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THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN.....
Paul

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

May 2, 1975

Mr. President:

As I mentioned on the helicopter, I suggest that you call Governor David Pryor of Arkansas this afternoon or this evening and congratulate him on his welcome and speech to the first Vietnam refugees arriving at Fort Chaffee Arkansas.

This would be part of the campaign you indicated you wanted to conduct to encourage public and official support for the refugees in opposition to the scattered letters and comments against the refugees coming here.

Attached find two wire service stories reporting on Governor Pryor's welcome for the refugees at Fort Chaffee.



Ron Nessen

5/2/75

I thanked him & said we would help. Approved my appreciation & admiration.

UP-069

(REFUGEES)

FT. CHAFFEE, ARK. (UPI) -- THE FIRST OF 20,000 SOUTH VIETNAMESE REFUGEES LANDED AT FORT SMITH MUNICIPAL AIRPORT TODAY TO CHEERS OF "WELCOME" AND TAUNTS OF "GO BACK TO NAM" FROM A CROWD OF ABOUT 500 RESIDENTS AND OFFICIALS.

THE GREAT MAJORITY OF THOSE WELCOMING THE FIRST OF FIVE PLANE LOADS OF 350 REFUGEES EXPECTED TO ARRIVE THE FIRST DAY CHEERED AS THE AIR FORCE C141 TOUCHED DOWN AT 10:07 A.M. TWO OR THREE YELLED, "GO BACK TO NAM." THE REST OF THE 20,000 REFUGEES WERE EXPECTED TO ARRIVE WITHIN THE NEXT MONTHS.

DR. LAM VAN PACH, FORMER DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE NATIONAL REHABILITATIVE INSTITUTE OF VIETNAM, WAS THE FIRST TO STEP OFF THE PLANE. A HIGH SCHOOL BAND PLAYED THE STAR SPANGLED BANNER AND LAM WAS PRESENTED A BOUQUET OF RED AND WHITE CARNATIONS DECORATED WITH RED, WHITE AND BLUE RIBBONS.

OTHERS FROM THE PLANE HUDDLED TOGETHER ON THE AIRPORT RUNWAY AS GOV. DAVID PRYOR MADE THE OFFICIAL WELCOME.

"WE HOPE THAT YOU REALIZE THAT WE SHARE THE AGONY, PAIN AND SORROW YOU HAVE EXPERIENCED," PRYOR SAID. "YOU FIND YOURSELF IN A NEW LAND. IT'S THE NATURE OF MAN TO FEAR THE UNKNOWN BUT LET ME ASSURE YOU OF THE SPIRIT OF FRIENDSHIP OF OUR PEOPLE.

"IF YOU ENCOUNTER SOME THAT ARE UNFRIENDLY REMEMBER THEY ARE PEOPLE LIKE YOURSELVES WHO HAVE MET UNKNOWN CIRCUMSTANCES AND ARE LESS THAN CERTAIN HOW TO DEAL WITH THEM. WE PRAY THAT YOUR PAIN AND SUFFERING AND FEARS HAVE FINALLY COME TO AN END."

LAM THANKED THE CROWD.

"WE HAD TO LEAVE OUR COUNTRY, ALL THAT WE HAD, ALL THAT WE HAVE FOUGHT FOR FOR THE PAST 20 YEARS," LAM SAID. "WE HOPE THE U. S. GOVERNMENT WILL GIVE US A CHANCE TO MAKE AGAIN OUR LIVES, NEW LIVES."

TWENTY-TWO WATCHERS CARRIED SIGNS, BUT ONLY ONE PLACARD PROTESTED THE ARRIVAL. ONE SIGN, CARRIED BY STATE SEN. MILT EARNHARD OF FORT SMITH, SAID "KUMKAW," VIETNAMESE FOR WELCOME.

UPI 05-02 12:49 PED

UP-097

ADD REFUGEES, FT. CHAFFEE (UP-069)

NINE VOLUNTEER GROUPS UNDER THE UMBRELLA OF THE AMERICAN COUNCIL OF VOLUNTEER AGENCIES WERE OPERATING AT CAMP PENDLETON, CALIF., TRYING TO FIND SPONSORS. WOULD-BE SPONSORS CAN CALL THE RED CROSS AT PENDLETON, WHERE THEIR NAMES WILL BE FORWARDED TO THE STATE DEPARTMENT, OFFICIALS SAID.

IN MIAMI, 31 REFUGEES ARRIVED LAST NIGHT AND WERE WELCOMED BY CUBAN EXILES -- MEMBERS OF THE INTERNATIONAL RESCUE COMMITTEE -- WHO THEMSELVES FLED TO THIS COUNTRY DURING THE COMMUNIST TAKEOVER OF THEIR HOMETLAND.

THE COMMITTEE WILL HELP THE REFUGEES FIND WORK AND HOUSING.

"THE MAIN THING FOR A REFUGEE IS TO HAVE A FEELING THAT SOMEONE CARES," SAID VIVIAN DE SOSA, A VOLUNTEER WORKER WHO WAS ON HAND TO GREET THE VIETNAMESE. "CUBANS SHOULD FEEL MORE INCLINED TO HELP THE VIETNAMESE NOW. MANY OF US HAD A ROUGH TIME IN THE '60S."

MORE THAN 260,000 CUBANS FLED THE CASTRO REGIME BETWEEN 1965 AND 1973. BEFORE THE CUBANS CAME 38,248 HUNGARIANS WHO FLED THEIR HOMETLAND AFTER THE 1956 UPRISING WAS QUELLED BY THE SOVIET UNION.

