

MINUTES OF THE ARIZONA TRIP  
November 23-28-1995

On behalf of the Families of Vietnamese Political Prisoners, we visited two areas: Phoenix and Tucson in Arizona. On Saturday, Nov. 25, we met with 107 former political prisoners (FPPs) in the Phoenix refugee center, and the following day with 37 people in the Tucson Asian Community Center. We also made home visits to 20 families of newly arrived FPPs in both cities.

In the two meetings with larger groups we found that their concerns and issues were similar to those we found in Florida and elsewhere -- unmarried sons/daughters and wives were separated for some unreasonable reasons even though interviews had been done before the new policy became effective in February 1995. They urged consideration be given to two additional groups: (1) Recently married wives of FPPs; and (2) Vietnamese Commandos and other Vietnamese caught in Laos before Saigon fell.

In home visits to the newly arrived families, we found that those who have the LIRS affiliate in Phoenix as their resettlement agency were practically abandoned after they arrived. Their apartments are sparsely furnished and their health needs are not attended to. This is particularly serious because they apparently had accepted many physically handicapped cases. This was not necessarily true for the local Catholic agency, which seemed to be doing a good job, using their FPP money effectively.

One strength we found in the community was that earlier arrivals were well established with jobs and housing, and were quite helpful to the FPPs and other new arrivals. They offered electronic assembly training and English classes on their own, without outside financial support from any source. We believe they would be willing to help commandos and the Laos groups (not family reunifications) if resettled as free cases by USCC.

Those FPP cases which arrived with grown-up children appeared to have made the transition to their new lives quite rapidly, so that within two years, the family units were beginning to own their own houses.

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Families of Vietnamese  
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