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# Thais, U.S.

## Set Large GI Cutback

From News Dispatches

BANGKOK, May 1—Thailand and the United States will announce Monday a massive American troop withdrawal from Thailand, officials of both countries said today. Diplomatic sources in Washington said the withdrawal, to be made over the next several months, would involve up to 9,000 U.S. Air Force personnel.

Thai Foreign Minister Chatichai Choonhavan refused to discuss details of the withdrawal at a news conference today, but he said, "The amount will be enormous and will surprise a lot of people."

A U.S. embassy spokesman said the withdrawal plan would be announced simultaneously in Washington and Bangkok Monday. He also declined to cite a figure for the impending pullout of men and planes.

About 350 U.S. military aircraft, including 17 B-52 bombers, and 25,000 American servicemen—the vast majority of them Air Force personnel—remain on four military bases in Thailand, in addition to a secret communications base and a 700-man advisory force with the Thai army.

Prime Minister Kukrit Pramoj, whose civilian government took office in March, has pledged that all American troops would be withdrawn within a year.

U.S. Defense Secretary James Schlesinger told the Senate Armed Services Committee earlier this year

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that the United States was considering substantial reductions in the U.S. military presence in Thailand, and other sources said the goal was to eventually reduce U.S. forces to about 10,000 men and 150 planes.

State Department sources in Washington said the current plan was for another gradual and measured reduction. In the last two years since the Paris ceasefire agreement on Vietnam in January 1973, the United States has roughly halved the 46,000-man contingent in Thailand. At that time, there were also 750 war planes at seven Thai bases.

At his news conference, Chartichai said U.S. officials had pledged that the United States would continue to honor its commitments to Thailand despite the withdrawal.

"We have allowed U.S. bases to remain here too long and we sent troops to fight the North Vietnamese," he said. "They will not forget that, so it may be a problem in our future relations with them."

North Vietnam has said American troops must be withdrawn from Thailand before relations can improve between the two countries.

U.S. military personnel in Thailand are barred by law from operating in, over or off the shores of North Vietnam, South Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos.

U.S. officials believe that there is still strong support within the Thai government for a continuing U.S. military presence. At least some of the Thai calls for a total withdrawal are believed to be intended for Thai domestic consumption. U.S. officials said that Thailand has not demanded a total withdrawal in its talks with the United States.

U.S. officials said the discussions that led to the withdrawal agreement predated the collapse of South Vietnam and were not directly related to it.

The U.S. fear now is that a precipitate U.S. withdrawal from Thailand over the next few months, coupled with the South Vietnamese surrender, would alarm other American friends in Southeast Asia.

The only written commitment that has been made public, a statement signed in 1962, promises U.S. support through the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization "to help Thailand meet indirect aggression."

The Thai foreign minister also announced today that Thailand will call a meeting of Southeast Asian ambassadors to discuss joint recognition of the new government in South Vietnam.