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U.S. to Open New Thailand Air Base

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The Pentagon said yesterday it is preparing to open a seventh air base in Thailand for use by American planes in the Indochina air war.

Sources reported, meanwhile, that nine more B-52 heavy bombers were flown from U.S. bases Thursday to Southeast Asia. This brings to nearly 160 the number of these eight-engine Stratofortresses committed to the air war.

The sources said additional B-52s will be going but the number was not disclosed. Last week the Air Force placed more than 40 of these planes on alert for possible use in the war.

The seventh base is at Nam Phong, located in the northeastern corner of Thailand. It served as an emergency field for U.S. planes between 1965-68.

One officer, explaining the

need to reopen Nam Phong, said "there's just getting to be so many planes there (in Thailand), there's no place to park them."

In the past month nearly 5000 U.S. airmen have arrived in Thailand to handle the new buildup of combat aircraft.

Takhli Air Base, 100 miles north of Bangkok, was reactivated last month. Built by the U.S. Government, it was closed in 1971 as part of the Nixon administration's troop withdrawal program.

In addition to Takhli, U.S. airmen in Thailand are stationed at Udorn, Ubon, Nakhon, Phanom and Korat, all in the northeast, and at Uta-pao, 90 miles south of Bangkok.

Over-all, the United States now has nearly 1000 bombers and fighter-bombers in Southeast Asia, only about 200 short of the peak committed earlier in the war.

Associated Press