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Last Viet refugees leave Pendleton

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CAMP PENDLETON — The last 11 Vietnamese have left for their new homes, ending for this Marine base six months of serving as the temporary home for more than 50,000 war refugees.

Once a bustling tent city with a peak population of 18,500, the camp was a virtual ghost town following the departure of Liang Suy Lang and 10 members of his family for Los Angeles. They only recently arrived through the long

pipeline from Vietnam.

The last of several thousand tents, erected in April to house the refugees, was struck and stored. Temporary telephone poles and lines were torn down. Streets were swept clean.

"Hopefully with a good winter, the grass will grow over and the camp will be the same as it was before they arrived," a Marine spokesman said.

During the six months and

two days of operation, the refugee camp processed 50,418 Vietnamese and Cambodians made homeless with the collapse of the war in Southeast Asia. Eight died, seven of natural causes including one 109-year-old woman, and a Cambodian who committed suicide. There were 165 births.

In the closing days of the camp, persuading the refugees to leave became more of a problem than the earlier one of finding sponsors.