Mercy medics leaving S.F. to help Cambodia

By Carl Irving

A 15-member medical team from the Bay Area leaves for the Cambodian border Thursday as the first organized medical group from the United States to deal with the plight of hundreds of thousands of refugees.

Supported by the International Refugee Committee and private donations from the Bay Area, the group will be flown to Bangkok, the capital of Thailand, and trucked to the Cambodian border four hours away.

Eventually, supplemented by other Bay Area doctors, nurses and paramedics, the group expects to establish a field hospital capable of handling 400 patients a day, with equipment from the Army's Fort Ord near Monterey.

John Coakley, from the International Refugee Committee, the nation's leading non-sectarian voluntary agency helping refugees, said this was the first medical group to go to the border from the United States. Coakley said a dozen American physicians and a number of others from abroad were treating refugees as best they could under makeshift conditions.

The hastily organized effort here came amid reports that war, genocide, famine and disease had killed 3.3 million people during the last decade in Cambodia. Two million face starvation and thousands are dying every month, according to the State Department.

The government of Vietnam has agreed to relief by way of the Cambodian capital of Phnom Penh, which it controls, but will not let relief supplies from there be transported to the refugees in the Thai border areas controlled by the guerrilla supporters of the deposed Pol Pot regime.

The Bay Area medical group, headed by two doctors, who will be joined by two more later this month, will be situated near the latter area, where starving refugees pour into Thailand.

Drs. John Goldenring, a pediatrician at Children's Hospital in Oakland, and Donald Rooke, clinical director for the Overseas Medical Center in San Francisco, spent last night ordering antibiotics, food supplements, immunizing drugs and bandages. Malnutrition, accompanied by infectious diseases, such as malaria, plague and diphtheria, will await them.

Experienced relief organizers warned the group last night during a meeting at the U.S. Public Health Service Hospital in San Francisco that starving babies will be the most serious immediate problem. Malnutrition is killing them at a rapid rate near the Thai border.

Other members of the group scheduled to depart from Travis Air Force Base on a Flying Tiger plane Thursday:

Christine Leverman, pediatric nurse who has served in Vietnam, from San Francisco General Hospital; Mary McCutcheon, nurse from the poison center at Mission Emergency Hospital in San Francisco; Andrea Kmetz, from the Alta Bates emergency unit in Berkeley; Judith Paul, nurse, a specialist with the dying, who has worked in India; Judy Greenberg, nurse, a specialist in midwifery and pediatrics from Alta Bates; Irene Vatockas, nurse formerly with Presbyterian Hospital in San Francisco; Karen Kremer, nurse from Presbyterian; Michael Grant, paramedic with San Francisco's city ambulance emergency units; Stephanq Maisonville, pediatric nurse at Children's Hospital in Oakland; Denise Voelker, San Francisco paramedic; Jose Clevenger, nurse at Oakland Pediatric Hospital; Michelle Carsten, Army paramedic; and Kathy Duffy, nurse at the University of California Hospital in San Francisco.

In interviews, members of the group said they volunteered because of the horrendous reports of starvation and disease and lack of medical aid in the area.

"I'm very upset about what's going on," said Rooke, 43, who previously had done refugee work in Central and South America. "The magnitude of this disaster is impossible to grasp. I thought I could help spark a medical program from this region."

Rooke, formerly a pediatrician, will be separated from his family for about two months. His colleague, Goldenring, 27, had been in Bangkok a few weeks ago and decided to participate after viewing the situation.

"It's a holocaust," said Richard Blanchfield, who helped organize the group and recently spent several weeks along the border. Blanchfield, who was a paramedic in Vietnam, is arranging to obtain a 200-bed field hospital.

United Nations Secretary General Kurt Waldheim yesterday said the member nations had pledged about $50 million in aid to the refugees in Thailand from among the $210 million expected for total Cambodian relief. The U.S. pledge is about $69 million.

Maria Eitz, one of the organizers, acknowledged that the group would offer only a "drop in the bucket, but it will be an ocean for whomever we reach." Eitz, who has adopted a 5-year-old Cambodian girl, operates a home for abused children in San Francisco.

Eitz helped organize an airlift for Vietnamese orphans in 1975. She is being assisted by John Berwald, former Palo Alto city councilman and Chevron executive. Berwald said the group planned to get 320 Bay Area medical people to take three-month tours to operate the field hospital after it's established.

