

cc: 1B

**Administration for Children and Families
OFFICE of REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT**

FAX Transmission

2 Pages

**To: Genie Chough
Domestic Policy Council/TWH**

FAX: (202) 456-7431

**From: Gayle Smith
ORR, DRSS**

FAX: (202) 401-0981

Subject: Transmittal of Response

Attached is the response from the Office of Refugee Resettlement to the undated letter from American Viet League of Oakland, CA regarding the loss of targeted assistance formula funding to Alameda County in FY 1999.

Please call me on (202) 205-3590 IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS.
Gayle Smith

**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES****ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**

370 L'Enfant Promenade, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20447

OCT 1 1999

Mr. John D. Nguyen
President/CEO
American Viet League
255 East 14th Street
Oakland, CA 94606

Dear Mr. Nguyen:

This is in response to your letter expressing your concern that Alameda County will no longer qualify to receive targeted assistance funding and the impact this will have on refugees residing in Alameda County.

Alameda County has qualified for, and has received, targeted assistance funding since 1983, based on refugee and entrant arrivals. The Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) determines county qualification for targeted assistance every three years based on a county's most recent 5-year refugee/entrant arrival population, and on a county's refugee/entrant concentration, in keeping with statutory requirements. Based on these criteria, Alameda County, with a 5-year refugee/entrant arrival population of 3,329 and a concentration percentage of 26.02 per cent, did not rank high enough to be eligible for targeted assistance in FY 1999.

Your letter suggests that Alameda County would qualify if refugee arrivals were used as the sole basis for qualification. ORR is not able to use arrivals as the sole criterion for qualification. Our statutory language requires ORR to take into account refugee concentrations as well as refugee arrival numbers as factors in qualifying counties for targeted assistance. In section 412(c)(2) of the Immigration and Nationality Act, the three factors listed are high population, high refugee concentration, and high use of public assistance. ORR must take into account all criteria listed in the statute for which data are available. Data are available on refugee population and refugee concentration.

ORR no longer uses welfare dependency as a qualifying factor because data that would accurately reflect refugee dependency rates do not exist for all States and all counties. While some States collect refugee recipient data in the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, many States and counties no longer collect such data. Using refugee dependency data for some counties and not for others would be inequitable.

Mr. John D. Nguyen - Page 2

Your letter questions ORR's decision to limit the number of qualified counties to the top 50 counties. ORR placed the cut-off after the 50th county in order to cover as many counties as possible while still targeting a sufficient level of funding to the most impacted counties.

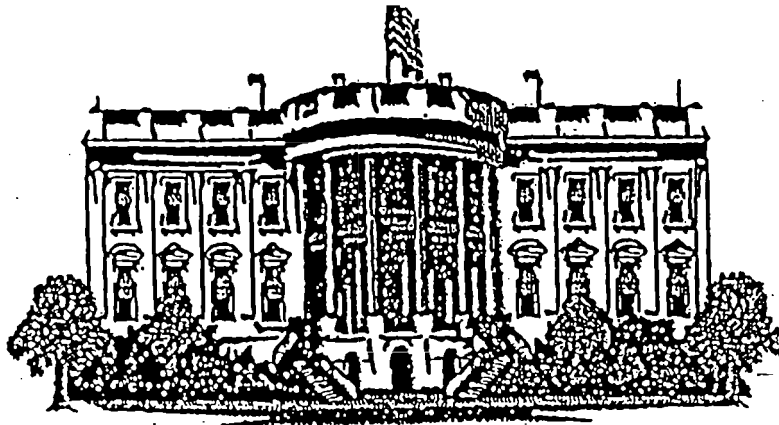
Targeted assistance funds are available to qualifying counties for three-years to allow counties an adequate period of time to address the refugee impact in their counties. Alameda County has received targeted assistance funding since 1983. Alameda County's Southeast Asian arrivals have declined significantly during the most recent five-year period from 761 in FY 1994 to 129 in FY 1998, while refugee arrivals to Alameda County from other countries have remained constant. The decline in Southeast Asian refugees has affected the total number of refugee arrivals and refugee impact in Alameda County. As refugee arrivals to Alameda County decrease, other counties are experiencing the increased impact of new refugee populations and as a result, have qualified for targeted assistance in FY 1999 for the first time.

