

Thailand Shifts 300 Refugees to Camp Near U.S. Base

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Special to The New York Times

BANGKOK, Thailand, June 23

—The Government closed a refugee camp in southern Thailand today and transferred its 300 inhabitants to another camp near the U Taphao air base.

The move was viewed here as part of efforts to keep close track of the remaining refugees from South Vietnam and Cambodia, who are becoming an increasing embarrassment as Thailand seeks to establish relations with Communist countries.

The refugees from Songkhla, on the Malay Peninsula, many of whom have been in a squalid camp on the water's edge since

they landed six weeks ago, were carried by ship to Sattahip. There they joined 800 other South Vietnamese still awaiting acceptance in the United States or elsewhere.

At U Taphao, which is on the Gulf of Thailand, another planeload of Cambodian refugees evacuated from Phnom Penh nearly two months ago, 165 this time, left for the United States. Only 64 of the Cambodian contingent evacuated by the Americans, for which the United States has accepted responsibility, remain at the base. More than 2,000 were sent to Camp Pendleton, Calif., and most of those have been resettled.

The refugees at Songkhla had

been surrounded by picket fences and security guards, but there was considerable contact with the local populace, and Thai officials were understood to want that stopped. A Western diplomat said: "They are particularly concerned that some could just drift off and take up residence in Thailand without strict controls."

After Phnom Penh and Saigon fell to the Communists, Thailand said that she would allow Cambodian and South Vietnamese refugees to stay no more than a month.

In many cases that restriction has long since been breached, and Thai officials are understood to be uneasy.

Officials have indicated to the press that the refugees

might be sent home, but there is no evidence that the Government is moving in that direction.

The subject has arisen in talks between Thailand and North Vietnam on diplomatic relations, and Premier Kukrit Pramoj plans to leave soon for Peking to establish relations.

American officials have said that many of the refugees may ultimately be accepted by the United States. Repeated requests from Washington for detailed data on them have been delaying their departure.

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