

U.S. AIDES SEEKING RELEASE BY LAOS

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Group Under House Arrest
Asks Mission Be Sent to
Obtain Their Freedom

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VIENTIANE, Laos, Saturday, May 17—American officials under house arrest in Savannakhet radioed yesterday that the situation there was becoming "increasingly tense." They asked the United States Embassy to persuade the Laotian Government to send senior ministers to the city to obtain their release.

This message came from Sanford J. Stone, the regional director for American aid operations, who was seized by student demonstrators along with two other officials on Wednesday. Yesterday the students, who were in control of the central Laotian city, reportedly ordered all 11 Americans there to remain indoors under house arrest.

As a result of Mr. Stone's appeal, the Minister of the Interior, Peng Pongsavan, a right-wing member of the coalition Government, and his deputy, Delume Souvannarath, a representative of the Communist-led Pathet Lao, were to have left for Savannakhet last night.

Departure Held Up

But their departure was held up after a large group of air force officers and enlisted men demonstrated at the air base across from Vientiane airport demanding the ouster of their right-wing commander, Gen. Bouathong Photiwongsa. The protest grounded all military planes.

[A few hours later, Reuters reported, the general handed in his resignation, yielding one of the last few remaining positions of influence in rightist hands. Last weekend, four ministers and a deputy minister, all rightists, resigned from the coalition.

Another indication of the in-

creasing power of the Pathet Lao came yesterday when the mixed commission that monitors how well the coalition arrangement is working recommended that the Government end the Laotian operations of the United States Agency for International Development.

Last week, when the Pathet Lao proposed such a recommendation, the commission had decided against it.

Appeal by Filipinos

As the students who control Savannakhet reportedly extended their confinement order to include all 11 Americans in the city, an American plane was sent to the town of Keng Kok, 40 miles to the east, to evacuate five Filipino workers at an American-financed Operation Brotherhood hospital here. The five had requested evacuation by radio, apparently because of threats of demonstrations and confinement. A spokesman in Vientiane said that no effort was made to evacuate the Americans from Savannakhet on the same plane because "all Americans have been asked to remain in their homes."

"We must honor that request," the spokesman added. "We are not going to do anything to tilt the balance down there. They are not in any danger now, but they might be if we were to send a C-47 in to pick them up."

The two ministers who were asked to go to Savannakhet were expected to attempt to go to the city today to negotiate with the students. Two colonels representing the Pathet Lao and Vientiane Government side of the central commission to carry out the accords, went to the scene soon after the demonstration began but have apparently failed to meet the demands of the protesting students. What these demands are is still not clear.

Corruption Key Concern

John Everingham, a freelance photographer on assignment for The New York Times, visited Savannakhet yesterday and reported that the students appeared to be most concerned with corruption involving local right-wing Government officials. They also blamed these officials for the sharp rise in inflation and other economic ills. They accused the A.I.D. of abetting this corruption by giving money for distribution to these officials who, in turn, used it to line their own pockets.

In other provincial capitals, particularly the royal capital of Luang Prabang, which was

the scene earlier this week of attacks on the A.I.D. compound, the situation was quiet yesterday. However, a pattern of anti-American demonstrations appeared to have emerged. ON Thursday the clandestine Pathet Lao press agency reported that students in nine provinces, including Savannakhet, "have recently adopted a document pledging their determination to work for the building of a peaceful, independent, democratic, neutral, united and prosperous Laos." The agency said the students smash all "acts of sabotage against peace and national reconciliation taken by U.S. imperialism, the Thai reactionaries and the Vietiane ultrarightists."

One city mentioned by the

Pathet Lao in this statement indicating student activity was Thakkek, capital of Khammouane Province. There is no longer any A.I.D. activity there involving Americans but the agency's radio transmitter is still there. On Thursday Mr. Everingham said he had observed students in Savannakhet using the A.I.D. radio to communicate with students in Thakkek who had apparently seized the transmitter there.