

Confusion Mars Arrival of American

Some Citizens Detained At Marine Corps Base

By JON NORDHEIMER

Special to The New York Times

CAMP PENDLETON, Calif., April 29—Hundreds of Americans and their Vietnamese dependents settled into temporary quarters in a remote corner of this 125,000-acre Marine Corps base today—hot, dusty, bone-tired and angry that the Government was preventing them from making the final leg of their long journey home.

The first plane load of American and Vietnamese refugees who had already undergone processing by the Federal authorities in Guam arrived in Southern California this morning, and by the time Marine buses ferried the 380 passengers to Camp Pendleton, some of the Americans were in a mutinous mood.

"This is a freak show," cried J. E. Massey, an American who kicked up a cloud of dust at the entrance to a Quonset hut after marines and Government officials were unable to tell him how long he would be detained.

A Land of Freedom?

"I'm an American citizen, I don't have any dependents, I've been through three and one-half days of processing in Guam, and now they tell me they're going to hold me here," Mr. Massey said. "And we told the Vietnamese they'd be accepted in a land of freedom to make their new home," he added.

Part of the confusion was apparently attributable to the designation of this camp as a refugee processing center to handle displaced Vietnamese, not American citizens and their officially sponsored retinues.

Confined to Planes

Processing teams from the State Department, the Immigration Service, the Social Security Administration and the Department of Health, Education and Welfare arrived here at about the same time as the plane from Guam, and it was several hours before the processing operation was ready to begin.

By midafternoon, however, it was announced that Americans and dependents possessing the proper paper work would not be detained against their will, and the agitation subsided.

Gale Froemming, an engineer from Milwaukee, said the Americans had been free to move around Honolulu when their DC-10 evacuation plane made an eight-hour stop there yesterday. But when the plane landed in California today at El Toro Marine Corps Air Station in Orange County, he said, sheriffs deputies would not allow the passengers to use the rest rooms at the base.

Dr. John R. Phelp, the Orange County health officer, had ordered a quarantine on everybody arriving here from Southeast Asia, and the police were at the air base to implement the order although all the passengers had already been screened by physicians in Guam, the authorities reported.

Dick Swanson, a former Life magazine photographer who went to Saigon last week to rescue his Vietnamese wife's family, said that a Marine Corps officer who greeted them at the base told them they might be detained for three months.

"That stoned me," said Mr. Swanson, who, like most of the other Americans aboard, was unshaven and rumpled after the five-day exodus from Saigon. "And when I refused to get off the bus until they explained what they were talking about, two military policemen threatened to drag me off," Mr. Swanson said.

Construction Halted

By JAMES T. WOOTEN

Special to The New York Times

EGLIN AIR FORCE BASE, Fla., April 29—The construction of temporary housing for Vietnamese refugees was halted here today after military authorities said they were not certain that any would arrive.

Bulldozers and heavy equipment had already cleared land for a tent city on this giant base when the Department of Defense ordered a delay of further work until a confirmation that displaced persons would be coming here.

The announcement came one day after Senator Lawton Chiles, and Representative Robert L. F.

Sikes, both Florida Democrats, had protested the State Department's decision designating Eglin as a site for an estimated 20,000 Vietnamese refugees. Maj. Lester S. Smith, an Air Force spokesman who briefed reporters today, said there was no relationship between their action and the cessation of work.

"We are simply uncertain, that's all," he said. In the military, you have to be cautious." Later, however, he said he felt that some refugees would eventually arrive at Eglin.

The base sprawls over 724 square miles in what is known as Florida's Panhandle, between Panama City and Pensacola. One of its facilities is a Federal detention center where E. Howard Hunt, one of the Watergate burglars, is a prisoner.

The area, represented by Mr. Sikes, is traditionally conservative and complaints were raised in several surrounding communities yesterday that the placement of the Vietnamese would create problems for local residents.

On a radio call-in program last night, for example, one woman said they can't speak English and they don't have a trade. It's O.K. with me if they send them right back where they came from."

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and Vietnamese

Refugees in California



United Press International

A group of Vietnamese refugees arriving at El Toro Marine Air Station in California on their way to Camp Pendleton for immigration processing.