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# Doctors Warn Babylift Poses

By Robert Joffe

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—The doctors in charge of processing South Vietnamese children who have been airlifted here say that if hundreds more children are brought to this country, radical changes must be made to avert "a medical disaster."

More than 1,000 of the 1,700 orphans and other children recently flown to the United States have been

brought through the Bay Area. Nearly 300 more orphans were airlifted out of Saigon today.

Dr. Mark Oscherwitz, general director of the medical processing center at the Army's Presidio base, and Dr. Alex Stalcup, chief pediatrician at the center, said in an interview that it is a "miracle" that the children survived in view of the dangers of spreading infection.

They recommend that a medical screening process be set up before children

board the flight and at various steps along the way so that those most in need of emergency treatment can get it early.

The doctors also said the number of children aboard each flight should be drastically reduced—perhaps to as few as 20 or 30—to prevent the spread of infection among themselves and to adult staff.

Stalcup said, "On the flight boarded by President Ford last Saturday, there were 302 kids. There was di-

arrheal stool everywhere and the stench was overwhelming. Supplies of formula and intravenous solution had run out, and babies with stretched skin and sunken eyes looked up at you helplessly—they were dehydrated and many were near death." He said subsequent flights have been "only a little better."

Facilities for medical processing on arrival also should be decentralized, the doctors said. As many as 200 children have been bedded

## Danger of 'Medical Disaster'

down in a warehouse-like facility at the Presidio.

Dr. Oscherwitz said that "the larger the group of children you put together, the greater the danger infection will spread." He noted that several hundred adult volunteers already have contracted a mild form of diarrhea from the children.

The doctors said children should be moved much more rapidly to hospital beds when they need them and to homes when they are well.

Bay Area hospitals are already strained under the load of 143 Vietnamese children who have suddenly been placed in their available pediatric beds, yet some children who are well have not been moved out because of "incompetence and disorganization among the agencies in charge of them," Stalcup said.

Contrary to public statements by the agencies, he said, "adoptive parents have not yet been assigned to many of these kids."

The doctors said they are concerned that the White House and State Department may not yet be fully aware of the impact that a sudden influx of sick children can have on a community.

Despite a well-organized volunteer response to the medical needs of arriving children, they said, the medical community here was in many ways ill equipped to handle what has amounted to a large-scale pediatric emergency.

Stalcup said ambulances were not equipped with splints, intravenous fluids, and drugs needed by small children. "And hospitals set up to deal with a large number of adult cases have made no such plans for children."

"One problem," he said, "is that there is not yet a single, effective organization coordinating the activities of the numerous agencies and personnel involved in this operation."