

FIRST OF REFUGEES ARRIVE ON COAST

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190 Vietnamese, Vanguard
of Thousands, Are Among
472 on Three Planes

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TRAVIS AIR FORCE BASE, Calif., April 22—The first wave of Vietnamese refugees, the vanguard of expected tens of thousands, has arrived here in the last 48 hours, with hundreds more aboard planes now coming from the Philippines.

The 190 Vietnamese were among 472 passengers on three planes that arrived late Sunday, yesterday and this morning, the Air Force said.

Some were accompanying American citizens who were also aboard the flights, some had full documentation for international travel, and some were alone, with other papers issued to them by the American Embassy in Saigon. The papers authorized the airplane to carry them to the United States without danger of being fined for introducing an illegal

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A South Vietnamese boy shouting for joy yesterday at Travis Air Force Base, in California, as he and members of his family arrived with other refugees.

Associated Press

immigrant into the country.

Virtually no records are available here of where they are going or why they were given seats on these flights, Air Force officials said.

When the planes landed, the passengers all quickly passed through immigration and customs, then left this air base, 50 miles northeast of San Francisco, for other destinations within the United States.

Immigration officials accepted the documentation carried by the refugees and let them pass into the country in parole status.

They are obligated to report to immigration officers when they reach their destination in this country, said Gordon Davidson, deputy district director of the Immigration and Naturalization Service.

The Air Force role in the matter was substantially the same as if it was the manager of a public airport. Two of the first three planes in the refugee airlift were commercial charters and the third was a military craft. All had come from Clark Field, Manila, by way of

Hickam Field in Honolulu.

When the planes landed, passengers—who had been in transit 6,900 miles for upward of 11 hours—dazedly disembarked, and were first sorted out at the gate to the small terminal. Those who were either members of the military or civilian employees of the Department of Defense were interviewed briefly and given room assignments on this base. Then they rejoined the other passengers.

Immigration and Customs

The passengers moved one by one past immigration officers and then through customs inspection. Those with Department of Defense connections then were taken in tow by the military.

The others—and this made up the greatest proportion of all three flights—“went out the front door of the terminal and they are on their own,” in the words of Lieut. Col. T. W. Sturgess, public information chief for the 60th Military Air Lift Wing, which operates from this air base.

“It operates in the same way a regular airport receives an overseas flight,” Colonel Sturgess said. “They come in, go through immigration and customs and out into a bus or taxi.”

Four Methods

It appeared to persons who watched the process that many of the Vietnamese were indeed on their own, for no one met them. Staff members on the base reported receiving many telephone calls inquiring about specific individuals.

Some Vietnamese were met by employees of companies for which they had worked in Vietnam. Some corporate representatives moved through the arrivals searching for Vietnamese employees whose entry they had

been told; had been arranged. Sometimes they found the Vietnamese, sometimes not.

The district office of the Immigration and Naturalization Service said in San Francisco that it had been notified from Washington that four methods had been used to enlarge immigration from Vietnam and Cambodia.

The largest expansion was in permitting close relatives of established residents to come into the United States, even though they had not met initial requirements by filing petitions for admission. Some 10,000 to 75,000 Vietnamese will be admitted under this relaxation.

Another 50,000 will be admitted in the “high risk” category—former employees of the United States Government in Vietnam, or officials of the Vietnam Government or “significant” political or intellectual leaders.

3,000 at Manila

Also, 1,000 former employees of the United States in Cambodia, who now are in Thailand, will be admitted, as will 3,000 Vietnamese who have filed for petitions for admission citing their “relationship to established residents of this country.”

Officers here said they had been told that upward of 3,000 refugees from Vietnam landed today at Clark Field at Manila. More than 1,000 have already departed for the United States, according to these sources.

Information here is that five planes have been scheduled from Manila to here in the next 36 hours. A DC-8 with 219 passengers is scheduled to arrive at 6:05 A.M. tomorrow; a 747 with 340 passengers at 6:25 A.M. tomorrow; a DC-8 with 219 passengers at 12:30 P.M. tomorrow; a 747 with 340 passengers at 1:05 P.M. Thursday,

and a 747 with 461 passengers at 2:55 A.M. Thursday.

Names of the passengers will not be known here until their craft arrive.

With the processing of these flights of refugee from the Vietnamese war, this air base has come full circle in the support of fighting in Indochina.

Troops Used Base

Early in the American build-up in Vietnam, arrangements worked out in planning rooms in the Pentagon for supplying a distant war by air were tried in the Indochina fighting and were amended. At times 105,000 men a month went through the little terminal, to be carried by military and civilian charters to the war and home again when finished with their roles in it.

The freight terminals handled as much as 32,000 tons of cargo a month. Some days 7,700 passengers went through the terminal. And many of the American 55,000 dead came back through here in aluminum coffins stacked in the cargo compartments of the big jets. From early 1965 through 1972 over 493,000 wounded men were carried through here.



Associated Press

South Vietnamese dependents of American citizens with their belongings at Clark Air Base, the Philippines. They were waiting for places in a tent colony following their evacuation from Saigon.