Refugee providers losing targeted assistance formula funds in Alameda County may wish to apply for ORR discretionary funds. Although the deadline for most of our discretionary programs has already passed, the County or any public or private non-profit organization is welcome to apply for ORR discretionary funding in FY 2000.

I appreciate hearing your concerns.

Sincerely,


for Lavinia Limón
Director
Office of Refugee Resettlement



CC:1B

Genie-
Will you check
on this w/ ORR?
J.M.
gmc

THE WHITE HOUSE

Domestic Policy Council

DATE: 8/24

Gail Smith -
Acty no longer qualifies
- still get ORR SS funds
for EET

FACSIMILE FOR: Lavinia Lemon

PHONE: () - FAX: () 401 - 0981

FACSIMILE FROM: Genie Chough

PHONE: () 456 - 5566 FAX: () 456 - 7431

NUMBER OF PAGES (INCLUDING COVER): _____

- ☐ FOR YOUR REVIEW
☒ PER MY E-MAIL OR VOICE-MAIL MESSAGE TO YOU
☐ PER YOUR REQUEST

COMMENTS: Hello,

To follow is a letter from a service provider
in Northern California. Please have ORR
staff respond as early as possible and
share response with us.

Thanks

Genie

Send to Lavinia

Toyo A. Biddle
Office of Refugee Resentlement,
Administration for Children and Families
370 L'Enfant Promenade, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20477

Dear Ms. Biddle:

I am writing this letter to express my concern regarding the recently published ORR proposed FY 1999 targeted assistance allocations (64 FR 11927) that remove Alameda County from the list of counties eligible to receive Targeted Assistance funding during the next 3-year project period.

For the last 15 years, the American Viet League has been serving refugees residing in Alameda County, which is a large county in terms of the number of refugee arrivals during the past five years (3330 refugees). Alameda County would rank 32nd among the 50 counties listed for FY 1999 funding in the *Federal Register* notice of March 10, 1999 if refugee numbers alone were used, as shown in the attached list using data in that notice. The number of refugee arrivals in Alameda County during the last five years is more than twice the total of some counties proposed for funding.

Loss of targeted assistance funding, particularly on short notice and over a three-year period, has a disproportionate impact on counties with greater numbers of refugee arrivals. We feel that several arbitrary decisions made by ORR in developing and applying the formula used to determine eligible counties make it possible for large counties to be disqualified. Such arbitrary decisions include the use of concentration rate as an index of impact, the weighting of concentration rate in the calculations, failure to use some assessment of need such as welfare dependency or median household income, and the limit of 50 eligible counties.

ORR needs to find some method to fund counties that have large numbers of refugees. Three thousand refugees is a large number for any county, and sudden loss of targeted assistance funding places an immediate burden on counties to find replacement resources so they can continue to provide job training services to their refugee residents. ORR should build in a "safety valve" for counties that are being proposed for disqualification and that have a threshold number of refugee arrivals. Such funding would allow counties time to adjust and develop new resources to serve refugees. The sudden funding cut contained in the proposed targeted assistance allocations will have a very large impact on Alameda County if it is implemented.

I sincerely urge you to carefully consider our concerns here in Alameda County and appropriately adjust the proposed rules so our refugees are not seriously impacted. If I can be of further assistance or provide more information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

John D. Nguyen
President/CEO

**IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION SERVICE****OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER****425 I STREET, N.W.****WASHINGTON, D.C. 20536****FACSIMILE TRANSMITTAL COVER SHEET****FAX #: (202) 307-9911****TO: Irene Bueno****DATE: 08/03/99****PHONE:****FAX #: 456-5581****NUMBER OF PAGES TO FOLLOW: 1****MESSAGE: FYI...the press office is putting something together, which I will get to you as soon as it's ready****FROM: Cathy St. Denis, Counselor to the Commissioner
RM 7100 CAB
202-514-8195**

Need additional money & the

If raise the limit, then take money for ~~re~~ settlement.

