Militarized Refuge: A Transpacific Perspective on Vietnamese Refuge Flight to the United States

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Introduction

Immigration has become a key symbol in contemporary American culture—a central and powerful concept that is imbued with a multiplicity of myths and meanings, capable of rousing highly charged emotions that at times culminate in violently unfair practices. The myth of "immigrant America"—the idea that the United States, as a nation of freedom, rights, and liberty and justice for all, constitutes the beacon for the world's dispossessed —shores up the national narrative of U.S.-bound immigration as a unidirectional and voluntary phenomenon, one in which the poor and desperate of the world descend en masse on a wealthy and benevolent nation. It is this "push-pull" story—of desperate individuals searching for the promised land—that has emboldened politicians, anti-immigrant groups and media agencies to create "knowledge" of an everyday "reality" that the U.S. borders are out of control and that immigration is overwhelming U.S. public institutions and threatening U.S. core values and identity. In other words, the myth of "immigrant America" constitutes the underlying logic of anti-immigration rhetoric and practices.

By portraying immigrants to the United States as a matter of desperate individuals seeking opportunities, the myth of "immigrant America" disregards the forcible inclusion of Native Americans, Mexican Americans and African Americans into the U.S. nation via conquest, annexation and slavery, and the fact that since at least World War II, migration to the United States "has been the product of specific economic, colonial, political, military, and/or ideological ties between the United States and other countries...as well as of war."[1] Given this history, to challenge anti-immigration rhetoric and practices, one would need to first expose the myth of immigrant America by emphasizing the role that "U.S. world power has played in the global structures of migration."[2] And yet, much of the published work in the field of U.S. immigration studies has not situated U.S. immigration history within this critical globalist framework, opting instead to focus on the immigrants' social, economic, and cultural integration into the nation. This "modes of incorporation" framework, which fits squarely within the status-attainment tradition, assesses the assimilability of the immigrants

[1] Mae Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 10.

[2] Ibid., 11.

but leaves uninterrogated the racialized and gendered economic, cultural, and political foundations of the United States.[3)]

Focusing on the flight of Vietnamese refugees to the United States, this paper questions the myth of "immigrant America" by calling attention to "the specificities of forced migration and the legacy of the American/Vietnam War."[4)] In 1975, about 92 percent of the first-wave Vietnamese refugees who fled to the United States trekked through the Philippines, Guam, or Wake Island—all islands, all with prominent U.S. military bases.[5)] Although these refugee flights have been widely covered by the media and scholars alike, few have analyzed the *militarized* nature of these routes. With the Defense Department coordinating transportation, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff-Pacific Command in charge of the military moves necessary for the evacuation, Vietnamese were airlifted from Saigon on U.S. military aircrafts, transferred to U.S. military bases in the Philippines, Guam, and also Thailand, Wake Island, and Hawaii, and delivered to yet another set of military bases throughout the United States: Camp Pendleton in California, Fort Chaffee in Arkansas, Eglin Air Force Base in Florida, and Fort Indiantown Gap in Pennsylvania. That few have interrogated these military connections speaks to the power of the myth of US "rescue and liberation" to make in/un-visible the militarized nature of what has been dubbed "the largest humanitarian airlift in history."[6)] Moreover, in April 1975, it was the U.S. continuing military presence on the Philippines and Guam, its former and current colonial territory respectively, that made possible the quick conversion of these islands into refugee receiving centers. This paper thus advances two related arguments: the first about military colonialism, which contends that it is the region's (neo)colonial dependence on the United States that turned the Philippines and Guam into the "ideal" receiving centers of U.S. rescuing project; the second about militarized refuge, which emphasizes the mutually constitutive nature of the concepts "refugees" and "refuge" and shows how both emerge out of and in turn bolster U.S. militarism.

1. Military Colonialism: About Islands

Not mere happenstance, the routing of Vietnamese refugees through U.S. military bases in the Philippines and on Guam followed the dictates of a "militarized organizing logic" that reflected—and revealed—the layering of past colonial and ongoing militarization practices

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3) For example, Alejandro Portes and Ruben G. Rumbaut, *Immigrant America: A Portrait* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2006).

4) David Palumbo-Liu, *Asian/American: Historical Crossings of a Racial Frontier* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 235.

