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# U.S. Moving HQ to a Key Base in Thailand

BANGKOK — (UPI) — Field Marshal Thanom Kittikachorn said yesterday he has given approval to the United States to move its military headquarters from Saigon to a remote base in Thailand — only 60 miles from North Vietnam — when a cease-fire goes into effect in Vietnam.

Thanom confirmed the planned move to isolated Nakorn Phanom Air Base some 380 miles northeast of Bangkok. Located nine miles west of the Mekong River, the base is commonly referred to as "NKP" by U.S. airmen.

It formerly served as a

major center for close air support of government and CIA sponsored troops in Laos, and was the jumping off point for the unsuccessful commando raid on the Son Tay POW camp in North Vietnam in 1970.

It is the closest base to both Laos and North Vietnam, lying about 60 miles from the latter Communist country at the closest point.

## U.S. Personnel

The field marshal said some U.S. troops would be withdrawn after a cease-fire but that with new arrivals from Vietnam the number of American military person-

nel in Thailand would remain at about its present level. There are now approximately 45,000 U.S. troops here, according to U.S. spokesmen.

This figure has never been confirmed as the seven air bases in Thailand are technically listed as "Royal Thai Air Force bases," and the Thai government seldom permits reporters to come onto the American staffed and operated airfields for what they call security reasons.

Thanom said he had discussed arrangements on the move from Saigon with U.S. ambassador Leonard Ungar. The Thai leader did not give details of the units which would arrive, but American sources here confirmed that the U.S. command structure was involved.

## Planned Ready

U.S. military sources in Saigon said that planning had been completed and that the supreme U.S. headquarters there, Military Assistance Command Vietnam, and the headquarters of the 7th Air Force would make the move.

The new command will be named Military Assistance Command Southeast Asia, or MACSEA, the sources said.

Thanom said U.S. air-planes would be involved in the readjustment of personnel here, but did not go into detail.

U.S. sources here have said some of the additional American planes moved into Thailand during the eight month pullout from South Vietnam might be removed from the U.S. occupied air bases here after a cease-fire is signed.

NKP now serves as headquarters for search and rescue operations to pick up U.S. pilots downed on missions over North Vietnam and Laos. It also houses the "Igloo White" electronic sensor operation which has located targets along the Ho Chi Minh trail supply network in Laos.