

# Pirates on the gulf of Siam

Pirates on The Gulf of Siam: Report from The  
Nhat Tien // Duong Phuc, Vu Thanh Thuy

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Pirates On The Gulf Of Siam

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*Bui Van Phu*



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**Second Edition**

# Pirates on the gulf of Siam

REPORT FROM THE VIETNAMESE BOAT PEOPLE  
LIVING IN THE REFUGEE CAMP IN SONGKHLA-THAILAND

NHAT TIEN • DUONG PHUC • VU THANH THUY

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# introduction

Dear Reader,

Contained herein is a number of documents concerning the outrage of piracy collected, edited, published and distributed by the Boat People S.O.S. Committee.

The charges brought forth in these pages are those made by the writers Nhat Tien, Duong Phuc and Vu Thanh Thuy, who speak of their own personal sufferings, as well as those of their friends and compatriots. Thus, all the matters discussed in these documents are completely genuine, with legitimate witnesses and which the victims themselves have allowed to be made public.

Our committee feels it is necessary to bring this book before the public because the cruel and agonizing atrocities committed by the pirates against the Vietnamese boat people crossing the sea in search of freedom, never before seen in the history of the world, continue to occur in Thai waters .

In the face of these atrocities, our committee and our compatriots all over the world, while sickened by the terrible fate of the victims, their brothers and sisters, have patiently carried on activities on behalf of the refugees in a manner both conciliatory and in accordance with the law. We have tried neither to negate the noble efforts of the Royal Family of Thailand towards the Vietnamese people, nor to speak ill of the wonderful traditions of the Thai people. But we also wanted to raise the alarm to the Thai authorities in the hope that they would empathize with the suffering of the victims and make use of those means within their power to eliminate piracy in their waters within a reasonable period of time.

Our committee has formally presented this material concerning the piracy problem to the Government and Royal Family of Thailand through their envoy in Los Angeles, California, on March 5, 1980. At the same time, these documents were also sent to the offices of the

U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, the then President of the United States, Mr. Jimmy Carter, the American ambassador in Thailand and other individuals with international prestige and influence in hopes that they might intervene on our behalf and transmit the documents to the authorities in Thailand.

Alongside the work of our committee, around the world nearly every Vietnamese organization, many compatriots and university students and others sent thousands of letters to the Thai monarch in order that the tragedy not be forgotten and the necessary means be taken to put an end to it. In May of 1980, a hunger strike was organized in front of the Thai embassy in Los Angeles with the same purpose.

Despite the tragedies and the activities designed to bring this to attention, the Thai authorities have still not responded in a concrete, positive way to resolve the problem at the source. The Thai courts see the victims merely as witnesses, without having the status of plaintiff. Those trials that have been conducted have been prolonged beyond necessity with excessive bureaucracy, causing the victims to become discouraged, and this does not even mention the threatening pressure that was applied to sabotage the proceedings.

For these reasons, after nearly a year of waiting, our committee has determined to make this book available to the general public with the following goals in mind:

1) to bring before the conscience of all, the horrible barbarity of the piracy in Thai waters that was and is committed against that Vietnamese crossing the sea in search of freedom and the indifference and lack of responsibility of the Thai authorities in dealing with this problem.

2) to ask all international organizations to seek every concrete means to rescue the boat people by:

– requesting all nations with ships passing through the South China Sea to officially permit their ships' captains to rescue boat people they come by.

– asking the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees to establish a special refugee camp as a haven for those refugees picked up by merchant ships in order to prevent their rescue attempts from causing any undue problems.

– petitioning the Pope, other religious leaders all over




the world, the Secretary General of the U.N. and the various heads of State of the free nations to do any and everything they can to intervene with the Thai king so that the government of that country develops serious and effective means of putting an end to piracy.

3) to ask the international news media to assist our committee in describing to all the people of the world the atrocity of piracy.

4) to point out that the paramount source of this tragedy is the brutal and deceitful policy of the Communist government in Hanoi. Therefore, it is necessary for the United Nations and the free world to take this as evidence of one more of the sufferings the Vietnamese people must endure since the takeover of their country by the Communists.

Our Committee, in the name of all our compatriots, wishes to express our sincere gratitude to the governments and people of those countries which have helped and are still helping the boat people. We would especially like to thank those Thai people who have been helping us and continue to do so by housing thousands of Vietnamese refugees.



