

for Holbrooke testimony 8/4/77

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Q. In February 1976 then Assistant Secretary Habib clearly testified that the Department would not be seeking further authority to admit Indochinese refugees under parole but would if necessary seek special legislation for that purpose. Why are you now seeking additional parole authority?

A. The urgency of the present situation precludes our seeking special legislation at this time. However, President Carter has evidenced his concern for a more orderly approach to this problem in the future by the establishment of an Inter Agency Task Force to develop a program to deal with this long term problem. We look forward to working with the Committee in developing a more durable solution. One approach which must be considered is the possibility of legislation to deal with the problem.

The Department has attempted to deal with this problem but has found it impossible to do so for a number of reasons. As we had hoped, we identified and began processing the bulk of the refugees under the Expanded Parole Program for 11,000 refugees by June 30, 1976 and most of these refugees had arrived before October.

In August 1976 the problem of those escaping by boat, primarily from Vietnam, became more serious. Countries around the periphery of the South China Sea began to turn these boats away and numerous tragic reports reached us of long and harrowing odysseys often with unhappy endings. As refugees who had earlier been selected to come within the 11,000 program

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dropped out, places were assigned to boat case refugees. Thus, about 500 places under the Expanded Parole Program were utilized to assist these boat cases while we sought a response within the international community.

The United Nations High Commissioner did issue an appeal in 1976, and a number of nations responded positively. As the United States contribution to the solution of this problem, a program was developed to utilize up to 100 conditional entry numbers per month for boat case refugees. We also hoped to utilize non-preference numbers for accompanying dependents of these refugees.

Initially the several diplomatic initiatives combined with increased resettlement opportunities led to a cessation by most countries principally involved, with the exception of Singapore, of the practice of forcing these boats back to sea.

Unfortunately, this approach proved inadequate. Except for France, other countries provided too few resettlement opportunities. Lack of availability of non-preference numbers restricted our own response. Refugees left by boat in ever greater numbers. The result has been that over 7,000 refugees who escaped by boat are now stranded in various countries in Asia, and some of these countries once again are forcing refugees to turn back to sea. Thus, while we share your desire for longer term solutions, we believe there is also an urgent need for action now.

A. Of the more than 84,000 refugees in 13 in-land camps, approximately 68,000 are Lao and Hmong, 12,000 are Cambodian, and 1,300 are Vietnamese. (There are another 2,100 Vietnamese in two locations on the coast boat case refugees)

Of those 84,000 people, we believe that at least 8,000 meet the categories employed in earlier paroles to select those towards whom the U.S. had an obligation in conscience. Those categories are:

I-refugees closely related to someone in the U.S.

II-former employees of the U.S. Government

III-Those whose positions in the civil and military services of their homeland, or in the public life of the nations of Indochina before the communist victory, brought them into close association with U.S. policies, programs, and personnel.

The ethnic breakdown under these categories is as follows (the numbers include accompanying family members):

	CAT I	CAT II	CAT III	TOTAL
Lao	500	1,500	2,000	4,000
Hmong	1,000	400	1,600	3,000
Cambodian	200	50	500	750
Vietnamese	125	100	200	425
Thai Dam	50	50	75	175
Total	1,875	2,100	4,375	8,350

Q. Just who is in this third category?

A. Those refugees, numbering approximately 4,000, include government administrators at levels from national, through province and district, down to city. In the armed forces they were officers and non-coms. Labor leaders, political and religious figures, teachers and writers are among this group.

Q. Are they a bunch of war criminals no one else wants?

A. No. Many were stigmatised by the new authorities as puppets of the Americans, and because the American support of the former governments was labelled criminal, people were tarred with the same brush. But we run security checks on each applicant, and any who have questionable backgrounds, as far as our records show, will be investigated further. If there are reasonable grounds to believe the person was either a war criminal, a civil criminal, a drug dealer or addict, or is otherwise inadmissible under our immigration laws respecting conduct and morals, that refugee will not be paroled. Our procedures for this program call for INS officers to approve each case, and they are experienced in examining prospective immigrants in this regard.

Q. Are they all Meo or other tribespeople?

A. They are not all Meo, or Hmong as they prefer to be called. As the table shows, about 3,000 of the 8,000 are Hmong, and another group, the Thai Dam, or Black Thai, make up another 175 or so. To think of these people as primitive and

uncivilised is quite wrong, frankly speaking. In last year's parole of 11,000, about 4,700 were Hmong, and another 600 were Thai Dam. They were carefully screened and fully met the criteria. Their customs and life styles were distinct, but their values and experiences and association with U.S. programs made them fully qualified for admission.

Q. Aren't they unresettleable and shouldn't we help them resettle in Thailand?

A. First, the ones selected for our program last year are proving themselves resettlable. There are some problems of adjustment for the women and the elderly, but, as the voluntary agencies report to us, the men move very quickly into employment, where they are highly regarded as willing workers and the young do what young have done throughout our history as a nation of immigrants ^{and} adapt quickly to the two worlds, the new home of the family and the outside world of school and neighborhood. The people of Iowa would be glad, I'm sure, to testify about the place the Thai Dam have in that heartland state.

