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Laotians Guard U.S. Compound

From News Dispatches

Three Pathet Lao soldiers stood guard with rifles last night inside the gates of the Chapman in Vientiane. The Charge d'Affaires Christian residence compound of U.S. Laotian Foreign Ministry said they should not be there and would be removed.

Other Pathet Lao soldiers took over Tha Deua, the main border crossing point with Thailand, 15 miles from Vientiane. They did not interfere with travelers crossing the Mekong River.

The guards in the capital did not enter Chapman's home coming or going.

It was not clear why the soldiers were at the Chapman residence, but there have been increasing anti-American incidents in Laos in the past six



CHRISTIAN CHAPMAN
... Pathet Lao watches

weeks.

On Thursday, authorities barred Michael Rogal, the finance officer for the U.S. Agency for International Development, from leaving for Thailand. But he was allowed to depart yesterday and flew to Bangkok after showing immigration officials a letter stating that his work had been completed.

AID employes backed by the Pathet Lao had complained that not all 2,400 local employes had received their final checks. But the U.S. Embassy said 85 per cent of the employees had been paid and it was not necessary for Rogal to be there to pay the rest.

Somphou Oudomvilay, Laotian secretary of state for economic affairs, announced that China and North Vietnam will send rice, bicycles and tractors as "urgent aid" to Laos, and North Vietnam will repair a road linking Laos to the North Vietnamese port of Vinh.

The road will end the landlocked kingdom's dependence on neighboring Thailand's transport system for shipping Laotian exports and imports of foreign goods. Oudomvilay said Chinese goods included in the aid package would go through Vinh.

Elsewhere, Saigon radio said deposits and savings accounts of all banks, including foreign banks, must be transferred to the national bank.

Exiled Vietnamese Socialist leader Co Van Hai said in London he had been invited to return after a six-year absence to help rebuild South Vietnam.

Hai, who went into exile during the rule of former president Nguyen Van Thieu, told a press conference that there are millions of Socialists in South Vietnam whose cooperation the new government needs.

"The Socialists and Communists will complement each other and not compete," Hai said.

A survey of Saigon markets by United Press International

newsmen showed that prices have dropped overall since the Communists took control of Saigon and that luxury consumer goods have almost no monetary value.

Saigon markets were packed with food and jammed with foodsellers and shoppers, despite reports from Bangkok quoting unnamed foreign officials in the Thai capital as saying starvation was possible and food supplies in Saigon were short. (WXP 19 JUN)

Newsmen who toured Saigon-area markets and black markets found food prices had dropped slightly in most cases.

They also found a wider variety of food available than before the April 30 takeover by the Provisional Revolutionary Government. The newsmen also saw no visible hoarding or panic buying.

Increased road security and absence of corrupt officials who shook down drivers are the main reasons for falling prices, they were told.

But the high cost of gasoline has almost offset the former cost of corruption. Residents are dumping cars because of the cost of gasoline.

Officials have said gasoline ration books will be issued to persons in necessary transportation services, but only bus lines have received the books.

The drop in market prices has been about 15 to 30 cents per unit of food, but the most dramatic drop is in luxury goods.

"I think I'll just take my car and destroy it," said one resident after finding out his \$4,000-automobile will bring only \$200.

Three reasons are given for the drop in the prices of luxury items. Looting of U.S. offices and homes poured such items into a gutted market, banks are closed, making money generally unavailable, and residents will take a low price if they can get cash.

The result: \$50 stereo sets, \$20 electric typewriters and \$10 handmade office and home furniture.