

Jonestown Mail Flooded State Dept.

By T.R. Reid

Washington Post Staff Writer
Of all the lapses of international affairs that might prompt people to write to the U.S. State Department, the one that might be the most mail this year yet, an obscure religious community in the jungles of Northern Guyana.

That community, which emerged from its obscurity with brutal suddenness last year, was the Peoples Temple settlement known as Jonestown, founded four years ago by the Rev. Jim Jones and members of his Peoples Temple church.

Between January and August of this year, the department said, it received more than 1,200 letters about the Guyana colony. More than 60 people, mostly from left-wing and radical mass-mail campaigns, mailed the settlement and asked the Peoples Temple which also ran a health center, to be charged that Jonestown's residents were being held against their will and tortured by army of guards.

The flood of mail to the secretary of state, supplemented by scores of inquiries from members of Congress and other officials who had received mail about Jonestown, almost surely will be cited in the months to come as public and private organizations look into one of the mysteries of the mass murder-suicide at Jonestown last weekend: why the U.S. Embassy in Georgetown, Guyana, was unaware of the bizarre practices that were reportedly common at the settlement.

State Department officials, under lengthy questioning from reporters, have defended the embassy's action, reviewing in detail its efforts to learn the truth about the colony.
For the moment, however, the department is concentrating on the aftermath of the tragedy. A special oper-

ations center, staffed by consular officers, found the clock has been stopped and coordinated the work of military personnel at the site of the massacre. The military is employing technical staff for handling jungle messengers, an army grades identification and is working to identify the bodies. The center will be turned over to Jonestown's 20,000 people.

State Department officials reported that the military is employing technical staff for handling jungle messengers, an army grades identification and is working to identify the bodies. The center will be turned over to Jonestown's 20,000 people.

A California television station Tuesday night read an "unofficial" list of names of the dead, prompting an explosion of calls to the State Department early yesterday. The department would not verify any of the names on the list.

A smaller mystery about Jonestown cropped up Monday when the Guyanese Embassy released a list of 38 names of Americans who it said had written character references for Jones when he asked permission to start his colony.

Most of those on the list said they had no record or recollection of such correspondence.

The embassy said yesterday that Jones had provided letters from 115 of the 39. The remaining references were cited on a list Jones gave the Guyanese Government.

In reviewing its reaction to complaints about the Peoples Temple settlement, the State Department said that officers from the embassy in Guyana had interviewed about 75 Jonestown residents to ask about charges of abuse.

Many were questioned privately in an open field with no other members of the cult present, the department said. But none of those questioned provided any evidence of abuses, the department's spokesman said.