

# U.S. Will Evacuate Another Thai Base

United Press International

BANGKOK, Sept. 3—The United States will end operations at Nakhon Phanom Air Base in northeast Thailand—once the command center for the U.S. air war in Indochina—by about the end of October, Thai authorities announced today.

The joint announcement also said the total authorized U.S. force level in Thailand would drop by another 15 per cent, about 3,000 personnel, over the next two months in a continuing program aimed at complete withdrawal by next March, as outlined in an agreement made last spring.

The move out of Nakhon Phanom, located in an insurgent-plagued area close to the Mekong River border with Laos and only 70 miles from North Vietnam, will leave fewer than 16,000 U.S. servicemen and about 200 U.S. military planes based in Thailand down from 1968-69 peak of about 50,000 troops.

Nakhon Phanom will be the third U.S.-run Thai air base to be vacated in less than 18 months, leaving U.S. contin-

gents in Bangkok and at Tumpao in the southeast, Udorn in the northeast and Korat in central Thailand.

U.S. force reductions began last year, but the remaining presence has been a source of anxiety to the Thais who are concerned about security but also eager to establish friendly relations with the new Communist government in Indochina.

With the exception of the Mayaguez affair in May, U.S. planes have not flown combat missions from Thailand since the bombing halt ordered by Congress in August 1973.

First put into operation 12 years ago, Nakhon Phanom was the wartime home of reconnaissance units and of Jolly Green Giant helicopters that made dramatic dashes into Communist territory to pick up downed U.S. pilots. Currently it has the smallest population of the four bases occupied by U.S. forces, with about 2,600 men.

The command center moved to Udorn in mid-August.