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REFUGEE ASSISTANCE

Q. Now that the Congress has defeated the legislation for \$327 Million in refugee assistance, what does the President propose to do in the way of new legislation?

A. As you are aware, the President was dismayed at the failure of Congress to pass urgently needed legislation for immediate refugee care and resettlement funds. He attaches high importance to the necessary approval of these funds and calls upon the Congress to act promptly. The President will be working with Congress to ensure that legislation for refugee care and resettlement is provided.

Amb. L. Dean Brown is testifying this morning before the House Judiciary and International Law Subcommittee on the necessity of funds for refugees who we now estimate to number approximately 125,000 people.

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

May 6, 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR:

THE PRESIDENT

FROM:

RON NESSEN

SUBJECT:

Talking points for your news conference
and Cabinet Meeting on refugee aid.

1. We have a moral obligation to help these refugees resettle and begin new lives in the United States. They fled from South Vietnam for two reasons: They feared that they would be killed if they stayed and they did not want to live under a Communist system of government.
2. By helping these refugees, many of whom fled their native land with nothing but the clothes on their backs and a few small parcels, we are living up to our heritage as a charitable and compassionate people. I have spoken out strongly on this issue because I believe strongly that we must do the right thing morally. We are a nation of immigrants and I believe the inscription on the Statue of Liberty, which enunciates our finest qualities as a people should be our guidepost in this tragic situation.
3. The maximum number of refugees expected is 150,000 at the most and it probably will be less. Sixty percent of that number are children, the innocent victims of this war who deserve a chance to live their life in freedom and will certainly not be taking anyone's job away. Only 35,000 refugees are heads of households who will be looking for jobs; but many of these have skills which will enable them to find employment. The number of job seekers is a tiny fraction of 1% of the labor force in the U.S. Even without the Vietnamese refugees, the U.S. has been opening its doors to 400,000 immigrants a year without any impact on the job market. Since the end of World War II, almost 1,400,000 refugees from Europe, Asia, Hungary and Cuba have fled oppression and sought freedom in the United States. They have made a rich contribution to our culture and our economy and we expect the Vietnamese will do the same.
4. Many of the Vietnamese refugees coming here have close relatives or sponsors in the United States so they will be no burden to the government. Ambassador Brown's office at the State Department is using a computer to match up the refugees job skills with the available jobs. The re-settlement program is being carried out in such a way that the refugees will be spread throughout the country without a heavy concentration in any one area.

5. We are working with other countries to resettle perhaps as many as 20,000 of the refugees outside the United States. Canada is welcoming some. Some French-speaking countries in Africa have indicated that they will take some.

6. I have received communications from Pope Paul, George Meany, and other leaders praising the refugee resettlement program and urging that the United States do everything it can to help these people. I want to compliment the Members of Congress, the Governors, the private refugee relief organizations, and the members of the public who have spoken out and acted to help the refugees begin a new life in the United States.

7. I want to emphasize one point. It is my intention that none of the aid money I am requesting from Congress will be spent by the United States Government to help the Communists of North and South Vietnam. I believe it is the responsibility of the nations which sent weapons of war to the Communists to come forward now to repair the damage.

8. Let me emphasize once more my deep moral commitment to help these refugees resettle and begin new lives in the United States. Despite the opposition of a few, I believe the majority of the American people want to live up to the finest traditions of our history and welcome these new immigrants as we have welcomed so many immigrants to our bountiful land in the past. We will be a better country and a better people for doing it.

9. I know Americans want to forget the Vietnam war. But we must not take out our frustration and anger on the innocent victims of that war. To do so would dishonor the sacrifices America has made in good faith throughout this long war.

REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT PROGRAM

Q. A recent press report has called the Refugee Resettlement Program a "mess." Can you give us the facts?

A. To my mind the results so far have been impressive. The Refugee Resettlement Program, under the direction of Julia Taft, has placed about 52,000 of the approximately 131,000 Indochina refugees. The program has continued to maintain resettlement rates of approximately 700 a day and in recent days has exceeded the 1,000 mark. Yesterday I sent a letter to all of the Governors asking them to establish resettlement programs in their State. We are offering the assistance of our Federal Regional Councils to help initiate such programs.

Based on the results of the Refugee Resettlement Program, it is my assessment this difficult program has proceeded well. The results are a credit to the many people who have worked hard and successfully to help the refugees.

JSB/7/11/75

REFUGEE APPROPRIATION BILL

Authorization
Arrived 10:45 AM

Q: The refugee appropriation bill arrived at the White House Monday afternoon. If the President is in such a hurry to get the money, as he said he was, why hasn't he signed the bill?

A: The bill did arrive here late Monday. Part of the delay is just due to the processing of the paper through the system. But I think you are probably aware that the Congress is expected to pass the legislation authorizing the expenditure of the funds sometime today. We expect to have that legislation tomorrow and I would look for the President to sign both bills together.

(If pressed, you can add: ~~that~~ The President prefers to wait for the authorization bill so that he doesn't have to contend with the question of whether or not we need an authorization bill to spend the money. Congress is moving forward and we are content to wait another day, but we would have to take another look at the situation if Congress were to recess before enacting the authorization legislation.)

REFUGEE APPROPRIATION

Q. Has the \$405 million appropriation bill for refugees arrived at the White House?

A. No. There is some expectation it will arrive this afternoon.

(FYI: The bill is on the House side now for the Speaker's signature; It will go to the Senate afterwards for signature, and, finally, back to the House for delivery to the White House. It will arrive sometime between 3 and 4 p.m.)

Q. If it arrives today, will he sign it?

A. We expect the President to sign the bill immediately. (Last Day for action would be May 30.)

CONCENTRATION OF REFUGEES IN FLORIDA,
ARKANSAS AND CALIFORNIA

Q: Citizens and local officials in Florida, Arkansas and California have recently voiced objections about the establishment of refugee camps in their states. They feel that these refugees will become a large permanent burden despite federal promises to move these people on to other locations. Can you comment on that?

A: The three camps we have established at Eglin Air Force Base (Florida), Camp Pendleton (California) and Fort Chaffee (Arkansas) are merely temporary holding areas at which further screening of the refugees will be carried out and counseling services provided. Many are being processed within 24 hours. Some of the refugees may remain in these areas for as long as three weeks, but there is absolutely no intention on the part of the federal government to have refugees remain on these bases permanently. We do not intend that large concentrations of Vietnamese will remain in any particular locality.

INDOCHINA REFUGEE STATISTICAL SUMMARY
(as of 0500 Hours (EDT))

Wesley Savage

	<u>Subtotals</u>	<u>Current Numbers</u>	
		<u>Totals</u> 0	<u>Change in Last 24-Hour Period</u> 0
A. Americans in Vietnam			
B. En Route to Western Pacific Restaging Areas (ALL CATEGORIES)		3,765	-1,315
--US Navy Ships	0		
--Military Sealift Command Ships	0		
--Vietnamese Ships	3,765		
C. At Western Pacific Restaging Sites		60,415	-58
--Thailand	667		+105
--Subic Bay	3,394		+576
--Clark AFB	255		+11
--Guam	48,550		-750
--Wake Island	7,549		0
D. In US Restaging Sites		45,176	+541
--Hawaii	62		+62
--Travis AFB	3		0
--Camp Pendleton	18,293		--22
--Ft. Chaffee	23,432		+158
--Eglin AFB	3,386		+343
E. Total Outprocessed		17,009	+208
--Travis AFB	5,730		0
--Camp Pendleton	7,832		+109
--Ft. Chaffee	1,977		+ 94
--Eglin AFB	299		+2
--Other Countries	1,171		+3
TOTAL EVACUEES		126,656*	

The figures stated represent the best information available.

*Include 291 in transit status.