

# 'No obligation': Joe Biden opposed helping South Vietnamese refugees reach U.S. in 1970s

By [Victor Morton](#) - *The Washington Times* - Thursday, July 4, 2019

**Democratic presidential front-runner Joseph R. Biden**, who has denounced President Trump's efforts against Central American asylum-seekers, vigorously opposed resettling as refugees South Vietnamese who had helped the U.S. during the war.

The Washington Examiner [reported](#) Thursday, citing [records](#) from the administration of President [Gerald R. Ford](#), that as a U.S. senator, **Mr. Biden tried to deny refuge to hundreds of thousands fleeing the imminent North Vietnamese victory and likely Communist persecution.**

[Mr. Biden](#)'s arguments about refugees reverse what he and other Democrats now insist are the only moral stances, saying that the U.S. had "no obligation, moral or otherwise, to evacuate foreign nationals," the Examiner reported.

**"The United States has no obligation to evacuate one — or 100,001 — South Vietnamese,"** Mr. Biden said then.

In an April 1975 meeting at the White House with Ford and several of his top foreign-policy officials including Henry Kissinger, Mr. Biden said he would not vote to fund evacuation of non-Americans.

"We should focus on getting [U.S. troops] out. Getting the Vietnamese out and military aid for the [South Vietnam's government] are totally different," he said.

Mr. Kissinger told Mr. Biden and others in the Senate delegation that there were anywhere from 170,000 to a million South Vietnamese "to whom we have an obligation," but the Delaware senator, a member of the Foreign Relations Committee, denied that.

**"I will vote for any amount for getting the Americans out. I don't want it mixed with getting the Vietnamese out," Mr. Biden said,** speaking two weeks before the fall of Saigon.

This angered Ford, calling such a refusal a betrayal of American values in terms similar to what Democrats say about Mr. Trump in 2019. "We opened our door to the Hungarians. ... Our tradition is to welcome the oppressed," Ford said.

In a Miami Herald op-ed column last month, Mr. Biden called the Trump administration's efforts to keep out or discourage asylum seekers at the border, "actions that subvert American values." Mr. Biden didn't get his way on opening American doors to endangered South Vietnamese. He was one of only three Foreign Relations panel members to vote against Ford's funding request and one of just 14 to do so on the Senate floor.

More than 130,000 South Vietnamese fleeing the victorious Communists were eventually evacuated and granted refuge in the U.S.

## 'Floppy Joe' Biden Fought to Keep Vietnam War Refugees Out of America

In 1975, 'liberal' Democrat Biden declared: 'The US has no obligation'

By: [Jay Greenberg](#)

***2020 Democratic presidential hopeful and open borders advocate "Floppy Joe" Biden, once fought to block tens of thousands of South Vietnamese refugees, who had helped the United States during the Vietnam War, from entering America, declaring: "The US has no obligation."***

Back in 1975, Senator Joe Biden was adamant that the United States had "no obligation, moral or otherwise, to evacuate foreign nationals," dismissing concerns for their safety as the North Vietnamese Army and Viet Cong swept south toward Saigon.

Almost 40 years later, his position was in stark contrast to the one he took over Iraqi and Afghan interpreters who had worked with American forces.

"We owe these people," Tony Blinken, Biden's then-top foreign policy adviser said in 2012.

According to the Washington Examiner, Biden said in 2015 that keeping Syrian refugees out of the U.S. would be a win for ISIS and tweeted in 2017 that "we must protect, support, and welcome refugees" to maintain the promise of America.

As South Vietnam collapsed at the end of the Vietnam War in the spring of 1975, President Gerald Ford and the U.S. government undertook to evacuate thousands of South Vietnamese families who had assisted the U.S. throughout the war.

### **The leading voice in the Senate opposing this rescue effort was then-Sen. Joe Biden.**

Hundreds of thousands of South Vietnamese allies were in danger of recriminations from the Communists, but Biden insisted that *"the United States has no obligation to evacuate one — or 100,001 — South Vietnamese."* In April 1975, Ford argued that, as the last American troops were removed from the country, the U.S. should evacuate the South Vietnamese who had helped the U.S. during the war, too.

*"The United States has had a long tradition of opening its doors to immigrants of all countries ... And we've always been a humanitarian nation,"* Ford said.

*"We felt that a number of these South Vietnamese had been very loyal to the United States and deserved an opportunity to live in freedom."*



But Biden objected and called for a meeting between the president and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to voice his objections to Ford's funding request for these efforts.

Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, who led the meeting, told the senators that "the total list of the people endangered in Vietnam is over a million" and that "the irreducible list is 174,000."

Biden said U.S. allies should not be rescued: "We should focus on getting them [the U.S. troops] out. "Getting the Vietnamese out and military aid for the GVN [South Vietnam's government] are totally different."

Kissinger said there were "Vietnamese to whom we have an obligation," but "liberal" Biden responded: "I will vote for any amount for getting the Americans out.

"I don't want it mixed with getting the Vietnamese out."

Ford was upset with Biden's response, believing that failing to evacuate the South Vietnamese would be a betrayal of American values: "We opened our door to the Hungarians ... Our tradition is to welcome the oppressed.

"I don't think these people should be treated any differently from any other people — the Hungarians, Cubans, Jews from the Soviet Union."

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee recommended that the bill be passed by the full Senate by a vote of 14 to 3. Biden was one of just three senators on the committee who voted nay.

The conference report also passed the Senate as a whole by a vote of 46-17, where Biden again **voted against it.**

Saigon fell on April 30, 1975, and hundreds of thousands of South Vietnamese who did not manage to escape the country were eventually sent to reeducation camps, where they were often abused, tortured, or killed.

Julia Taft, who headed the U.S.'s Inter-Agency Task Force on Indochinese Refugee Resettlement in 1975, **told NPR** in 2007 that the refugees should have been helped.

"I mean, they'd worked with us," she said.

"They'd been translators. They'd been employees. They'd been part of the South Vietnamese army, which was an ally, and just general victims of the whole chaos."

Despite opposition from Biden, and from other leading Democrats at the time, the U.S. military evacuated over 130,000 Vietnamese refugees in the immediate wake of the collapse of South Vietnam, and hundreds of thousands more were resettled inside the U.S. in the following years.

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