John has ~~the~~ first testimony

P4 2000 ~~80K~~ 80K

80K

10 K - mean reduce overall ⁱⁿ ~~in~~ #5.

18K Africa

National Migration Forum

PRESS ADVISORY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 2, 1999

Contact: Judy Mark
(202) 544-0004, ext. 14

AFTER U.S. WELCOME OF KOSOVAR REFUGEES, WILL WE DO THE SAME FOR OTHERS?

Leading Refugee Protection Groups Call on Clinton Administration to
Reverse 41% Decline in Refugee Admissions

WHAT?

The Senate Immigration Subcommittee is holding a hearing on America's commitment to rescuing refugees. America has had a proud tradition of rescuing persons who fear political or religious persecution through an orderly and limited resettlement process. Prior to the Kosovo crisis, however, the Clinton Administration planned to allow only 78,000 refugees to come to the U.S.—a 41% decline from the beginning of the Administration and a 10-year low. Will recent efforts to help Kosovar refugees be used as a model for assistance for refugees from throughout the world, particularly Africa?

Leaders at the press conference will call on the United States to reinvigorate its leadership in refugee protection by restoring the refugee admissions level to no less than 132,000—the level that was in place when the current Administration took office.

WHEN? Wednesday, August 4, 1999
12:30 pm

WHERE? U.S. Capitol, Room SC-5

WHO? Most Reverend Nicholas DiMarzio, Bishop of Camden and
Chairman, U.S. Catholic Conference Committee on Migration
John Fredriksson, U.S. Committee for Refugees
Ralston Deffenbaugh, Lutheran Immigration & Refugee Service
Frank Sharry, National Immigration Forum

Several refugees who have been resettled in the United States will also speak.

#

220 I Street, NE, Suite 220 ♦ Washington, DC 20002-4362
phone: (202) 544-0004 ♦ fax: (202) 544-1905
www.immigrationforum.org

Total Pages: _____

LRM ID: REJ156

**EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET
Washington, D.C. 20503-0001**

Monday, August 2, 1999

LEGISLATIVE REFERRAL MEMORANDUM

TO: Legislative Liaison Officer - See Distribution below

FROM: Richard E. Green (for) Assistant Director for Legislative Reference
OMB CONTACT: Ronald E. Jones
E-Mail: Ronald_E._Jones@omb.eop.gov
PHONE: (202)395-3386 FAX: (202)395-3109

SUBJECT: STATE Testimony on FY 2000 Refugee Admission Program

DEADLINE: 2 PM Tuesday, August 3, 1999

In accordance with OMB Circular A-19, OMB requests the views of your agency on the above subject before advising on its relationship to the program of the President. Please advise us if this item will affect direct spending or receipts for purposes of the "Pay-As-You-Go" provisions of Title XIII of the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1990.

COMMENTS:**DISTRIBUTION LIST****AGENCIES:**

61-JUSTICE - Jon P. Jennings - (202) 514-2141
52-HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES - Sondra S. Wallace - (202) 690-7760
83-National Security Council - Glyn T. Davies - (202) 456-9221
62-LABOR - Robert A. Shapiro - (202) 219-0201

EOP:

Irene Bueno 410
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ra J. Shin 27
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Michelle Peterson 175
Steven D. Aitken 132
Sandra Yamin 247
Joseph G. Pipan
Steven M. Mertens
Stuart Shapiro
Jennifer M. Forshey
Richard J. Turman
Darrell Park

SUBJECT: STATE Testimony on FY 2000 Refugee Admission Program

_____ Concur
 _____ No Objection
 _____ No Comment
 _____ See proposed edits on pages _____
 _____ Other: _____
 _____ FAX RETURN of _____ pages, attached to this response sheet

STATEMENT OF JULIA V. TAFT
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE
BUREAU OF POPULATION, REFUGEES AND MIGRATION
AUGUST 4, 1999

Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to participate in today's hearing on the President's proposal for the FY 2000 refugee admissions program. Under your leadership, this subcommittee has consistently provided strong bipartisan support for this important humanitarian effort and I look forward to reviewing with you where the Administration believes our focus should be as we enter the next millennium.

