

Laird, in Bangkok, Pledges More Arms Aid in 1970's

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BANGKOK, Thailand, Jan. 7—Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird has assured Thai leaders that United States military aid to Thailand will increase over the next ten years.

At a dinner with Thai officials at the residence of Premier Thanom Kittikachorn, Mr. Laird is reported to have pledged that aid would be made available from excess stocks of military equipment.

The proposed increase, he said, would reinforce the Nixon doctrine, under which the United States is to help its allies to defend themselves.

United States military aid to Thailand is now about \$75-million a year. Most of it is spent on modernization of equipment used by the Thai armed forces.

Major items contributed to Thailand by the United States include grenade launchers, M-16 rifles, general purpose military vehicles, helicopters and radios.

Counterinsurgency Aid

The Defense Department has set up an Advanced Research Projects Agency to help the Thais in counterinsurgency activities. The United States also subsidizes the pay and allowances of the 12,000-man Thai division in South Vietnam.

Mr. Laird's promise of increased military aid to Thailand is one of a number of such pledges in recent years. In 1962, Secretary of State Dean Rusk said the United States would defend Thailand against Communist aggression without waiting for "prior agreement" by the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization. In 1966 Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey, during a visit to Bangkok, promised increased military aid.

Mr. Laird, on his arrival today at Bangkok's Don Muang

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Airport, told reporters that Thailand and the United States had a joint responsibility to restore and maintain peace in Southeast Asian.

"We will continue to help the Thai people to preserve the right of self-determination, and we look forward to increased cooperation."

The Nixon doctrine, he said, should be understood not only in Asia but throughout the world because the principle was important to the United States ability to meet its obligations.

Mr. Laird told reporters that Vietnamization of the war was ahead of schedule, permitting the reduction of Thai forces in South Vietnam as the South Vietnamese assume more of the burden of combat.

Last Thai Replacements

Later, Air Marshal Dawee Chullasapya, chief of staff of the Thai command, said that the last group of replacements would leave next month. The group comprises 1,500 men. Withdrawal of the division is scheduled to start in July and to be completed by February 1972.

Before Mr. Laird leaves for Saigon tomorrow, he is expected to visit the American base at U Ta Pao which is used for B-52 operations in the Vietnam war.

Thai sources said he might

also meet again with Thai leaders.

Mr. Laird is to confer with Lieut. Gen. Jesus V. Varas, Secretary General of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization, tomorrow morning at the residence of the American Ambassador, Leonard Unger.

The Secretary's visit to Vietnam is expected to last until Monday.