

U.S. Wary of Refugees on Guam Who Seek

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Sept. 3—The Ford Administration has become increasingly concerned about 1,802 South Vietnamese seeking to return to their homeland from temporary quarters on Guam.

Those seeking repatriation were among the more than 130,000 Vietnamese evacuated from South Vietnam before the completion of the Communist take-over last May. They have been in American custody since then.

From the outset of the evacuation last April, the Administration has made it clear that anyone seeking later repatriation would be assisted in his return by the United States, Julia Vadala Taft, director of the interagency task force on Vietnam, said in an interview today.

However, not a single refugee who wanted to return has been accepted by the Communist government in Saigon since it took power last spring, she said.

A Dangerous Level

As a result, frustration among those quartered on Guam has reached a dangerous level, she said, and, "we have become really concerned."

Mrs. Taft cited an incident last Sunday in which Vietnamese demonstrators burned a barracks and a guard hut on Guam. Four United States marshals were struck by rocks during the incident.

American officials believe there may be a small group of agitators—perhaps 20 or 25—among those seeking repatriation who could be acting on orders from Vietnamese officials in Hanoi to stir further trouble among those seeking repatriation.

One American official cited as evidence recent broadcasts from the Hanoi radio asserting that only those Vietnamese on Guam who actively demonstrated against "Yankee imperialists" would obtain repatriation.

Mrs. Taft said there was sufficient tension and frustration among the Vietnamese on Guam even without the incite-

ment of agitators.

"They have radios and they hear broadcasts about how good things are in Vietnam now," Mrs. Taft continued, referring to the Vietnamese on Guam, "and they can't understand why they cannot return."

Nonpolitical Reasons

According to surveys on Guam, virtually all the 1,802 Vietnamese have given nonpolitical reasons for their desire to return.

"They are almost all family reunion cases," Mrs. Taft said. "Some of them—air force mechanics or ships' engineers—were forced to leave by superiors."

The repatriation problem is being handled by Prince Aga Sadruddin Khan, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, whose office was asked to assist in eventual repatriations by the United States last April 18.

The United Nations agency was slow to act initially, according to the Ford Administration. Although requests for repatriation started on May 3, the first United Nations representative did not arrive at an American refugee center until on May 29. Since then, the Administration says, the United Nations agency has been cooperating.

The United Nations began

distributing 29-item questionnaires developed at the instance of the authorities in Saigon for the those seeking repatriation. In July, the refugee task force arranged to concentrate all refugees desiring repatriation on Guam in the expectation that this would facilitate their return.

However, in repeated meetings with United Nations representatives the Saigon authorities refused to begin processing repatriation cases. According to Mrs. Taft, Saigon's excuse has been that each case had to be cleared through the local authorities in Vietnam, down to the village level.

"We don't know what their

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Repatriation

real motive is," Mrs. Taft continued. "Either they are not organized or they already have enough problems with refugees and displaced persons, or they enjoy making an uncomfortable situation for the United States."

She noted that the Saigon authorities have refused to meet representatives of Guam's Vietnamese refugees in Laos or Hong Kong, and also refused to negotiate with the authorities in Hong Kong on the repatriation of 44 Vietnamese stranded in the British Colony.

Hong Kong has been particularly concerned about the repatriation issue because it has been trying without success to

extricate 600 Hong Kong citizens remaining in Saigon.

"It is an international problem," Mrs. Taft said, "and we would like to see it internationalized." She added there were still more Vietnamese seeking repatriation in other countries, although the American authorities do not have precise numbers.

Mrs. Taft said the last major hope for cooperation from Saigon was a mission scheduled to begin Friday by Prince Sadruddin, who is planning to fly to Bangkok, Thailand, from Geneva on the first leg of a trip to Southeast Asia.

The United Nations high commissioner has asked to be

received in Hanoi and Saigon to discuss the Guam repatriation question and to try to bring about a resumption of airline flights between Hong Kong and Saigon as a vehicle for settling that repatriation question.

"If he isn't admitted to Vietnam we'll have to think about something else," she said.

Mrs. Taft said she was not fond of a solution proposed last month by several members of Congress and a number of the Guam Vietnamese—that the repatriates simply board a ship on Guam and sail for Saigon. "If we do that, the United Nations will simply wash their hands of us," she said.