5) William T. Liu, Maryanne Lamanna, and Alice Murata, *Transition to Nowhere: Vietnamese Refugees in America* (Nashville, TN: Charter House, 1979).

6) Vik Jolly, "Pendleton Once Home for 50,000 War Refugees," *The Orange County Register*, April 8, 2010, accessed October 10, 2011, http://www.ocregister.com/news/vietnamese- 243238-pendleton-family.html.

on these islands.[7] Since the Spanish-American War in 1898, the United States had colonized islands—Cuba and Puerto Rico in the Caribbean, and Guam, eastern Samoa, Wake Island, Hawai'i, and the Philippines in the Pacific—and transformed them into strategic sites for advancing American economic and military interests. Throughout these islands, the United States established coal stations, communication lines, and naval harbors, wreaking havoc on the local population, economy and ecology in the process.[8] Calling attention to the connections between colonialism and militarization, Robert Harkavy reports that from the nineteenth century until and beyond World War II, most overseas bases throughout the world were "automatically provided by colonial control and were an important aspect and purpose of imperial domination."[9]

The Philippines: America's "First Vietnam"

In 1898, in the aftermath of the Spanish-American War, the United States brutally took possession of the Philippines over native opposition and uprising, thereby extending its "Manifest Destiny" to Pacific Asia. Linking U.S. war in the Philippines to that in Vietnam, Luzviminda Francisco dubs U.S. imperial aggression in the Philippines the "first Vietnam" in order to dispute the contention that US violent war in Vietnam is an "aberration" of American foreign policy.[10] It was during the Philippine-American War (1899-1902), which resulted in the death of about a million Filipinos, the violent destruction of the nationalist forces, and the U.S. territorial annexation of the Philippines, that the United States established its first military bases in the Philippines. For the next century, the Philippines had hosted—often unwillingly—some of the United States' largest overseas air force and naval bases. As a consequence, the Philippines had been key to U.S. power projection capabilities in the Pacific Basin, serving as its prime military outpost and stepping stone to China and the Asian mainland.[11]

Established as a direct consequence of the US colonial occupation of the Philippines, Clark AFB was initially a US Army Calvary post, Fort Stotsenberg, until the creation of the Air Force in 1947. From 1903 to 1979, Clark remained a "virtual territor[y] of the United

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[7] Shigematsu and Keith L. Camacho, "Introduction: Militarized Currents, Decolonizing Futures," in *Militarized Currents: Toward a Decolonized Future in Asia and the Pacific*, ed. Setsu Shigematsu and Keith L. Camacho (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), xvii.

[8] Ibid., xx.

[9] Robert E. Harkavy, Great Power Competition for Overseas Bases: The Geopolitics of Access Diplomacy (New York: Pergamon Press, 1982), 17.

[10] Luzviminda Francisco, "The First Vietnam: The U.S.-Philippine War of 1899," *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* 5 (1973): 2-15.

[11] Michael F. Kimlick, "U.S. Bases in the Philippines," accessed May 20, 2011, http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/report/1990/KMF.htm.

States,"[12] providing a vital "umbrella of security and surveillance to the Pacific region."[13] Even after the Philippines' formal independence in 1946, the Military Bases Agreement, signed one year later, formalized the establishment of twenty-three air and naval bases in strategic parts of the Philippines, the most important of which were Clark Air Force Base and the Subic Naval Base.[14] Although the agreement was signed in 1947, its preliminary terms had been arranged before World War II, in effect making it an agreement between the United States and its colony, not between two sovereign states. In comparing this Military Bases Agreement with similar postwar military arrangements between the United States and other countries, Voltaire Garcia II concluded that "the Philippine treaty is the most onerous" and that its provisions "made the bases virtual territories of the United States."[15] In 1951, the United States and the Philippines signed the Mutual Defense Treaty (MDT), which obligated both countries to provide joint defense against "any external armed attack in the Pacific" on either country, further entrenching U.S. military control over the Philippines.[16] Although the MDT was purportedly about military cooperation for the good of both nations, it was in effect a colonial project, with the "American military machine (gendered masculine and racialized white) [allegedly] protecting a feminized, brown Pacific."[17]

During the Cold War, Clark grew into a major American air base. At its peak, it had a permanent population of 15,000, making it the largest American base overseas. In 1979, pressed by Filipino intellectuals and nationalists who objected to the pervasive US military presence, the Philippines and the United States signed a new bases agreement that established Philippine sovereignty over the bases *but* still guaranteed the United States "unhampered" military use of the bases. It was not until a 1991 vote for national sovereignty by the Philippine Senate that the US Air Force transferred Clark back to the Philippine government, some ninety years after the first U.S. troops landed in the Philippines.

