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Refugee Relief Groups Criticize U.S. Methods

By Lawrence Meyer
Washington Post Staff Writer

Four major voluntary refugee relief organizations criticized the administration's Inter-Agency Task Force yesterday for leaving them in the dark about planning for the arrival of Vietnamese refugees.

The task force performance was characterized by one witness during Senate testimony as showing "complete ineffectuality, inefficiency and complete disregard for the well-being of human beings."

Although the refugee organizations are ready to begin their work, said the Rev. John Schauer, director of immigration and refugee affairs for Church World Service, "we have no indication of where to go or what to do."

Schauer and representatives of three other refugee relief organizations sat impatiently through 90 minutes of testimony by administration officials who had been called to brief the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Refugees and Escapees, chaired by Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.), on progress in evacuating Americans and Vietnamese from South Vietnam.

Although the subcommittee had asked Ambassador L. Dean Brown, head of the task force, to appear, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Philip C. Habib was sent in his place. Habib told the subcommittee that the White House was invoking executive privilege in not allowing Brown to testify.

[Counsel to the President Philip W. Buchen said in a telephone interview, however, that executive privilege, which applies to types of information and not to

individuals, was not being invoked. Rather, Buchen said as a matter of "comity" or courtesy, presidential aides are not normally asked to appear before congressional committees.

[Buchen said he was contacted Thursday night and told that the subcommittee wanted Brown to appear. Buchen said he suggested that someone else who could supply the same information that Brown could give should be sent in order not

to break with what Buchen described as a well established precedent.

["If the subcommittee still wants Brown to testify, I would be willing to take it up," Buchen said, "but I don't think it was something I should decide last night."]

Habib told the subcommittee that as of 3 a.m. Washington time yesterday, 1,357 Americans were left in South Vietnam and 4,528 Americans had been evacuated since April 1, including 501 Thursday. Reporters were told Thursday that 1,100 Americans would be left in Vietnam by yesterday. Reporters were told yesterday that 177 of the Americans evacuated had been previously uncounted on State Department lists of Americans left in Vietnam.

At Kennedy's request, the subcommittee was given a further breakdown of the Americans left in Vietnam: 164 Department of Defense civilian employees, 162 military personnel, 300 Defense Department contractors, 534 "other" contractors and American citizens and 197 "other American citizens," future," but he resisted pres-businessmen, floaters, drifters and thrill-seekers."

Habib said the number of Americans will be reduced to 1,000 or below "hopefully in the near future, but he resisted pressure from Kennedy to say when the American embassy staff would be reduced to its barest minimum or how many persons that would be.

Frank G. Wisner, director of the State Department's Office of Plans and Management and a member of the task force, told the subcommittee that 17,000 Vietnamese had been evacuated since April 1, including 5,587 evacuated Thursday. Wisner said that about 5,000 Vietnamese would be moved out daily, but no estimate was given of how long the evacuation could continue.

Because conditions at Guam, where Vietnamese refugees now being taken, are becoming overcrowded, the United States will begin diverting refugees to Wake Island, Pentagon sources said yesterday.

Asked by Kennedy if a majority of the Vietnamese refugees would end up in

the United States, despite efforts to find other countries, Habib replied, "In all honesty, I have to say that is a correct statement. I wish it weren't so." Habib said there were no indications at the moment that more than the previously estimated 132,000 Vietnamese refugees would be admitted to the United States.

A Pentagon spokesman said that planning has begun to house refugees temporarily on military bases around the United States. One of the bases mentioned as a possibility is Fort Pickett, Va.

Habib, Wisner and the other administration officials did not stay to hear the complaints of the refugee organization representatives. "The settlement of refugees in the United States can only be done—and I emphasize the only—by the private sector," Wells Klein, executive director of the American Council of Nationalities Service, told Kennedy. But the organizations need governmental cooperation to do their job, he said.

When Klein, Schauer and others complained that they had tried unsuccessfully for a week to meet with Brown, Kennedy sent an aide to a telephone, recessed the hearing for five minutes and came back to say that Brown would see them this morning.

The other two refugee relief group witnesses were John McCarthy of the U.S. Catholic Conference and coordinator of Southeast Asia Refugee Assistance for the bishops and Church of the United States; and Donald Anderson, director of immigration and refugee affairs for the National Lutheran Council, New York.