

# OFFICIALS EXPRESS DOUBT ON U.S. HELP

## State Department Aides Say Refugee Aid Won't Alter Vietnam Deterioration

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WASHINGTON, April 3—

President Ford declared today that "the United States has been doing and will continue to do its utmost" to help the refugees in South Vietnam. But officials here expressed doubt that the Administration's efforts would markedly improve a deteriorating situation.

At his news conference in San Diego, the President said that 2,000 Vietnamese orphans in the process of being adopted by American families would be flown to the United States in the next two days.

Mr. Ford also said that he had ordered "all available naval ships to stand off Indochina to do whatever is necessary to assist." [Opening statement, Page 12.]

### Legal Authority Cited

At the State Department, where an Indochina Task Force has been set up to coordinate relief efforts, officials estimated that 1 million to 1.3 million South Vietnamese could be considered refugees.

When a reporter asked Mr. Ford today whether there were plans to accept additional refugees, the President did not answer directly, saying that there was legal authority to permit refugees to come to the United States.

A State Department official said that "at present, there are no plans for further children to be brought here."

The official emphasized that virtually all the 2,000 orphans to be flown from Saigon to the American West Coast on C-54's and other specially-equipped cargo planes were already placed with American families. The few who have not been placed, the official said, will be assigned to families from a waiting list.

In response to hundreds of telephone calls from persons inquiring about adopting Vietnamese orphans, the State Department's task force issued a press release today that said:

"It is not anticipated that additional children will be available for adoption at this time. In any case, there is a long waiting list of American families for children who may become available for adoption in the near future."

The Pentagon announced that a C-5A had left the Philippines tonight for Saigon with food and supplies and would return with orphans if any were ready to leave. According to the announcement, the orphans will be taken to Clark Air Base in the Philippines for processing and medical attention before they are flown to the United States.

### U.S. Ships Off Vietnam

A Pentagon spokesman said that four naval vessels had been sent to Vietnamese waters last week to aid in the evacuation of coastal areas, but that their efforts thus far had been thwarted by the speed of the Communist take-overs.

The ships arrived off Da Nang after the city had already fallen, the spokesman said, and began moving down the coast toward Cam Ranh. Through today, according to the spokesman, only 20 refugees had been picked up by the four vessels.

The spokesman said that the use of Navy ships, mentioned by Mr. Ford, was "in the active planning stage." He said that the Joint Chiefs of Staff would inform the Commander in Chief of the Pacific Fleet, Adm. Noel A. M. Gayler, of the President's directive and that Admiral Gayler would determine what ships could be used in South Vietnam evacuating efforts. State Department officials said that commercial ships patrolling off the coast had been more successful and had taken aboard thousands of refugees who came out to deep water in small boats.

"Some were picked up in sampans, some were hanging onto flotsam and jetsam, some were just swimming for their lives, one official said.

From a staging area at Vung Tau, in the Mekong River delta, the refugees were being taken around the Ca Man peninsula to Phu Quoc, an island off the southwestern coast of South Vietnam in the Gulf of Siam.

### It's 'Britain in World War II'

"Phu Quoc is Britain in World War II," said Terry Liercke, a coordinator of the Indochina Task Force. It's up against the wall. You don't go any further."

He said that the island was being equipped to handle 80,000 refugees and that American planes were bringing in food and water. Asked what would happen when there was no room on the island for more refugees, Mr. Liercke said, "That's what everyone's asking."

In the task force headquarters—a small room on the first floor of the State Department, with walls covered with maps and charts marked by grease pencil—there was a sense of helplessness.

"Events are just changing so fast," a senior officer com-

mented. "We have no idea how many can get to where we can evacuate them."

Upstairs, in a tiny room metal desks and chairs and 10 telephones, an exhausted crew of men and women took calls from the public over a special toll-free number: 800-424-1180.

Between 10 A.M. and 1 P.M. today, more than 600 such calls were answered. The callers were encouraged to contribute money to voluntary relief agencies, and were told that donations of food and supplies were not advisable.

The Administration's policy on refugees came under criticism today from members of Congress.

Senator Edward M. Kennedy, Democrat of Massachusetts, accused the Administration of being "completely unimaginative in desponding to the humanitarian needs of the Vietnamese people." He made the charge on NBC-TV's "Today" show.

Yesteday Senator Kennedy, who is chairman of the Senate Subcommittee on Refugees and Escapees, urged Mr. Ford to appoint a "special envoy" to assist in relief efforts and work for a cease fire in Indochina.

Senator Jesse A. Helms, Republican of North Carolina, complained that too little was being done to evacuate refugees and suggested, in a telegram to the President, that Mr. Ford order the Seventh Fleet to help in the evacuation.

Mr. Helms also proposed that emergency medical teams be sent in from Hawaii.

Meanwhile, the American Red Cross announced here that it had contributed \$100,000 to the League of the Red Cross Societies in Geneva for Red Cross refugee relief operations in Southeast Asia.

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