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12) During 1978, following negotiations that had lasted on and off since the early 1970s, the two governments agreed to establish Philippine sovereignty over former American bases in the country and thus the Clark Air Base Command of the Armed Forces of the Philippines came into being, following the signing of a revised MBA on January 7, 1979.

13) Kimlick, "U.S. Bases in the Philippines."

14) Mark Padlan, "U.S. Militarism in the Philippines," accessed September 15, 2011, http://www.peacemaking.co.kr/english/news/view.php?papercode=ENGLISH&newsno=134&pubno=142.

15) Garcia, Voltaire E. II, "U.S. Military Bases and Philippine-American Relations," *Journal of East Asiatic Studies* II (1967): 55, 92.

16) Padlan, "U.S. Militarism in the Philippines."

17) Vernadette Vicuna Gonzalez, "Touring Military Masculinities: U.S.-Philippines Circuits of Sacrifice and Gratitude in Corregidor and Bataan," in *Militarized Currents: Toward a Decolonized Future in Asia and the Pacific*, ed. Setsu Shigematsu and Keith L. Camacho (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 67.

Guam: "Where America's Day Begins"

After World War II, colonialism and militarism converged in the Pacific. Willfully aborting the decolonization movement in Micronesia, American military leaders turned the region's islands into a Pacific "base network" that would support U.S. military deployment in allied Asian nations as part of the containment of communism.[18] Once they have secured American hegemony in the Pacific, military leaders proceeded to build permanent facilities on key islands in Micronesia, primarily Guam and Kwajalein Atoll. As the largest of more than 2,000 islands scattered between Hawai'i and the Philippines, Guam's role in the geopolitics of the Pacific was transformed, from the prewar situation, "in which Guam was a lonely American outpost surrounded by hostile Japanese islands, to one in which Guam was the center of an American-dominated lake that encompassed the entire western Pacific Ocean," second in importance only to Hawai'i.[19] By 1956, Andersen Air Force Base, a 20,000-acre site located on the northern end of the island of Guam, had become Strategic Air Command's chief base in the Pacific, one of thirty-eight overseas bases that encircled the Sino-Soviet Bloc.[20]

The militarization of Guam was swift and expansive. On August 11, 1945, Admiral Nimitz informed the U.S. chief of naval operations that to convert Guam into a "Gibraltar of the Pacific" would require 75,000 acres, or 55 percent of the island. About a year later, the Land Acquisition Act was passed, authorizing the Navy Department to acquire private land needed for permanent military installations on Guam.[21] By the beginning of 1950, the federal government had controlled close to 60 percent of the island. Today, the U.S. military maintains jurisdiction over approximately 39,000 acres, or one third of Guam's total land area.[22]

2. Militarized *Refuge*: *Resolving* Refugee Crisis

In Spring of 1975, the most frequently used route to airlift approximately 125,000 Vietnamese from Vietnam to the mainland United States was from Saigon to Clark Air Force Base in the Philippines to Andersen Air Force Base on Guam to Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton in California. In this section, I trace this most-traveled refugee route via military aircraft as a critical lens through which to map, both discursively and materially, the transpacific *displacement* brought about by the legacy of U.S. colonial and military

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[18] Robert F. Rogers, *Destiny's Landfall: A History of Guam* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1995), 206.

[19] Ibid., 207.

[20] Ibid., 233.

[21] Ibid., 214-15.

[22] Michael Lujan Bevacqua, "The Exceptional Life and Death of a Chamorro Soldier," in *Militarized Currents: Toward a Decolonized Future in Asia and the Pacific*, ed. Setsu Shigematsu and Keith L. Camacho (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press), 34.

expansion into the Asia Pacific region. Grafting the colonial histories of the Philippines and Guam onto the history of the Vietnam War, this section illuminates how residual and ongoing effects of colonial subordination "constitute the conditions of possibility for ongoing forms of militarization."[23] Therein lies the crux of what I term "militarized refuge": It was the enormity of the military buildup in the Pacific that uniquely equipped U.S. bases there to handle the large-scale refugee rescue operation. In short, U.S. evacuation efforts were not a slapdash response to an emergency situation that arose in Vietnam in 1975, but rather part and parcel of the long-standing militarized histories and circuits that connected Vietnam, the Philippines, and Guam, dating back to 1898.

