

WXPost JUL 18 1975
Journalists

Face New Laos Curbs

VIENTIANE, July 17 (UPI)

—The Communist-dominated Laotian government took its first major step against the foreign press today, banning a Thai newspaper and setting up stiffer entrance requirements for newsmen.

One information Ministry source said that henceforth foreign newsmen will have to get permission from the ministry before they will be granted entry visas.

The sources also said that the English-language Bangkok Post would be banned immediately because it allegedly printed erroneous stories about conditions in Laos.

(In Bangkok, the newspaper said it was not surprised at the order.) ("It seemed inevitable, particularly after the hard-liners began taking over the top jobs" in Laos, managing editor Graeme Stanton said. "It is obvious they don't want the Lao people to read any objective analysis or news of what's going on in the country.")

The Information Ministry sources also said journalists will not be given entry visas until the embassy where the journalist applies cables the ministry for permission.

American journalists are now granted two-week visas that cannot be renewed or extended inside Laos.

The Information Ministry was taken over earlier this week by Thao Ma, who is regarded by some sources as a hard-line supporter of North Vietnam.

He replaced Souk Vongsak, who left Laos today for medical treatment abroad, probably in Peking or Moscow. Souk was regarded as a moderate although both men are members of the Communist Pathet Lao faction of the coalition government.

Thao Ma is former governor of Sam Neua Province, the Communist capital in Laos, and a member of the Communist Central Committee.

[Several hundred refugees who fled to Thailand as the Pathet Lao increased their power have returned in response to a promise of safety by Prime Minister souvanna phouma, according to a statement by a Laotian government spokesman reported by Reuter.] JUL 18 1975