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Veteran Is 'Just Hoping' New Son Wasn't Aboard

By LEE DEMBART

A Vietnam veteran and his wife, who have been renovating their upstate home to make room for a Vietnamese orphan, waited apprehensively by their telephone yesterday for word on whether their child was aboard the plane that crashed near Saigon.

"We're just hoping," the veteran, David Shakow, a 32-year-old father of two, said by telephone from Mechanicville, N.Y., north of Albany. His voice breaking, Mr. Shakow added: "We have no way of knowing. We can't piece it together. We're hoping he wasn't on the plane."

"We wanted to do this right along for many years," Mr. Shakow went on. "I was in Vietnam in the sixties, and that convinced us to go with a Vietnamese child."

"We started back in December, '73. It's time-consuming. Six to seven months that the agency studies the home. Then immigration. The paperwork is unreal. To get it all down to one day at the end, I can't believe it."

Last month, the Shakows received a photograph of 13-month-old Minh Khiet Luu, who was in a Saigon orphanage.

"He looked to be a healthy little boy," Mr. Shakow said. "I've got a little boy of 3, and we've got all the clothes ready. We didn't have to buy anything special."

"We've been renovating the house to get the extra bedrooms. We may be crowded for a while, but it's O.K. If things break on the happy side, we won't give a damn."

Mr. Shakow, who works for an insurance company, said he had heard about the crash on the radio yesterday morning and had tried to call the adoption agency, Friends of All Children, in Boulder, Colo.

At first there was no answer, then the agency said it did not have a passenger manifest. Mr. Shakow took the day off from work to stay by the phone with his wife, Nancy.

"We were hoping that we could get him here sooner, and then things started to fall apart there," Mr. Shakow said. "We sent the air fare, and a few days before it was broadcast that a chartered 747 would take the children out. Why they switched over to military we don't know."

The doomed craft, which crashed shortly after take-off from Saigon, was a United States Air Force transport plane taking children from a Saigon orphanage. If he was, ours could sit up, so he probably wasn't in the cargo. From what we've heard, the kids who were strapped down in the upper part were the only ones who made it."

The Shakows did not tell their son or 4-year-old daughter about the crash, but "they know there's something wrong," Mr. Shakow said. "We're not like our usual selves."

"We head one rumor that we should hear something tomorrow," he said, his voice choking up again. "If you hear anything please let us know."