(1) The Philippines and Guam—Pacific stopovers

A seemingly humanitarian gesture, U.S. designation of Clark Air Force Base (AFB) as a refugee staging point was intimately linked to, and a direct outcome of, U.S. colonial subordination and militarization of the Philippines. Due to Clark AFB's prominence and proximity to Saigon, US officials promptly designated it the first refugee "staging area": a temporary housing place for Vietnamese en route to the continental United States to complete the necessary screening and paperwork.[24] Flown there by military aircraft C-141s and C-130s, more than 30,000 refugees, including over 1,500 orphans, transited through Clark AFB in spring 1975.[25] At its peak, in April and May, as many as 2,000 refugees at a time were housed in a tent city adjacent to the base's Bamboo Bowl sports stadium.[26] However, as the flow of refugees surged, on April 23, President Ferdinand Marcos informed the U.S. Ambassador that the Philippines would accept no more Vietnamese refugees, "thus foreclosing for all practical purposes the most promising staging base."[27] In response, that very same day, U.S. officials moved the premier refugee staging area from the Philippines to Guam, and ordered the local Pacific Command representative on Guam and the Commander Naval Air Forces Marianas to prepare to accept, shelter and process the refugees as they were being evacuated from South Vietnam.[28]

The U.S. swift decision to designate Clark AFB a refugee staging area, and the Philippines' equally quick refusal to accept any more refugees reflected the ambiguous nature

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[23] Setsu Shigematsu and Keith L. Camacho, "Introduction: Militarized Currents, Decolonizing Futures," in Shigematsu and Camacho, *Militarized Currents*, xv.

[24] Feliz Moos and C.S. Morrison, "The Vietnamese Refugees at Our Doorstep: Political Ambiguity and Successful Improvisation," *Review of Policy Research* 1 (2005): 28-46.

[25] Tim Vasquez, "Clark Air Base: History and Significant Events," accessed August 31, 2010, http://www.clarkab.org/history/; Thomas Tobin, "Last Flight from Saigon," *USAF Southeast Asia Monograph Series* IV (1978), US Government Printing Office.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Moos and Morrison, "The Vietnamese Refugees."

[28] Tobin, "Last Flight from Saigon"; "Now On to 'Camp Fortuitous,' *Time*, May 12, 1975, accessed November 1, 2008, http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,917414,00.html?iid=chix-sphere.

of the bases agreement: while the United States had control of the bases, the Philippines had sovereignty over them. In the case of Guam, there was no such ambiguity. Since Congress passed the Organic Act in 1950, which decreed Guam as an unincorporated organized territory of the United States under the jurisdiction of the Department of the Interior, the federal government has had plenary powers—that is, full authority—over the island.[29] On an island where the U.S. military controls one third of its territory, Guam—more specifically, its air and naval bases—became the "logical" transit camps for the processing of evacuees.

With total land area of about 200 square miles, and meager local resources, Guam was hardly an ideal location for the large-scale refugee operation. That it became *the* major refugee staging point in the Pacific had more to do with the US militarization of Guam than with US humanitarianism. Directed by the Joint Chief of Staff—Pacific Command's local area commander, Operation "New Life" was a massive undertaking, requiring the resources and manpower of all military branches on Guam, as well as from neighboring Pacific and mainland bases.[30] In all, nearly 20,000 military personnel, including the crews from visiting ships and aircrafts, were directly involved in the Guam refugee operation. Military bases, as the largest and most resourced institutions on Guam, doubled up as refugee shelters: Refugees were initially housed in temporary barracks on Anderson Air Force Base, on the Navy field at Agana, and at the US Marine Corp Camp at Asan Point, and subsequently in the hastily-constructed but massive "Tent City" on Orote Point within the U.S. Naval Station, which provided tent space for about 50,000 people.[31]