Volunteers may call either Eitz at 661-8666 or Berwald at 864-6551 or may write to Berwald care of Rescue Now, Room 309, 555 Market St., San Francisco, 94105.

Berwald also is asking for donations from individuals and corporations to be mailed to the Market Street address.

Examiner: Nicole Bengiveno

PLANNING MEDICAL ASSISTANCE FOR REFUGEES
Judy Greenberg, John Goldenring, Donald Rooke

'A moral issue'

Mrs. Carter's refugee visit

WASHINGTON (UPI) — First lady Rosalynn Carter will fly to Thailand tomorrow to inspect Cambodian refugee camps and help focus world attention on the starvation and suffering there.

"I can see that there are several reasons for me to go," the first lady said after meeting with top officials of international refugee and relief agencies. "It's one of the moral issues of our time. It's an international issue. We can't let people starve. We can focus world opinion on it . . . in order to get action."

As her husband's representative, Mrs. Carter will visit the camps, consult with Thai Prime Minister Kriangsak Chomanan and his Cabinet, and meet with international relief agency officials, according to a statement issued by her office.

Officials said she will "look at ways to increase the flow of relief supplies and food . . . and report her findings to the president in order to help accelerate effective support for the international relief programs."

Mrs. Carter leaves tomorrow morning and will return Saturday. She will be accompanied by Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs Richard Holbrooke and Surgeon General Julius Richmond.

President Carter was expected soon to name a replacement for former Sen. Dick Clark, who resigned as refugee coordinator to join Sen. Edward Kennedy's presidential campaign.

Meanwhile, the Cambodian government was maneuvering to press Washington and other governments to deal with it on famine relief in an apparent bid to get recognition for the Vietnamese-backed regime.

Cambodian leader Heng Samrin sent his first delegate to the United Nations, giving officials the choice of discussing or forgetting the distribution of $210 million in aid pledged for a U.N. sponsored program to feed the millions of starving Cambodians.

The relief pledges made yesterday were humanitarian, but an undercurrent of politics surfaced.

Secretary of State Vance announced a U.S. contribution of $69 million to the one-year program and urged delegates to cast diplomacy and politics aside because, "First of all, we are human beings."

The $69 million had been promised earlier by President Carter.

But before leaving for Washington, Vance met with Vietnamese Ambassador Ha Van Lau, who said he told Vance, "If the U.S. and the American people wanted to help, they should contact the government of Kampuchea (Cambodia)."

Van Lau said Cambodia would not permit U.S.-proposed overland relief from Thailand and said a Cambodian-Vietnamese agreement to open the Mekong River for relief barges is sufficient to feed the needy.

He claimed the number of refugees was largely "exaggerated" in the West and there were actually only 300,000 Cambodians who needed help.

The Vietnamese-led invasion last winter that overthrew the Pol Pot regime and fighting between Pol Pot loyalists and government troops has caused widespread famine in Cambodia and mass migrations into Thailand.

The United Nations still recognizes Pol Pot as Cambodia's legal representative. U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Donald McHenry said the Cambodian delegation was issued tourist visas to emphasize that no recognition of the Phnom Penh government exists.

But Sens. Max Baucus, D-Mont; John C. Danforth, R-Mo., and James R. Sasser, D-Tenn., who came with Vance, did confer with the delegation. For Samrin, this represented a form of de facto recognition.

The General Assembly opens a three-day debate on Cambodia on Monday.

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2) Your entry must be an original work of art.
3) Any medium: paint, charcoal, pen & ink, crayon or mixed media may be used.
4) Your entry must be no larger or smaller than 8½x11 inches.
5) All entries become the property of the sponsors and will not be returned.
6) Your design will be judged by a panel of experts on originality, use of color, design and implementation of theme: "Holidays are for Kids."
7) The National Broadcasting Company (NBC) or KYUU-FM radio, Macy's California and the San Francisco Examiner employees, their families and their agencies are not eligible to enter.
8) All entries must be received by 5:00 p.m., November 16, 1979 and may be mailed or delivered to: "Kids Holiday Art Contest," San Francisco Examiner, 110 Fifth St., San Francisco, CA 94103.

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