

WXPost
87 Refugees
MAY 3 1975
Return to
Cambodia

ARANYAPRATHET, Thailand, May 30—Eighty-seven Cambodian refugees, most of them military men, voluntarily returned to Cambodia today after six weeks of exile in Thailand. Many said they were going back because they had left their families behind.

"We're not afraid to go back to be ruled by the Khmer Rouge, even if we have to be forced to work in the jungles," said Group Capt. Kong Lach, who served in the Cambodian air force for 14 years before the country fell to the Communists April 17.

Chai Suwan, the chief Cambodian immigration officer at the border village of Poipet, said all of the returnees would be taken to Phnom Penh by truck for what he called "Khmer Rouge-style indoctrination."

"Everyone has to go through this before we let them see their families and then go to work for our country," he said.

Khmer Rouge soldiers standing in rows shook hands with the refugees before they were taken to trucks for the trip to the capital.

The 82 men, three women and two children were driven to this border town from Utapao Air Base in Southern Thailand, where they had been living in a U.S.-run refugee camp.

The U.S. embassy said about 1,350 Cambodian refugees have been flown to the United States and another 750 are still living under U.S. sponsorship at Utapao.