At the onset of the refugee influx, the Pacific Command representatives on Guam estimated that even with the use of all military structures and all available civilian rentals, Guam could shelter a *maximum* of 13,000 people for a *short* period of time.[32] However, in all, more than 115,000 evacuees passed through Guam, a number that exceeded Guam's civilian population at that time by at least 25,000.[33] At its peak, there were as many as 3,700 evacuees processed through and airlifted out of Andersen in any given day.[34] The sheer volume of refugees overwhelmed Guam's limited resources. Locals found their access to lagoons and beaches reduced; their water supply rationed; and their travel restricted as military vehicles jammed busy roads. Children had no transportation to school because 181 school buses were used to transfer the refugees from the various air and ship terminals to the temporary military housing and campsites. Overall health conditions also deteriorated, as mosquito and sewage

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[29] Bevacqua, "The Exceptional Life and Death, 34.

[30] Moos and Morrison, "The Vietnamese Refugees."

[31] Ibid.

[32] Ibid., 33.

[33] "Tender Tale: Operation New Life April 23–October 16, 1975," accessed November 20, 2011, http://www.tendertale.com/ttonl/newlife.html.

[34] Dan Knickrehm, "The 43rd and Operation New Life," *The Official Website of Pope Air Force Base*, accessed June 4, 2010, http://www.pope.af.mil/news/story.asp?id=123207835.

borne diseases proliferated.[35)]

Not only did more refugees come than expected, they stayed longer than anticipated, thereby pushing the actual refugee population on Guam beyond an acceptable limit. Begun on April 23, Operation New Life was not officially closed until October 16, 1975, and it was not until January 15, 1976 that the last evacuee left Guam. The refugees were not supposed to linger on Guam; they were to be processed almost immediately and then sent on to the continental United States. However, some U.S. states initially refused to accept the refugees or postponed the arrival date, in part because of lack of planning and proper facilities, but also because of adverse reaction by the public and strong opposition by state officials to the influx of refugees. As an "unincorporated territory of the United States" with second-class citizenship status, Guam had little choice but to continue housing the refugees until they could be received "properly" elsewhere.[36)] That Guam had to house such a large number of refugees, even as its resources were severely stretched, bespeaks the intertwined histories of U.S. military colonialism in Guam and its war in Southeast Asia. That is, it was the militarization of the colonized island that turned it into an "ideal" dumping ground for the unwanted Vietnamese refugees, the discards of U.S. war in Vietnam.

(2) California's Camp Pendleton—Refugees' "first U.S. home"

From Guam, many Vietnamese refugees journeyed to the other side of the Pacific—to Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, a 125,000-acre amphibious training base on the Southern California coast, in San Diego County. It was here, at a U.S. military base, that the largest Vietnamese population outside of Vietnam got its start in America—ironic for a population fleeing military violence. Like Clark and Andersen Air Force Bases, Camp Pendleton emerged out of a history of conquest: it is located in the traditional territory of the Juaneno, Luiseno and Kumeyaay Tribes, which had been "discovered" by Spanish padres and voyagers who traveled to Southern California in the late 18th Century, "owned" by unscrupulous Anglo-American settlers for about a century as the California state legislature repeatedly blocked federal ratification of treaties with native communities, and ultimately "acquired" by the U.S. Marine Corps in 1942 in order to establish a West Coast base for combat training of Marines.[37)]

The first military installation in the mainland United States to provide accommodations for Vietnamese evacuees, Camp Pendleton temporarily housed over 50,000 refugees between April and August 1975. Heavily covered by the national and international media, Camp Pendleton's participation in the U.S. military's 1975 relocation effort, dubbed the "Operation New Arrivals," was key to U.S. effort to recuperate itself after the defeat in Vietnam; its

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35) Richard Mackie, *Operation Newlife: The Untold Story* (Concord, CA: Solution, 1998), 57.

36) Moos and Morrison, "The Vietnamese Refugees."

