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Refugee Resettlement May Take a Year

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CAMP PENDLETON, Calif.—At the rate it's going, the resettlement of Vietnamese refugees from military bases could take six months to a year, according to some officials involved with the program.

Camp Pendleton's "Little Saigon" tent city already is beyond its 18,000-inhabitant capacity. Ft. Chaffee in Arkansas and Eglin Air Force Base in Florida will be at capacity soon. With those

three camps filled, there will be roughly 100,000 refugees waiting to be transported from Guam and other Pacific bases to the United States.

The problem is compounded by two major bottlenecks: the requirement that each refugee over 17 years of age go through a time-consuming security check, and the more massive task of matching refugees with qualified American sponsors. Without both of these, no refugee who is not

a relative of a citizen or a resident alien may leave.

At Pendleton, nearly half the 18,700 refugees on base Saturday had still to go through initial processing. Of those who had completed that phase, none had yet received security clearance, and only 50 families had certified sponsorship, according to Donald Day, the Immigration and Naturalization Service official in charge.

The process here can be visualized as a long funnel, with the wide intake end re-

ceiving thousands of refugees, but the flow slowing to a trickle as it gets to the security check and sponsorship end.

One official, Jack Svahn of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, predicted that once the security checks begin returning—hopefully this week—officials could move out up to 3,000 refugees daily.

But the church-related agencies given responsibility

See REFUGEES, A14, Col. 4

REFUGEES, From A1

for finding sponsors for unattached refugees were less confident. The agencies include the U.S. Catholic Conference, the American Lutheran Conference, the Mormon Church, the World Church Service of the National Council of Churches and the International Rescue Committee.

Joseph Battaglia, director of the Catholic Conference operation, said Saturday, "I think we're here for a year—and that could be conservative. In any case, it's a minimum of six months."

He added: "The resettling offices are working like hell, but we're going to have to go a long way when you're talking about 150,000 people. All this is great theoretically, and right now there's a lot of enthusiasm and a lot of people volunteering to be sponsors. But what happens later when the novelty wears off and there isn't the big play in the press?"

Of the five agencies, the Catholic Conference is getting the bulk of the traffic since most of the Vietnamese are either Catholic or Buddhist and there is no Buddhist sponsoring agency here.

Battaglia described the sponsor search as a three-phased task: finding sponsors, identifying and verifying their legitimacy, and matching them with Vietnamese families.

The search for sponsors is simplified, Battaglia said, by

a nationwide network of diocese offices that has been operating since World War II relocating refugees.

Sponsor requests from these offices are given priority over the flood of individual would-be sponsors volunteering by phone or by letter.

"Using our resettlement offices we can avoid the task of confirming each sponsor," said Battaglia. "One diocese might ask for, say, 50 families. Well, we can put a package of 50 together and move them in bulk. In that case, we'd pick the hard-core cases, the families with young babies, extra-large families, a mother with several children and no father."

Asked if the unconnected refugees would have a choice about where they'd go, Battaglia said they are told they could request a specific location, but it would delay their departure. "When they hear that, most everyone says 'Anywhere...'"

At the sponsor-search compound—a collection of tents at the northern end of Camp Pendleton—hundreds of refugees awaited sponsorship interviews Saturday. They included many professionals, teachers, lawyers—most of whom were realistic about their prospects.

One who had been an appeals court judge in Saigon said, according to a volunteer: "I will wash dishes. I will clean a building. I will do anything an

American doesn't want to do."

Resettlement personnel, most of them working 18-to-20 hours a day, seemed overwhelmed by the volume. None of the agencies was fully geared up for the magnitude of the operation.

One problem was that the agencies located themselves at the far end of the refugee area, isolated from the rest of the camp. A move was scheduled for Monday to a more central location.

"It's been a frustrating two weeks," confided a key official, "processing requests for sponsorship, explaining it to the refugees, relieving their anxieties and then tying it all in with the immigration service."

INS official Day said the required security checks, processed by the FBI and the CIA, would isolate such undesirables as "criminals and subversives." Asked what happens to those who fail the security check, he answered, "I have a telegram on my desk. It says, 'Wait for further orders.'"

Kaunda Visits Frelimo

Agence France-Presse

DAR ES SALAAM, May 11
—President Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia arrived here today with a large delegation to visit the Mozambique Liberation Movement (Frelimo) military camp at Nachingwea, in Southern Tanzania.