Fact sheet

The fall of Saigon, 1975

Saigon, the capital of South Vietnam, fell on 30 April 1975 when forces of the North Vietnamese Army invaded the city and captured the presidential palace. This ended a campaign begun in January that saw the North Vietnamese Army overrun the central highlands of South Vietnam and then the coastal cities of Hue (where Australian journalist Peter Whitlock was detained), Da Nang and Qui Nhon.

Australia's military commitment to the Vietnam War – in which over 50,000 personnel saw service – ended with the withdrawal of all combat forces by December 1971. By 1975 the only Australian government presence in Vietnam was diplomatic.

By March 1975 the concern was for the safety of Australians in Vietnam (such as journalists) and those Vietnamese who might be at risk under the new regime. The plight of Vietnamese infants came to particular attention and on 4 and 17 April, RAAF flights evacuated some 270 of them to Bangkok (for transfer to Australia by Qantas) as part of 'Operation Babylift'. Arrangements were also made to assist adult Vietnamese in fear of the new government, including over 400 who were students in Australia. The last Australians from the Australian Embassy in Saigon – including Ambassador Geoffrey Price – were evacuated by the RAAF on 25 April 1975.

Records relating to the fall of Saigon

A selection of records relating to the fall of Saigon held by the National Archives is listed below. Unless otherwise indicated records are held in Canberra.

Records of the Department of Foreign Affairs (CA 1382)

Title or description of record	Date range	Series, item number
South Vietnam – political – general	1971–81	A1838, TS3014/2/1 part 15A
South Vietnam – Vietnamese orphans – assistance	1971–75	A1838, 3014/10/15/6 part 1
South Vietnam – Vietnamese orphans – assistance	1971–75	A1838, 3014/10/15/6 part 2
South Vietnam – Vietnamese orphans – assistance	1971–75	A1838, 3014/10/15/6 part 3
South Vietnam – Vietnamese orphans – assistance	1971–75	A1838, 3014/10/15/6 part 4
North Vietnam – political – general	1971–75	A1838, 3020/2/1 part 24
South Vietnam – foreign representation	1972–75	A1838, 3014/8/2B

Policy towards countries – South Vietnam	1973–75	A1838, 2020/2/14 part 11
South Vietnam – proposals for international conference	1973–75	A1838, 3014/9/7/1 part 2
South Vietnam – relations with Australia	1973–76	A1838, 3014/10/1 part 26
South Vietnam – relations with Australia	1973–76	A1838, 3014/10/1 part 27
Vietnam – foreign representation – diplomatic	1973–75	A1838, 3015/10/11/1 part 1
Vietnam – foreign representation – diplomatic	1973–75	A1838, 3015/10/11/1 part 2
Vietnam – foreign representation – diplomatic	1973–75	A1838, 3015/10/11/1 part 3
Vietnam – foreign representation – diplomatic	1973–75	A1838, 3015/10/11/1 part 4
Australian representation abroad – Democratic Republic of Vietnam – Wilson, David – Ambassador	1974–76	A1838, 1500/2/93/3
South Vietnam – resettlement of refugees	1974–75	A1838, 3014/2/8 part 5
North Vietnam – foreign policy – the war	1974–75	A1838, 3020/7/1/1 part 8
North Vietnam – relations with Australia – general	1974–75	A1838, 3020/10/1 part 6
Post liaison – Crisis Task Force – Vietnam orphans – second uplift	1975	A1838, 626/2/9/2/2 part 1
Post liaison – Crisis Task Force – Vietnam orphans – second uplift	1975	A1838, 626/2/9/2/2 part 2
Asian political subjects of UN concern – North Vietnam	1975	A1838, 915/7/1A part 2
Legal enquiries – Australian legislation – airlifts of orphans from Vietnam	1975–79	A1838, 1490/5/94 part 3
Diplomatic representatives in Australia – Republic of Vietnam – closure of embassy in Canberra	1975–76	A1838, 1500/1/65/17 part 1
Australian immigration policy and relations with other countries – South Vietnam political refugees – general	1975	A1838, 1634/70/2 part 2
Indo-Chinese refugees – policies and programs – staff at Republic of Vietnam embassies	1975	A1838, 1634/75/16 part 1
South Vietnam – relations with North Vietnam – military developments	1975–76	A1838, 3006/8/1 part 30
South Vietnam – political – general	1975	A1838, 3014/2/1 part 77
South Vietnam – political – general	1975	A1838, 3014/2/1 part 79
South Vietnam – political – military situation	1975	A1838, 3014/2/7 part 40
South Vietnam – political – military situation	1975	A1838, 3014/2/7 part 41
Australian representation in South Vietnam	1975	A1838, 3014/10/6 part 10
South Vietnam – Australian representation – evacuation of Australian personnel	1975	A1838, 3014/10/6/1 part 2
South Vietnam – Australian aid – political refugees	1975	A1838, 3014/10/15/4 part 2
South Vietnam – Australian aid – political refugees	1975	A1838, 3014/10/15/4 part 4
South Vietnam – Australian aid – political refugees	1975	A1838, 3014/10/15/4 part 10
Republic of South Vietnam – Vietnamese refugees	1975	A1838, 3015/7/3 part 1
Vietnam – relations with Australia – Provisional Revolutionary Government – general	1975	A1838, 3015/10/1 part 7

