

U.S. WITHDRAWAL SOUGHT BY THAIS

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Premier Proposes Pullout of Troops in a Year in Bid for Leftist Support

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By The Associated Press

BANGKOK, Thailand, March 17 — Premier Kukrit Pramoj said in a policy statement today that his coalition would seek the complete withdrawal of the 25,000 American troops and 350 aircraft from Thailand within a year.

The statement, issued after his seven-party civilian coalition was confirmed by King Phumiphol Aduldet, also said the Government would seek to establish diplomatic relations with China and would try to open talks with North Vietnam. The new Cabinet faces a confidence vote in the lower house of Parliament Wednesday.

The previous cabinet, headed by Mr. Kukrit's brother, Seni Pramoj, was confirmed Feb. 22 and forced to resign eight days later when it lost a confidence vote on its policy program.

Mr. Kukrit's coalition has 124 of the 269 seats in the house or 11 short of a majority. His policy statement was aimed at winning the support of left-wing parties that have demanded the American withdrawal.

He said, however, that the withdrawal must be completed within a year only if "the political and military situation in this region permits. His brother had called for withdrawal in 18 months and failed to win the leftists' support.

"Withdrawing the American forces doesn't mean that we don't like America," Mr. Kukrit told newsmen today. "Our good relations must continue.

The United States carried out bombing missions in Indochina from air bases in Thailand for eight years.

Mr. Kukrit's moderate Social Action party ran fifth among the 22 parties represented in

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PULLOUT BY U.S. SOUGHT BY THAIS

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the house in the Jan. 26 general elections.

During the campaign he said that the American military presence in Thailand was necessary "for the security of Southeast Asia and the entire Indochina."

Today, in formally announcing a policy to seek the withdrawal of United States forces within a year, he said:

"If the Cambodian was expanded into Thailand, or if rockets fall on our soil, then we have to think it over."

During the election campaign the issue of United States withdrawal was pressed mainly by various Socialist parties, which together won 41 seats in the house. But since the election other parties have begun to talk of speeding up the withdrawal process.

The Pentagon had already indicated plans to cut United States strength in Thailand by about half during the coming year.

Mr. Kukrit, a newspaper publisher and columnist who played the role of an Asian premier in the movie "The Ugly American," starring Marlon Brando, now heads a coalition made up mostly of conservative parties with ties to former military Governments.

He won formal election as Premier by the lower house last Thursday on an announced platform that included the call for an United States withdrawal within a year. He was backed then by 135 of the 253 members present.

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