But first, a few words about recent events in the Balkans. The massive humanitarian disaster caused by the Milosevic regime's attempted ethnic cleansing in Kosovo demanded a swift and resolute response by the international community. It seems almost impossible to comprehend that some 800,000 citizens of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia fled their country under threat of unspeakable violence, survived for several weeks in hastily constructed refugee camps, host family accommodations or in evacuation locations around the globe; and then - in the vast majority of cases - returned home to Kosovo. And all in four short months. While the international community's effort was massive and,

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even under the most difficult circumstances, effective in providing food and shelter and minimizing the spread of disease, much credit for this remarkable outcome rests with the Kosovars themselves. After the horror that they had experienced, their abiding goal and what sustained them throughout was the fervent desire to return to their homes, communities, customs and culture. They did not leave by choice to seek a better life elsewhere. They, like most refugees in the world, wanted above all else to go home.

In order to reduce the pressure on Macedonia, a neighboring state that deserves enormous credit for sharing its territory with the fleeing Kosovars and the relief effort, the United States joined 30 other countries in offering places of refuge to these strong and remarkable people. The refugee admissions program that we are here to talk about today was the best available vehicle the United States had to assist the Kosovars. While most often used in situations where resettlement is intended as a permanent solution, we have now seen that it can also be effectively used in other situations. The fact that the resources of a well-established network of voluntary agency affiliates could be used in this emergency operation greatly facilitated our ability to respond. In all some 11,000 Kosovars have been provided refuge here since the first arrivals on May 5. In keeping with our commitment to

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facilitate their voluntary return to Kosovo, the first group of 300 repatriating Kosovars departed the United States on July 26. The International Organization for Migration estimates that up to a third of the 11,000 have requested information on return flights.

While all of this has been happening, the American people have been reminded of what it means to be a refugee. The public's response to the plight of the Kosovars was immediate and overwhelming. We received tens of thousands of calls and everyone wanted to do something. We did our best to ensure that these offers of assistance were appropriately channeled to voluntary organizations that resettle not just Kosovars but refugees from all over the world. These refugees may not receive the same press attention but they are welcomed in communities across the United States week in week out year after year.

The changing ethnic and religious composition of the refugee population being resettled under the admissions program has posed new challenges for the resettlement community. Religious persecution has long been the basis of a significant percentage of applications to our refugee admissions program and we have unfortunately no reason to believe that this global phenomenon will ameliorate in the near term. The number of new ethnic groups being offered

resettlement as a durable solution has skyrocketed in recent years.

Some have noted that in 1993 the authorized refugee ceiling was considerably higher than it is at present. However, two in-country refugee programs in which the United States was fulfilling long-standing historic commitments then produced 80% of admissions. By way of contrast, in the current fiscal year, that percentage will continue to decline to about 40%, leaving the majority of U.S. refugee admissions for those individuals and groups recognized by UNHCR and the international community as refugees in need of resettlement. It is by accepting persons based on their need for resettlement rather than on their integration prospects or the strength of their advocacy groups that U.S. leadership and commitment are demonstrated.

This more diverse population often cannot depend on the kind of ethnic community support that was available to the Indochinese and Soviet refugees and there are signs that the system is straining in some locations. We have begun a dialogue with our non-governmental resettlement partners to determine how the government and the private sector should best organize our institutions and resources to better meet the needs of incoming refugees, including through the involvement of interested members of resettlement communities.

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I would like to turn now to the specifics of the President's proposal for fiscal year 2000.

We believe that the overall admissions ceiling in the coming year should be 90,000. 80,000 of these numbers would be funded through the President's Migration and Refugee Assistance account for FY 2000. We can only fund all 80,000 admissions if we receive from Congress the Administration's full request of \$660 million for Migration and Refugee Assistance in FY 2000. The proposed \$20 million increase over our FY 1999 appropriation is all allocated to the admissions program. If we receive an appropriation less than \$660 million, we will be forced to cut the number of admissions. Adequate funding is a prerequisite for implementing the type of generous refugee admissions program many in this Congress have encouraged this Administration to maintain. In addition to the 80,000 numbers to be funded by our regular MRA budget, we propose that up to 10,000 numbers be made available to address compelling refugee situations, which have and continue to develop out of the Kosovo crisis. Given the dynamic nature of events in the region, it is difficult to estimate how many of these admissions would be needed. These would be funded out of the Emergency Supplemental Appropriation for Migration and Refugee Assistance already approved by Congress. While most Kosovar Albanians have already or will be able to return, there will

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be individuals identified by UNHCR who are in need of third country resettlement. Members of minority groups, such as the Roma people, and former refugees now unable to remain safely in the former Yugoslavia - such as Krajina Serbs - will continue to need assistance in finding a durable solution.

