



NEWS RELEASE

December 21, 2001

INS Announces Suspension of Cambodian Adoptions and Offer of Parole in Certain Pending Cases

WASHINGTON D.C. – Expressing particular concern about the adoption process in two countries, Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) Commissioner James Ziglar today announced an immediate suspension of the processing of adoption petitions in Cambodia and a review of the adoption process in Vietnam. This suspension does not affect the thirty-two families that the Department of State (DOS) has scheduled for visa appointments in January in Cambodia.

“INS’ responsibility to determine that a child is truly an orphan must never be tainted by any action that results in the exploitation of innocent children by separating them from their biological families as a result of fraud, trafficking in human beings or other criminal activity,” said Commissioner Ziglar.

Building on that commitment, the Commissioner announced a series of initiatives to improve and strengthen the integrity of the adoption program, as follows:

- In conjunction with the DOS, the INS will enter into discussions with the Cambodian government to establish an adoption process that will protect the interests of the Cambodian people and prospective adoptive parents;
- Initiate a general review of international adoption procedures;
- Continue to work with the DOS to identify weaknesses in the process and implement the principles of the Hague Convention on foreign adoptions which regulates foreign country adoption procedures and international adoption agencies; and
- Host a summit with adoption agencies and advocacy groups to discuss international adoption issues and methods by which the INS and such agencies can give prospective parents a clear and realistic understanding of the international adoption process.

Thirteen families are currently involved in disputes over the validity of their orphan petitions with respect to children in Cambodia and Vietnam. These concerns were first identified by the U.S. embassy in Cambodia. The Commissioner announced that these families would be given the opportunity for parole into the United States of their prospective adoptive children, provided that they agree to certain conditions. The conditions offered are:

1. Subject to applicable state law, within two years these families must obtain legal U.S. adoptions in the state of their choice and they must report to INS quarterly on their progress in the adoption process; and
2. If at anytime during the adoption process the child is proven not to be an orphan or that the family will be unable to secure a legal adoption within the applicable period, the family must return the child to its country of birth.

“The suspension and the review I am announcing today will bring order to a troublesome situation. I have extended an offer to families caught in the middle while ensuring that the INS is not encouraging or perpetuating the stealing, selling or other exploitation of children,” said Commissioner Ziglar. “I would also like to take this opportunity to remind families considering adoption that there are many deserving children who are U.S. citizens that are in need of loving homes.”

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