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Fords in S.F. to welcome Viet orphans

By Robert Hollis and
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Despite 14 cases of chicken pox among the young refugees, President and Mrs. Ford flew into San Francisco Airport last night to welcome 319 Vietnamese orphans to America.*

Air Force One, carrying the presidential party and newsmen, landed shortly after 9 p.m. Minutes later, a Pan American 747 with the Vietnamese orphans touched down after a day-long flight from Saigon.

The Fords planned to spend 30 minutes greeting the 319 refugees — 14 whom have chicken pox — before returning to their Palm Springs vacation retreat.

The planeload of refugees was the first large group of parentless Vietnamese children to reach the United States under the evacuation program announced last week.

Twenty-five buses stood near the Pan American maintenance area to take the tired children and their escorts to temporary quarters at the Presidio.

Orphans suffering from chicken pox and other disorders were to go to six San Francisco hospitals.

The White House explanation for the Ford visit was:

"The President and Mrs. Ford . . . are deeply touched by the plight of the South Vietnamese people and especially by the thousands of innocent orphans."

Aboard the chartered jet were 319 Vietnamese children — many of mixed parentage — and 13 adult escorts. Two of the children were survivors of Friday's crash of a C-5a Air Force jet near Saigon's Tan Son Nhut airport.

Also meeting the giant aircraft were platoons of Army, Red Cross and private volunteers who initiated an orphan housing program in a converted truck maintenance shop at the Presidio.

"The place is stacked with supplies," said Glenda Ganny, a spokeswoman for the Red Cross. About 100 mattresses covered the concrete floor of "orphan central" for the tired flood of young refugees.

Stacks of baby bottles, soybean-based baby formula, fresh fruit, gelatin and rice also awaited the orphans, she said.

Earlier in the evening, seven happy families were united with their newly-adopted sons and daughters at the airport when a delayed Pan Am 747 arrived here from Saigon.

Eighteen Vietnamese orphans were on board the mechanically troubled plane, and 11 were taken to temporary facilities at the Presidio. They will be moved to their new homes in the next few days, said an Army spokesman.

"Isn't she beautiful?" cried one delighted mother from Jackson, Miss., as she was handed her new daughter. "Isn't she beautiful? I can't believe it."

Another couple from Tuc-
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* includes 185 whose adoptions had not been finally processed - NYT 7 Apr 75, Paul L. Montgomery



DOWN THE STAIRS CAME A BABY... THEN ANOTHER... THEN ANOTHER
Long-delayed flight brought 18 orphans to happy families

—Examiner photo by Bob McLeod

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son who met their child at the Pan Am concourse said the whole adoption procedure cost them \$2,000.

Virtually all the orphans on both planes have already been adopted by American parents, said a spokesman for Friends For All Children, the private volunteer group sponsoring the children.

Meanwhile, a number of prominent San Francisco businessmen have formed a non-profit corporation called Orphans Airlift which will accept donations from around the country to help pay the cost of flying more parentless Vietnamese children to the United States.

San Francisco real estate magnate Walter Shorenstein was named chairman of the group.

The number of Vietnamese orphans reaching California is expected to exceed 900 by tonight with the planned arrival of three more planeloads of refugees at Travis Air Force Base, near Fairfield, this afternoon and evening.

Two Air Force C-141 Starlifters and an Overseas National Airways DC-10, with perhaps 500 orphans, were scheduled to arrive at Travis today.

Another chartered Pan Am jet was scheduled to touch down at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport at midnight last night carrying 409 orphans and 73 nurses, doctors and escorts.

A Pan American official said he believed the passenger load — including many tiny infants — was a record for a 747 jumbo jet.

The orphans aboard the Seattle-bound aircraft were adopted by families in Washington and Oregon through Holt International Children's Services, of Eugene, Ore.

The plane was crammed with bassinets, diapers, bottles and food including hot dogs. Many of the escorts carried infants in their arms for most of the flight.

At the Presidio, Army officials said they were ready to handle up to 700 children.

On hand are 7,886 bottles of formula, at least 10,000 disposable diapers, 2,440 cotton tipped swabs and 750 cotton balls, 1,440 aspirin tablets, gallons of baby powder, ointment by the bushel,

toothpaste and towels.

In Saigon, as the massive "Operation Babylift" went into high gear early Saturday, the scene was far from happy.

Vietnamese foster families — many of whom had to give up their youngsters to American families — wept openly as the toddlers were loaded aboard the American jets waiting at Ton Son Nhut

airport.

The mass loading of infants contrasted grimly with the C-5a crash scene less than five miles from the field. Workers sifting the wreckage of the huge cargo plane discovered three more bodies yesterday bringing the death toll to 200.

The C-5 alaxy had carried at least 319 persons, including 243 children.