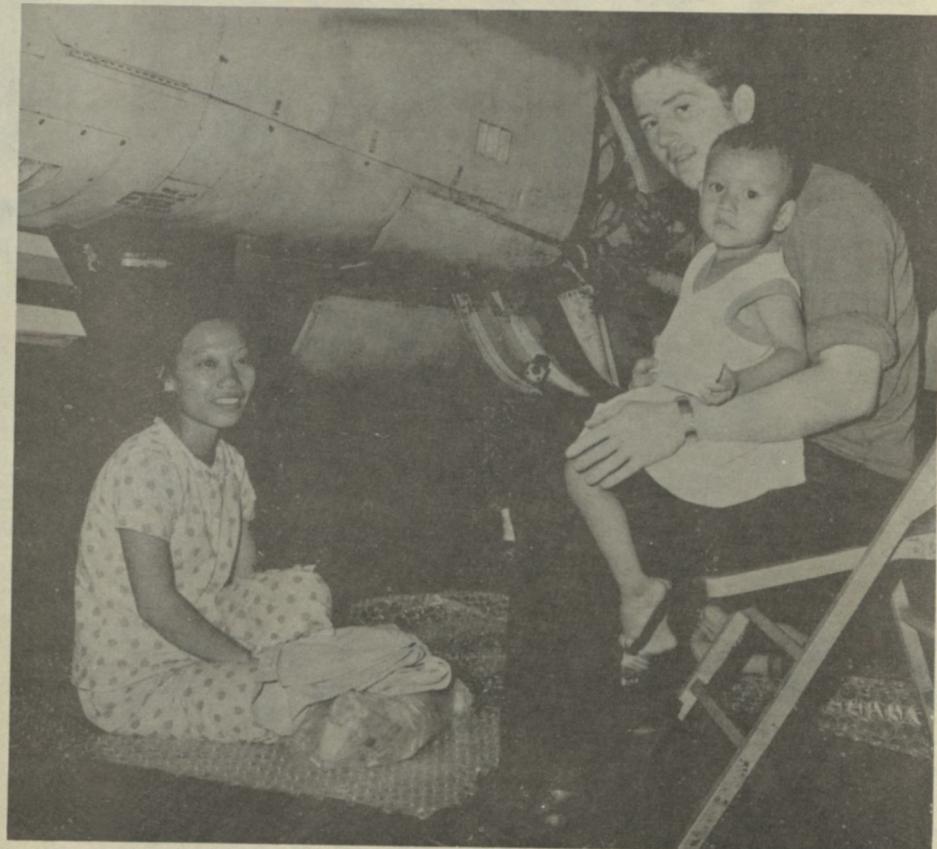
The 16 officer pilots and 14 enlisted aircrewmen, under the command of Lieutenant Commander Guy Ishiguro, accomplished 158 landings aboard six different ships involved in the evacuation.

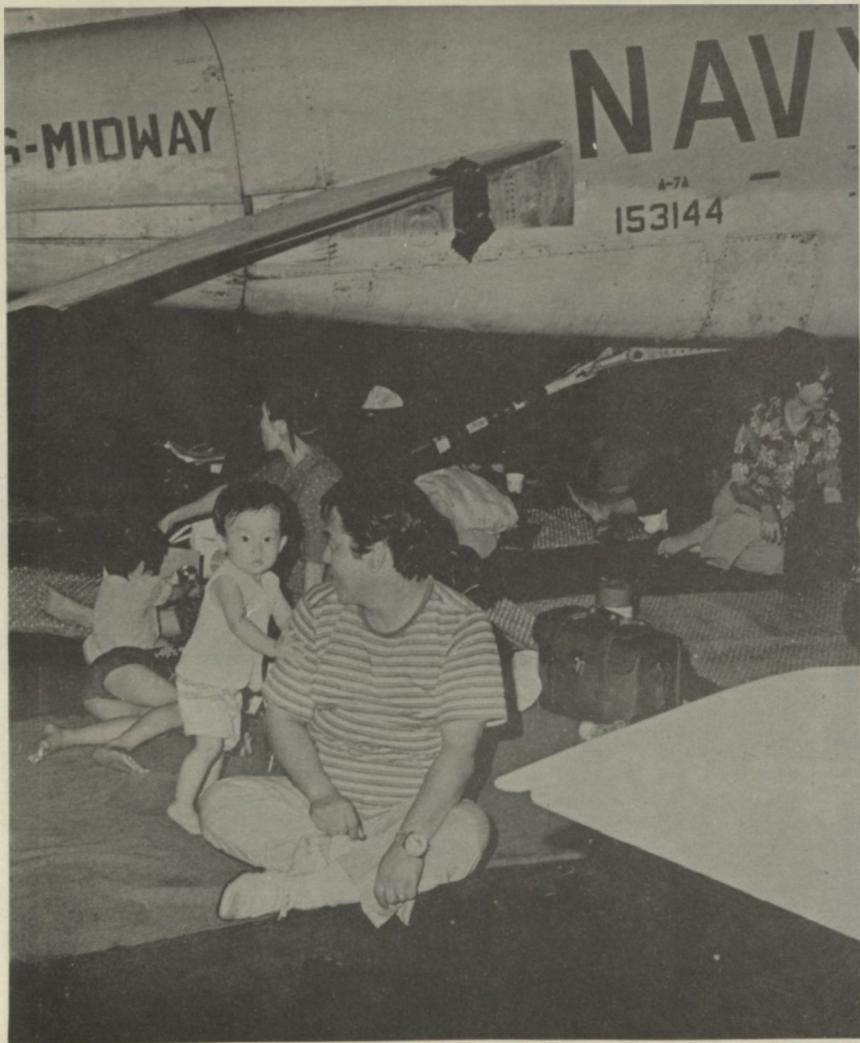


## Overnight Guests

Midwaymen did their best to make the evacuees' stay aboard the ship an enjoyable one. Supply Department's S-2 Division did an outstanding job preparing meals for the hundreds of additional people aboard.

The majority of the evacuees slept on mats or blankets in the ship's hangar bay. While it may not have been the most comfortable night they ever spent, the evacuees went to sleep with the knowledge they were safe.

