

Laos-U.S. Rupture Threatened

From News Dispatches

An influential Laotian student leader said in Vientiane yesterday that the United States must pay war reparations to Laos and accept the takeover of U.S. embassy facilities or the Communist-dominated Laotian coalition government will break diplomatic relations.

Observers believed the U.S. government would be unable to agree to the demands, which raised the possibility of a total rupture of relations between the two countries.

The threat, made at a news conference, was the first public mention by a student activist of a full diplomatic break with the United States.

It was made by Khamsay Sourithone, head of the Lao Student Federation and a leader of the week-long student occupation that led to the dissolution of the mission of the U.S. Agency for International Development in Vientiane last week.

Khamsay said he spoke for "almost all the Lao people." It was not known how many he actually represented in this nation of 3 million, but student activists, the prime movers against the Americans in the last two months, have not yet been reproached or opposed by the coalition government, which is increasingly dominated by the pro-Communist Pathet Lao.

U.S. embassy officials met yesterday with Foreign Ministry representatives in an effort to regain a general services compound, a housing area and the U.S. Information Service library, all taken over during the weekend. An embassy spokesman said no decision was reached.

Meanwhile, a report from the Laos-Thailand border said two more high-ranking right-wing officials, including a former justice minister, had crossed into Thailand seeking asylum.

In Saigon, South Vietnam's Military Management Committee warned the population to be on the lookout for fake soldiers and revolutionary cadres

who have been stealing motorcycles, bicycles, TV sets and other property.

Liberation Radio in Saigon reported that 250 Roman Catholic priests including Archbishop Nguyen Van Binh, were represented in mid-June at a meeting designed to promote "better understanding between Catholic and the new government."

Catholic activity was also reported in North Vietnam. According to the North Vietnam news agency, monitored in Hong Kong, a delegation of French and Canadian Catholics recently met with officials and members of several Catholic communities in Hanoi and other cities.

In Bangkok, Hiroshi Hitomi, Japanese ambassador to South Vietnam, reported that the South Vietnam's national commercial credit bank for international business.

Hitomi said the piaster is being exchanged at 755 to the dollar, the last legal rate quoted before the government changed hands April 30. The black market rate at that time was more than 4,000 piasters to the dollar.

A regupee from Cambodia reported in Bangkok that the Khmer Rouge is forcing some people from urban areas to haul plows in the fields because of a shortage of farm animals.