



NEWS RELEASE

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Cambodia Adoption Review To Expand

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Cambodia Adoptions Task Force announced today a final expansion of the special humanitarian initiative that is currently underway in Cambodia to include a limited number of additional orphan adoption cases. The task force was established on March 1, 2002, to address the special circumstances of those prospective adoptive parents whose cases were pending on December 21, 2001, when the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) suspended U.S. orphan visa petition processing in Cambodia due to allegations of child trafficking in the Cambodian adoption process.

The initiative will now include those prospective adoptive parents who filed an I-600A application by December 31, 2001. To be eligible, the parents must have designated Cambodia by September 1, 2002. Additionally, a Cambodian child that is to be adopted must have been born on or before December 31, 2001.

"Our goal in the special humanitarian initiative has been to review on a case-by-case basis those Cambodian adoptions that were started prior to the suspension announced last December," said INS Commissioner James Ziglar. "The suspension was undertaken in the face of mounting evidence of baby trafficking, and the goal of the suspension was to encourage the establishment of a legitimate, transparent and consistent adoption process in Cambodia. I believe we now have a final resolution to this difficult situation."

The task force already has reviewed and cleared 152 children for adoption by 140 U.S. families to date. Although the initiative will continue to review qualifying adoption cases, the suspension of orphan visa petition processing in Cambodia will remain in effect until the Cambodian adoption process is more transparent and consistent with international adoption standards.

The initial phase of special humanitarian initiative reviewed orphan petitions filed by adopting parents who had completed the official Cambodian referral process prior to the Dec. 21st suspension. In May 2002, INS and the Department of State expanded the special humanitarian initiative to include those cases where an I-600A was approved before or soon after the suspension was announced and who had received an informal match with a particular Cambodian child prior to December 21.

Provided the Government of Cambodia agrees, the task force anticipates that it will be able to begin reviewing cases in the latest expansion of the initiative after completing the

cases currently under review. The process will continue the same as the cases currently under review: (1) the Cambodian government issues a decree for a specific child to be adopted by a particular parent, and (2) the task force conducts a case-by-case review to verify the adopted child qualifies for an orphan visa under U.S. law.

After the suspension, many prospective adoptive parents decided to pursue an adoption in a different country. The U.S. government is establishing a fund to cover some of the expenses that will be incurred if a prospective adoptive parent who would qualify for this expanded initiative decides to pursue an adoption from a country other than Cambodia. The U.S. government fund will cover the costs of a new I-600A application, an I-824, and new fingerprints. Specific details on the implementation of this fund are forthcoming.

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