37) Sta Berryman, "NAGPRA Issues at Camp Pendleton, *CRM* 3 (2001), 17-18.n. Indeed, San Diego County has more Indian reservations than any other county in the United States.

importance to the nation underscored by First Lady Betty Ford's May 21 visit to the Camp to greet newly-arrived Vietnamese children.[38] For a nation still reeling from the shock of defeat and the agony of a deeply divided war, watching images of U.S. Marines—the central players in that very war—working "around the clock to build eight tent cities and to provide water, food, clothing, medicine, electricity, power, and security for the first 18,000 refugees,"[39] was cathartic, enabling many Americans to reclaim their faith in America's goodness and to move beyond the extremely unpopular war. However, these warm images made un-visible the connection between the refugee recovery mission and the military violence that preceded it—the fact that both were executed by the same military outfit: the Camp Pendleton's 1st Marines.

3. ***Militarized*** **Refuge:** ***Producing*** **Refugee Crisis**

The material and ideological conversion of U.S. military bases into a place of *refuge*—a place that *resolves* the refugee crisis—discursively transformed the United States from violent aggressors in Vietnam to benevolent rescuers of its people. In this section, I challenge the logic of this "makeover" by detailing the violent roles that these military bases—these purported places of refuge—played in the Vietnam War, in order to hold them accountable for the war-induced displacement of the Vietnamese people. The term "*militarized* refuge"—its intended jarring juxtaposition—exposes the hidden violence behind the humanitarian term "refuge," thereby challenging the powerful narrative of America(ns) rescuing and caring for Vietnam's "runaways" that erases the role that U.S. foreign policy and war played in inducing the "refugee crisis" in the first place.

In the Philippines, Clark Air Force Base was the backbone of logistical support for U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia. Soon after the United States proclaimed its campaign to "contain Communism" in the late 1940s, Clark AFB became the headquarters of the 13th Air Force and played a key logistical role in support of the U.S. forces in the Korean War (1950-1953). From 1965 to 1975, as the largest overseas U.S. military base in the world, Clark AFB became the major staging base for U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia, providing crucial logistical support for the Vietnam War. Air traffic at Clark reached as high as 40 transports per day, all bound for Vietnam. At the same time, in an exercise of its fledgling sovereignty, the Philippines refused to permit the United States to mount B-52 bombing runs from Clark: the aircraft had to fly from Guam but were refueled from Clark. U.S. troops at Clark also provided vital support to the war as they spent a significant portion of their alleged "temporary duty" (TDY) in Vietnam. The large number of TDY troops who were sent to

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[38] Vik Jolly, "Pendleton Once Home for 50,000 War Refugees," *The Orange County Register*, April 8, 2010, http://www.ocregister.com/news/vietnamese-243238-pendleton-family.html.

[39] "Wandering Chopsticks," Images at War's End: Refugee & Marine Images from Col Waterhouse Collection & Marine Staff Photographs from Camp Pendleton Archives—Camp Pendleton, September 12, 2010, accessed March 17, 2011, http://wanderingchopsticks.blogspot.com/2010/09/images-at-wars-end-camp-pendleton.html.

Vietnam from Clark, as well as from other U.S. bases in the Pacific, was part of the Pentagon's illicit design to mislead Congress about the number of troops that were "officially" assigned to Vietnam's combat zone.[40)]

While the United States could not impose its military will on the Philippines, a sovereign nation, it could and did on Guam, its unincorporated territory. When the United States was not permitted to mount B-52 bombing runs from Clark, it turned to Anderson AFB, which came to play a "legendary" role in the Vietnam War, launching devastating bombing missions over North and South Vietnam for close to a decade.[41)] In this way, Guam's fate was linked to that of the Philippines's as U.S. military decisions often triangulated these two vital nodes in the Pacific base network. The two air force bases also joined efforts in providing crucial medical support for U.S. troops during the Vietnam War. Begun in November 1965, four times a week, C-141 aircraft would fly from Clark into Da Nang to load casualties, return for a two-hour stop at Clark and then fly on to Guam. The close proximity of these three sites—Vietnam, the Philippines, and Guam, linked via U.S. militarism in the Pacific—meant that injured soldiers were transferred to Guam within two or three days of injury, as flight time between Da Nang and Clark is 2 to 2 1/2 hours and between Clark and Guam 3 1/2 to 4 hours.

As stated on the Strategic Air Command website, since it became operational as North Field in 1945, Andersen has continually played vital roles in U.S. wars in the Pacific, launching daily bombing missions over Japan during World War II, serving as a focal point for aircraft and material flying west during the Korean War, and supporting rotational bomber deployments from stateside bases after that war, first with B-29s, and eventually hosting B-36, B-47, B-50, B-52 and KC-97 and KC-135 units. For the next six years, Strategic Air Command trained and practiced its wartime skills, which would be deployed time and time again in Southeast Asia.