The 17,000 numbers proposed for non-Kosovo crisis refugees from the Former Yugoslavia would address the ongoing need for Bosnian resettlement. While this program is decreasing in size, there remains a population for whom return to Bosnia is not yet a realistic prospect. Many persons in mixed marriages fall into this category.

In Africa, I am pleased to report that the rapid expansion from 7,000 admissions in FY 98 to 12,000 this year has been accomplished without diminishing either the quality of the processing or the caseload. We credit all of our operational partners - Church World Service (the Joint Voluntary Agency), UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration - with doing a masterful job of coordination, in spite of the disruption created by the bombing of our Nairobi Embassy one year ago this week.

INS and we have continued to develop our relationship with UNHCR field office staff to enhance their understanding of our programmatic and legal requirements. Together we have identified groups of refugees, such as Ogoni in Benin,

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Togolese in Guinea and Musunguli in Kenya who needed third country resettlement. In keeping with this progress, the President's proposal for African refugee resettlement would be to increase the ceiling in FY 2000 to 18,000.

Our support of UNHCR in the Near East/South Asia region has greatly expanded their work in individual status determinations and, as a result, referrals for resettlement. Although many of the beneficiaries are members of nationalities traditionally included in our admissions program - Iraqis and Iranians - we have also seen a sizeable increase in the numbers of Afghan Women at Risk and African refugees, long resident in the region, referred for resettlement. In order to accommodate the anticipated surge in referrals, we are proposing to double this regional ceiling in FY 2000 to 8,000.

As I noted earlier, the longstanding in-country programs for the former Soviet Union, Vietnam and Cuba are declining. In the former Soviet Union, admissions this year are unlikely to reach 20,000. New applications from eligible individuals have declined and the composition of the caseload now comprises predominantly Evangelical Christian cases. We are making a last effort to resettle those among the long-approved population of over 30,000 who have yet to take advantage of our resettlement offer. For several months, we have been calling and sending letters to

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these individuals to learn of their intentions. We expect to see a slight increase in next year's admissions level as some among this group decide to migrate. In those cases where approved refugees do not offer a compelling reason for their failure to depart or who fail to respond to our calls and letters, we will have no choice but to close their files. The proposed ceiling for the former Soviet Union is 20,000.

In Vietnam, most of the remaining Orderly Departure and ROVR program cases are being adjudicated this fiscal year but not all will arrive by September 30 and will require FY 2000 admissions numbers. In addition, interviews of a small number of former U.S. government employees and Amerasians as well as compelling cases of current persecution will be handled through a refugee unit recently established in conjunction with our consulate in Ho Chi Minh City. Burmese and other East Asian cases referred by UNHCR or U.S. Embassies will also utilize some of the 8,000 admissions numbers proposed for the region.

For the past two years, Cuban refugee admissions have fallen well below the authorized ceiling. While we continue to interview qualified applicants and have taken steps to ameliorate the burden posed by the Cuban government's exorbitant departure fees, we do not expect that the refugee admissions component of the 20,000 annual Cuban migration

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program will grow. In addition, the program remains available to individuals of other Latin American nationalities referred to the program by UNHCR or U.S. embassies. The recommended ceiling for FY 2,000 is 3,000.

Given the considerable uncertainties surrounding the need for refugee admissions numbers - particularly in the Balkans, we recommend that 6,000 numbers be unassigned to specific regions, but rather, be available for future allocation from an unallocated reserve. This will allow the program the flexibility needed to address situations such as this year's Kosovo crisis.

