

U. S. WILL REDUCE FORCE IN THAILAND

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Bangkok Aide Says 'Large
Number' Will Leave —
Announcement Awaited

BANGKOK, Thailand, May 1 (AP) — The United States Government has agreed to a substantial withdrawal of American forces from Thailand, Foreign Minister Chatichai Choonhavan said at a news conference today.

Mr. Chatichai said the withdrawal would be announced simultaneously Monday in Washington and Bangkok. He refused to disclose how many of the 25,000 United States servicemen and approximately 350 aircraft still stationed in Thailand would leave but said it "will be a large number."

Premier Kukrit Pramaj has pledged that all American troops will be withdrawn within a year.

A Gradual Withdrawal

Mr. Chatichai, who met last week with Edward E. Masters, the deputy chief of the American mission in Bangkok, to prepare for the withdrawal, said it must be gradual so that new work can be found for the 25,000 Thais employed by the United States military. He said the United States Government has confirmed that it would stand by its defense commitments to Thailand.

The only written commitment ever made public is the 13-year-old Rusk-Thanat joint statement, which promised United States support through the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization "to help Thailand meet indirect aggression."

The joint statement, which was signed in Washington in March, 1962, by Secretary of State Dean Rusk and Foreign Minister Thanat Khoman, said the United States "regards the preservation of the independence and integrity of Thailand as vital to the national interest of the United States and to world peace."

Commitment by Nixon

Other commitments to Thailand were given at meetings between President Nixon and Thanom Kittikachorn, who was then Premier. On his visit to Thailand in 1969, Mr. Nixon reaffirmed that the United States would stand by its commitments to help fight Communist aggression against Thailand.

Opposition leaders here meanwhile are urging speedy withdrawal of the remaining American forces so as not to provoke retaliation from North Vietnam.

"We've kept the United States forces on our soil for too long," said Mr. Kukrit's brother, Seni Pramaj. "We sent our troops to fight in Vietnam. I'm sure that the Vietcong did not like our actions."

Mr. Seni also urged the Government to recognize the Chinese and North Vietnamese Governments as soon as possible because "time is running short for us." North Vietnam has said she will not open diplomatic relations with Thailand until all United States forces are withdrawn.