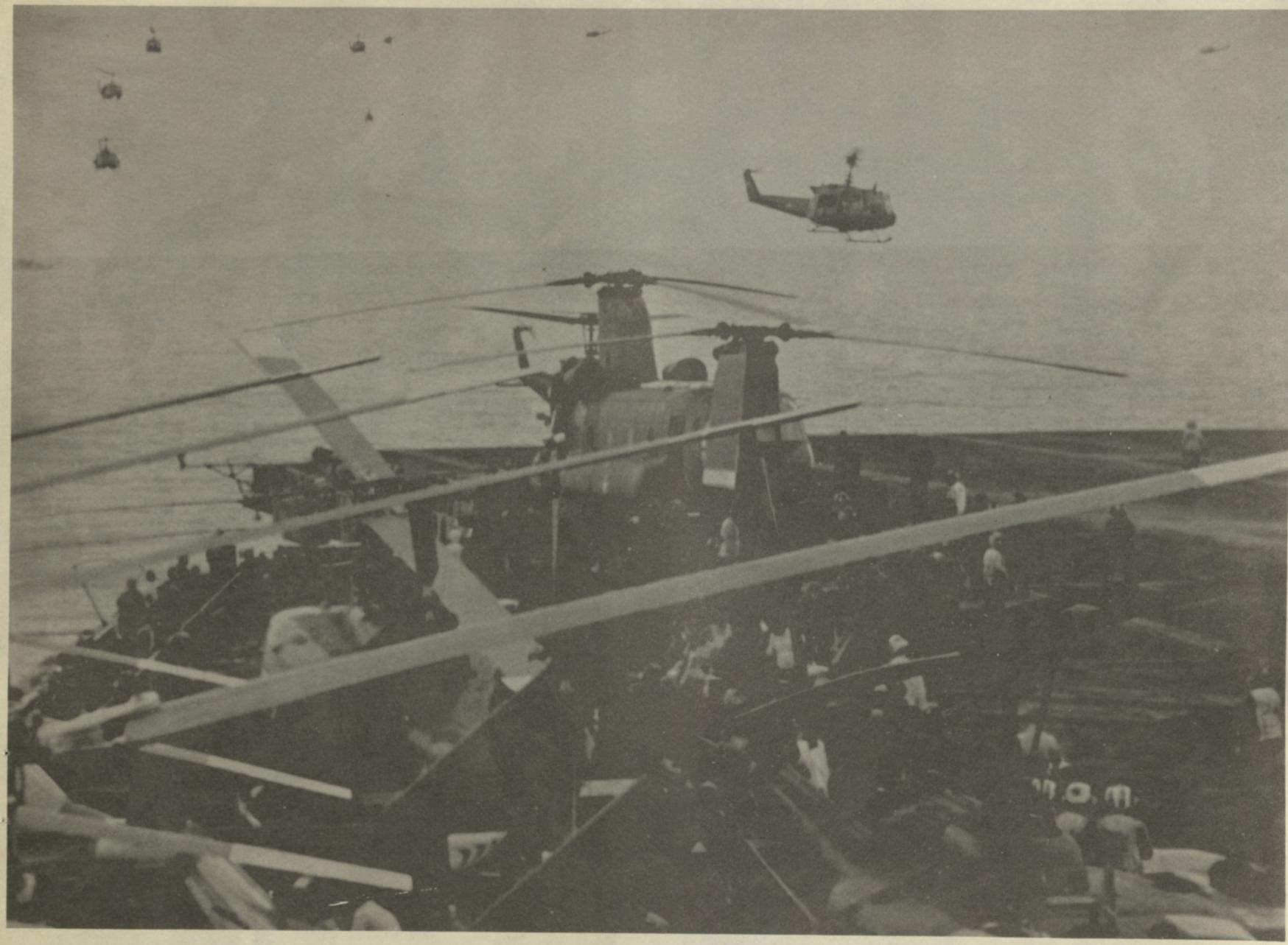




Top right, While aboard the carrier, several of the evacuees attended church services.

Bottom right, Youngsters gather belowdecks. Two of the children are wearing Midway T-shirts. Midway sailors temporarily moved from their quarters so the children would have a bed to sleep in.







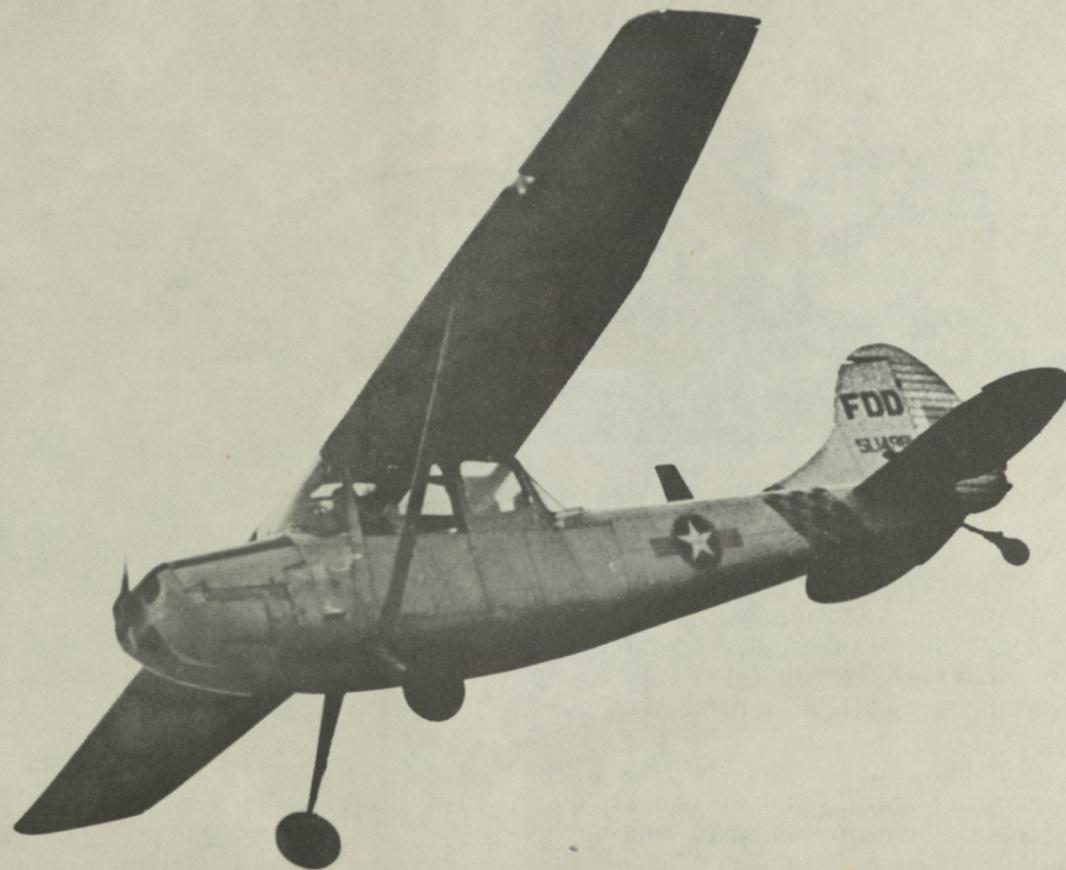
The second and final day of the evacuation, thousands of refugees fled to Seventh Fleet ships in Vietnamese helicopters.

