

Many Children Found Ill On Arrival From Vietnam

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SAN FRANCISCO, April 6—As stepped-up emergency airlifts continued to fly hundreds of South Vietnamese children to the United States, dozens of those arriving were rushed to hospitals by doctors who met the flights.

"It was the most incredible scene of deprivation and illness I've ever seen," Dr. Alex Stalcup said today as he described conditions aboard the chartered Pan American World Airways 747 that arrived here last night with 313 of the youngsters, most of whom were infants.

Dr. Stalcup, who was with a team of doctors that boarded the plane as soon as it landed, said the group had found severe cases of dehydration, pneumonia, diarrhea, chicken pox and other viral diseases.

Forty-seven of the children were sent immediately to area hospitals. A number were "unquestionably near death" when they landed," the doctor said in answer to a question, but he added that they were improving with treatment.

In Seattle, 16 of 408 children who arrived there early this

morning were reported hospitalized with similar ailments.

Dr. Stalcup described the scene in San Francisco: "There were bassinets as far as the eye could see. They had them on the floor, on the seats. The staff of about 15 or so were so exhausted that many of the women could barely stand."

The 100 survivors of Friday's C-5A crash, which killed about 200 adults and children, were on last night's flight and, according to Dr. Stalcup, many of them were suffering from head and other injuries.

By the end of the 16-hour leg of the flight from Japan; the doctor said, the staff members on the aircraft were running out of liquids with which to treat the dehydration cases. Dr. Stalcup, the chief pediatric resident at the University of California Medical Center here, is heading emergency service for the children at a makeshift reception center at the Presidio, an Army base.

"Several who survived the

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crash had injuries that became infected en route," he added. "Several who had head injuries and were thought well enough to make the trip became seriously ill en route."

Moreover, of the nearly 300 who are being bedded down on mattresses in a gymnasium-like building on the base until arrangements can be made for them to join their adoptive parents, many are still ill enough to require the constant services of volunteer doctors and nurses.

"By American standards about half of them should be in the hospital right now," Dr. Stalcup said at a news conference called by exhausted volunteer physicians to plead for

more help from area doctors and nurses. "By Vietnamese standards, these were the cream of the crop, the healthiest they could find to put on the plane."

The serious illness of many of the children forced President Ford, who had interrupted a vacation at Palm Springs to fly here last night with his wife to greet them, to wait for an hour on a bus on an airstrip at San Francisco International Airport while doctors decided which cases needed immediate hospitalization.

Pledge by President

After the ambulances had departed, the President strode bareheaded and without a raincoat through a chilling rain to the huge blue, silver and white jet, which was carrying the first large contingent of South Vietnamese youngsters to land in this country since he said on Thursday that efforts would be made to evacuate 2,000 of them at once.

The President made two trips onto the plane to carry down infants swaddled in white blankets and turn them over to volunteers on a waiting bus.

"I thought he had tears in his eyes," said Dr. Fred Stark, who reported that he had handed the children to the President.

"Initially, I was worried that people would try to turn this into a political event," Dr. Stalcup said, "but I was impressed that he and his staff were extremely helpful. Once, he asked me, 'Alex, am I in the way?' There's no question it was moving to him."

Dr. George Carnie, chairman of the board of directors of Friends for All Children, a non-profit organization in Boulder, Colo., that sponsored last night's flight, said Mr. Ford had talked with him for about 50 minutes on the waiting bus and was "very, very concerned about getting more children out of Vietnam."

He said the President had also promised him that the Agency for International Development would "pick up the tab" for the emergency operations at the Presidio.

Dr. Carnie said that last night's flight emptied his organization's four houses in Saigon, but added that "we have re-

ports now of mothers with children coming in."

"So we are planning to go back and rescue more kids," he said. "We have plans now to get out at least a thousand more children and maybe more. We have to operate quickly. There is a feeling among people I've talked with that we may only have two more weeks to get this job done."

Meanwhile, other flights, some charter, were reported heading for this area and for other parts of the country. However, the situation seems to be changing so rapidly that officials here said they were unable to say just how many more children were on the way.

Dr. Carnie said his organization hoped to have all the children now at the Presidio placed with their new parents by Wednesday, making way for more to be housed here temporarily.

He said he was not as alarmed as the attending doctors about the condition of the arriving children.

"I think it's all a matter of relativity," he said. "They would think conditions in Saigon were a disaster. I don't want to minimize the problem, but we live with death in Saigon. We take a child who is malnourished and try to nurse him back to health."

In the meantime, Harmon House, the old Spanish-style building where the youngsters are being housed, was alive with activity. Hundreds of volunteers, young and old, men and women, were working four-hour shifts, dandling babies, feeding them, changing them.

The infants, most of them too young to crawl, were laid out two to a mattress with row after row of mattresses all but covering a floor about the size of a basketball court. Some were crying, some were sleeping, some just stared uncomprehendingly at the confusion around them.

Asked to assess the airlift, its effectiveness and the charges made by some groups that it was immoral to take the children from Vietnam, a young, bearded volunteer said quietly:

"They're here. They're children — with those beautiful, beautiful eyes. That's enough. It's up to Ford and those other people to figure the rest out."