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300 More Viet Orphans Cleared for U.S. Flights

By Bill Richards

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The U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service granted approval yesterday for 300 more Vietnamese children to be flown to the U.S. for adoption under the controversial "Operation Babylift" program.

Vern Jervis, a spokesman for the Immigration Service, said that questions over whether children already brought in under the program are eligible for adoption will have to be answered by courts in the states where the children have been placed in foster homes.

Jervis said the 300 Vietnamese children authorized for admission to the U.S. yesterday had been "in the pipeline" when Immigration temporarily halted the children's flights earlier this week so that the federal

agency could determine whether there had been "irregularities" in the emergency adoption system.

The Vietnamese children, Jervis said, were all believed to have been screened and to be legally adoptable by U.S. parents. Their admittance will bring the total number of Vietnamese and Cambodian children admitted under the emergency program to nearly 2,000, the ceiling set by the U.S. Attorney General earlier this month.

Asked whether the ceiling will be raised still higher, Jervis said, "It could be. It would not be out of the question." But he said there has been no specific request yet that it be raised.

The Babylift program has become a source of controversy. See CHILDREN, A13, Col. 1



Associated Press

Refugee children arrive at Vietnamese island refuge.

CHILDREN, From A1

very, especially after 28 Cambodian children arrived at Dulles Airport Monday without necessary releases for adoption. Several children told interpreters they still had parents living in Cambodia but had been told they could study in the U.S. if they boarded a plane out of Phnom Penh April 9.

According to Immigration Service officials there were apparently no officials in charge of the children when they left Phnom Penh on a plane that was chartered by the U.S. Agency for International Development.

A team of investigators and interpreters from AID, Immigration and the State Department began a series of interviews with all 23 children yesterday to try to learn whether they did have parents and just how they got on the flight. The children are scattered in foster homes throughout the Washington metropolitan area, according to officials of adoption agencies which handled the placements.

Charles B. Olds, executive director of the Pierce-Warwick Adoption Agency in Washington, which placed most of the Cambodian children, said yesterday that three or four of the youngsters under five years old had been put in homes as "permanents."

"They are being placed where permanence is a possibility," said Olds. Most of the others, he said, were being put into homes on a temporary basis but with parents who had asked to adopt Vietnamese or Cambodian children in the past.

"We think it shouldn't be

long before their status is cleared up," Olds said. "We're waiting for a decision by Immigration."

Leonard F. Chapman Jr., commissioner of the Immigration Service, said Thursday that there is "no evidence that these (the Cambodian) children are adoptable."

Yesterday Jervis said that an order and gone out April 4 to all the Immigration Service offices around the country that none of the children admitted under "Operation Babylift" would be sent back to the Far East.

He said that in the event of court action over the adoptable status of the children, Immigration would not take the position that they are ineligible but would just present the findings of its investigation.

The placement of the Cambodian and Vietnamese children drew further criticism yesterday from three black social service agencies from Washington, Detroit and Chicago. The agencies charged at a press conference here yesterday that most of the children in the emergency program who were fathered by American blacks in Vietnam were being placed with white families here.

Spokesmen for the agencies estimated that at least 325 of the children in the Babylift program had black fathers, but few were being placed with black families. They said they had compiled a list of 40 black families eager to take the children, most of them near Detroit, said had little response when they presented the list to adoption agencies handling the children.