In the scramble to escape, the Vietnamese helos were often loaded over the recommended maximum of people. The UH-1 "Huey" helos, designed to carry 12 infantrymen, often carried three times as many evacuees. In one instance, a "Huey" landed with over 50 people aboard.

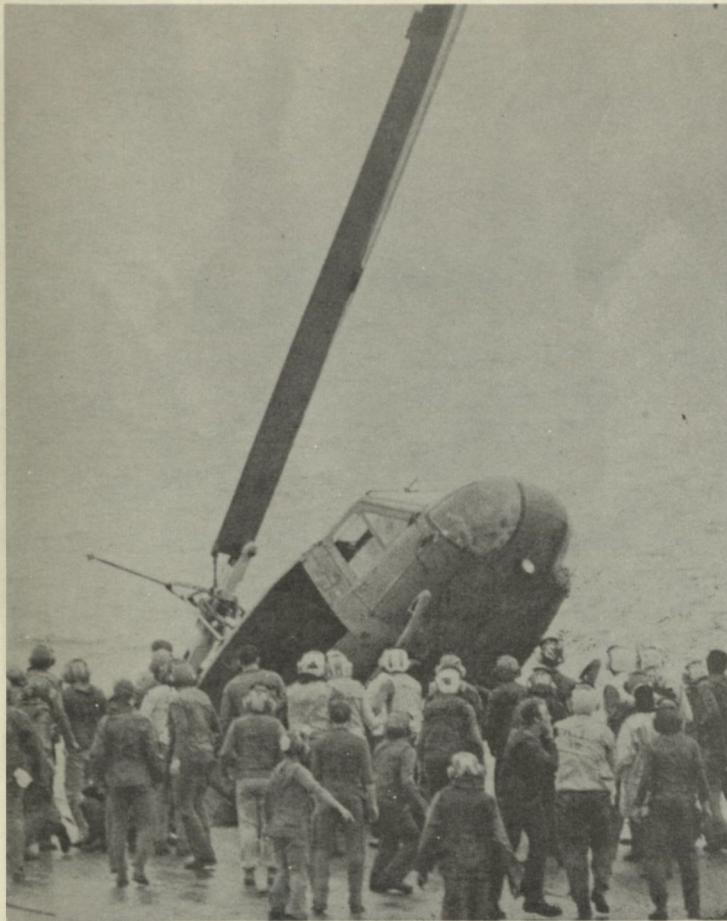
Those aboard included the rich, the poor, the anonymous and the famous. Among those who stopped aboard Midway were the two children above, and the former vice-president of Vietnam, General Nguyen Cao Ky, at right.

Helping the children find their way on the busy flight deck is Gunners Mate Second Class Terry Thompson of Midway's Weapons Department. General Ky is being escorted by Lieutenant (j.g.) Ken Prater, the Air Transfer Officer.





