

Indochina Refugees Ask Return

UNITED NATIONS, June 17

—More than 2,650 Vietnamese and Cambodian refugees have expressed a desire to return home, U.N. officials said today.

They include 1,982 Vietnamese, most of them still on Guam, and 670 Cambodians, the office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees said. In addition, 67 Vietnamese are known to have returned already on their own, officials said.

The first batch of several hundred repatriation applications was turned over to representatives of the new Saigon government last week, a U.N. commission staffer said.

"Their attitude so far has been completely positive, and we foresee no difficulties," said the staff member. He

added that the first group of voluntary repatriates could be flown back to Vietnam by the United Nations "in a matter of weeks."

The reasons the Vietnamese give for returning vary, he said. Many insist they had no intention of leaving in the first place, but were swept along in the confusion. Others say they want to return because their families are there or that with the war over, they want to help reconstruct Vietnam.

U.N. officials have been in touch with Cambodian authorities in Hanoi, Paris and Peking on behalf of Cambodians who asked U.N. assistance in returning, but there has been no official response, they said.

"This is not the final figure," the U.N. commission's report said. "People will be coming forward for months; it is not something to settle overnight. The important thing is to keep the option of returning open."

To do this, U.N. officials have located themselves in the camps, placed announcements in camp newspapers, and talked informally to groups of refugees.

"They know we are there if they want to use us," the U.N. official said.