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Detainees
MAY 1 1975
Awaited
In Thailand

From News Dispatches

ARANYAPRATHET, Thailand, April 30 — The first of about 610 foreigners, who have spent the past 12 days in deteriorating conditions in Phnom Penh's French embassy, were believed Wednesday night to be on their way to Thailand by truck.

French officials at this point just across the border from the Cambodian town of Potpet said the first group was not expected to reach the border before Thursday.

A French embassy official in Bangkok, when asked about a statement by the French government spokesman in Paris saying the first evacuees already had crossed the border, said, "It's not true at all."

About 120 persons, most of them women, children and the sick, were expected in the first group. Red Cross workers at the border said many of the refugees were believed to be suffering from dysentery.

According to a report reaching here, the refugees were reported to be staying overnight at Sisophon, a small town about 30 miles from the frontier. The refugees, according to reports received at Aranyaprathet were said to be aboard five trucks for the 12-hour journey between Phnom Penh and the border, a distance of 225 miles over bad roads.

France had asked the Khmer Rouge to allow the refugees to leave by plane because so many of them were in poor health. This was turned down Tuesday and the overland trek was ordered. A French presidential communique said the

journey "runs counter to international law" and Foreign Minister Jean Sauvagnargues said the journey could kill some.

"They are in deplorable health, especially considering the conditions in which their evacuation" is being carried out, said Sauvagnargues. "These conditions could imperil the lives of some of them."

The foreigners, who sought refuge in the French embassy compound when the Cambodian capital was taken over the Khmer Rouge insurgents, were mostly long-term French residents.

They also include 110 persons of other nationalities—United Nations and relief organization officials, diplomats, doctors and journalists.

Thai soldiers closed the border at dusk and told waiting diplomats and journalists to move to the immigration post 300 yards back from the border for a night vigil.

At nightfall three air-conditioned buses arrived and were parked to await the evacuees.

Officials here said those in good health would be taken by bus to Bangkok while the sick would be treated in Aranyaprathet hospital.

Sources in the French embassy in Bangkok stressed they had not had any communication with the embassy in Phnom Penh since last Saturday and there was no firm confirmation that the first group of evacuees had begun the drive across Cambodia this morning.