

Air Force Pullout Frozen in Asia

SFC

1-18-71

Saigon

American military sources said yesterday that the United States has frozen withdrawal of Air Force squadrons in Southeast Asia, to assure a high level of allied firepower during the pullout of U.S. ground troops.

The sources said all Air Force squadrons in Southeast Asia will remain under Phase VI of President Nixon's troop withdrawal program, although less than 1000 individual airmen, mostly administrative personnel, will return to the United States.

Phase VI calls for cutting the number of American

servicemen in South Vietnam from 332-500 on January 7 to 284,000 on May 1.

The sources said it would be the second successive troop withdrawal phase in which all American Air Force units stayed. Only 600 airmen, mostly administrative personnel, left under Phase V, which ended December 31.

They said Air Force squadrons stationed in Thailand for raids against the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Laos also would be frozen.

Military sources put the level of airmen at 42,800 in South Vietnam and 29,000 in Thailand.

United Press