

THAI BOAT REPORTED TO SINK LAOS CRAFT

BANGKOK, Thailand, Oct. 10 (UPI)—A Thai gunboat battled a Laotian patrol boat on the Mekong River, sinking the patrol boat and apparently killing five crewmen in the most serious incident between the two countries in years, officials said today.

The battle on the river border 290 miles north of Bangkok took place Wednesday, but was not reported until today, a Government official said.

Police sources in Bangkok said the Thai vessel was fired on by the patrol boat. Marine police returned the fire and sank the Laotian boat, they said.

Five of the eight Laotian crewmen were believed killed or drowned. The others swam to shore.

Thai officials declared a military alert in the area of the clash 65 miles west of the Laotian capital of Vientiane.

Meantime, the Thai National Assembly approved the 1976 budget of Premier Kukrit Pramoj in a crucial vote Friday that virtually insured the survival of his six-month-old Government.

The Assembly passed the \$312.25-million proposed Government budget by a vote of 139 to 100.

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