

# U.S. Is Seeking to Admit 980 Cambodians

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WASHINGTON, April 16—

The Ford Administration is expected to announce tomorrow that 980 Cambodian political refugees will be admitted to the United States as temporary residents under a dispensation by the Justice Department, high State Department officials said.

The Cambodians, almost all staying at U Taphao air base in Thailand, will be the first large group of political refugees from the Indochina war to receive this dispensation, the officials said.

Authority for waving immigration regulations in an emergency lies with the Attorney General.

Evacuation of Cambodian and South Vietnamese political refugees and their admission to the United States have been the objectives of an interagency group since the beginning of the month. The 20 or so officials involved have been operating in considerable secrecy at the State Department under the direction of Philip C. Habib, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs.

## The Danger of Talk

"When you are in the process of trying to save lives, talking about the process may endanger those very lives," said Elinor Green of the Office of Refugee and Migration Affairs in explaining the secrecy. "Those are the constraints," she added.

Another official, who said that announcement of United States acceptance of Indochinese political refugees represented "a political act," explained that "it signals others what our expectations about the war are." For that reason, he said, there will be no information on plans for the evacuation of many thousands of South Vietnamese until the Administration determines that Saigon is doomed.

The group headed by Mr. Habib has already developed elaborate contingency plans for the evacuation of as many as 170,000 South Vietnamese, according to an official source, who said the contingency planning began with the fall of Da Nang on March 30.

The State Department requested waiver authority yes-

terday from the Attorney General, Edward H. Levi, for the Cambodians and for Vietnamese related to American citizens. He has already lifted restrictions to admit 2,000 Vietnamese children and 3,000 Vietnamese wives of American citizens.

The waiver authority is vested under a 1965 law used to admit 675,000 Cubans. Since World War II the United States has admitted 1.7 million refugees, most seeking asylum for political reasons.

The law permits the refugees to reside temporarily, although most eventually become citizens.

Justice Department and State Department officials have been consulting Congressional committees since Monday in an effort to get approval for the admission of the refugees al-

though this is not required by the law.

Administration officials concerned with refugee problems said they expected other Western countries to make provisions to take Cambodians and South Vietnamese. France appears to be a likely refuge because of her long association with Indochina.

An American official said no effort was being made now to coordinate refugee resettlement with other countries or with international organizations because that too would be "a political signal."

Most of the Cambodians affected were flown last week to U Taphao, where the United States Air Force maintains a base. Among them were officials and their families evacuated by United States Marine helicopters last Friday.