

STATEMENT BY U.S. REP. PAUL TSONGAS CONCERNING
VIETNAMESE ORPHANS SITUATION, APRIL 5, 1975

Two days ago the Agency for International Development began the evacuation of 2000 Vietnamese orphans from South Vietnam. These children were at various stages of the adoption process, with families awaiting their arrival in the United States.

However, there are thousands more Vietnamese orphans-- many of American parentage-- who have not been included in the A-I-D program. There are no plans to evacuate these children. The State Department estimates that they number 18,000. Other groups, such as the American Friends Service Committee say the figure is many times higher.

I have expressed my concern on two occasions to State Department officials about the need to expedite and expand this humanitarian effort. Organizations with years of experience in placing Vietnamese children have assured me that there are more than enough families willing to adopt these orphans. In fact, my offices in Lowell and Washington have received such offers from across the country. With Saigon in danger of collapse, there can be no hesitation. We must act. Several thousand children have already been left behind in Danang.

To see that action is taken I have arranged a special meeting, this Monday, in Washington. Representatives of the State and Justice Departments; Congressmen and Senators will discuss the present situation and the prospects for action. It is my intention to urge the Administration officials to make an immediate commitment for the evacuation of additional Vietnamese orphans. If no such commitment is made, I will request the support of my colleagues for emergency legislation to meet these ends.

The present situation in Vietnam and Cambodia is the culmination of a series of tragic mistakes in American policy. While we have no obligation to contribute one more penny to the Thieu regime, we have every obligation to offer humanitarian assistance to the orphans of Vietnam. The American people have recognized this obligation. A great outpouring of concern has dramatized that recognition. Our government must do its part for the future of these children.

There are many tragedies of war which have been visited upon the people of Indochina. This is one of the few which we might erase. At the very least, let us in government remove the roadblocks which confront those Americans of good will who stretch out their hands to these children.

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NOTE: This should be typed in ORATOR IBM print (or largest available), Copy of Viet Orhans Bill should be in Paul's possession, don't forget to correct section 3, line 3 of bill, date of headline should be moved to under statement title. Make 50 xeroxes.