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Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

FACT SHEET

STATUS REPORT: REFUGEES FROM INDOCHINA

The President is today transmitting to the Congress the first report required by Section 4.(b) of the Indochina Migration and Refugee Assistance Act of 1975 (PL 94-23). The report describes the initial activities of the President's Special Inter-Agency Task Force which is charged with coordinating refugee resettlement activities. The report also describes the steps taken to retrieve and deposit in the Treasury amounts authorized and appropriated but not expended for assistance to South Vietnam and Cambodia.

BACKGROUND

On April 18, 1975, the President established a Special Inter-Agency Task Force "to coordinate...all U.S. Government activities concerning the evacuation of U.S. citizens, Vietnamese citizens, and third country nationals from Vietnam and refugee and resettlement problems relating to the Vietnam conflict." Twelve Federal agencies are represented on the Task Force; The Departments of: State, Health, Education, and Welfare, Treasury, Defense, Justice, Interior, Labor, Housing and Urban Development, Transportation, Agency for International Development, Office of Management and Budget and Central Intelligence Agency. Responding to the President's request for legislative action, the Congress passed the Indochina Migration and Refugee Assistance Act of 1975 which the President signed into law on May 24, 1975. Pursuant to that law, today's report includes sections on the status of the refugees from Cambodia and Vietnam, plans for their resettlement, and a separate section prepared by the Department of Defense and the Agency for International Development regarding non-expended funds.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE REPORT

- As of June 15, 131,399 evacuees had entered the U.S. system of control; 32,321 had already joined their families or sponsors in the U.S.; 3,756 had been resettled in other countries.
- The security clearance procedures which had been a principal cause of a slowdown in processing in mid-May have been centralized and automated and no longer pose the major time problem they once did.
- The four reception centers in the continental U.S. (Camp Pendleton, California; Fort Chaffee, Arkansas, Fort Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania; Eglin Air Force Base, Florida) are now providing employment counselling through the Department of Labor, English-language training and cultural orientation classes through volunteers and Government personnel as well as continued screening and processing by the Immigration and Naturalization Service and the Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

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- Guidelines that spell out the Federal Government's role in resettlement support relating to welfare, medical assistance, education and social services have been issued to State Administrators and other interested organizations and agencies by the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.
- The first 25,000 refugees to be resettled in the United States are located throughout the fifty States.
- As of June 10, 3,341 refugees had been relocated to eighteen third countries, a majority of them to Canada. An additional 4,000 refugees have indicated a desire to resettle in other countries.
- Through repatriation procedures established in coordination with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 1,917 persons have indicated a desire to return to Indochina. The U.S. Government will pay the costs of transportation at such time as the UNHCR is successful in arranging their acceptance by the authorities in Saigon and Phnom Penh.
- As a result of reductions in the refugee population on the island of Guam, the use of tent facilities will be ended no later than June 24.
- Efforts are underway to reinforce Task Force support of the voluntary resettlement agencies and to expand the traditional sponsorship system through which refugee families are assimilated into the American life stream.
- Pursuant to Section 4(b)(3) of PL 94-23, as of June 10, 1975 the Military Departments have identified a total of \$108 million which may be available for deobligation.

In accordance with the requirements of PL 94-23, the next report on the status of the refugees from Cambodia and Vietnam will be sent to the Congress in 90 days.

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