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Laos: 1500

Soviets as Advisers

BANGKOK, Thailand, Aug. 28 (UPI)—About 1,500 Soviet advisers and experts have replaced American experts formerly used in Laos, the country's acting foreign minister said in a newspaper interview printed today.

Phoune Sipraseuth, a Communist who is also deputy prime minister, told the English-language Bangkok Post that the Soviet assistance was preferred because it came "without stings attached, unlike the United States."

In saying there were currently about 1,500 Soviet experts aiding Laos in different fields, Phoune offered the first public disclosure of the number in the country.

There were 185 members of the U.S. Agency for International Development mission in Laos four months ago, but all left by the end of June under an agreement with the Laotian government.

[In 1972, when U.S. military and support activity was at a peak in the nation of 3 million people, the American mission numbered about 1,200.]

The interview took place in the Laotian capital of Vientiane, where the newspaper itself is banned.

Phoune said Laos "is not under the influence of North Vietnam." He said the landlocked kingdom is a "neutral country."

The Communist Pathet Lao announced last weekend that they had assumed control of Vientiane Province, the last province to come fully under their control following de facto collapse of the coalition government three months ago.

Meanwhile, neighboring Thailand has asked six right-wing Laotian military figures to leave the country in an effort to ease tensions between the two countries, Thai government officials said.

Foreign Ministry sources said the Laotian government would be informed of the move "this week." The six fled to Thailand in May and June. Premier Kukrit Pramoj said the United States, France and Canada would be asked to receive some of the six.

Laos has frequently accused Thailand of conspiring to foment unrest in Laos by harboring leaders who fled when the Pathet Lao began its takeover last spring.

In another development, the Lao government news agency reported that the entire senior staff of southern Savannakhet Province has been sent to the new Pathet Lao capital at Viengsay for re-education.

Vietnam Radio Cites Resistance in Hue

From News Dispatches

An appeal has gone out to the South Vietnamese army and security forces in the Hue region to put down all anti-revolutionary movements the new Saigon government's Liberation Radio reported yesterday.

The radio monitored in Hong Kong said that the appeal was issued by a people's congress organized for northern Thuathien Province in the former capital of Hue on Saturday.

Industrialists and traders also were called on to respect economic and financial regulations and take part in rebuilding the economy.

Meanwhile Reuter reported from Saigon that authorities have launched a campaign to clean up the city's black markets, arresting alleged illicit gold dealers.