

FLOW OF REFUGEES SNAGGED ON COAST

Security Checks and Hunt for Sponsors Are Factors

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CAMP PENDLETON, Calif.,

May 13—The original optimistic timetable for moving refugees from Southeast Asia through this processing center was being revised today.

Relief agencies, public and private, are expressing doubt that security clearances and a designation of sponsors for the refugees can be accomplished

with the speed first forecast. Confusion over policy was prevalent as the number of refugees approved to leave the camp dropped radically in the last few days.

Contributing Factors

Contributing to the decline have been the following factors: ¶Security checks of the refugees by four investigative agencies, initially scheduled to take from seven to 10 days, have bogged down.

¶The location of sponsors willing to take responsibility for Vietnamese and Cambodian families has proceeded haphazardly.

¶Coordination of policy in several areas of refugee processing has fallen apart between agency representatives here and their home offices.

¶Similarly, coordination be-

tween the different agencies working with the refugees has broken down at several key points.

Moreover, a top official of one of the major relief agencies said that he doubted that all the Vietnamese headed for this country could be cleared through the processing centers in the three-month period forecast for the operation.

"Unless there's a real surge of concern by the American public for these people, we'll still be here this time next year," declared Joseph Battaglia, head of the United States Catholic Conference operation at Camp Pendleton.

Pessimistic on Future

"Some of the initial response has been good," he said, "but what happens when the news

media interest in the story dies down and the bulk of the refugees arrive?

"I think that in six months there will be priests pleading with their parishes to remind them that refugees are languishing in the camps."

Meanwhile the camp director of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare said that the processing effort could be facilitated by greater coordination between the eight volunteer agencies contracted by the State Department to assist in the resettlement of the displaced persons.

"It is our view that the system is not working as it should and can work," said Dan Sprague of H.E.W. "The policies controlling this situation need immediate clarification. From what I've seen the State

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Department does not have much leverage over the volunteer agencies. We need a basis for a coordinated performance."

He said that H.E.W. had had to stop sending lists of proposed sponsors to the volunteer agencies for verification because backlogs had already piled up. There are nearly 5,000 refugees in camp who have identified sponsors on their processing forms, he explained, but only a fraction of these sponsors have been checked by the volunteer agencies in telephone calls around the country.

Lack of Phones

Mr. Battaglia of the Catholic Conference said that his team of 40 workers has been fully assembled for only a few days. Until last week, he said,

only one telephone was available to his staff, and telephone checks had to be made out of hotel rooms. He now has four telephones, and hopes to bring the total to eight by the end of the week.

Further, many of the sponsors the incoming refugees identified on the forms were the names of the only Americans they knew in this country. A majority of the individuals who were reached agreed to enter the sponsorship relationship, but many balked, he added.

The Immigration and Naturalization Service has finished processing the documents of more than 25,000 refugees who entered this camp over the last two weeks, and has reduced its staff from 80 to 25 for lack of work.