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THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

FOR RELEASE AT THE CONCLUSION
OF THE SIGNING CEREMONY AT 2:30 PM (EDT)

October 22, 1982

The Amerasian Immigration Act of 1982
(S. 1698)

FACT SHEET

SUMMARY

The President today signed into law the Amerasian Immigration Act of 1982. This bill is an important humanitarian action on behalf of the thousands of children of Americans who served in Asia since 1950. By giving these children preferential status for admission to the United States, this legislation provides them with an alternative to the discrimination and inhumanity they are shown in their native countries because of their mixed race. The bill is the result of strong concern and support from the Executive Branch, the Congress, churches and voluntary agencies to help these children.

BACKGROUND

The bill provides that a child fathered by a United States citizen and born in Korea, Vietnam, Laos, Kampuchea or Thailand between January 1, 1950 and the date of enactment of the bill, may enter the United States as a permanent resident. To ensure that only eligible children receive special treatment, the bill establishes the following requirements:

- o A petition for admission as a permanent resident alien must be filed by or on behalf of the alien child and approved by the Attorney General.
- o A guarantee of legal custody and financial responsibility for the alien child must be signed in the presence of an immigration or consular officer by an individual who is 21 years of age or older, is of good moral character and is a citizen or permanent resident alien of the United States.
- o The sponsor must agree to furnish financial support to the applicant for five years after admission or until the child is 21 years of age. Financial support must be at a level equal to at least 125 percent of the official poverty line.
- o For children under the age of 18, sponsorship of the child must be arranged by a child welfare agency licensed in the United States and actively involved in international placement of children; and the child's mother or guardian must in writing irrevocably release the child for emigration.

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THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

October 22, 1982

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
IN SIGNING CEREMONY FOR
IMMIGRATION AND NATIONALITY ACT AMENDMENT

October 22, 1982

The Roosevelt Room

2:34 P.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: This is a happy occasion, I think, for all of us here. Today I'm signing into law legislation that comes to grips with a problem that I think should touch every American's heart.

During the last three decades when tens of thousands of our airmen, soldiers and Marines and sailors went to Southeast Asia and Korea to prevent aggression and protect the vital interests of our country, a number of Amerasian children were born.

And when the fathers returned to the United States, far too often innocent children were left without parent or without a country. Through no fault of their own, these children have frequently lived in the most wretched of circumstances and often have been ostracized in the lands of their birth.

Today it gives me great pleasure to sign Senate Bill 1698, a major step toward facing up to the moral responsibility that we can't ignore. This good and humane law -- and it is that -- recognizes the rightful claim of Amerasian children to American citizenship and permits their entry into our country after arrangements have been made for their care with families or with private organizations.

The sponsors of the legislation, Senator Jeremiah Denton and Congressman Stuart McKinney deserve a special word of thanks for their efforts to reunite these children with those who will love and care for them. And also my thanks to Father Alfred Kean who worked so hard for this bill. And really he brought it to the government's attention. Now he is not here, but his sister Judy is here, and with her are Julie and Scott Tripp, the adopted children of her sister and we also have Eddie Chey and Jeannie Choi who are students at Gonzaga University in Spokane. I'll bet they found out already that that is where Bing Crosby was a student. (Laughter.)

Americans have always opened their hearts to those coming from distant lands to make a new life here, to live in freedom and to improve their lot. In this case I think we should go a step further. Instead of saying welcome to these children, we should say welcome home.

And now I am going to sign this bill and make it official.

(The President signs the legislation.)

And I do so with a pen that can only write one word to make sure that it is the only place -- And there it is. It is all legal. (Applause.)

END

2:37 P.M. EDT