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Pendleton exodus begins

Associated Press

CAMP PENDLETON — After two weeks of being crowded to capacity, the "Little Saigon" refugee camp more slowly began to empty yesterday.

Some 250 Vietnamese and Cambodian refugees were given permission to leave.

They were on a list of 10,644 who worked for the U.S. government.

Persons appearing this list are being granted security clearance without having to be screened by federal agencies in Washington.

For thousands of the refugees, security clearance has become part of a forced waiting game. They also must wait for sponsors to be found, for permission to leave, and in lines for food, medical attention and processing.

There are reports of depression and despair among the refugees because of the uncertainty of their situations.

Six Vietnamese have signed a list saying that they wanted to go back to their native country.