Guam's involvement in the Vietnam War began in 1962, when it first served as a support base for the American advisers that President Kennedy dispatched to South Vietnam. In mid-1965, after the United States deployed ground combat units in South Vietnam, Guam's role in the war was expanded to include direct combat operations by B-52s from Andersen. A hornet's nest of intense activity, Andersen rapidly became the U.S.'s largest base for B-52 bombers—"the eight-engine behemoths that attempted to bomb the Vietnamese communists into submission."[42)] Given Guam's proximity to Vietnam, a B-52, which carries 108,500-pound bombs, could fly from Guam to Vietnam and back without refueling.[43)] On June 18, 1965,

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40) Thomas C. Utts, "Clark Air Base Scrapbook: Gateway," 2008, accessed September 9, 2010, http://zcap.freeyellow.com/pix3.htm.

41) Rogers, *Destiny's Landfall*, 252.

42) Ibid., 242.

43) Larry Clinton Thompson, *Refugee Workers in the Indochina Exodus, 1975-1982* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland, 2010), 62.

Andersen launched twenty-seven B-52s against suspected Viet Cong base operations and concentrations and supply lines, the first of thousands of conventional “iron bomb” strikes—dubbed Operation Arc Light—over North and South Vietnam, and also Cambodia and Laos. The Nixon Doctrine, announced on Guam on 25 July 1969, initiated the withdrawal of U.S. ground troops from Vietnam, but also immediately escalated the U.S. air war, with B-52 bombing missions from Guam increasing in tempo and ferocity.[44] In 1972, Andersen was the site of the most massive buildup of airpower in history, with more than 15,000 crews and over 150 B-52s lining all available flight line space—about five miles long. At its peak, Andersen housed about 165 B-52s.[45] During Operation Linebacker II (named after Nixon’s favorite sport), the round-the-clock “Christmas bombing” against the cities of Hanoi and Haiphong in December 1972, bombers stationed at Andersen flew 729 sorties in 11 days. On December 18, 87 B-52s were launched from Andersen in less than two hours. Dubbed the “11-day war,” Operation Linebacker II is credited for forcing the North Vietnamese to return to the stalled Paris peace talks, and to sign a cease-fire agreement in January 1973.[46] The Nixon Doctrine was thus a racial project: by withdrawing American troops but intensifying the air raid, the United States prioritized American lives over Vietnamese lives, preserving the former while obliterating the latter, racialized to be dispensable, via carpet bombing.

The U.S. air war, launched from Guam, decisively disrupted life on the island. Richard Mackie, a Public Health Service officer, describes the thundering impact of the air war on everyday life:

> There was no announcement. There was no warning. It just started happening. Every hour, day and night, every house...would almost shake off its foundation at the deafening roar of three B-52s and a refueling plane would pass a few hundred feet over our heads.... Life became tedious, sleep was almost impossible. Conversations were continually interrupted. We found ourselves constantly gritting our teeth and staring angrily at the ceiling as each ‘sortie’ passed overhead. Guam’s main highway was jammed day and night with trucks hauling bombs from the port to the airbase.[47]

As the Department of Defense’s busiest training installation, California’s Camp Pendleton, the refugees’ first home in the United States, trains more than 40,000 active-duty and 26,000 reserve military personnel each year for combat.[48] During the Vietnam War, Marines arriving at the Camp were given fifteen intensive training days, complete with a fabricated Vietnamese jungle village with deadly booby traps, and then sent to Vietnam. Camp Pendleton is also the home base of the illustrious 1st Marine Regiment, whose

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[44] Rogers, *Destiny’s Landfall*, 243.

[45] Ibid., 252.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Thompson, *Refugee Workers*, 62-63.

