

Thais Close Parts of Border With Laos After Forces Clash

BANGKOK, Thailand, Nov. 18 (Reuters)—Thailand closed parts of its border with Laos today as a result of a clash between Thai and Laotian forces yesterday.

A company of Thai troops was sent to the area of the clash to help the navy recover a patrol boat grounded on a sandbank by Pathet Lao shell-fire near the Laotian capital of Vientiane.

According to the Thais, the clash began when the Laotians opened fire on the patrol craft. A Thai navy man was killed, and three others were wounded.

Fighting was continuing this morning, the Thai army commander in chief, Gen. Boonchai Bamrungphong, said. But he said he did not think it would increase.

"We just want to take back our ship for our prestige," he added.

After a regular weekly Cab-

inet meeting, an official spokesman said that Thailand was closing the border at three districts in the northern province of Nongkhai until the situation returned to normal. The districts include Tha Bo, just across the Mekong from Vientiane.

Foreign Minister Chatichai Choonhavan said the Thai ambassador to Laos, Sawet Komolphuti, had been recalled for consultations. A Cabinet spokesman said the ministry had been instructed to try to begin talks with Laos.

Accusation by Laos

HONG KONG, Nov. 18 (Reuters)—The Laotian Government today accused Thai warships of attacking soldiers and civilians on the Laotian side of the Mekong River yesterday.

A broadcast monitored here said the Government had delivered a note to the Thai am-



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Thailand closed border in Vientiane area.

bassador reporting a four-hour battle between three Thai ships and Laotian soldiers after one of the ships had opened fire on soldiers bathing in the river. One of the Thai ships was sunk, it said.