

Refugees on Guam Await U.N. Help

The fate of more than 1,800 Indochina war refugees on Guam who are desperately anxious to return to South Vietnam and Cambodia, is hanging precariously on a U.N. mission to Southeast Asia.

Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan, the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, is presently in Thailand with invitations to visit Laos and North Vietnam, his New York office said recently.

"If he comes back empty-handed, then we are really in a bind," said Julia Vadala Taft, director of the U.S. inter-agency task force on Vietnam.

American officials are plagued by the problem of what they will do if South Vietnam and Cambodia continue to drag their feet on letting the refugees return.

"Just put them on a ship and send them back," whether or not the two countries agree to accept them, insist some members of Congress. "What are we supposed to do — parachute them in?" countered one harried U.S. official.

There are 1,712 refugees brought out of South Vietnam who demand their return, according to the U.S. task force, plus about 90 Cambodians seeking to return home. The Cambodians are mostly military personnel who were being trained in the United States when Cambodia, followed by South Vietnam, fell to Communist control last April.

The Vietnamese include refugees in a group of 13 who were drugged and removed from Thailand to Guam by U.S. Air Force personnel. The Defense Department acknowl-

edged regretfully in August that this group was sedated and removed against their will, because Thailand insisted that they leave that nation, where they wanted to remain. The bulk of the refugees seeking to return say they left their country in mistaken confusion.

These 1,802 refugees are the most troublesome for U.S. officials out of the 134,000 Indochinese refugees brought to the United States. Of that number, Taft said, over 92,000 have been resettled in the United States so far.

"The 1,800 really want to go back," Taft said, "and about 25 to 50 of them ... are really reaching violent proportions." On Aug. 31, the angriest refugees burned down a barracks on Guam, and four U.S. marshals were hospitalized in trying to calm them down.

"Many of the refugees on Guam have radios and they are listening to broadcasts from Saigon saying that 'everything is great and we want the people back,'" Taft said. But "we have been rebuffed," she said, on "every initiative on our part and by the U.N." to send them back.

U.S. officials, starting last April, asked the office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for assistance in repatriating the refugees. The United States agreed to pay all costs of their return.

The bargaining has been under way ever since, including a laborious process of UNHCR interviews with each refugee, filling out questionnaires to certify that they are bonafide refugees.