

Last B-52's Left in Thailand Starting Their Flights Home

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U TAPHAO AIR BASE, Thailand, June 6 (UPI)—The last American B-52 bombers in Southeast Asia began flying home today, eight years after they began bombing targets in Vietnam.

The first of the 16 remaining planes took off under overcast early morning skies after low-key departure ceremonies. All the camouflaged, drooped-wing bombers will be removed by Sunday as part of the United States withdrawal from Thailand.

A Thai officer presented each of the departing plane crews with a garland of flowers.

Aboard the last B-52 to leave will be Maj. George Adams, 35, of Huntington, W. Va., who was the navigator on the first

B-52 strike flown out of Thailand on April 10, 1967.

"I'm proud of our record," Major Adams said. "We've done what we had to do, I flew 60 missions out here and every one was successful."

At the height of the fighting in Indochina, more than 50 Air Force B-52 bombers flew 729 bombing missions a month out of both U Taphao and Guam, the second main staging point for B-52 operations.

Since Aug. 15, 1973, when the bombing halt was enforced in Cambodia, the planes have staged only training flights. Most of the B-52's were gradually withdrawn, but the United States maintained 16 on a contingency basis.