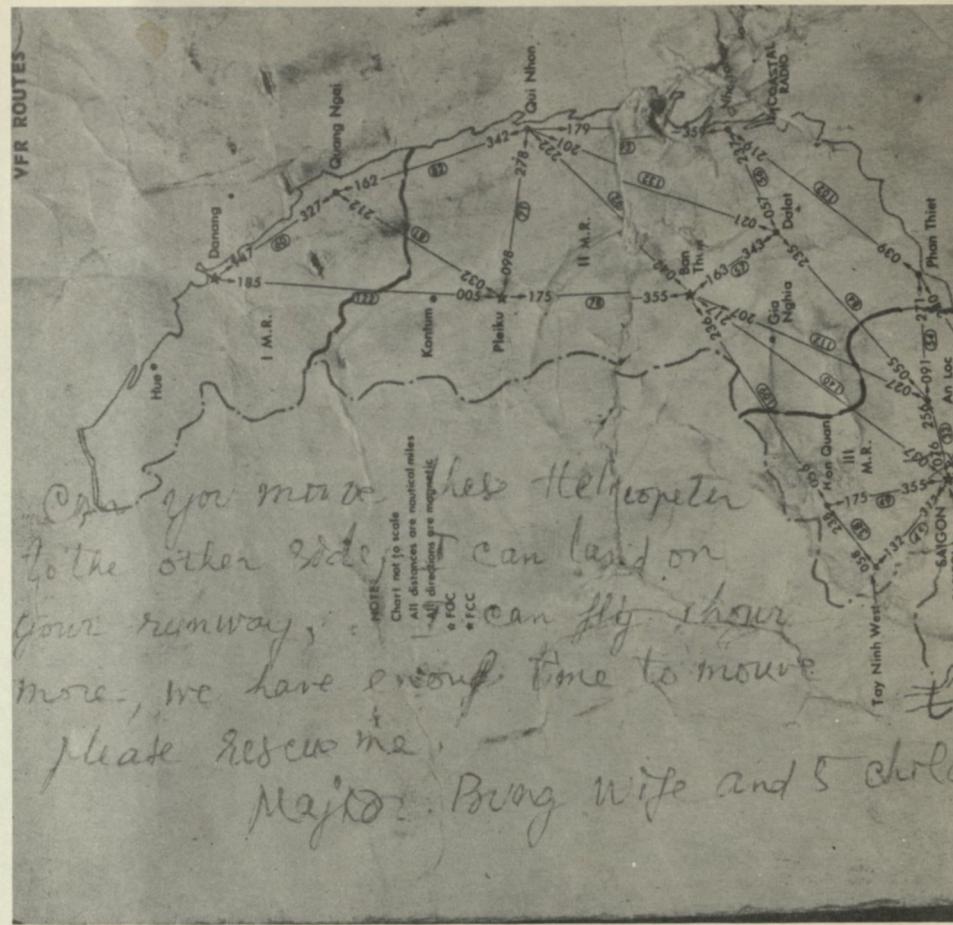
**FLIGHT FOR FREEDOM**

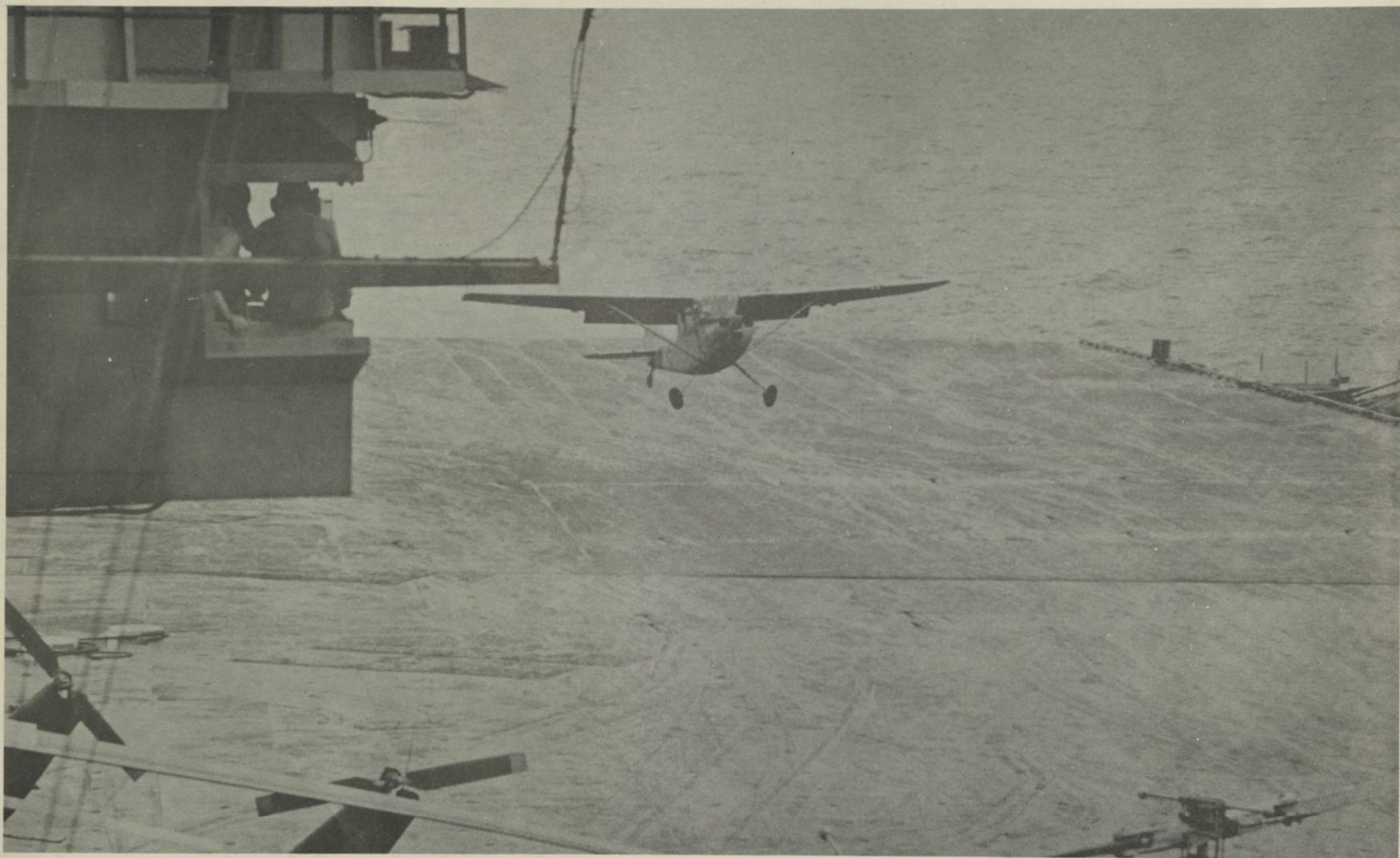


On April 30, amid helicopters escaping from Saigon which dotted the sky, appeared a small Cessna O-1 "Bird Dog" observation plane. Piloting the "Bird Dog" was a South Vietnamese Air Force major, who in a desperate attempt to escape, had flown the single-engine plane from Con Son Island seaward in search of safety. With the major were his wife and five children.

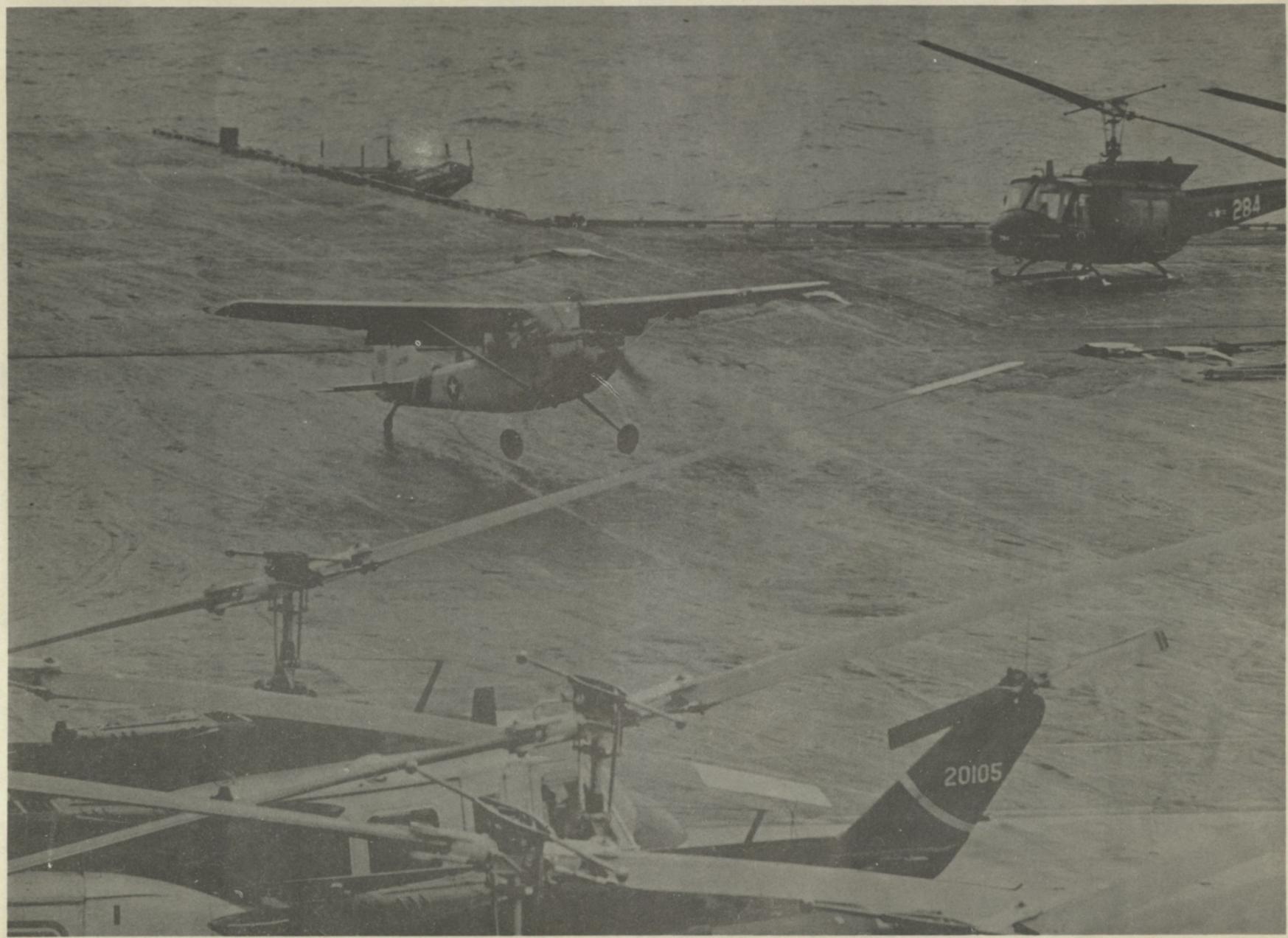
The "Bird Dog" circled Midway, and the major dropped a note on the flight deck which read, "Can you move those helicopters to the other side? I can land on your runway. I can fly one more hour. We have enough time to move. Please rescue me."

