

Message Text

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ACTION SR-04

INFO OCT-01 EA-10 IO-14 ADS-00 HA-05 AID-05 CIAE-00
DODE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00 ICAE-00 INRE-00
PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 EUR-12
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9918
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USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 23340

EO 12065: GDS-07/05/79

TAGS: SREF, TH

SUBJ: SITUATION OF KHMER REPATRIATES

REF: A. BANGKOK 22988, B. BANGKOK 22989

1. (C - ENTIRE TEXT)

2. EMBOFF HAS HEARD FROM WESTERN EXPATRIATE IN BANGKOK AN ACCOUNT OF CONDITIONS FACING LARGE BULK OF REPATRIATES INSIDE CAMBODIA. EXPATRIATE CLAIMS HE PERSONALLY MADE TWO SUCCESSIVE WALKS INTO CAMBODIA JUNE 26-30 IN AREA AROUND PREAH VIHEAR. THE INFORMATION HE RECOUNTS IS PLAUSIBLE, BUT CANNOT RPT CANNOT BE CONFIRMED. IT SUGGESTS THAT DISPERSION OF 42,000 REPATRIATES MAY NOT BE AS GREAT AS WE THOUGHT AND THAT ANOTHER LARGE GROUP OF KHMER REFUGEES MAY HAVE MOVED INTO THE SAME GENERAL AREA FROM THE SOUTH.

3. SOURCE, WHO EMPHASIZED DIFFICULTY OF ESTIMATING NUMBERS OF PEOPLE SPREAD OUT THROUGH FORESTS, SAID HE
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WOULD PUT THE BULK OF REPATRIATES AT 20-30,000. THEY ARE, HE SAID, SOUTH AND SOUTHEAST OF THE INSERTION POINT NEAR CAO PREAH VIHEAR WITHIN ABOUT 5 MILES SOUTH OF CLOSEST POINT ALONG THAI-CAMBODIAN BORDER. HE SAID GROUPS VARY IN SIZE FROM SEVERAL HUNDRED UP BUT ARE IN TWO GENERAL CONCENTRATIONS WITHIN SAME VICINITY, AND FATALITIES FROM MALNUTRITION, EXPOSURE, DISEASE, AND

MINE EXPLOSIONS MAY NUMBER 200 OR MORE DAILY. ALMOST HALF OF THE REPATRIATES APPEARED TO THE SOURCE TO BE IN "STATE OF SHOCK." THE DEAD LIE UNBURIED AND THE STENCH IS OVERPOWERING. SOURCE ESTIMATED MOST OF GROUP ARE WITHIN A WEEK OF DEATH.

4. SOURCE CONTINUED THAT THE VIETNAMESE/HENG SAMRIN FORCES SHOW NO CURRENT INTEREST IN THE REPATRIATES, BUT EARLIER TOOK OFF MOST YOUNG MALES AND SOME YOUNG FEMALES FOR FORCED LABOR. THERE ARE SOME KHMER RESISTANCE FORCES (SEMI-BANDIT) OPERATING IN THE AREA, BUT THEY HAVE NOT DONE ANYTHING TO ASSIST THE REPATRIATES. MINE FIELDS FURTHER INTO CAMBODIA HINDER ANY SAFE PASSAGE INTO MORE HABITABLE AREA. AREA ALONG THAI/CAMBODIAN BORDER, HE SAID, IS MINED HEAVILY FOR SEVERAL KILOMETERS INTO CAMBODIA. KHMER REPATRIATES ARE ON A SERIES OF STEPPES IN AN AREA OF HILLY TERRAIN WITH FAIRLY HEAVY FOLIAGE.

5. SOURCE ALSO SAID THAT ABOUT 5 MILES FURTHER INTO CAMBODIA FROM BULK OF LARGELY SINO-KHMER REPATRIATES HE SAW LARGE NUMBERS OF WHAT APPEARED TO HIM TO BE ETHNIC KHMER IN EQUALLY DISTRESSING CONDITION. KHMER RESISTANCE MEMBERS TOLD SOURCE THAT THESE PERSONS WERE MOVED TO AREA FROM FURTHER SOUTH IN CAMBODIA BY VIETNAMESE/HENG SAMRIN FORCES FOR UNKNOWN REASON. SOURCE ESTIMATED THAT THIS GROUP MIGHT NUMBER UP TO CONFIDENTIAL

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40,000.

6. COMMENT: WE HAVE REASON TO BELIEVE SOURCE IS AN OPPORTUNIST AND MAY DISTORT HIS PERSONAL ROLE OR MOTIVES. AT THE SAME TIME, HE DOES APPEAR TO HAVE THE EXPERIENCE NEEDED TO MAKE THE FOOT-JOURNEYS HE CLAIMS. HIS INFORMATION ON THE PHYSICAL AREA ITSELF TRACKS, BUT THERE ARE OTHER INCONSISTENCIES AND IT IS DIFFICULT TO BELIEVE HE SPENT SO MUCH TIME ON KAMPUCHEAN SIDE. THE NUMBERS HE GIVES FOR REFUGEES IN THIS AREA ARE TOTALLY NEW TO US. IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS, HOWEVER, WE CANNOT YET DISPROVE HIS ASSERTIONS AND FORWARD HIS STORY FOR WHAT IT MAY BE WORTH. TO PROTECT HIM, HE SHOULD NOT BE IDENTIFIED IN ANY OUTSIDE DISCUSSIONS AS A WESTERN EXPATRIATE, BUT ONLY AS A "SOURCE."
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