Turning briefly to our other area of major responsibility -- refugee assistance, the Balkans has been the single largest focus for our bureau over the past year. I am extremely proud of the role my staff played in quickly moving resources to the region, evacuating refugees from first asylum countries, keeping the U.S. Government apprised of the constantly changing situation on the ground, and working with other governments and humanitarian organizations. In addition to our resettlement efforts, PRM has provided more than \$130 million in assistance in FY99 for emergency relief, return, and reintegration. The funds recently appropriated by the Congress in the Emergency supplemental are already being used to address the priority needs of the returnees inside Kosovo.

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Even as we focused on Kosovo, we continued our efforts to facilitate minority return in Bosnia and Croatia. Although progress in these countries is slower than desired, the momentum is in the right direction and we remain committed to this effort.

In the Middle East, PRM's substantial contributions to the UN Relief and Works Agency are a key element of U.S. assistance to the Middle East Peace Process, supporting over 3.2 million Palestinian refugees. In addition, the US helps more than 50,000 humanitarian migrants from the former Soviet Union resettle in Israel yearly.

Migration is one of the top issues on the USG's agenda with our neighbors to the south, and PRM is increasing its funding in the region. The U.S. is responsible for implementing several sections of the Santiago Summit of the Americas Plan of Action, including the section pertaining to Migrant Workers, and we will soon assume the chair of the Regional Conference on Migration (known as the Puebla Group). PRM is providing assistance for people displaced by the hostilities in Colombia, an area of growing concern.

The U.S. remains the driving force behind efforts to help states of the former Soviet Union develop effective and comprehensive solutions to population movements within and among their countries. Earlier this month, the Government of Russia officially thanked us for the role we have played on this front. At the same time, PRM continues to support

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programs that foster self-reliance for IDPs in Azerbaijan and Georgia as well as refugees in Armenia.

Much of the news from Africa has been discouraging over the last year -- unspeakable atrocities in Sierra Leone where innocent men, women, and even small children have had limbs chopped off in order to terrorize rather than kill; renewed warfare in the Congo which pulled in neighbors near and further afield; a war we have difficulty understanding between Ethiopia and Eritrea; another cycle of warfare in Congo/Brazzaville. All of these have uprooted people from their homes. In recent weeks, however, there have been a number of hopeful developments that I would like to highlight.

The July 7 Lome peace accord between the Government of Sierra Leone and the Revolutionary United Front has been holding and does provide a framework for that long-suffering country to move toward recovery and reconciliation. When appropriate, PRM/State will strongly support the repatriation of some 450,000 refugees currently in Guinea, Liberia, and Cote d'Ivoire. Sierra Leonean refugees have always been anxious to return home when the conflict ebbed in earlier stages, so we expect that most will want to return as soon as they perceive Sierra Leone to be secure. At the same time, many refugees have experienced atrocities

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and setbacks in previous peace processes so many may be cautious about returning.

At a recent international meeting (Brookings Group) of senior representatives from select major donors (including NGOs, UN agencies, and the World Bank), Sierra Leone was selected as a target country for proposed "partnership initiatives" designed to improve relief and development planning and program implementation. This should lead to increased donor attention to Sierra Leone, which has received insufficient world attention compared to other complex humanitarian emergencies. The Great Lakes region, especially Burundi, was also selected as a pilot.

A cease-fire accord for Congo has been signed last month by six heads of state involved in the war there. The agreement still lacks the signature of the rebels because of internal disagreements, but we are hopeful that this will soon be rectified, that the fighting will indeed stop, and the outflow of refugees -- principally to Tanzania, Zambia, and the CAR will also be reversed.

And an accord between Ethiopia and Eritrea seems imminent. Peace there would enable the internally displaced to return to their homes. And possibly those who were forced out because they had ethnic origins in the other state might even be able to return eventually should they want to.

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Our assistance earmarked for Africa this fiscal year is expected to reach some \$135 million. One element of that is the beginnings of an effort to close the gap between the basic assistance that often exists in Africa with what international practice outlines as the minimum standard in such areas as nutrition and health. For example, we are providing assistance to an NGO in Guinea to mount a new program to address sexual gender violence. In the Great Lakes, we are providing additional funds to WFP to help ensure that refugees dependent upon external food deliveries get the requisite 2000 kcal per day.