Midway's Commanding Officer, Captain L. C. Chambers, assessed the situation and ordered the flight deck cleared. Crewmen worked feverishly to clear the landing area of Vietnamese UH-1 "Huey" helicopters. It was necessary to dump one "Huey" over the side to provide adequate room for the neophyte carrier pilot.





Once the flight deck had been cleared, crewmen quickly prepared to recover the "Bird Dog". The major piloting the aircraft was given landing instructions through a volunteer Vietnamese interpreter. The approach of the "Bird Dog" to the ship was low and slow. He touched down once, bounced, and rolled to a stop well short of the end of the angle deck. For Midwaymen, the dramatic landing was the most memorable story of Operation Frequent Wind.



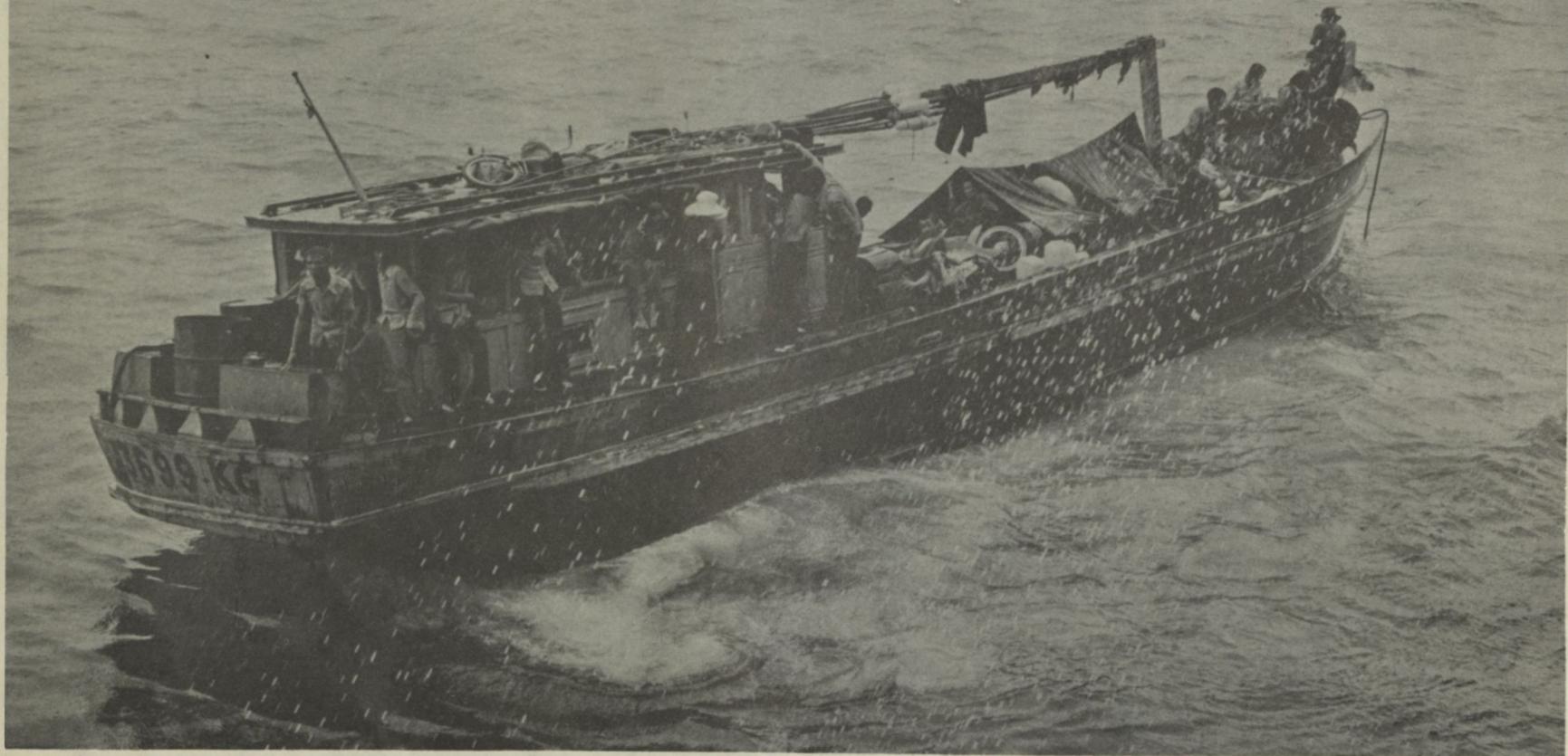


The graceful landing of the "Bird Dog" on Midway's flight deck was made despite a rain-soaked deck and without benefit of a tail hook or barricade. After his extraordinary display of airmanship, the major was met with wild applause from flight deck crewmen as he exited his aircraft. He and his family were surrounded by well-wishers.

Midway men were so moved by the courage of the major and his family they decided to establish a fund to help the family start their new life, wherever they may choose to settle.



