

C.I.A. Plans to Cut Thai Operations

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WASHINGTON, Jan 18—

United States officials said today that the Central Intelligence Agency's operations in Thailand would be sharply reduced soon.

The C.I.A. has been conducting a sizable counterinsurgency program against Communist guerrillas in Thailand for almost 10 years.

But last month an agency operative stationed in a provincial town in Thailand set to the Bangkok Government a fake letter purporting to be a peace offer from a guerrilla leader. But the deception was revealed, stirring an outcry in Thailand against the intelligence agency, the United States and Ambassador William R. Kintner.

The Washington officials said that Mr. Kintner was preparing recommendations that would greatly limit the agency's operations in Thailand. The agency is now said to have 150 operatives in Thailand, most of them in the counterinsurgency program and the rest combating narcotics traffickers from Burma.

Protests Against U.S.

The officials said that Ambassador Kintner had planned a reduction of intelligence operations before the incident, as part of a general readjustment of United States policy toward the new Thai Government, which came to power last October.

Mr. Kintner, who is 58 years old, spent several years in the Central Intelligence Agency himself after ending a career as an Army officer. He is described by officials here as sensitive to the negative effects of clandestine operations on foreign policy.

The Washington officials said that during a routine staff discussion conducted by the C.I.A. station chief in Bangkok, Bernardo Hugh Tovar, "the idea was floated" of manufacturing fake letters purporting to be peace offers to Premier Sanya from a Thai Communist leader. "The idea was shot

down at the meeting," one official said.

Nonetheless, one American agent who was assigned to advise Thai military and intelligence officers at the provincial town of Sakon Nakhon thought that the idea was a good one.

The official said the agent wrote the letter without telling his Thai colleagues and sent it to Premier Sanya, with copies going to several Bangkok newspapers. Evidently the fake letter was designed to undermine morale in the Communist insurgent movement and cause defections.

The false nature of the letters was exposed in the first week of January, and the agent was hastily sent out of the country — presumably to the United States.

A press spokesman at the agency's headquarters in Langley, Va., said today that he did not know what had happened to the agent, who was not identified.

Ambassador Was Away

But officials said Mr. Rovar, 53, was home for consultations when the letters were sent and when they were exposed as fake. He returned to Bangkok about Jan. 5, the official said.

Another official said that Ambassador Kintner's proposals to reduce C.I.A. operations would be reviewed by the so-called Forty Committee — a panel of top United States intelligence authorities who approved the Thai counterinsurgency program originally.

Soon after he first arrived in Thailand last November, Ambassador Kintner began revising American activities in

Thailand, the officials said, beginning with the economic-aid program. This had a bearing on the counterinsurgency program since the aid program includes the equipping and training of Thai policemen.

The shift in economic policy has been toward conventional forms of development assistance and away from anti-insurgency programs.

Another kind of aid that is being phased out is called accelerated rural development—supplies of bulldozers and sanitation facilities "to make villages more attractive to Thais and more immune to the insurgents," as one official put it. He said that this program had reached a saturation point in Thailand.