San Diego, California

April 15, 1981

Nguyen Huu Xuong, Ph.D.

University of California at San Diego (UCSD)

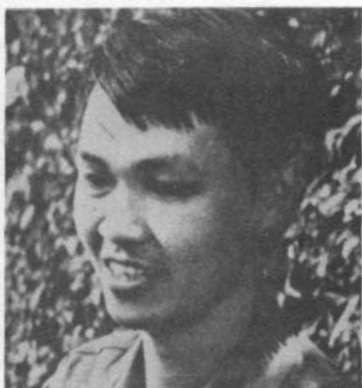
Chairperson, Boat People S.O.S. Committee

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This White Paper consists of two parts. In the first part are the reports of atrocities committed by pirates in the Gulf of Siam. The second part contains letters and petitions written on behalf of the boat people.



Author Nhat Tien  
Former Vice Chairperson  
of the Vietnamese Pen Club



Reporter Duong Phuc



Reporter Vu Thanh Thuy

# PART 1

## REPORT FROM KO KRA ISLAND

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Ko Kra is a deserted island in the Gulf of Siam 80 kilometers from the town of Nakhorn Sri Thamaraj. Lately the island has become a haven for Thai pirates. The Thai government is aware of this fact, but is apparently unable to do anything about it.

It is impossible to relate accurately the stories of all the boat people killed on or around the island, but we shall report to you here some of the most recent events.

### \*First Incident: 87 People killed

Witness: Ms. Nguyen thi Thuong, 36, a graduate from an American university who took further training in Paris and prior to 1975 was an instructor at the Polytechnical Institute in Thu Duc. She left Vietnam with her husband, mother, uncle, two younger brothers, two sisters-in-law, four other young relatives and her three-year-old daughter. She and her daughter are the only survivors of the family.

Their boat, #SS0640 IA, 13½m. in length and carrying 107 people, left Rach Gia on Dec. 1, 1979. On the third day of its journey, as they were nearing the Thai mainland, they encountered pirates in the following manner. Two Thai boats came up alongside the refugee boat and pirates charged aboard with guns and knives. Because of the crowded condition of the boat, the pirates took some of the refugees onto their boat in order to search them for valuables. 27 were released.

The remaining 80 were searched and robbed of what valuable items they had. The pirates then tied a cord to the refugee boat and towed it behind them. They made sport of running at full speed in a circle so that the refugee boat tipped and sank. The refugees screamed and wept, begging for mercy as the boat went under while the pirates cut the rope and drove off, leaving the 80 people to flounder helplessly in the ocean and the 27 on their boat to weep in great distress as they watched their relatives go under.

The pirates went straight to Ko Kra, but as they approached the island, they shoved the men overboard,

forcing them to swim ashore. 7 men drowned in this manner.

The other 20 were taken to the island and summarily searched and handled on all parts of their bodies to see if they might be hiding any valuables on them. Ms. BTD, 26, who had a four-year-old child, was taken into the bushes and raped, despite the fact that she was exhausted and unable to stand because of hunger, thirst and terror.

During 8 days on the island, the refugees were tortured and questioned as a number of pirate gangs landed on the island each day. The women tried to hide in the jungle or on the mountain, but they were still unable to escape the pirates. One woman, Ms. D, was being attended to as she lay unconscious due to exhaustion, when pirates came, chased everyone away and four of them raped her there where she lay. When they left, she was still at that spot, unable to move.

On the third day on the island there came a boat with the inscription POLICE #513. As the pirates fled out to the ocean, the police boat anchored off shore, but did not come any nearer. The refugees believed they were going to be rescued and one youth carrying a letter written in English to be delivered to the U.N High Commissioner for Refugee Affairs swam out toward the boat. Before he could reach them, however, the police opened fire on him and in terror he swam back to shore. A teenager was nominated to swim out with the letter and he was taken aboard the police boat, given a few packs of noodles and sent back to the island. Finally, the boat left and as we now realize, the crew never sent word to the authorities of the refugees' plight.

The next day after the Thai police left, the pirates returned and the atrocities continued. On the fifth day a Thai navy boat passed by and the refugees waved it in. This time, the boat allowed representatives of its crew to come ashore to talk and take the letter for the U.N Commissioner in Thailand. On the 8th day, Mr. Schweitzer, the U.N representative came to take the refugees to the mainland.