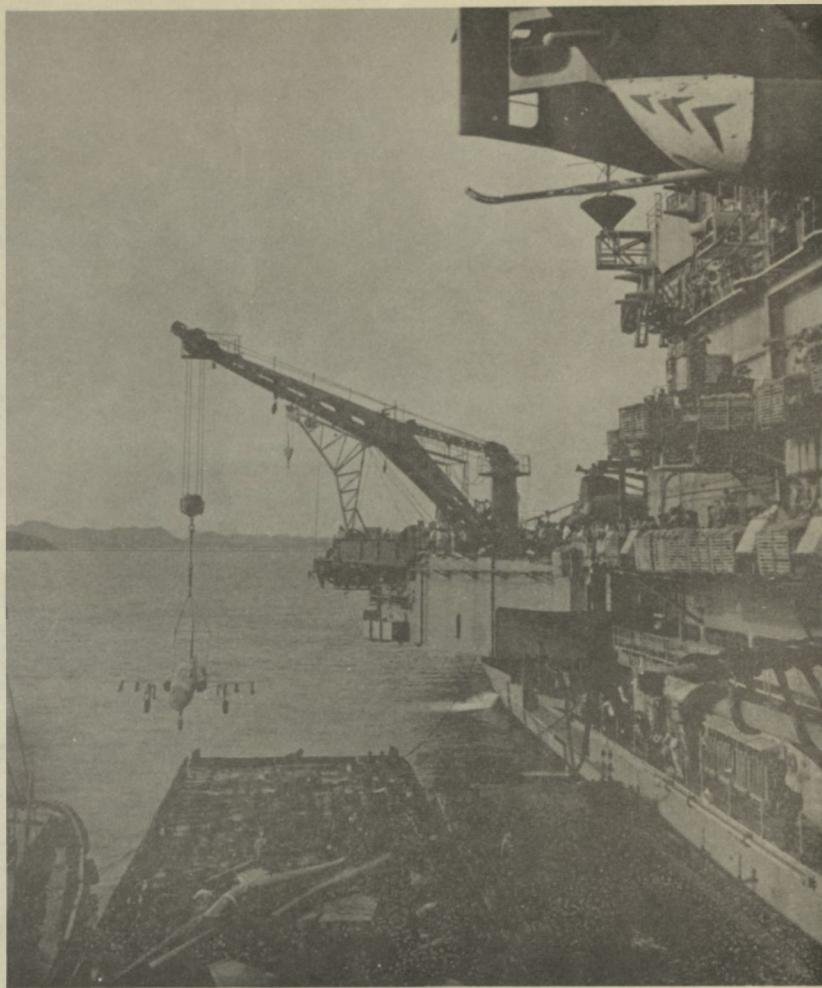
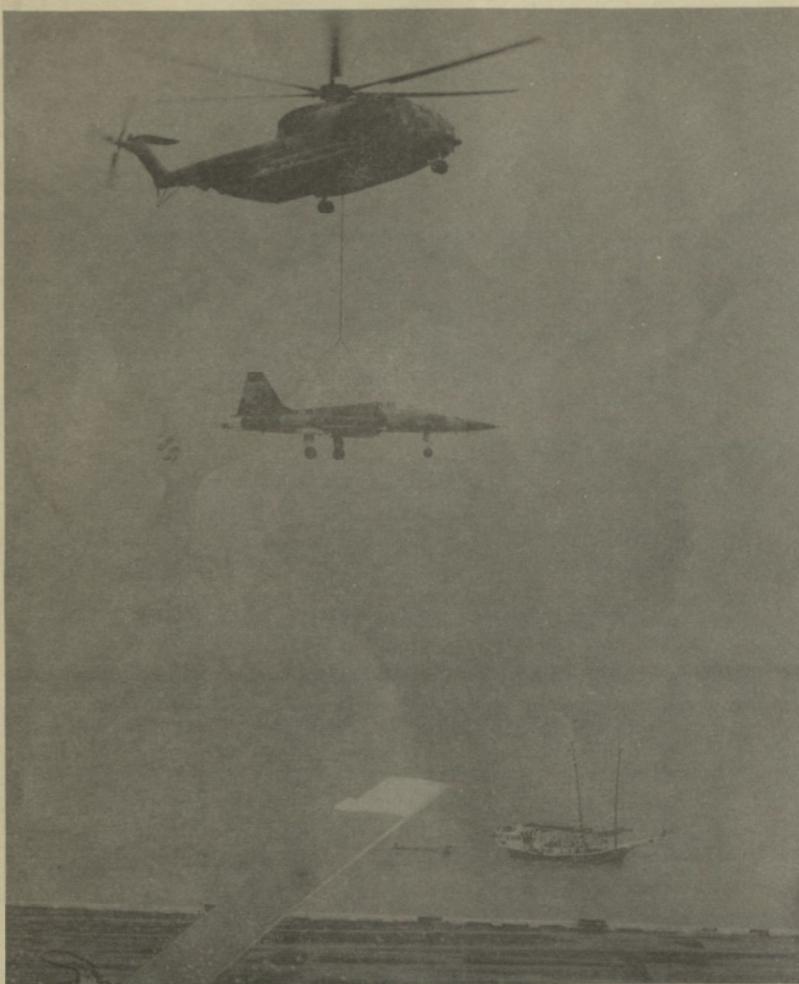
## Unexpected Guests



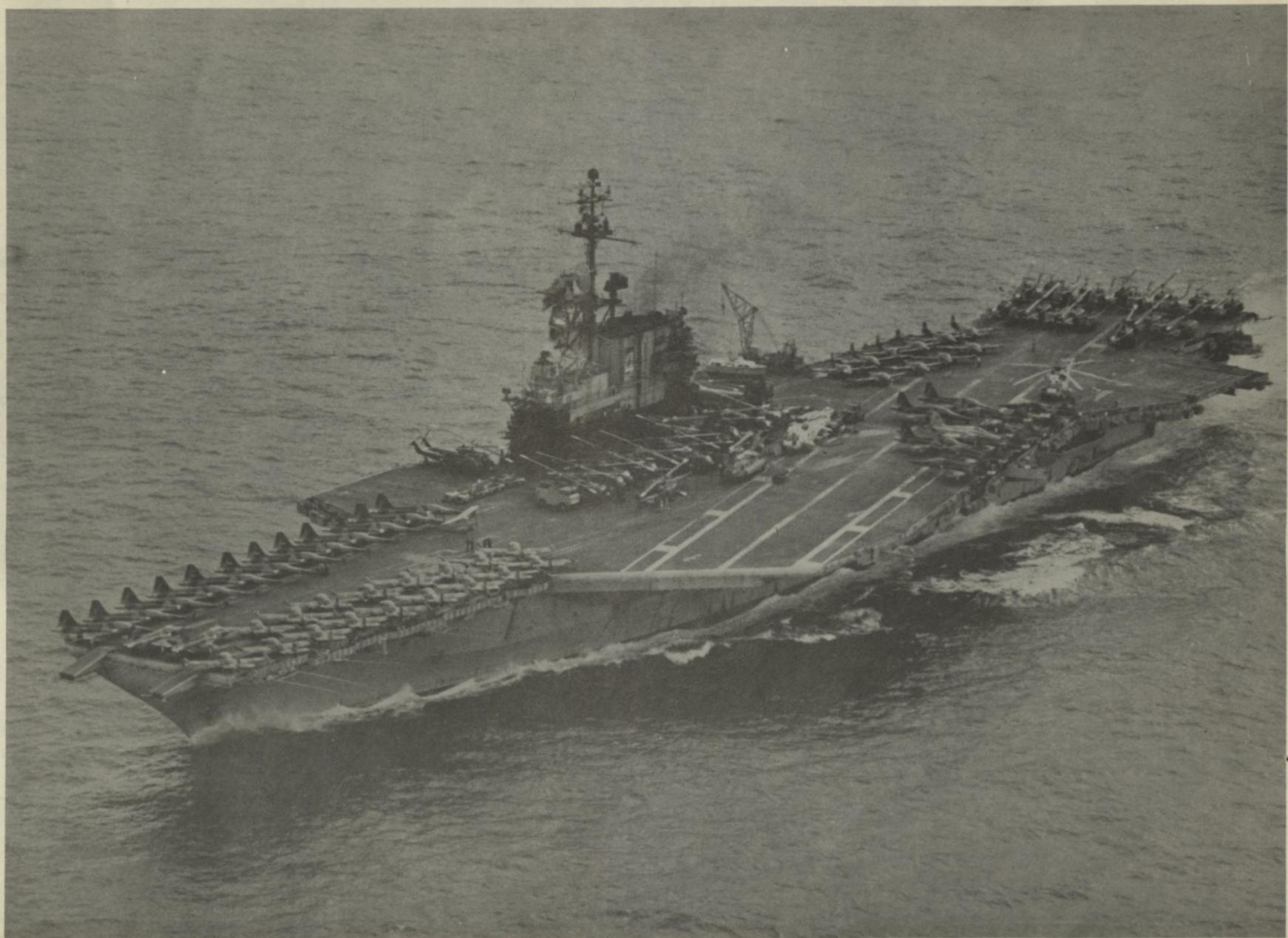
After leaving Vietnam, Midway came upon a small Vietnamese fishing boat carrying 84 people who were making a desperate attempt to sail from Communist Indochina. Their overcrowded boat was gradually sinking, and could not have reached friendly shores.

