

Refugees

Los Angeles .

Unconvinced that a nationwide dispersal of Southeast Asian refugees will take place as forecast, the state of California is encouraging its school districts to prepare for the eventual absorption of many thousands of Vietnamese and Cambodian school-age children.

Wilson Riles, state superintendent of public instruction, has also called for a federally financed program to teach English to the refugees detained at four processing camps around the nation.

Aides to the superintendent said that each refugee could be taught "survival English" to equip the individual either for the American school system or for economic self-sufficiency.

It is estimated that the in-camp program would cost \$400 per student, a savings compared to the expense of providing English instruction to the refugees once they have left the camps.

Moreover, the in-camp program could use thousands of Vietnamese already proficient in English, and identify a cadre of English-speaking Vietnamese who could move into teaching roles in California

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and other areas where refugees are expected.

David Gordon, an assistant to the superintendent, said that a survey of refugees at Camp Pendleton had led his office to conclude that three out of four refugees would eventually seek assistance from the nation's public schools, either in regular or adult education classrooms.

"It's been our department's consistent opinion that dispersal of the refugees will not be as widespread as hoped," said Gordon. "Even if many refugees are initially deployed in other states, it's our feeling that because of our climate and the fact that many Asians are already settled here, that the Vietnamese will drift back to California and form communities here."

So far, Congress has authorized \$20 million for the education of the refugees, a sum that represents about \$150 for each of the 130,000. Another \$50 million has been appropriated but is being held in reserve.

That amount of federal money, Gordon said, "is woefully inadequate." Further, he said, the Department of Health, Education and Welfare has not yet prescribed a formula for dis-

bursing this money.

The state response to the expected refugee impact has taken two paths. First, an administrative study group has been assembled to keep information on the refugees up to date and pass it on to the school districts, particularly those in the metropolitan areas of Los Angeles and San Francisco, which presumably will receive more refugees than any other districts of the United States.

Secondly, Vietnamese language training materials are being reviewed for referral

Levels of English fluency vary widely in the camps. Only 13 per cent of the children in the age groups 7 through 14, sampled in a Camp Pendleton survey, could speak any English at all.

By contrast, nearly 64 per cent of those aged 15 through 18 could speak some English, while most adults 19 through 45 had some degree of English proficiency. This is a reflection, it was felt, of the Vietnamese educational system, where nothing in the way of a foreign language was taught before secondary school.

to the districts.

One of the refugees, Do Ba Khe, former vice minister of Education in South Vietnam, is assisting state educators in the screening of these materials, including some borrowed from the Army Language School at Monterey. It is expected that these materials will be sufficient to teach English to most refugees.

In addition, it was learned, the California Department of Motor Vehicles hopes to prepare drivers manuals in the Vietnamese language.

It may also reflect the fact that many of the adult refugees were former employees of the U.S. government or American companies before they left their homeland.

Rile's staff has also detected a large number of educators among the refugees at Camp Pendleton. About 50 per cent of these had received undergraduate or graduate degrees at U.S. institutions, which opens the way for them to receive teaching certification here without retraining or testing, Gordon said.

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