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## Laos Protest

## Wins Bonus

## From AID

By Lewis M. Simons

Washington Post Staff Writer

VIENTIANE, June 6—U.S. Agency for International Development officials, in their continuing efforts to withdraw all American personnel, today agreed to pay 2,700 Laotian employees extra severance pay equal to 12 weeks' salary.

The latest compromise came after all-day negotiations with protesting workers.

This new bonus, along with all other previously agreed-to payments, is to be made in kip, the Laotian currency. The workers had been demanding payment in U.S. dollars as well as three months' severance pay beyond what the agency had already agreed to.

Led by a small protest committee, about 200 workers pinned signs to the chain link fence ringing the AID compound and broadcast their demands over loudspeakers.

AID acting director Gordon Ramsey explained to the protest committee that payment in dollars was forbidden by the government of Laos. The workers want dollars because, as they told Ramsey, they can change them on the black market for twice the legal rate.

Under an agreement already reached between AID and its local employees, the workers are to receive a maximum of 18 weeks' severance pay plus a 30 per cent increment which AID offered as a "humanitarian gesture" to the workers, many of whom are unlikely to find jobs once the agency pulls out of Laos.

With 1,700 local workers in Vientiane and another 1,000 around the rest of the country, AID employed more people than any organization other than the government.

AID has been given until June 30 to leave the country, following a week-long occupation of its office and warehouse compound by 200 students, supported by Communist Pathet Lao armed police.

Announcements made over loudspeakers in the compound today told workers: "If you take your money now, You'll miss more later."

The Americans, who are being subjected to continuing harassment, are anxious to leave as soon as possible. Some U.S. employees have reported that armed Pathet Lao police have demanded entry to their houses to conduct searches.

"They're very suspicious of us," said one source, "and they seem to believe we're going to try to take things, like furniture and pictures on the walls, that are rightful property of the Laotian people." Houses evacuated by departing AID families have been looted.

As a result, the agency is striving to complete the turnover well in advance of the June 30 deadline.