

WXPost
200 Viet Refugees
Start Return Trip

By Nguyen Anh Tuyet
United Press International

CAMP PENDLETON, Calif., July 4 — Some 200 Vietnamese refugees boarded air force planes for Asia today, following 50 persons who started the trip home Thursday.

One of those leaving the United States on Independence Day was Le Van Truong, 23, who refused a sponsor and a job repairing trailers in Los Angeles to return to his village in the Mekong Delta.

"I prefer to go back to Cantho where my parents and my six brothers and sisters are now living," Truong explained. "I don't want to think of what is going to happen to me now."

A U.S. military spokesman said 100 repatriates boarded two C-141 cargo planes early today at the El Toro Marine Air Station for the 16-hour flight to Guam, where they

will wait for entry papers to South Vietnam.

Another 100 refugees were scheduled to leave later in the day.

The refugees who left for Guam Thursday were the first to leave of an estimated 600 Vietnamese who said they wanted to go home. Most are soldiers who either were flown inadvertently to the United States during the evacuation last April or decided after a few weeks in refugee camps that they are incompatible with American life.

Truong was an air force accountant at Cantho Air Base when the Communist take over forced his unit to flee by boat to Thailand. He was swept into the refugee pipeline and spent the last two

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months in exile in the United States waiting for word to go home.

Truong first said he wanted to go home because he felt lonely and had nobody to care for him. A trailer mechanic offered him a job and housing but Truong said he wants to rejoin his family.

The repatriates today included two babies.

American officials said they did not know how long the refugees returning to South Vietnam would stay on Guam. U.N. representatives there are waiting for final approval

from the Saigon government to fly the refugees home. During their stay on Guam, they will be treated the same as refugees on the island waiting to come to the United States.

Meanwhile, thousands of other Vietnamese refugees at this Marine base turned out today to celebrate their first American Independence Day competing in traditional games and athletic contests and listening to five military bands.

The Vietnamese, who count birthdays and anniversaries one year in advance of Americans, counted this Fourth of July as the 200th birthday of the United States instead of the 199th, making them one year early for the American bicentennial.

Each refugee section here put on "typical" American games that do not figure in the Vietnamese social life. The contests included dart throws at balloons, Ping-Pong ball "squirt-offs," horseshoe pitching, beanbag and softball throwing, basketball tossing, and a walk for cookies.