Flights of Refugees Shifted From Guam

By Susan Guffey Special to The Washington Post

AGANA, Guam, April 26 —More than 20,000 evacuees from South Vietnam had reached safety here today, just as the military announced it would divert flights to Wake Island for one or two days until further accommodations can be prepared here.

The airborne tide of refugees is expected to swell this small Pacific island's population by 50,000 within the next week. Guam, the westernmost U.S. territory, normally has a population of 110,000.

Military barracks and hospitals vacant since the U.S. troop withdrawal from South Vietnam can house about a third of the refugees expected here. But Navy Seabees preparing a huge tent city on a naval installation here say they can erect only about 6,000 tents per day-not a fast enough pace to shelter the wave of refugees that has been arriving since Wednesday. Another tent city is planned at Andersen Air Force Base.

The last flight into Guam for the next one to two days landed at midmorning today.

Wake Island, with two

nearby islets, has a total area of 3 square miles. It is 1,500 miles northeast of here, almost half way to Hawaii.

The shift to Wake Island was necessitated by conditions like those at Camp Asan—a 30-year-old hospital —where overflowing plumbing, exposed wiring and hour-long waits outside the dining hall plagued the 5,000 refugees already there. Officials say the camp can eventually hold 10,000.

Delays in readying accommodations here have led local authorities to open a registration center where private citizens can volunteer space in their homes.

Forty U.S. immigration service workers arriving from the mainland are to help process the evacuees. Until final medical clearance is given, even those with necessary papers will not be allowed to leave the housing compounds.

Most are without any official U.S. status. All have received sponsorship from an American willing to assume financial responsibility.

Some of the signatures are reported to be false but

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"once you get here, they consider themselves safe," said an American husband accompanying his wife back to Virginia.

Corrugated metal buildings at Andersen, dubbed Tin City, were reported full with 4,300 refugees late Thursday. The World War II naval hospital san house 10,000 refugees, said a navy spokesman. 24 APZ

Military personnel were pulled from their normal jobs Wednesday to clean and repair the needed buildings and help with immigration processing. All military personnel began 12-hour shifts that day.

It was the largest military effort here since the last day of the Vietnam conflict, when huge B-52s filled the skies on their way to Hanoi.

Inside the airbase's tin houses, evacuees—many of them American men accompanying their wives and children home for the first time—rested and took stock of their future.

Many had fled with little more than a suitcase. As they walked down the plane ramps, their arms were filled with everything from flight bags heavy with gold bars to stuffed animals and golf clubs.

The early Vietnamese arrivals were generally fluent in English, and willing to talk with reporters if their names were not used. Many fear for the relatives and associates left in Saigon.

Leroy Eades of Chicago said he was caught in the evacuation with his 10-yearold stepson Phu. His wife and their own two children were in Chicago and did not know where he and the boy were, he said. He had been unable to make a phone call during the 24 hours at Andersen.

One 34-year-old woman said this was her family's third flight from the Vietcong in 25 years. Natives of the North Vietnamese coastal town of Vinh, the family fled to Hanoi in 1950 and were aboard the first flight from Hanoi to Saigon in 1954 as Communists took control of the north.

"In 1954, having escaped from them once, there was no reason to stay. It's that way again now."

She and her husband made a picnic of their ham sandwiches, rice and tea from Tin City's military chow hall and said they were grateful for the American welcome.

"But we always come back to thinking about the future," she added. "Right now, we don't know just what will happen."

Meanwhile, Guam's civilian community continued its mixed reaction to the airlift. The governor's office is pushing for legislative approval of special powers.

The Guam legislature, however, continued its questioning of State Department officials to find out if Guam would suffer under the influx of Vietnamese.

Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger told Gov. Ricardo Bordallo in a cable Wednesday to "plan initially for 90 days with the possibility of a longer period."

Legislative Speaker Joseph Ada said early this week that "we don't want this to be another Miami with the Cuban refugees staying for life."

David L. Schiele, deputy status liaison officer for the State Department, told local officials that he had been "assured that it is only temporarily and Guam is only a staging area in which to hold them pending further movement."

News dispatches added the following:

In Saigon, U.S. officials said that a record 31 refugee flights departed from Tansonnhut airport in the 24 hours ending at noon Saturday.

Officials at (Clark Air Force Base said 6,500 South Vietnamese refugees, war babies and Americans arrived at U.S. facilities in the Philippines Saturday. 26 APR

Five chartered jetliners flew 2,200 refugees from Clark's tent city to Guam and Wake Islands.

Operation Babylift resumed Friday after a 10-day suspension and a spokesman said 550 war babies were being cared for by volunteers at Clark.

Of the Saturday refugee arrivals, 2,000 landed at the U.S. Subic Bay Naval Station, 50 miles northwest of Manila.

Philippines President Ferdinand E. Marcos earlier ruled that no more than 200 Vietnamese would be allowed at Clark at one time. A U.S. request to ease the restriction was said to be under consideration. The total, between Clark and Subic Bay, was 7,000 by Saturday night, a U.S. military spokesman said.

At the airport in Saigon, U.S. Marines took up guard posts, and admittance checks were described as the most stringent since the airlift started 10 days ago.

Marines checked papers of all evacuees, whereas two days earlier some Vietnamese were allowed through with only flimsy evidence of U.S. connections.

The previous rule requiring an affidavit signed by an American citizen was tightened to require the sponsor to be traveling with the evacuees, Reuter reported.

Despite the difficulties, an American working at the Saigon compound said, "I **saw a party of rich-looking** Vietnamese drive in here in a Mercedes and they were on a plane within hours."

The Saigon government declared that too many doctors and trained people were leaving and that a fee, not specified, would be collected.