Even after we have taken those Hmong who strictly qualify under the criteria I ^{earlier} outlined, ^{are} ~~there~~ will be somewhere near 50,000 others ^{and} and probably more coming into Thailand ^{with} with little or no prospect for resettlement outside Thailand. The Thai Government is considering what to do about them, and the UNHCR is urging that they be resettled in the country. We will be examining that subject in the Interagency Task Force

which at the President's instruction has been established to look at the long term problem of Indochinese Refugees. I should like to say, however, that those qualified under the criteria to be paroled ought not be left to languish in camps until the Thai Government accepts the idea of their resettlement in Thailand, and implements it, just because they are from a culture that is unlike ours. They are anxious to be part of life here, and those already here have shown that the gulf of cultures is not unbridgeable. If they are not afraid, I don't think we ought to be.

Q. Are your figures any good? What about discrepancies between your statistics in February 1976 and those refugees actually brought in under the EPP? Are your figures any better now?

A. The figures on the number of boat case refugees is relatively accurate since it is only a matter of counting. It is, however, fluid as new refugees arrive and others proceed to third countries.

Figures on refugees in Thai camps within our program criteria are much harder to come by. The selection of limited numbers of refugees from among the 81,000 in camps is a time consuming task. This figure is also a fluid one as new qualifying refugees arrive or are uncovered through the interviewing process and others leave.

In 1976 there were substantial differences between our estimates by Category and the final EPP caseload. (Figures attached). Our assurance to the Committee is not that the Categories and ethnic mix will remain exactly as predicted but that each individual refugee will be screened by both State and INS officers and will meet the criteria for eligibility outlined to the Committee.

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 Comparative Statistics on EPP
 Estimated and Actual

Estimated Caseload-February 1976 (Thailand Only)

	Cat I (Relatives)	Cat II (Employees)	Cat III (High Risk)	Totals
Lao	126	534	972	1,632
Hmong	-	-	2100	2,100
Cambodian	303	10	3579	3,892
Vietnamese	838	116	771	1,725
Thai Dam	-	-	2000	2,000
Totals	1,267	660	9,422	11,349

Admitted Under EPP - (Thailand Only)

	Cat I	Cat II	Cat III	Totals
Lao	378	192	1455	2056
Hmong	1186	413	3109	4766
Cambodian	368	3	884	1281
Vietnamese	741	109	286	1160
Thai Dam	501	25	73	604
Totals	3174	742	5807	9867

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Q. This Committee has reported out a bill revising refugee

legislation. Would not such a bill provide a foundation for a long range solution to this problem?

A. As you know, Mr. Chairman, the Administration testified in favor of many basic aspects of HR 3056 while differing on others, including the imposition of numerical limitations on group admission of refugees in emergent situations.

In fact, the present parole recommendation would fit the criteria outlined in the bill. The President has reviewed and approved, in principle, the exercise of parole by the Attorney General. The present emergent refugee situation is one of special concern to the United States. It has proven impossible to accomodate this problem under the conditional entry authority. We believe the parole action will significantly promote the national interest and is strongly justified by grave humanitarian concern. Concurrently with the exercise of this authority, it is our intention to promptly seek the cooperation of the international community in the resettlement of these refugees, both present and foreseen as a part of the longer term problem.

While continued group actions under the present parole authority or the procedures provided under the proposed legislation provide one possible method for dealing with the continuing problem of Indochinese refugees, we will want to consider other solutions, as well, which might minimize the necessity for recurrent consultations with the Congress on this matter.

Q. Aren't many Indochinese fleeing their homeland, really economic refugees?

A. It is true that economic conditions in Indochina are bad. It is, however, also clear that the members of the populations of these countries who suffer the most from depressed economic conditions are those who were previously ^{to the success} ~~committed~~ among [the ruling or privileged classes] of the former societies in these countries. Thus, the Vietnamese selected to go to a New Economic Area and there to ^{endure} ~~suffer~~ grave deprivation ^{and} perhaps suffer malnutrition or disease because of lack of food and medicines, is not the former associate of the communist movement but is the former civil servant or businessman. Similarly such individuals in urban areas often find it impossible to obtain any employment because of their past associations. Unable to earn a livelihood, they subsist by selling their possessions. In other words, this is the classic case of political persecution through economic deprivation. Thus, it is really not useful to speak of "economic" refugees from the Indochinese countries at this time when the new communist regimes are totally reshaping the society.

Q. Isn't this a temporary measure? Won't refugees keep coming out? Won't you be back again in about six months?

A. Yes, Mr. Chairman;

The proposed parole action is clearly a temporary measure.

We plan to parole 7,000 boat case refugees. There are over 7,000 such refugees now stranded in various locations in East Asia and more are coming out at the rate of about 500 per month, a rate which we believe will be sustained or even increased.

Some of the present 7,000 boat cases will resettle in other countries but the proposed parole action will only be adequate to cover the requirements for the next few months.

Similarly, we believe that there are probably already enough qualified refugees among the 80,000 Indochinese in camps in Thailand to fill the proposed parole action for 8,000 Indochinese refugees escaping by land. More arrive in these camps daily; we estimate ^{there are well} over 1,200 ^{new arrivals} per month and expect this rate to continue or rise. Some of these will also qualify under the criteria previously used to identify refugees to whom we believe we owe a special consideration.

In short, we agree completely that something beyond this parole action is required. The present proposal is to meet the emergency situation and will be followed by others, designed to meet the longer term need.