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Vietnamese bid to poison refugees

TWO saboteurs, one of them a Vietnamese soldier, were arrested by Thai troops while they were trying to poison a water well at a border camp which shelters more than 20,000 Kampuchean refugees, a highly-placed official source told the Bangkok Post last night.

The arrest follows the first known attempt by the Vietnamese on the western Kampuchean border, although there have been reports of the Vietnamese using poisonous chemicals

against resistance forces inside Kampuchea.

The source said the other man arrested was a Kampuchean soldier of the Heng Samrin forces.

He did not specify the date of the arrest but said both were held about

four days ago, at Nong Samet camp near the border of Ta Phraya District.

The two men were first spotted by refugees at the camp as they were walking towards a water well, acting suspiciously.

The refugees informed Thai soldiers who made the arrests. A search revealed poisonous capsules in the men's possession, the source said.

One of them reportedly admitted that he was ordered to drop the capsules, which contained poisonous chemicals, into wells and other water sources at the camp. He said he came from Phnom Penh.

The source said both men were disguised as refugees and mingled with Kampuchean refugees who arrived to receive food aid from relief agencies.

More than 20,000 refugees are being given temporary sanctuary at the camp, the source said.

He said both were put in custody and were being questioned by Thai authorities.

The source did not say if poisonous chemicals had already been dropped into any wells at the camp. But another source at the border said refugees have been warned against drinking water that has not been tested by the authorities.

Meanwhile, two Vietnamese soldiers yesterday gave themselves up to Thai authorities at Khok Sabaeng village of Tambon Tha Kham to

the south of Aranyaprathet District.

Duc Nguyen Xon, 20, and Yo Chang Vel 20, who were not armed told the authorities that they were former South Vietnamese soldiers and decided to escape because they were fed up with the war in Kampuchea.

They said they were among about 10 Vietnamese soldiers assigned to collect information near the Thai border, but they slipped away from the group and crossed the border.

They reported fierce fighting between Vietnamese soldiers and Khmer Rouge guerrillas near kilometre markers No. 4 and No. 6 on Route Five from Polpet to Siachon, opposite Khok Sabaeng village, before their escape.