UPI 05-02 02:40 PED

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REFUGEES ROUNDUP BJT NL 470; 2 TAKES 840

WITH WIREPHOTOS

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WORDS OF WELCOME AND CHANTS OF PROTEST ON FRIDAY GREETED THE FIRST BATCH OF SOUTH VIETNAMESE REFUGEES TO ARRIVE IN ARKANSAS EN ROUTE TO TEMPORARY HOMES AT FT. CHAFFEE. THOUSANDS OF OTHER REFUGEES; MEANWHILE; SETTLED INTO THE ROUTINE OF LIFE AT CAMP PENDLETON; CALIF.

ESTIMATES OF THE NUMBER OF SOUTH VIETNAMESE REFUGEES ON SHIPS; AT PACIFIC ISLAND WAY STATIONS AND IN THE UNITED STATES SWELLED TO OVER 100,000; BUT U.S. IMMIGRATION SERVICE OFFICIALS SAID THEY DID NOT KNOW HOW MANY WOULD WIND UP IN AMERICA.

PLANS TO HOUSE UP TO 60,000 REFUGEES AT CAMP PENDLETON; FT. CHAFFEE AND EGLIN AIR FORCE BASE; FLA.; HAVE DRAWN STRONG PROTESTS FROM LOCAL RESIDENTS AFRAID THAT LARGE GROUPS OF PEOPLE CONCENTRATED IN A FEW AREAS WOULD ADD TO UNEMPLOYMENT PROBLEMS.

OTHER AMERICANS; HOWEVER; OFFERED HOMES AND JOBS TO THE REFUGEES AND FEDERAL OFFICIALS ASSURED PEOPLE THAT THE NEWCOMERS WOULD BE SCATTERED THROUGHOUT THE NATION.

A WELCOMING SPEECH FROM GOV. DAVID PRYOR AND MUSIC FROM A HIGH SCHOOL BAND MINGLED WITH SCATTERED CHANTS OF "GO HOME;" AS 71 REFUGEES; INCLUDING A HANDFUL OF AMERICANS WHO HAD BEEN IN VIETNAM; LANDED AT THE FORT SMITH; ARK.; AIRPORT AND BOARDED BUSES FOR FT. CHAFFEE. FOUR MORE PLANELOADS WERE DUE DURING THE DAY.

"THIS IS YOUR FIRST DAY IN AMERICA;" SAID PRYOR IN A SPEECH TRANSLATED INTO VIETNAMESE BY A MILITARY INTERPRETER. "WE HOPE YOU REALIZE THAT OUR PEOPLE IN ARKANSAS AND AMERICA SHARE AT THIS MOMENT IN THE AGONY; PAIN AND SORROW YOU HAVE EXPERIENCED."

DR. LAN VAN THACH; ACTING AS SPOKESMAN FOR THE REFUGEES; SAID THE VIETNAMESE HAD TO MAKE "THE HEARTBREAKING DECISION TO LEAVE OUR COUNTRY AND ALL WE HAD. WE THANK YOU FOR GIVING US THE CHANCE TO MAKE OUR LIVES AGAIN."

THE PENTAGON; MEANWHILE; PROVIDED ANOTHER ESTIMATE OF THE NUMBER OF REFUGEES WHO WERE EVACUATED FROM OR FLED SAIGON JUST BEFORE THE VIET CONG TAKEOVER EARLIER THIS WEEK.

SPOKESMAN JOE LAITIN SAID THE LATEST TALLY SHOWED THERE WERE 75,000 ON U.S. BASES IN THE PACIFIC OR ON THE MAINLAND AND ABOARD AMERICAN SHIPS. HE SAID THAT AS OF FRIDAY MORNING THERE WERE 35,319 REFUGEES ON U.S. BASES IN THE PACIFIC; 4,381 AT U.S. DOMESTIC BASES AND 34,363 ON U.S. SHIPS. ANOTHER 30,000 REFUGEES ARE REPORTED ABOARD A FLOTILLA OF 26 VIETNAMESE SHIPS ESCORTED BY TWO U.S. NAVY SHIPS.

LAITIN SAID THE AIRCRAFT CARRIER HANCOCK; CARRYING 2,001 EVACUEES; WILL BE THE FIRST OF THE EVACUATION SHIPS TO REACH AN AMERICAN MILITARY BASE; WITH AN ESTIMATED FRIDAY NIGHT ARRIVAL TIME AT SUBIC BAY IN THE PHILIPPINES.

MANY OF THOSE AT U.S. BASES IN THE PACIFIC ARE CLUSTERED ON GUAM. A 9-YEAR-OLD VIETNAMESE BOY ON FRIDAY BECAME THE FIRST REFUGEE TO DIE AT THE BASE. A MILITARY SPOKESMAN SAID NA DUNG PHUC WAS ADMITTED TO THE NAVAL REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER ON THURSDAY SUFFERING FROM A HIGH FEVER; A RASH AND SHOCK. AN AUTOPSY WAS PLANNED TO DETERMINE THE CAUSE OF DEATH.

MORE

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

May 3, 1975

ADMINISTRATIVELY CONFIDENTIAL

MEMORANDUM FOR:

RON NESSEN

FROM:

JERRY JOHNS

The attached was returned in the President's outbox with the following notation:

-- I thanked him and said we would help.
Expressed my appreciation and admiration.

cc: Don Rumsfeld