



UPI Telephoto

SENATOR KENNEDY
"Crisis of people"

APR 9 1975

'Only 4000' Orphans Are Yet to Come

Washington SFChronicle

The number of South Vietnam orphans to be brought to the United States for adoption probably will not exceed another 3000 to 4000 according to Agency for International Development administrator Daniel Parker, who coordinated the airlift program.

Parker testified yesterday before the House immigration subcommittee where he was criticized for airlifting more than 1300 Vietnamese orphans to this country without consulting Congress. He also testified before the Senate refugees subcommittee whose chairman, Senator Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.) criticized the government for doing too little in the face of "the growing crisis of people in Indochina."

Parker told House members, who said they had been deluged with phone calls asking how to adopt an orphan, that private volunteer agencies who operate the adoption programs gave him the 3000 to 4000 figure as an "informal estimate."

The government's only role in the orphan evacuation program was to provide air transportation last week when the collapse of much of South Vietnam crowded Saigon orphanages to the point that private agencies felt some children being processed by them for adoption should be taken out immediately.

Parker assured both subcommittees that every effort is made to reunite Vietnamese children with relatives or in foster homes in their native land. They are sent to the United States or other countries for adoption only as a "last resort," he said.

Representative Joshua Eilberg (Dem-Pa.), subcommittee chairman, said he understood there are 800,000 or more orphans in South Vietnam. Parker replied that the only figures he has seen were of 17,000 to 20,000 children in orphanages. Some of them have parents who cannot care for them, he said.

Parker replied "absolutely not" to a question about a report that the orphan airlift was intended to drum up public support in this country for more military aid to South Vietnam.

Representative Elizabeth Holtzman (Dem-N.Y.) asked what assurances Parker and that the children sent here for adoption do not have relatives in Vietnam who would like to adopt them. Parker said officials relied on the private volunteer agencies who have outstanding records of concern for the children's interests.

Washington Post