

Guyana says temple defectors free to leave

By Peter H. King
Examiner Staff Writer

GEORGETOWN, Guyana — A full month after their escape from Jonestown was sabotaged by a storm of bullets, 11 anxious Peoples Temple defectors were free today to leave this country and continue their quest for new lives in the United States.

The 11 defectors, who have spent a hellish month in the Park Hotel here waiting to be released, were among 18 Americans the Guyanese government said it no longer needs as witnesses in three investigations into temple-related bloodshed.

American Embassy officials here said it was not yet clear when flights could be arranged for this latest group of returning Jonestown survivors. But officials were optimistic the group could be in the United States by Christmas.

"I can't wait to be getting back," said a smiling Dale Parks, 27, who along with the others had grown increasingly frustrated as their term of detainment dragged on.

The defectors had been preparing to flee Jonestown on Nov. 18 with U.S. Rep. Leo Ryan and his party of journalists and concerned relatives of temple members when they were ambushed by rifle-toting loyalists of cult leader Jim Jones.

Ryan, Parks' mother Edith, Examiner photographer Greg Robinson and two NBC journalists were killed in the Port Kaituma airstrip ambush, which was a bloody prelude to a bizarre death ritual that took the lives of Jones and 912 of his followers at the jungle settlement.

Not included on the list of those to be released, which was given to The Examiner last night, were four of the five young temple members known to have still been in Jonestown when the mass murder-suicide commenced.

Tim and Mike Carter and Mike Prokes, three trusted Jones aides who have testified they were ordered to carry a suitcase and important financial instructions out of the settlement after the killings began, had been hopeful they would be on the list.

"Damn! I don't believe it," cursed 29-year-old Tim Carter when told by a reporter that he was not on the list of those free to go.

The trio on Saturday had completed testimony at a coroner's inquest to determine whether the Jonestown killings were murder or suicide.

The coroner's jury, which is expected to rule tomorrow, can recommend that charges be brought against any survivors it suspects played a criminal role in the killings.

Also left off the list of released Americans was Odell Rhodes, who testified at the inquest that he had slipped away from Jonestown after about half of the settlement had succumbed to cyanide.

The complete list of those allowed to leave: Debra Touchette, Robin Touchette, Harold Cordell, Monica Bagley, Gerald Parks, Dale Parks, Breda Parks, Tracy Parks, Herbert Nevill, Henry Cannon, Eugene Smith, Jim Bogue, Edith Bogue, Tina Bogue, Tom Bogue, Stanley Clayton, Paula Adams and Christopher O'Neal.