[48] Mark Denger, “A Brief History of the U.S. Marine Corps in San Diego,” The California State Military Museum, accessed March 15, 2011, http://www.militarymuseum.org/SDMarines.html.

battalions began arriving in Vietnam in August 1965. The Regiment's battalions participated in some of the most ferocious battles of the war, including the Harvest Moon in December 1965, and Utah, Iowa, Cheyenne I and II, and Double Eagle in the succeeding months, and Operation Hastings in July 1966. Between January and March 1968, the 1st Marines, along with other U.S. Marine and South Vietnamese units, fought to regain control of Hue, the old imperial capital, engaging in street fighting and hand-to-hand combat, killing nearly 1,900 "enemy" in the process. The Regiment continued heavy fighting through the rest of the year, culminating in Operation Meade River, which "netted nearly 850 enemy killed." According to the Global Security website, in 1971, the Regiment was ordered back to Camp Pendleton—the last Marine infantry unit to depart Vietnam.[49)]

In all, during the course of the Vietnam War, via its satellite military bases, the United States dropped more explosives on Vietnam—a million tons on North Vietnam, and 4 million tons on South Vietnam—than in all of World War II.[50)] Four times as many bombs were dropped on South Vietnam as on North Vietnam because the U.S.'s goal was to decimate the "Viet Cong" in the South, in order to preserve South Vietnam as a non-Communist, pro-American country.[51)] The massive tonnage of bombs, along with the ground fighting provided by Marine units like the Camp Pendleton's 1st Marines, displaced some twelve million people in South Vietnam—almost half the country's total population at the time—from their homes. Although there are no statistics on how many North Vietnamese were forced to flee their homes, it is likely that the percentage of the displaced there must have been even higher, as North Vietnam coped with the relentless American air war by evacuating major population centers to the countryside.[52)]

As such, the Pacific military bases, Clark and Andersen Air Force Bases, and California's Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, credited and valorized for resettling Vietnamese refugees in 1975, were the very ones responsible for dislocating millions of Vietnamese from their homes during the course of the Vietnam War. By recognizing only the refugees fleeing Vietnam after 1975, the United States engages in the "organized forgetting" of the millions of long-term refugees who stayed in Vietnam, whose dislocation was the direct consequence of its military's "high-technology brutality."[53)] Together, the hyper-visibility of the former, the post-1975 refugees who left Vietnam, and the un-visibility of the latter, the internal refugees who had been displaced throughout the war, enable the United States to represent itself as a refuge-providing rather than a refugee-producing nation.

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49) http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/agency/usmc/1mar.htm.

50) William S. Turley, *Second Indochina War: A Short Political and Military History* (New York: Signet, 1987), 87.

51) Marilyn Blatt Young, *The Vietnam Wars,* 1945-1990 (New York: HarperCollins, 1991).

52) Sucheng Chan, *Asian Americans: An Interpretive History* (Woodbridge, CT: Twayne, 1991), 56.

53) Chan, *Asian Americans*, 51.

Conclusion

At this moment of reinvigorated U.S. imperialism, I am deeply interested in and concerned about how the Vietnam War and its "refugees" have continued to serve as a stage for the (re)production of American identities and for the shoring up of U.S. militarism. When scholars portray Vietnamese flight to the United States as a matter of desperate individuals fleeing political persecution and/or economic depression, they completely discount the aggressive roles that the U.S. government, military, and corporations have played in generating this exodus in the first place. This historical revisionism in turn allows the United States to remake itself into the magnanimous rescuers. The military's alleged role in *solvin*g the refugee crisis enables the United States to transform itself from violent aggressors in Vietnam to benevolent rescuers of its people, a feat that helped to recuperate its status as the mighty and moral leader of the Asia-Pacific region, its defeat in Vietnam notwithstanding.

Challenging this historical revisionism, this paper critically juxtaposes seemingly unrelated topics: U.S. colonialism in the Philippines, U.S. militarism in Guam and in California, and the Vietnam War. However, in tracing the most-traveled refugee route via military aircraft, I have knitted these different events together into a layered story of "militarized refuge"—one that connects U.S. colonialism, military expansion and transpacific displacement. In connecting Vietnamese displacement to that of Filipino and Chamorro, and "mak[ing] intelligible" the military colonialisms that engulf these spaces, I disrupt the U.S. myth of "rescue and liberation" that enunciates violence *and* recovery simultaneously and exposes the hidden violence behind the humanitarian term "refuge," thereby challenging the powerful narrative of America(ns) rescuing and caring for Vietnamese that erases the role that U.S. war played in inducing the "refugee crisis" in the first place.