We are also pursuing this "up to standard" initiative with Afghan refugees, with a special focus on educational opportunities for refugee women and girls in Pakistan. When it looked a few years ago as if peace might come to Afghanistan, repatriation was robust and international aid to refugees began to be downsized. Now, with genuine peace still elusive in Afghanistan and the patience of the refugee-hosting nations wearing thin as the decade closes, we have redoubled rather than phased out our assistance. We expect our earmarked assistance for Afghans to reach nearly \$10 million this fiscal year, while general regional contributions to the UNHCR and ICRC also benefit Afghans significantly.

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In East Asia, Burmese continue to be the largest refugee group now that Cambodians have all returned home. I am happy to report that the Thai Government's relatively recent agreement to accord UNHCR an explicit monitoring role along the Burma border where all basic assistance is provided by NGOs has resulted in refugee registration and the thwarting of some threatened pushbacks. The situation in Indonesia is quite worrisome, particularly in East Timor and Aceh, where the kind of relief and protection that an ICRC presence can bring is so needed. That is a good example of where our Bureau works closely with other elements of the Department and USAID to take as much complementary preventive action as possible.

I have not, of course, mentioned all of the humanitarian situations in which we are closely involved and would be happy to try to answer whatever specific questions you might have. I do want to address one issue that keeps arising -- the perception that we are doing more for some refugee groups than for others. Late last month (7/22), for example, the Wall Street Journal carried a story that OCHA was concerned that aid to Kosovo is coming at the expense of humanitarian disasters in Africa and Asia. While we cannot speak for other countries, the United States has ensured that our funding of humanitarian relief for Kosovo has not diminished our regular commitment to assist refugees and

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others in humanitarian crises in the world, thanks to the special supplemental appropriation.

Everyone recognizes that humanitarian needs in Africa, for example, are huge and that there are many obstacles to meeting all of them adequately -- from programming levels to logistical access. However, it is not by merely criticizing aid to victims in Kosovo that those obstacles will be overcome. We must take inspiration from what is possible when there is collective will, publicity, whatever the magic combination of factors that have led to a generous outpouring of assistance for Kosovars -- and ensure that our collective efforts everywhere are indeed up to international standards.

In closing, let me reiterate our great appreciation for your steady support for all that we are trying to do for the world's refugees and internally displaced persons. We value our relationship with the Congress and welcome your thoughts on the President's FY 2000 admissions proposal or other aspects of the United States humanitarian relief efforts.

Steven M. Mertens

06/17/99 04:59:38 PM

Record Type: Record

To: Irene Bueno/OPD/EOP@EOP

cc:

Subject: Restructuring Blurb -- edit as you see fit

- The Administration is committed to a fundamental change in the way the INS conducts its business and serves its clients.

This was reflected in the Administration's restructuring proposal submitted to Congress last Spring and by the follow-up efforts of the Department of Justice, INS and the Administration to flesh out -- at the local service and enforcement levels -- the plan submitted last year.

- The Administration wishes to work with the Congress this year to restructure the INS along three core principles:
 - 1) Immigration enforcement and service functions must be separated into distinct branches, both within a "new" DOJ immigration bureau.
 - 2) The immigration bureau must be headed by a DOJ official who reports to the Deputy Attorney General and is Senate confirmed. The restructuring legislation must statutorily authorize this official to have the staff necessary to coordinate immigration programs, policies and procedures.
 - 3) In order to ensure that the chief of each branch (immigration enforcement, immigration service) is appropriately responsive to the policies of the senior Bureau official, the chiefs must be non-career SES, and not Senate-confirmed. The branch chiefs must have authority that is delegated, not direct, and must report only to the head of the immigration bureau.
- Finalizing an organizational structure that incorporates these principles and that will also ensure clear lines of authority, strengthen accountability and improve efficiency and effectiveness have been an Administration priority over the past year.

The Administration is close to completing this effort and will soon brief groups.

The American Tradition of Welcoming Refugees is in Decline

The Issue

Refugee resettlement is an important tool of protection that represents America's tradition of rescuing persons who fear persecution because of their political or religious beliefs. Although the U.S. currently accepts less than 1% of the world's refugees on an annual basis, resettlement of refugees in the U.S. and other countries is a critical means of relieving pressure on countries where refugees first flee—countries of "first asylum."