The tiny fishing boat drew alongside the mammoth carrier, and the evacuees climbed aboard via a cargo net to safety. Those who were unable to climb the net (the very young and the very old) were taken aboard Midway by hoist.





An important part of Midway's mission in Operation Frequent Wind took place four days after Saigon had been evacuated. The carrier sailed to the Gulf of Siam where she took on 25 Vietnamese F-5 fighter aircraft and 27 A-37 light bombers. The aircraft were brought aboard via cranes and helicopters. Upon departure from the Gulf of Siam on May 5, Midway's flight deck looked as congested as a Japanese train at rush hour. Over 100 aircraft, lined wing to wing, covered the flight deck enroute to off-loading in Guam. To permit room for the evacuees and Vietnamese airplanes, many aircraft of Midway's Attack Carrier Air Wing Five had remained behind in the Philippines on April 18.

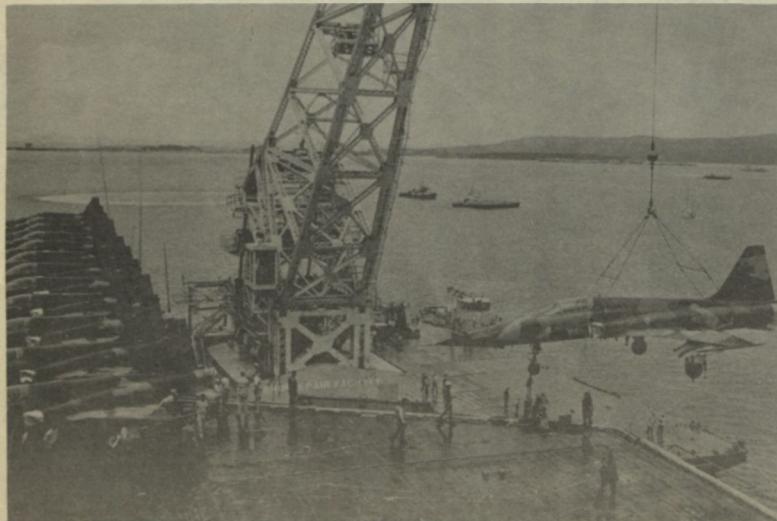


# GUAM

Midway's participation in Operation Frequent Wind ended with the off-loading in Guam of the aircraft that had landed aboard during the evacuation and had been received in the Gulf of Siam.

All told, 101 aircraft were off-loaded in Guam: 45 UH-1 "Huey" and three CH-47 "Chinook" helicopters; 27 A-37 strike aircraft, 25 F-5 "Freedom Fighters"; and one Cessna 0-1 "Bird Dog". Cranes removed all the aircraft from the deck of Midway in one day of work while the ship lay at anchor on May 11 and 12.

Bottom right, the Cessna 0-1 "Bird Dog" leaves Midway -- its next stop the Naval Aviation Museum in Pensacola, Florida.





SENATE  
DRAWING  
BUREAU

The Honorable James R. Schlesinger  
Secretary of Defense

Please convey to all personnel involved in the Vietnam evacuation operation my appreciation and respect for their superb performance.

This operation was carried out under extremely adverse conditions. Its smooth and orderly accomplishment reflects great credit upon the men and women who participated in its planning and execution.

I also join with their comrades in mourning the loss of those gallant men who gave their lives in this humanitarian task. To their families and loved ones goes our deepest sympathy.

Their sacrifices, as well as the courage and determination of all the participating units, stand as a final example of the selfless dedication which has typified the performance of our armed forces throughout our involvement in Indochina.

They have my gratitude and that of the American people for the successful accomplishment of this difficult mission.

Sincerely,

Gerald R. Ford

I want you to know how much I admire and appreciate the competent manner in which Operation Frequent Wind was carried out.

The evacuation was an enormous undertaking of incredible technical complexity. Its success was due primarily to the extraordinary valor, coolness, and competence of the military people involved. Their performance was in the highest tradition of America's military services.

...To all those who participated in this operation, my admiration and gratitude for a job well done.

Warm regards,

Henry A. Kissinger

The evacuation of U.S. citizens, together with Vietnamese and others from Vietnam, was accomplished with untold numbers of individual acts of valor. Those officers and men committed to or supporting the operation who were not personally subjected to danger displayed a uniformly high standard of dedication and professionalism.

The Navy-Marine Corps team once again gave a superb performance under fire in the most gruelling and exhausting circumstances. My hat is off to all of you.

Thank you and well done.

G. P. Steele  
Vice Admiral U.S. Navy  
Commander, Seventh Fleet

To the crewmen of USS Midway:

From my position onboard, I have observed with pride your performance through all phases of the complicated Vietnam evacuation operations, and I can unequivocally state that the results of your endeavors were superb.

...Particularly impressive was the flexibility shown by the flight deck crew handling the USAF [helicopters] LPH-style and in effecting an emergency re-spot to permit a safe...landing of a Vietnamese [airplane] by which the determined pilot, his wife and five small children, arrived onboard unharmed.

The entire crew of Midway can take great pride in their performance during the evacuation operations as they have been personally instrumental in preserving thousands of human lives and millions of dollars worth of aircraft.

