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Gold Buyers, Bankers Gather at

By Bill Richards

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Ft. INDIANTOWN GAP, Pa., May 30—Bankers and gold changers have set up operation at this central Pennsylvania refugee camp and they said today they expect thousands of Vietnamese refugees arriving here to be carrying several million dollars worth of gold with them.

"We need 2½ million dollars in deposits just to make our operation break even and we've listed that on our application for operation," said Harvey B. Witmoyer, executive vice president of the American Bank and Trust Co. of Pennsylvania. The bank opened a branch today in a shed about 100 yards from the barracks

where an estimated 15,000 refugees will be housed.

The bank estimates a \$98-000 profit on \$2.5 million in checking and savings deposits, Witmoyer said. He said the bank will also be handling deposits for some 2,000 military employees stationed here temporarily to handle the refugee inflow. But the prime reason for the operation, he said, will be the plane-loads of refugees who began arriving Wednesday from Guam where many have been housed in tents for the last month.

The refugee flights have carried a mixed group of Vietnamese, some have virtually nothing on their backs but secondhand clothes they picked up in Guam and

some carrying suitcases, applicances and sacks of clothing and other personal belongings.

Officials of the international gold-buying house of the Deak-Perera Group, which opened for business next to the bank, said their experience during the last month in similar gold-buying operations at other U.S. refugee camps in California, Arkansas, Florida and on Guam led them to expect a substantial amount of gold here.

"We didn't know what to expect at the other camps but it turned out that he refugees we encountered were not poor people," said Nicholas Deak, president of the gold-buying firm.

While it lacks the niceties

of the ordinary suburban banking operation, the branch here is functional. A blue armored car is pulled up to the door of the one-story shed where the bank is located and Army-issue desks have been moved in to weigh the gold on.

Lars Hansson, the manager of the Deak office here, said that most of the Vietnamese carry their gold in "taels" a thin pliable strip weighing slightly more than an ounce and worth between \$170 and \$180, that can be easily molded and carried almost anywhere.

"In the other camps the refugees seem to be carrying them everywhere," said Deak. "They pull them out of their pockets, their shoes, their belts and their bras."

Pennsylvania Refugee Center

About 2,000 refugees have already arrived here and local military officials said they expect between 14,000 and 15,000 will have arrived at the camp by the end of next week. Military officials in Washington said today that figure could go to more than 20,000. There is strong pressure on the Refugee Task Force, which is overseeing the processing and placement of the Vietnamese, to move some 62,000 refugees now on Guam into U.S. camps as quickly as possible because of the imminent arrival of the Western Pacific typhoon season.

While officials here have said that they expect the refugees to move through the camp fairly rapidly, officials of the new bank

branch here said they were told they might be handling Vietnamese accounts here for up to two years.

Eleanor Green, spokesman for the Refugee Task Force in Washington, said that the congressionally mandated screening system to weed out possible undesirables from the refugees had been streamlined in recent days and this could speed the refugee flow through all the camps and into new homes in the U.S.

Several hundred of what task force officials are calling "hits," or potential undesirables, have been picked out by matching refugee name lists with the files from the various agencies including some lists of names that were compiled

by the Saigon police and shipped out from the capital by the State Department before Vietnam fell last month.

Some 40,000 Vietnamese have already been cleared through the screening process, according to a task force spokesman, and are awaiting U.S. sponsors to vouch for them so they can leave the refugee camps. About 18,000 potential sponsors are being informally screened before they can be matched with a refugee family, said the official.

Some refugees who were brought here from Camp Pendleton, Calif. said poorer refugees with large families were being told there by volunteer agency workers to

split up their families in order to increase their chances of getting placed outside the camp with American sponsors.

Nguyen Van Linh, a fisherman who escaped from the Vietnamese port of Vung Tau on his fishing boat April 29, said here today that he had considered the possibility of splitting up his 14 family members, ranging from a month-old infant to his grandparents.

"I would most like to go back to fishing, maybe in Florida," he said as his family filled out background questionnaires in Vietnamese and had their fingerprints taken by refugee processors in a former Army mess hall here on the base.