Prof. Nguyen thi Thuong had left home with her husband, Tran Quang Huy, 41, professor at the Faculty of Letters in Saigon before 1975, and the relatives mentioned above. The other relatives were among the 80 left to drown by the pirates and Mr. Huy had died when he was unable to make the swim to the island. Ms. Thuong gave birth to a

baby girl in the refugee camp in Songkhla and now lives there with her daughters and her husband's sister and brother. She had been nine months pregnant when she left Vietnam and this kept her from being raped by the pirates.

As Ms. Thuong told the story, she sobbed quietly and said, "My husband and I tried to take into consideration the terrible things that might happen to us when we took to the sea. We decided that leaving was preferable to living under Communism. But what I've suffered now exceeds anything we had imagined."

\*\*\*

#### \*Second Incident: 70 People Killed

Witness: Vu Zuy Thai, 44, who left Vietnam with his wife, aged 40, his four children and two young relatives. He is the lone survivor.

The junk VNKG 0980, 14m. long, 2.2m wide, carrying 120 people, left Rach Gia on Dec. 29, 1979. It encountered a pirate ship on Dec. 31. The pirates' boat was orange-red in color with the number 128 on the bow. The 12 pirates aboard were armed with guns and knives, hammers, and hatchets. The pirate ship ran into the bow of the refugee boat and put a crack in it. The pirates then leaped aboard the refugee boat and began wrecking the engine and enlarging the size of the crack so that water began to flow in. They searched the refugees and took watches, gold, rings, etc. while water continued to pour into the boat. In an hour the boat had sunk and the women and children clung to each other crying in fear. The pirates themselves drove off, taking with them the pretty girls. By the time the pirates were fifty meters away, a number of men and youths had managed to swim to the boat and hang on. Although some were pushed away by the pirates, 50 survived drowning by hanging on in this manner. These people had seen their friends drown, watching helplessly as the waving hands finally dropped beneath the surface.

Mr. Vu Zuy Thai had grabbed his wife and one child during the confusion and brought them to the pirate ship. The other 5 members of his family drowned. The wife and child had swallowed too much water, however, and couldn't move when pulled on board the pirate boat. Before he could apply artificial respiration to revive them, the pirates tossed

them overboard.

Mr. Pham Viet Chieu, a boat pilot, related how he and some others managed to pull some people out of the water in hopes that they were not dead yet but only unconscious but the pirates forced them back into the ocean.

After that, the pirate boat headed straight for the island of Ko Kra where they held the victims for five days until the U.N. High Commissioner came to rescue them.

On the night of Jan. 1, 1980, a Thai navy boat numbered "18" came to the island armed with guns. Again the refugees thought they were going to be rescued, but the sailors only looked them over, forced them to remove all their clothing and stand naked—including the women and children and then they went on their way.

On Jan. 2, another navy boat, #17, came to the island. The sailors rushed ashore and they, too, searched the refugees. The women were publicly stripped naked while the Thai sailors felt them for weapons or other objects. The sailors then retired to their ship and sat anchored off shore until Jan. 4, when they left.

While the sailors had been busy with the refugees, the pirates were not to be seen, but as soon as the navy boat left, 4 pirate boats came back to the island. The pirates searched the refugees, although by now there was nothing left to steal. They took turns raping the women right on shore, without seeking a secluded spot. 5 girls, K.H., 15 years-old, B.T., 17, A.H., 12, H.Y., 11, and M.T., 15, were gang raped in front of everyone's eyes.

This would have continued but Mr. Schweitzer's appearance brought it to an end when he arrived on a police boat and rescued the suffering people.

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\*Third Incident: the pirates force girls into prostitution

Witnesses: Miss Nguyen Thi Anh Tuyet, 17, who left home with her sister Nguyen Thi Nam, killed by pirates, and Cong Huyen Ton Nu My Kieu, 17.

An unmarked junk, 10m. long and carrying 78 people, left Nha Trang on Dec. 8, 1979.

After three days at sea, they ran out of fuel and food and their boat drifted for ten days on the high seas. During this period 12 children died of hunger and thirst and





































































































































































































