Under the Clinton Administration, the number of refugees admitted to the U.S. has declined by 41%. Other nations carefully monitor our refugee policies as a means of establishing their own. Diminished U.S. leadership in this area threatens to undermine the international community's tenuous commitment to protecting refugees throughout the world.

Background

Under international and U.S. law, refugees are persons fleeing persecution based on race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion. While immigrants choose to leave their countries—to join families or to seek better lives—refugees are forced from their homes.

Where Refugees Come From – Among the largest groups of refugees are Afghans, Bosnians, and Iraqis. Sizeable groups also come from Sudan, Vietnam, Burma, Tibet, Rwanda, Nicaragua, the former Soviet Union, and many other places. The demise of many Cold War institutions has blown the lid off ethnic and nationalist tensions in many parts of the world, creating new areas of conflict and new uprooted populations. The number of refugees and displaced persons in Europe, for example, is higher than at any time since World War II, as a result of conflicts in the former Yugoslavia and the former Soviet Union.

Where Refugees Go – Most refugees go to countries in the developing world. In 1997, most refugees sought protection in the Middle East (5.7 million) or in Africa (2.9 million). Resettlement acts to relieve the pressure on countries of first asylum—mostly developing nations that host large refugee populations, often indefinitely. For most refugees, returning home when conditions permit is the preferred solution, and in recent years large numbers have indeed repatriated. However, for a small number of refugees, resettlement is the only viable option.

U.S. Refugee Admissions – The number of refugees admitted each year is determined by the President in consultation with Congress. However, included in the President's budget at the beginning of the year is an amount for the resettlement of a set number of refugees for the following fiscal year. The budget for refugee resettlement is determined far in advance of the consultative process that the President has with Congress. Once this budget is in place, it is very difficult to set a higher level for refugee admissions. Under the Clinton Administration, the refugee admission ceiling has declined from 132,000 in Fiscal Year 1993 to 78,000 in Fiscal Year 1999.

Refugee Resettlement in the U. S. – Refugee resettlement in the United States is the product of a longstanding public-private partnership that includes the federal government, state and local governments, and a charitable network of religious, service, and ethnic organizations. This partnership has an excellent track record of helping new arrivals adapt and become self-sufficient. Through this partnership, the United States has a tremendous capacity to meet the immediate and longer-term needs of refugees; the states and refugee agencies have demonstrated the ability to respond quickly to new refugee crises, and the grass-roots commitment to refugee protection and resettlement is very strong.

Overall, refugees comprise only about 7% of the annual number of newcomers in the U.S. In 1998, refugees resettled in the U.S. came from Bosnia, the former Soviet Union, Vietnam, Cuba, Somalia, Sudan, and other countries. Refugees become permanent residents after one year. Most go on to become citizens.

Recent Actions

Congress has rejected recent attempts to place a limit on refugee admissions. An attempt to attach a cap on refugee admissions to the 1996 immigration law was widely defeated in a bipartisan vote. With the Clinton Administration acting on its own to reduce refugee admissions, Republicans and Democrats from key committees in both the House and Senate have recently written to the Administration, urging a return to previous levels of refugee admissions. Representatives **Gilman** (R-NY), **Conyers** (D-MI), **Christopher Smith** (R-NJ), **Lantos** (D-CA), **Ros-Lehtinen** (R-FL), **Berman** (D-CA), **Menendez** (D-NJ), and **Payne** (D-NJ) recommended a ceiling of at least 100,000, while Senators **Abraham** (R-MI), **Kennedy** (D-MA), **Hatch** (R-UT), and **Leahy** (D-VT) recommended a range between 90,000 and 110,000. The Senate letter noted that "this level would be in keeping with our traditions and we are confident that it would receive bi-partisan support in Congress."

What Lies Ahead

The Clinton Administration's Fiscal Year 2000 budget proposal includes funding for the admission of 80,000 refugees—a slight increase over Fiscal Year 1999. While this is a welcome departure from the steady decline of recent years, it is inadequate to restore U.S. leadership in rescuing refugees fleeing persecution. A much bolder step towards restoring our leadership is certainly warranted by the U.S.'s capacity, congressional support, and the numbers of refugees throughout the world for whom U.S. admission is the best solution.