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# U.S. Promises to Check on Orphans

A federal judge approved an agreement last night under which the Immigration and Naturalization Service pledged to conduct an exhaustive background check on each of the Vietnamese orphans brought into the United States.

The service had earlier agreed to send out letters to all adoptive agencies and all prospective adoptive parents warning them there was a possibility they might not be able to adopt the child assigned to them.

As part of the stipulation,

the service has also agreed to take photographs and either footprints or fingerprints of all the estimated 2000 Vietnamese orphans in this country.

Originally, an estimated 2700 orphans came into the United States from Vietnam.

but 700 have gone out to other nations.

The order was approved by U.S. District Judge Spencer Williams after several days of hearings in a class action suit brought on behalf of all the orphans.

Mort Cohen, a Golden Gate University Law School professor, argued on behalf of the orphans that many of them had, in effect, been kidnaped from their homeland. He said many of them were not legitimate orphans and had parents or relatives in Vietnam to whom they should be returned.

Cohen had asked the court to halt all adoptions until it was determined the children had no relatives of their own who wanted them.

Before revealing details of the stipulation, Williams told a special evening court session that he was satisfied from evidence that "some children came in on Operation Babylift who were not in the pipeline (Not in legitimate adoption channels).

The judge said the immigration service had agreed to conduct a records check on each child and "satisfy themselves as to who was a proper orphan."

Williams said the service would notify the agencies involved as well as the adoptive parents if the child assigned to them qualified for adoption.

If the service was not satisfied the child was a legitimate orphan, Williams said, the service would try to establish the child's true status.

He said the service would be encouraged to use international agencies to help establish a child's true standing.

Williams said when there was a questionable case the service was to communicate to the child's prospective adoptive parents that further checks were being made and that the family should not initiate adoption proceedings until all the facts were known.