

Bush Seeks Slight Increase in Number of Refugees

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Body

President **Bush** asked Congress today for a small **increase** in the **number** of **refugees** who could be admitted to the United States in the coming year, but his proposed ceiling of 125,000 would exclude tens of thousands of **refugees** who have applied to come here.

Mr. **Bush** proposed no **increase** in the **number** of Eastern Europeans, despite the large **number** of people leaving countries in that part of the world.

The Administration is requesting money to pay for the admission of only 84,000 **refugees** in the fiscal year 1990, which begins in three weeks. Mr. **Bush** did not say who, if anyone, would pay for transportation and resettlement of the others.

Questioning **Bush**'s Intent

Representative Bruce A. Morrison, chairman of the House Judiciary subcommittee on immigration, said the disparity between the proposed **number** of **refugee** admissions and the Administration's budget request made him wonder if Mr. **Bush** was "really serious" about admitting 125,000 **refugees**.

In addition, Mr. Morrison, a Connecticut Democrat, said: "The world has changed dramatically in Eastern Europe. But this proposal for **refugee** admissions reflects an attitude of business as usual."

Mr. **Bush**'s plans are set forth in a report titled "Proposed **Refugee** Admissions for Fiscal Year 1990," which will be the subject of at least four Congressional hearings later this week.

The report comes at a time when the **number** of **refugees** around the world has reached a record level of 14 million and many countries have adopted more restrictive admissions policies.

The Administration said it planned to admit 6,500 **refugees** from Eastern Europe, the same **number** allowed to come this year. A coalition of private voluntary organizations involved in **refugee** resettlement work has recommended the admission of 20,000 Eastern European **refugees** in the coming year.

The ceiling for Soviet **refugee** admissions, 43,500 this year, would rise to 50,000 under Mr. **Bush**'s proposal. But the United States Government would pay for only 40,000, leaving private groups to pay for the rest.

Congress has appropriated money to pay for all 43,500 this year, so the Federal financial commitment would actually decline in 1990 under the Administration proposal.

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Under the Refugee Act of 1980, the President, in consultation with Congress, sets an annual limit on the number of refugees who will be admitted to the United States. The number for the current fiscal year is 116,500.

Administration officials confirmed today that the State Department and the Justice Department were planning major changes in the review of refugee applications from Soviet Jews and evangelical Christians. Most Jews and Pentecostals leaving the Soviet Union have done so on Israeli visas; until recently, there was no alternative for those wishing to leave. Many traveled to Vienna and Rome, where their applications were reviewed by American immigration officers.

Under the Administration plan, the United States would, for the first time, rule on most Soviet refugee applications in Moscow. It would not review applications outside Moscow for any people who left the Soviet Union on Israeli visas issued after a certain date. The date could be as early as Sept. 30. After that date, Soviet applicants for Israeli visas would be told that they should apply to the American Embassy in Moscow if their ultimate destination was the United States. American officials would assume that Soviet citizens holding Israeli visas issued after Sept. 30 wanted to go to Israel.

Administration officials said that Soviet refugees waiting in Moscow, Vienna or Rome with visas issued on or before Sept. 30 could still come to the United States if they met other requirements.

In its report to Congress, the Administration said the Near East and South Asia had "the largest concentrations of refugees and displaced persons in the world: five million Afghans, four million Palestinians, one million Iranians, nearly 100,000 Iraqis."

But the Administration proposed to reduce the number of refugees from this region to 6,500 in 1990. The number this year was 7,000.

The Administration wants to increase admissions of African refugees, to 3,000 in 1990 from 2,000 this year.

For Latin America and the Caribbean, Mr. Bush proposed to keep the refugee ceiling at its current level, 3,500. Three thousand places are meant for Cuban political prisoners and their relatives. That leaves 500 places for the thousands who have fled Nicaragua and El Salvador.

Mr. Bush's plan continues to emphasize the resettlement of Indochinese refugees. Since 1975, the United States has admitted 857,000 Indochinese, accounting for two-thirds of all refugees admitted to this country in that period.

The Administration proposes to admit 51,500 refugees from East Asia in the coming year, up from the 50,000 authorized this year. Twenty-five thousand Indochinese, mostly Vietnamese and Laotians, would come to the United States from Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Hong Kong and other places where they have found temporary asylum. The other 26,500 would come directly from Vietnam, including Vietnamese jailed for political offenses because they once worked for the United States.

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