

Art Objects Found On Refugee Ship

From News Dispatches

AGANA, GUAM, May 24—The territorial government of Guam today confiscated a horde of art treasures with an estimated value of more than \$150 million from a Vietnamese merchant ship that arrived here Thursday with refugees. There was speculation that some of the art objects could be from South Vietnam's National Museum.

The Tam Nam Viet's 50 crates of confiscated cargo included Vietnamese vases, scrolls, statues and other items—all on open deck, according to a spokesman for Gov. Ricardo J. Bordallo.

U.S. agents boarded the ship and opened two crates after Vietnamese refugees began talking about treasures aboard the ship.

The spokesman said the owner of the vessel reported the crates contained no gold or other valuable metals, but U.S. agents reported him as saying, "It is very valuable. The owner is a very rich man.

The ship's captain was quoted as saying the cargo was the property of Dao Diep Khanh, now a resident of Montreal, but there was no bill of lading or other documents with the cargo.

"For this reason the cargo is being confiscated," the spokesman said. He said Guam cus-

toms agents would open the crates and make an inventory.

Guam's Pacific Daily News reported there was concern that some of the treasures might have come from the Vietnamese National Archives illegally and could be worth as much as \$150 million.

The spokesman, who saw a few of the large crates being opened for inspection, said the \$150 million estimate was probably too high.

"But if these things are as valuable as we think they are we have a real security problem . . . The federal government won't take the responsibility. What if a typhoon comes?"

"Nobody knew about the cargo," he said. "All we knew was that it (the ship) was loaded with Vietnamese who were starving."

He said the ship's owner told customs agents that the crates belonged to a South Vietnamese pharmacist who wanted them delivered to an art agent in Hong Kong. But the ship never stopped there.

A detachment of 20 Guam police officers, clad in combat fatigues and carrying riot shotguns, surrounded the area in the commercial harbor where the ship was towed from anchorage in the outer harbor.