| Provisional Revolutionary Government – Vietnam – relations with Australia – general | 1975–77 | A1838, 3015/10/1 part 12 |
| North Vietnam – relations with Australia – representation | 1975 | A1838, 3020/10/6 part 4 |

Records of Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (CA 1401)

Title or description of record	Date range	Series, item number
Vietnam – situation reports	1974–75	A1209, 1974/7556
Adoption of Vietnamese orphans	1975	A1209, 1975/546
Adoption of Vietnamese orphans – uplift flight	1975	A1209, 1975/656
Adoption of Vietnamese orphans – uplift flight	1975	A1209, 1975/657
Adoption of Vietnamese orphans – uplift flight	1975	A1209, 1975/658
Mr Whitlock – Australian journalist missing in Vietnam	1975	A1209, 1975/852

Records of the Australian Embassy, Republic of Vietnam (Saigon) (CA 2773)

Title or description of record	Date range	Series, item number
Saigon – Evacuation of orphans	1957–75	A4531, 221/4/8 part 1
Saigon – RAAF evacuation of Vietnamese refugees and airlift of supplies	1975	A4531, 8/2/4
Saigon – Vietnam political and economic reports by bag telegrams	1975	A4531, 201/1 part 3
Saigon – Vietnam ceasefire negotiations and violations	1975	A4531, 201/2/8 part 34
Saigon – other international organisations	1975	A4531, 221/3/3 part 2

Personal papers of EG Whitlam (CP 99) – Records held in Sydney

Title or description of record	Date range	Series, item number
Foreign affairs – Senator Willesee	1975	M519, 29
Vietnam – general	1975	M522, V.2
Vietnam – collapse of Saigon Government	1975	M522, V.4
Vietnam – orphans	1975	M522, V.5

Records of the Department of Labor and Immigration, Victoria (CA 1812) – Records held in Melbourne

Title or description of record	Date range	Series, item number
Vietnamese orphans	1975	B925, V1978/60194
Vietnamese orphans	1975	B925, V1978/60195
Vietnamese orphans	1975	B925, V1978/60196
Vietnamese orphans	1975	B925, V1978/60197
Vietnamese orphans	1975	B925, V1978/60198

Vietnamese orphans	1975	B925, V1978/60199
Vietnamese orphans	1975	B925, V1978/60200

Records of the Administrator, Northern Territory (CA 1070) – Records held in Darwin

Title or description of record	Date range	Series, item number
Vietnamese orphans and refugees	1975–78	F1076, 1975/71