

Thailand to Protest Use Of Base by U.S. for Raid

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Washington Post Foreign Service

BANGKOK, May 15 — Thailand is considering diplomatic moves against the United States because the Thais consider the use of bases in their country in the rescue of the merchant ship Mayaguez to have been a clear violation of Thai sovereignty, a Foreign Ministry spokesman said here Thursday.

Demonstrators, mostly leftist students, burned an effigy of President Ford in a Bangkok park to protest the U.S. action.

The Foreign Ministry spokesman described the American use of Thai bases as "a breach of faith" and said it "was an act that went against the expressed wish of the head of the Thai government."

He said he doubted that anything as drastic as a break in diplomatic relations would follow, but added: "Perhaps this incident could cause public opinion in Thailand to move toward quickening the pace of American withdrawal."

He said it is necessary to establish an understanding with the United States to prevent this sort of thing from happening again, adding that a decision on what diplomatic move to make might be announced Friday.

[UPI quoted Foreign Office sources as saying that Prime Minister Kukrit Pramoj was considering three ways to express Thailand's disapproval with the U.S. action: recalling the Thai ambassador from Washington, asking for an immediate withdrawal of the 25,000 U.S. troops here, and circulating a diplomatic note advising embassies here that the United States acted on its own in retrieving the Mayaguez.]

On Tuesday and Wednesday Kukrit stated publicly and privately to U.S. charge d'affaires Edward Masters that the United States could not use Thai soil as a springboard for military action against the new Cambodian government. He told Masters that the Marines that had been flown here against the wishes of the Thai gov-

ernment should be removed "immediately." *

It appears that the United States ignored the wishes of the Thai government on every count. The Marines who were flown in here Tuesday and Wednesday were used in the Mayaguez rescue, the Thai spokesman said, as were American planes flying from Thai bases north of here.

The Thai military authorities assured him, the spokesman said, that American planes flying from Thai bases had not been directly involved in the sinking of Cambodian gunboats on Wednesday; but he said he had no assurances about the bombing of Sihanoukville on Thursday.

The U.S. began withdrawing the Marines Thursday, but as of mid-afternoon, the spokesman said, he had no word from the Americans that the remaining Marines had left Thailand. Masters had promised to call him as soon as all the Marines were gone, he said.

* [Asked about this apparent violation of the Thai demand that the Marines be withdrawn immediately, spokesman said, "To quote Ron Nessen, 'immediate is immediate,' " AP reported. He was referring to a remark by President Ford's press secretary about the American demand that Cambodia return the Mayaguez immediately.]

The status of the Marines could not be confirmed from the American side because the embassy has refused to comment on any aspect of the Mayaguez rescue.

Masters had told the premier that the U.S. embassy had not been informed that the Marines were being sent to Thailand, the spokesman said, adding: "And I would like to believe it."

Although the Americans may now be congratulating themselves on the success of the Mayaguez adventure, the operations has severely strained relations with Thailand, America's only remaining ally on the mainland of Southeast Asia.

The Thai government has little wish to make a big issue of this, officials said privately, but the violation of

sovereignty had been so flagrant that Thailand has to make some gesture.

Thailand has been in a state of shock since Cambodia and Vietnam fell to the Communists. With Laos going the same way, albeit peacefully, Thailand is trying to adjust diplomatically to the new realities in Southeast Asia.

It is not easy. Thailand shares long borders with Laos and Cambodia. The Cambodians have become belligerent about the border demarcation, the new South Vietnamese government has criticized Thailand for letting the Americans get away with so many of the planes flown here by fleeing South Vietnamese pilots, and Hanoi has criticized Thailand for allowing riots against Vietnamese settlers in the north.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations is holding a foreign ministers' conference in Kuala Lumpur and, as the Foreign Ministry spokesman pointed out, the timing of this humiliation at



KUKRIT PRAMOJ
... weighing options

the hands of the Americans comes at a particularly embarrassing time since the Thai foreign minister is "discussing peace and neutrality" in the region.

During the 1960s Thailand made an agreement with the United States allowing the Americans to build and operate air bases in Thailand, but the Thais always insisted that they maintained sovereignty over the bases.

The American move has further widened the split between left and right in this country and, as one government man said, "This has made it very hard for any of us with pro-American sympathies to be heard. We would simply be shouted down."