

Thais Hit Actions Of U.S.

By H. D. S. Greenway
Washington Post Foreign Service

BANKOK, May 14—

The Thai government strongly protested the arrival of approximately 1,100 U.S. Marines against Thailand's wishes Wednesday and said that if the Marines are not removed "immediately" relations between Thailand and the United States will be "exposed to serious and damaging consequences."

The Marines were flown into the air base at Utapao, on the Gulf of Siam, Tuesday and early Wednesday morning, according to Foreign Minister sources here, possibly to rescue the American merchant ship Mayaguez from Cambodia.

Apparently the move was made in defiance of Thai Prime Minister Kukrit Pramoj's warning that Thailand could not be used as a springboard for any American retaliation against Cambodia.

The American merchant ship, stopped at sea by a Cambodian gunboat Monday in what President Ford called "an act of piracy," is now being held off an island about 30 miles from the mainland. Planes of the U.S. 7th Fleet have been ordered to fly to Utapao—the nearest American-operated base to the Cambodian coast.

But the Thais have always maintained sovereignty over the bases they allow the Americans to operate, and the arrival of American ma-

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...rines against their wishes has precipitated a diplomatic crisis.

Thai government officials have expressed shock and amazement at the American action. "It put us in the same position as you are with the Cambodians," one official said. "How can we possibly overlook such a flagrant violation of our sovereignty?"

[Later a Thai Foreign Ministry official, commenting on reports that U.S. planes had sunk three Cambodian boats, called it "piracy" and "madness—an action taken with no thought for the consequences to Thailand," AP reported. "What if Cambodia decides to retaliate?" he asked. "It cannot retaliate against the Americans; they are too far away. But it can retaliate against Thailand, which is right next door."]

The American embassy here refused to comment, referring all queries to Washington. It is not clear, however, that the embassy was even informed that the Marines had been flown in, and the move may have been made without the embassy's knowledge.

The new American ambassador here, Charles S. Whitehouse, arrive late this afternoon to take up his post and was greeted at the airport by about 50 protesters carrying signs. One said, "Bastard Ford, Get Your Troops Out."

Meanwhile, it was learned



PREMIER KUKRIT
... relations endangered

that another ship, reportedly the Eastern Grand under Panamanian registry, was stopped Wednesday enroute to Thailand by a Cambodian gunboat and allowed to continue along its way after a few hours.

Prime Minister Kukrit Pramoj reportedly told journalists that the Americans had until dawn Thursday to get the Marines out of the country, but no such deadline was mentioned in the statement put out by the Prime Minister's office Wednesday.

Tuesday, the prime minister told reporters that he had summoned the American charge d'affaires, Edward Masters, to tell him that the Thai government would not permit the base at Utapao to be used in

any "retaliation to be taken in the form of recourse to weapons or military action. The Thai government considers it a matter between the United States and Cambodia only."

Kukrit said that Masters had "accepted this information without demurrer and made an assertion in accordance with it."

Kukrit saw Masters again Wednesday, and the note issued from the prime minister's office recalled that the American diplomat had been told that "Thailand does not wish to become involved in the dispute between the United States and Cambodia over the seizure of the vessel Mayaguez and that Thailand will not permit its territory to be used in connection with any action by the United States against Cambodia."

The note said that the Thai government had learned of the American Marines' arrival at Utapao as part of a possible "reaction against Cambodia," and that the Thai government considered this action "inconsistent with the goodwill existing between Thailand and the United States."

"Unless these forces, which have entered against the wishes of the Thai government, are withdrawn immediately," the note said, "the good relations and cooperation existing between Thailand and the United States would be exposed to serious and damaging consequences."



Department of Defense photo

Pentagon spokesman Joseph Laitin briefs reporters on the Cambodia situation.

Thailand, which sent troops to fight alongside the Americans in Vietnam and allowed its territory to be used as a base for American bombing of Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, has been profoundly shocked by the sudden collapse of non-Communist governments in Cambodia and Vietnam. With the Communists now in the process of taking control of the coalition in Laos as well, Thailand faces the certain prospect of a long frontier with new, and possibly, beleaguered Communist governments.

Therefore Kukrit's shaky government has been trying to end hostility with the new government. The Communist government in Saigon is expected to send a

delegation here Friday to take over the South Vietnamese embassy in Bangkok, and Thailand has extended diplomatic recognition to North Vietnam and Cambodia as well.

The Thai government has already been embarrassed by the Americans' taking away South Vietnamese airplanes that had landed at bases here because the provisional revolutionary government in Saigon had insisted they all be returned. Knowledgeable Thai sources say that the latest American move of sending in Marines against the government's wishes could even cause a break in diplomatic relations unless something is done quickly to defuse the crisis. It could not be

learned here, however, if anything was being done by the Americans to move the Marines out.

About 25,000 American servicemen are now stationed in Thailand. There has never been a status-of-forces agreement between the two countries, but the Thais have always insisted that they maintain sovereignty over the bases the Americans built in the 1960s.

On May 4, it was announced that the number of servicemen would be reduced to less than 20,000 by the end of June. The present disagreement is bound to cause further pressure on Kukrit to reduce the American presence here at a faster rate.