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**Many non-orphans
reported airlifted**

By Robert Hollis

Hundreds of Vietnamese children have been airlifted to the United States as orphans by their wealthy families and government officials, Vietnamese translators said here yesterday.

Space designated for parentless children has been taken by the sons and daughters of Saigon officials on virtually every babylift aircraft reaching the Bay Area. Many of the children freely admit they have relatives living in the besieged South Vietnamese capital.

Last night, Maria Eitz, an official of Friends for All Children, one of the groups organizing the big orphan exodus, conceded that the reports were "apparently correct."

Jane Barton, a translator from the American Friends Services Committee in The City, said that on Wednesday she spoke to four children who are

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related to a Vietnamese colonel.

Three were his children and the fourth was a niece, she said.

"There are unquestionably children in the airlift who are true orphans, but I talked to a number of children who said they are not orphans.

"One 8-year-old boy said he was separated from his mother in a refugee column and was sent to an orphanage temporarily and, a day later, flown to the U.S.," Miss Barton said.

Tran Tuong Nhu, of the International Children's Fund in Berkeley, said she and several other Vietnamese students from the University of California talked with hundreds of children airlifted last week.

"We picked 10 children at random at the Presidio on Wednesday," she said. "Not one of them said they were orphans."

Muoi McConnell, a Vietnamese nurse's aide from San Leandro, was one of the group of volunteer translators.

"There are some children here who were in Saigon orphanages for only a couple of days before they were flown here," she said.

Many of the children are miserable, she said, lifted to a strange country and wrenched from what family they had in Indochina.

Doan Thi Phuy Linh, a 4-year-old girl with a parasitic disease that affects her legs, told Mrs. McConnell she was sent to an orphanage by her mother and grandparents.

"She cried all the time and wouldn't eat," said the translator. "Finally we got her to eat a little rice. But she is very unhappy."

The child wore a plastic

Army bracelet inscribed with a number, "EE-12," and the name Robert Blair. The Blairs apparently were the adoptive family.

But Mrs. McConnell said officials at the Presidio would not tell her anything about the child.

Similarly, reporters and photographers have been largely barred from the three Presidio buildings where the children are. Small groups of photographers and reporters have trolled tours of the reception centers.

But no "unauthorized" interviews have been allowed.

Miss Muoi said she talked to one 5-year-old girl, Le Thi Bach Nuyen, who is the daughter of the director of the Friends For All Children orphanage in Saigon.

Friends For All Children is one of the groups sponsoring the airlift from Indochina.

A U.S. government official denied any "official knowledge" of non-orphans being airlifted in place of real orphans. But he did disclose that 60 to 70 Vietnamese are being detained at Clark Air Base, near Manila, in the Philippines, as "unauthorized aliens."

He said all children arriving here "are definitely supposed to be orphans."

Mrs. Eitz, however, said it now appeared that some of the supposed orphans were actually the children of Vietnamese officials or wealthy families fearful of the consequences of a Communist victory.

"Until two or three days ago, the very idea didn't even occur to me," she said last night. "But I am no longer able to deny it altogether."

Mrs. Eitz once helped organize the adoption of children from Communist East Europe. She's a close friend

of the Friends For All Children's founder, Rosemary Taylor, and has four adopted Vietnamese children herself.

She said she has seen several children at the Presidio who arrived with documents containing the names and addresses of local Vietnamese as well as the names and addresses of their parents.

She said the children of government officials may have been sent here as part of a bribe.

"There may have been cases where (a Vietnamese official) said if you take these four children, then you can take these 60 orphans," she said.

In other cases, orphans "may have been replaced (on U.S.-bound planes) by children from families that had money."

But regardless of whose children are being flown to the United States, she said, "it's not the children's fault for all the mistakes."
