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3 Americans Freed as Laotians Give Up AID Offices

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VIENTIANE, May 28 — The week-long student occupation of the U.S. Agency for International Development headquarters here ended today as employees returned to their offices and began preparations for handing the facility over to the Communist-dominated government of Laos.

The two U.S. Marine guards and a civilian who had locked themselves in to the building during the week-long occupation were allowed to leave. They are Sgts. Roger Murphy and Donald Wilburn and William Darden, an employee of Federal Electric Corp.

A U.S. embassy spokesman told Associated Press that the Lao government left a police force inside the AID compound in violation of the agreement and further negotiations would be necessary.

AID workers were allowed back into the warehouse and office compound following the signing last night of an agreement which dissolves the agency in Laos. The withdrawal of AID and handing over of all its property had been the principal demand of several hundred pro-Communist students who occupied the compound since May 21.

Another chartered airliner left with more than 60 American officials and dependents, leaving about 200 where there were once over 800.

U.S. embassy and AID officials entered the compound shortly after 1 p.m., although it had been agreed last night that they would be allowed in at 8 a.m. The students said

they had yet to set up a "coordinating committee," but U.S. officials felt the students were simply squeezing the Americans for every last drop of humiliation.

The three released Americans were not permitted to speak to newsmen. But correspondents touring the main AID building, in which Wilburn had been holed up, found that the Marine was prepared to defend himself in the event of attack.

He had laid out strips of rubber matting in the form of a pentagon on the floor of the building's hallway and sprinkled the strips with a mixture of gunpowder and cordite. In the center of the pentagon he had spelled out "USMC" with the explosive mixture. He had also spread the powder inside the building's main door and presumably would have ignited it if he had to.

As soon as the Marines left the compound and were replaced by other guards, AID officials set up tables and began paying the agency's 1,400 local employees. According to acting AID director Gordon B. Ramsey, they would each receive an advance equivalent to \$25 today and the rest of their biweekly salaries in the next few days.

The workers were to have been paid last week but could not receive their salaries because of the student occupation. Although most workers do not share the students' anti-American enthusiasm, most feared speaking out against the youngsters who have closely aligned themselves with the Communist Pathet Lao.

The Pathet Lao, who have assumed almost complete control of Laos' coalition government, appear to have manipulated the students to force AID out of the country. Top Communist leaders claim the students' demands represent the popular will of Laos' 3 million people.

Under the seven-point agreement reached last night, the United States has until the

end of June to wrap up its affairs here and hand over all AID property and material. AID officials said they have not yet worked out the value of these assets, but it is certain to run into the millions of dollars.

Besides the 1,400 Laotian workers employed by the agency in Vientiane, another 1,200 worked for AID in provincial towns. The agency was



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Freed Marine Sgts. Donald Wilburn, left, and Roger Murphy, center, relax with civilian William Darden in Vientiane.

second only to the government of Laos as an employer and since it began operating about 17 years ago it has built up an enormous infrastructure of buildings, vehicles and equipment ranging from heavy-duty road grading machinery to air conditioners. Total aid is put at about \$750 million. The program for this year was \$32 million.

Were it not for the fact that

the incidents culminating in the closure of this huge organization represent the virtual end of American involvement in Laos, they would be too minor and ludicrous to warrant attention.

The students who forced the U.S. government to bend to their wishes appeared no more revolutionary than any privileged middle-class youngsters in any developing country.

Most of them are well-dressed, in the latest European imports, and speak French, English and Lao.

It is evident from their behavior that they are playing a game that seems like fun at the moment. But the Pathet Lao, who are using them for advancing this country's quiet revolution, are deadly serious and the current close relationship between the two probably will not last.

A number of students have commandeered AID cars and jeeps and sped around town, talking to each other on radio telephones and carrying M-16 rifles, 45-caliber pistols and bayonets.

One youngster took special delight in constantly wearing a fluffy, red and white, woman's bathing cap, evidently taken from the AID compound's swimming pool area. The students are a breed apart from the Pathet Lao, most of whom are hill tribe peasants, shorter than the lowland Lao.

The Communists are quickly and efficiently establishing their domination, and its harshness becomes more evident almost daily. Yesterday, for example they viciously broke up a demonstration of AID workers outside Premier Souvanna Phouma's house. The workers, who had split with the students, were seeking Souvanna's help in getting their salaries.

Pathet Lao soldiers and officers swooped down on the group, brandishing pistols which they held to several workers' heads, and dragged

off one of their leaders in handcuffs.

Most observers in Vientiane expect the strictness of Pathet Lao rule to intensify, perhaps even reaching the severity of Khmer Rouge domination in neighboring Cambodia.