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Historic flight heads for Vietnam

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PART of a historic trip commemorating the 30-year anniversary of "Operation Babylift," a World Airways plane departed Sunday from Atlanta's Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport bound for Vietnam.

On-board were 21 Vietnamese adoptees returning to Ho Chi Minh City for a special two-day visit where they will tour the city and will be honored at a special banquet in the Unification Palace.

?Thirty years ago, World Airways airlifted 57 orphans from Saigon and brought them to the United States to be adopted by American families,? a World Airways release stated, adding it contacted 21 of those children, now adults, and invited them for this special trip aboard one of World's modern MD-11 wide-body passenger aircraft, specially painted with the company's former red and white design and logo from 1975.? ?Several of the invited adoptees were on that historic World flight on April 2, 1975.?

That flight to California led to an even larger Operation Babylift effort by the U.S. government throughout the month of April 1975, transporting more than 3,000 children, the customized transportation services provider added.

"After two years of planning, we are finally on our way for what will be the second journey of a lifetime for many of these individuals," said Randy Martinez, chief executive officer of World Air Holdings, Inc. "It's an honor to help make this trip happen, and the two days we will spend in Ho Chi Minh City will truly be memorable."

The adoptees and Martinez were joined on the trip by several invited guests, including Ross Meador, who placed the 57 children on the 1975 flight from an orphanage he managed for Friends of the Children of Vietnam (FCVN), World Airways pilots Ken Healy and Bill Keating, who flew the original flight out of Saigon under dangerous conditions, and other members of the original crew and several ground support employees are taking part in the special trip.

The group will return to the US on July 17.

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