My personal "Well done" is extended to a dedicated crew who performed their duties with professionalism and efficiency and who, as true Americans, showed sincere compassion and concern for those who were displaced from their homeland by war and fear of retribution.

Bravo Zulu.

W. L. HARRIS  
Rear Admiral U.S. Navy  
Commander, Task Group 77.4

# Summary

USS Midway departed Yokosuka on March 31 to conduct air operations and visit the Philippines and Hong Kong. On April 18, the third day of a scheduled 10 day port-call in Subic Bay, Philippines, Midway was ordered to get underway and proceed to the coast of Vietnam at maximum speed.

Ten U.S. Air Force H-53 helicopters from the 56th Special Operations Wing flew aboard Midway April 20 to take part in the evacuation.

On April 29, the evacuation commenced. The first H-53s departed Midway at 2:45 p.m. local time bound for landing zones in Saigon. Returning at 4:53 p.m., each helo carried about 60 passengers.

During the first day, 2,074 refugees were brought aboard Midway. While Air Force H-53s were bringing more evacuees aboard Midway, Navy and Marine Corps helicopters began transferring the early arrivals to other ships in the Seventh Fleet armada off Vietnam.

Over 1,000 of the evacuees spent the first night aboard the carrier.

By early morning of the second day of the evacuation, all U.S. military flights into Saigon had been completed. A steady flow of refugees continued, however, fleeing in Vietnamese aircraft.

In the early afternoon of April 30, a small Cessna 0-1 "Bird Dog" light observation plane began to circle Midway. At first it was thought the pilot would try to ditch alongside the carrier. But then the tiny, single-engine aircraft flew over the ship and the pilot dropped a note saying that he had his wife and

five children aboard and wanted to land aboard Midway.

On orders from USS Midway's Commanding Officer, Captain L. C. Chambers, flight deck crewmen quickly cleared the carrier's angle deck and prepared to recover the aircraft.

Despite a rain-soaked deck, the Bird Dog's pilot, a South Vietnamese Air Force major, made his first carrier landing a successful one.

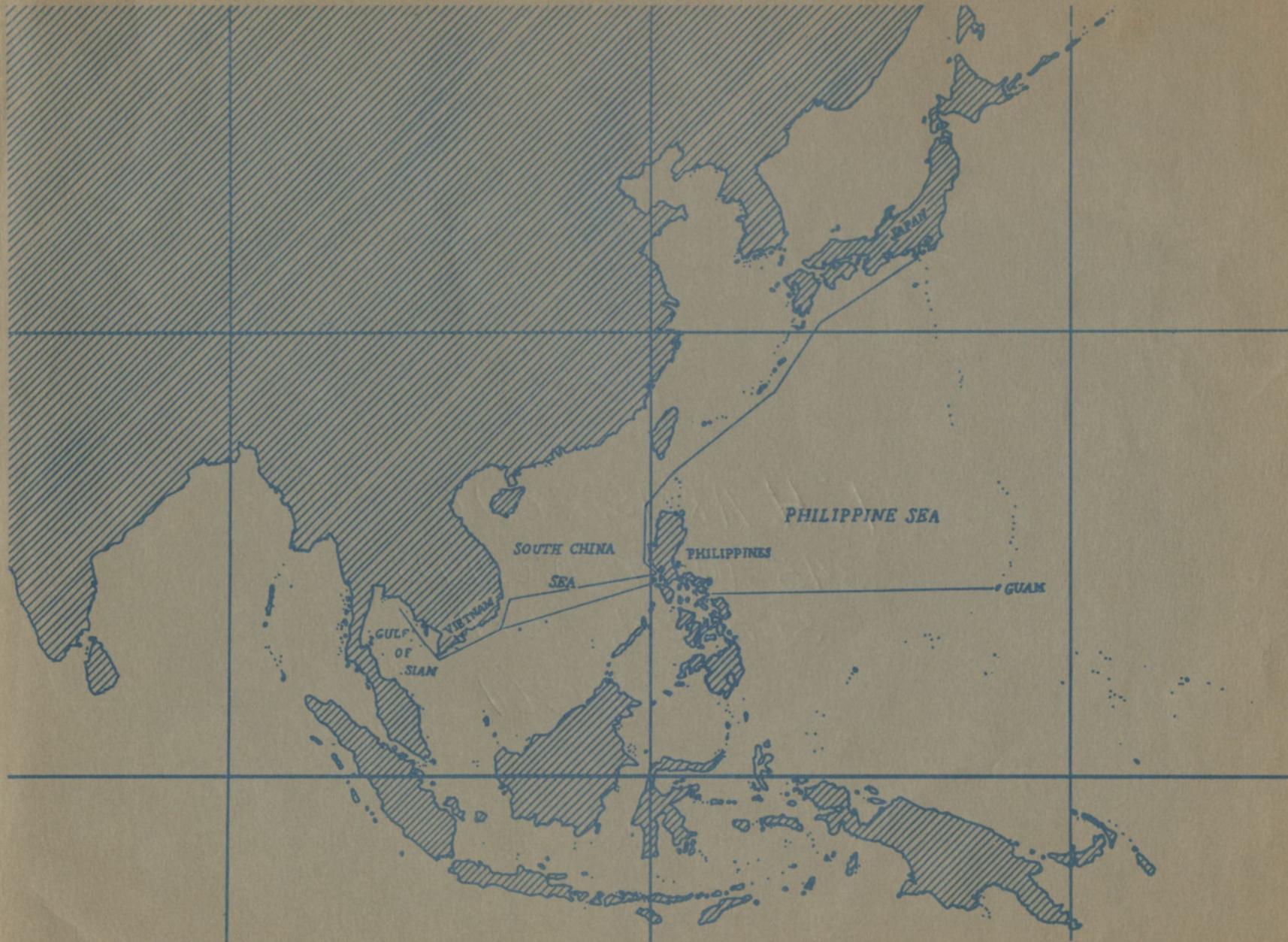
The Bird Dog came to a stop well short of the end of the angle deck without benefit of a tailhook or barricade. The major and his family were met with wild applause from the crewmen as they exited the tiny plane.

In two days of operations, a total of 3,073 evacuees were picked up by Midway. In addition to the Bird Dog, three Vietnamese CH-47 "Chinook" helicopters, 40 Vietnamese and five Air America "Hueys" found refuge aboard Midway.

The carrier's medical team treated nearly 300 evacuees for minor illnesses and injuries. Most evacuees were found to be in good physical health.

Over 6,000 meals were served to the refugees aboard the ship during the course of Operation Frequent Wind.

The crewmen aboard USS Midway met the evacuees with compassionate understanding. They liberally gave of their time and attention, more than duty required. The kindnesses shown by the carrier's crewmen were the evacuees' first taste of American hospitality. It must have given them hope for the days to come.



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