

Many Refugees Are Reluctant to Leave the

By DOUGLAS E. KNEELAND
Special to The New York Times

CAMP PENDLETON, Calif., July 21—The effort to resettle more than 130,000 Vietnamese and Cambodians has run into a new problem—a growing reluctance of many refugees to leave the relative familiarity and security of the four military bases in this country in which they are being housed.

Large numbers, perhaps most, of the approximately 75,000 who remain on bases in this country, the Pacific or Asia, are chafing under the routine existence of the camps as they await sponsors to help them start a new life. But officials involved with the program are reporting a spreading of what some call "camp-itis."

They describe this as a rising fear of the unknown world outside, adding that it appeared to have the most effect on the less well-educated and least sophisticated refugees, especially those with little or no English.

Widespread at Pendleton

Even in this Southern California Marine base, where most of the newcomers are living not in barracks but in crowded tents that they generally describe as too hot by day and too cold by night, the "camp-itis" is acknowledged to be widespread.

Nicholas G. W. Thorne, senior civil coordinator here of the President's Interagency Task Force on Indochina refugees, explained: "Basically it is because in Vietnam we were the guys who were always in a hurry, we were always pushing them. So when they stay here three to six weeks, our behavior is atypical. So they get suspicious. They think the American public is hostile."

Shaking his head sympathetically, the sandy-haired Foreign Service officer added:

"They realize when they pas-

out of this camp that this is the last bit of Vietnam they're going to see—or Cambodia."

Joseph N. Battaglia, who heads the United States Catholic Conference's resettlement operation here, agreed.

"Some of them don't want sponsors," he said. "They just don't want to go. After they're in a camp long enough, they develop a form of camp-itis—"

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... of camp-itis and security."

Ruth I. Dieck, co-director of the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service effort here, attributed the fear of moving that has developed to the length of time it has taken to find sponsors for the refugees.

"The longer they're here, the worse it is," she said. "If we'd been able to move them out that first month, I don't think we'd have had half the problems we've had."

"I think the Vietnamese people are kind of bewildered," said Gloria Rosenbaum of the United Hias Service. "I think a lot of them are very, very frightened when they leave the camp. A lot of them were middle-class people who came out with nothing but their clothes."

"There are a lot of them here who don't want to leave," agreed Joseph P. Aggergard,

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Resettled

who runs Washington State's refugee office here. "They're here with their own people and they feel secure."

And Edward C. Burke, who directs the state's Intermediate Center for Refugees at Camp Murray, a National Guard base near Tacoma and who has been visiting here, said the prob-

lem was even worse there.

"They don't want to move out of Murray," he said. "That's our difficulty. They're secure. They're with their countrymen. They have access to shopping. They're getting their driver's licenses. They keep hiding on you when you're trying to match them with a sponsor."

On the Vietnamese side, Nguyen Luan, a 51-year old management consultant from Saigon who had been associated with Americans in a dairy and a laundry business and speaks English well, said he had heard many refugees, especially the less sophisticated, expressing fears about what



The New York Times
Nguyen Luan, an interpreter, pointing out a location on a poster at Camp Pendleton, Calif., to a refugee family. The billboard gives information on Colombia for people who may wish to settle there.

would happen when they left camp.

"There are many people who will want to stay in the camp," he said "This program of sponsorship will only be successful if there is current participation by the Vietnamese side. They must be kept together.

"They are very much afraid. They are very uncertain about the future. A lot of them are afraid to leave."

He said he knew about 50 persons who had received letters from friends who had gone out into various parts of the country under sponsorship and that many had written that they were "very disappointed."

Cold Weather a Problem

A spokesman for the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in New York said that a number of persons who had cleared the camps and been resettled under sponsors had written and asked to join the 2,400 refugees who are seeking repatriation.

He said the office had received "60-odd" requests so far from persons not in the camps, but that most had been from students or others stranded in the United States when South Vietnam fell to the Communists at the end of April, rather than from resettled refugees.

He said those who wanted to return were being told to ask the American Red Cross for help in arranging transportation to Camp Pendleton, where they will be processed before being sent to Guam. Nearly all the repatriates are being kept on Guam to await their acceptance by the new Government in Saigon.

The United Nations official said that most of those who had been resettled and changed their minds had not expressed disenchantment with their situation in this country.

"A number of them men-

tioned that their sponsors had been very kind to them," he went on. "It's simply that very many of them have family members in Vietnam, and they want to return to their families. Others want to go back and work for their country."

Another problem the resettlement agencies have encountered, particularly here at Camp Pendleton, is the resistance among the refugees to being sent to any area that has cold winters.

"None of them want to leave California," said Mrs. Dieck, the Lutheran official, "which is a real problem. All they can think of is that it's cold here in these tents at night, and they don't want to go where it's colder yet. If they don't want to go, we can't force them, but we explain to them that it means they might have to sit here many weeks more. California is pretty well saturated already."

Of the more than 25,000 refugees who have passed through here, nearly 94,000 are known to have settled in California. Washington, with its active recruitment and placement policy, has attracted more than 1,200. Texas, which the refugees have heard is warm, is in third place among the states with about 1,150.

Dec. 31 Termination Date

Mr. Thorne, the senior civil coordinator, said that the reluctance to leave camp or to move from California had not hurt the resettlement program as yet, but "only because Herculean efforts have been made to overcome it" through "counseling."

Moreover, at a time when officials of the task force and of the voluntary agencies agree that the number of sponsorship inquiries is dropping sharply, those working with the re-

fugees say they can usually find someone willing to accept an offer if another person turns it down.

Task Force officials report that about 700 refugees are still being moved out of the four United States camps every day and that if this average is continued they will meet their latest goal of closing out the operation by Dec. 31. The camps, in addition to the one at Pendleton, are at Fort Chaffee, Ark., Eglin Air Force Base, Fla., and Fort Indiantown Gap, Pa.

A number of executives in the voluntary agencies are skeptical that the goal will be met, but Mr. Thorne noted that 55,000, or 43 per cent, of the refugees had been resettled already.

"This has been done in about 11 weeks," he said, "and when you compare this to the 40,000 Hungarians in 1956, it took 14 months to resettle them."

Still, he conceded that lack of sponsorships could slow the process.

"There's no question in my mind we're going to have plenty of sponsors if we're willing to wait," he said. "The way to move refugees quicker is to get state and local governments into the act and corporate sponsorships."

However, despite a turn by the task force away from the emphasis on individual sponsors toward a determined effort to encourage more government units to participate, only Maine so far has followed the example of Washington State, agreeing recently to sponsor 300 refugees. And while the voluntary agencies have reported a rise in the number of church and community groups offering sponsorships, very few corporations are said to have expressed any interest in helping the refugees.