

U. S. Aides To Remain, Thais Say

BANGKOK, Feb. 3 (AP) - The Thai and U.S. governments have tentatively agreed that about 3,000 American military advisers will remain in Thailand after the March 20 deadline for withdrawal of all U.S. combat forces from the country, official Thai sources said today.

The U.S. embassy declined to confirm the report, saying, "Consultations between the two governments are continuing." A State Department source in Washington said the adviser provision is "still a live issue" in the U.S.-Thai talks.

The Thai sources said the U.S. military mission might include about 270 men assigned to the Joint U.S. Military Assistance Group in Bangkok, while other advisers probably would be stationed at the big Utapao air base on the coast and at the U.S. communications base at Ramasun, 300 miles northeast of Bangkok.

The sources added that the number of Americans might change "depending on the political situation during the next two months."

The American military presence is expected to be a major political issue during the campaign for the April 4 election of a new Parliament.

The United States still has about 8,500 servicemen stationed in the country, down from a peak of 50,000 in 1968 and 1969 when the Vietnam war was at its height. About 20 noncombat aircraft remain at Utapao and the Korat air base.

The presence of U.S. troops in the country has been op-

See THAILAND, A10, Col. 5

Thais Say 3,000 U.S.A

THAILAND, From A1

posed by leftist politicians and students, but they have been losing public support since new Communist governments took charge in neighboring Laos and Cambodia and some border clashes took place.

Gen. Boonchai Bamrungpong, commander-in-chief of the Thai army, told reporters last week that U.S. combat units should be stationed in the country because "Thailand is now in the precarious position of having to fight the Communists alone." The Thai military command expects a major offensive by Communist insurgents in the northern and north-eastern parts of the country during the coming dry season.

U.S. Ambassador Charles Whitehouse said in December that the Military Assistance

Group "will continue to provide assistance in the form of military hardware, guidance to support Thai efforts to establish military manufacturing and maintenance facilities, or training — as long as the U.S. and Thai governments continue to agree that this effort is necessary and desirable."

Laos Says Cubans Are Not Military

BANGKOK, Feb. 3 (AP) - The Laotian Embassy said today that more than 50 Cuban advisers are working in Laos, but they are technicians and agricultural experts and not military men as was recently rumored here.

Charge d'Affaires Kath Dithavong said the Cubans arrived in the country after the proclamation of the

People's Democratic Republic of Laos in mid-December. He would not disclose the exact number.

Unconfirmed reports and rumors that several hundred Cuban military advisers were stationed in Laos circulated in Bangkok recently. The Soviet

Union has a large assistance program in Laos, which diplomatic sources here said includes work on roads, airfields and in agriculture. Estimates of the size of the Soviet mission range from several hundred to several thousand people.