

JUN 5 & 1970

Big Payment To Thailand For Troops

S F CHRONICLE
Times-Post Service

Washington

The United States has paid more than \$200 million to Thailand for the support of its forces now in South Vietnam, according to Senate testimony on American involvement in Thailand released yesterday.

The extensively censored transcript of closed-door Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearings held last November 11-17 was made public by Senator Stuart Symington (Dem.-Mo.), the subcommittee chairman.

He also released a letter asking Secretary of State William P. Rogers for details of the American role in last week's announcement by Thailand that it will send "volunteers" to Cambodia.

QUESTIONS

Symington asked Rogers for details on when negotiations on the "volunteers" began, what the United States is to provide, what it will cost, the Thai role in supporting the Cambodian regime of Lon Nol and which country can bring about withdrawal of Thai units from Cambodia.

Both the hearing and the letter are part of the effort by senators opposed to the Indochina war to force full disclosure of what the U.S. has been and is doing. The senators hope to increase pressure on President Nixon to end the conflict.

Despite more than 300 pages of transcript, the hearings, as censored, produced only a few nuggets of new information. Much of the transcript consisted of repetitious rival contentions between senators, especially Symington and Senator J. William Fulbright (Dem.-Ark.), on the one hand, and the administration on the other, about the nature of the American commitment to Thailand.

SECRECY

Symington repeatedly castigated administration witnesses for excessive executive branch secrecy on matters which he contended Congress and the public have a right to know.

The \$200 million figure was supplied by the administration. A submitted statement said American "support to Thai forces" had averaged about \$50 million a year, or

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\$200 million since their arrival in South Vietnam in 1966.

Fulbright put into the record a table showing that a Thai lieutenant general receives \$370 a month base pay, paid by Thailand, plus \$450 a month in overseas allowance, paid by the United States. The scale ran down to a private whose base pay is \$26 dollars a month from his own country plus \$39 a month from the United States.

AMBASSADOR

American Ambassador to Thailand Leonard Unger provided figures showing that in 1949-69 the United States had given Thailand \$2,190,900,000 in all forms of economic and military assistance and for military expenditures.

He also estimated that the American contribution of all sorts to the Thai economy was about \$200 million a year in 1967 and 1968 and about \$170 million in 1969.

Graham Martin, now ambassador to Italy and former ambassador to Thailand, said at one point that he thought the Thais had sent the troops to Vietnam "because they were requested to by the government of Vietnam and by the United States. I think they made that decision in the full realization that it was increasingly uncomfortable for the United States to have the massive deployment of U.S. troops with far less contingents from the other partners in the SEATO alliance."

STATEMENT

The nature of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) commitment by the United States, and how it

was affected by the Rusk-Thanat statement, was much argued over during the hearings but with no agreement between senators and administration witnesses.

The Rusk-Thanat statement of March 6, 1962, signed by then Secretary of State Dean Rusk and Thai Foreign Minister Thanat Khoman, was defended by Unger as not "in any sense altering or extending our commitment under SEATO."

The statement, in Unger's view, simply made clear that the United States could come to Thailand's aid on its own initiative without the argument of all the SEATO nations.

Fulbright, however, contended that the statement had created "a bilateral agreement" and had done so "without reference to Congress." But the most the administration witnesses would concede was that the statement had been an added assurance to Thailand at a moment of peril.

All references to reports that Thai troops have been serving in Laos were deleted except for a newspaper report that some 5000 had been sent "disguised in the uniform of the royal Laotian army."