

# \* 250 Saigon Refugees, Illegally in Philippines, Are at U.S. Base

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CLARK AIR BASE, the Philippines, April 17—More than 250 South Vietnamese refugees, most with no passports or visas and with no place to go, have in the last two weeks arrived illegally from Saigon aboard United States Air Force planes.

The refugees are being held incommunicado under State Department orders until, according to one Embassy official, "we can figure out what to do with them."

Meanwhile, the refugees—men, women and children, many employees of Americans in Vietnam or otherwise connected with them—wait here in enforced isolation.

Nonuniformed security guards at Clark Air Base have been assigned to make certain that the refugees do not leave the barracks to which they have been assigned. The refugees have been denied any contact with the outside world, including access to newsmen.

Embassy officials declined to discuss the situation at all today, but the decision, it was understood, to "detain and pro-

cess" the refugees was made by Ambassador William H. Sullivan in consultation with State Department officials. The Ambassador refused today to discuss the reasons for his action.

## Concerns of Officials

However, it was learned that there are several major concerns that American officials have been expressing about these refugees.

The principal fear is that these refugees may set a precedent, and there may be a flood of future refugees while resettlement problems are still unresolved and formal United States policy has not been set on the matter.

Further, no other nation—including the Philippines, which is apparently worried about a potential flood of 200,000 South Vietnamese pouring through Clark Air Base here—have agreed to take any of these South Vietnamese.

"Everyone here also has watched what happened at Da Nang," said one senior Embassy official, referring to the situation when thousands of South Vietnamese charged

across the field, nearly overwhelming evacuation planes.

"If they think that they can come through here freely, we may have the same thing at Tan Son Nhut," the official continued, "and it just might jeopardize the departure of Americans from there."

There is no indication, however, according to people who have talked with refugees repeatedly over the last two weeks here, that anything like the Da Nang situation was involved in their departure.

Some of these refugees are understood to have been members of families working for Americans in Saigon, other are wives and children of Americans working there who had neglected ever to formalize the relationship or obtain necessary travel documents, not realizing that the situation was critical until it was too late to obtain documents.

The exact means by which they managed to get on board the C-141 transports that each day shuttle between Saigon and Clark—bringing Americans and legal Vietnamese emigrants, including children—is still not known.

But since their arrival at Clark, apart from the enforced isolation, they have been well-treated while the State Department processes forms and decides where they may be sent. Their return to Saigon has not been ruled out but one official said that likelihood is "becoming slimmer by the day."

These refugees have been eating regular mess-hall meals, been provided with television and radio sets and movies and athletic equipment, and have been given complete physical examinations as preparation for possible immigration to the United States.

The air base itself, the largest American overseas Air Force installation, reportedly remains prepared to accept and process a far larger number of refugees should that become necessary. Air Force officials said today that as many as 5,000 could be handled at any given time at the base and that it was prepared to begin accepting them immediately.

## The Flow of Americans

Barracks, two huge gymnasiums and other facilities here have been cleared of their traditional equipment and rows upon rows of mattresses and cots have been moved in. Much of this preparation was initially for the air lift of South Vietnamese children but that has virtually stopped.

The base, however, is maintaining these facilities in the event that a major evacuation from South Vietnam is ordered. Meanwhile, Americans continue to trickle through Clark

in a steady stream. Each day three or four flights land with anywhere from 20 to 70 Americans on board.

While the latest figures here indicate that the American population in South Vietnam may still be 4,000 or more, over the last two weeks 900 have arrived here on the evacuation flights, and others would have left on scheduled commercial flights.

However, with the pace of the last several days through Clark continuing, by the end of next week the American population in Saigon could be reduced to 1,000 persons.

At that level, one large day's airlift of C-5a transports could remove all remaining Americans to Clark. Air Force officials here, however, have as yet received no indications that such an operation, like Operation Eagle Pull, which emptied Phnom Penh of Americans in several hours, was being contemplated for Saigon.

## Guam Plans Refugee Haven

AGANA, Guam, April 17 (AP)—The Government of this Pacific territory plans to offer permanent residence to possible refugees from South Vietnam if that country falls to the Communists.

Gov. Ricardo J. Bordallo endorsed today a resolution by his Council of Economic Advisors designed to make Guam a home for as many as 25,000 South Vietnamese refugees and a processing point for others who would eventually settle there.

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