

Vietnamese-Thai conflict worsens

Viets shoot down Thai planes, six wounded

United Press International
BANGKOK, Thailand — Vietnamese anti-aircraft guns shot down two Thai military aircraft over Thai territory Tuesday and Western diplomats said the level of the conflict was escalating.

Western diplomats, who witnessed the incident, said Vietnamese anti-aircraft emplacements about half a mile inside Thailand downed a Thai "Spooky" helicopter gunship and an L19 light observation plane within 10 minutes of each other.

The two aircraft crashed and six crewmen were removed from the rubble, all in serious condition, the diplomats said.

The incident took place over the

embattled Mak Mun area, 150 miles northeast of Bangkok and the site of continuous fierce fighting since some 2,000 Vietnamese troops surged into Thailand in a bloody invasion Monday.

"Our expectation is that the level of conflict will increase considerably after the downing of these two aircraft," said one Western diplomat.

Thailand protested the invasion to the United Nations, condemning the fighting as an "international act of aggression aimed at killing Thai soldiers and citizens. Thai Foreign Minister Sitthi Savetila said Bangkok would ask for a U.N. Security Council meeting.

The boom of artillery duels and

automatic weapons fire resounded along the Thai-Cambodian frontier as Thai forces battled to turn the tide of the multi-pronged Vietnamese invasion.

The fighting was particularly

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heavy around the Mak Mun area and the Thais threw U.S.-made M-41 tanks, heavy artillery and helicopters

against the Vietnamese units.

F-5 jet bombers were seen flying support for the Thai troops.

Western intelligence analysts said the Vietnamese invasion force was well dug in about half a mile inside Thailand at several points along the border.

The analysts said the Vietnamese were in total control of two sprawling border encampments, that once held 100,000 Cambodian refugees, and several strategic Thai villages.

Senior Western diplomats termed "rubbish" reports the Vietnamese were withdrawing.

"The Thais are bringing in reinforcements and hitting the Vietnamese with just about everything

that explodes," said one diplomat. "The Vietnamese are still very much here."

Thai military intelligence sources said massive Vietnamese troop and tank movements inside Cambodia indicated a second, more penetrating attack by the Hanoi troops.

The sources said two Vietnamese "fast assault" divisions, the 9th and the 11th, were fanning out from their base at Nimitr, Cambodia, and pushing toward the Thai frontier with a phalanx of Soviet-built T54 tanks.

The two divisions were estimated at between 16,000 and 18,000 troops.

Military analysts said the two divisions were surging along the frontier north of the strategic border town of Aranyaprathet, 135 miles east of Bangkok, and could cross into Thailand at any moment.

Overall casualties were difficult to estimate. Western diplomats said they would not be surprised if casualties among the Cambodian refugees, caught in the middle of the fighting, numbered 1,000 dead and wounded.

Thai military sources said 30 of their soldiers were dead and 150

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wounded. Hospital sources said 300 wounded were treated in two days. Battle-front reporters saw seven Vietnamese bodies.

Thai sources said two full Vietnamese divisions, a total of about 16,000 men backed by Soviet-made T-54 tanks, were pulling closer to the border from their Cambodian bases near Poipet.

Western diplomats in radio contact with the war zone said the Vietnamese in Thailand, believed to number about 2,000, were digging in and holding their position about 1 mile inside the country.

May gas increase hits two-year low

WASHINGTON — Consumer prices rose 0.9 percent in May, the second straight month as gasoline costs made their smallest increase in two years, the Labor Department reported Tuesday.

But analysts quickly cautioned that despite recent moderation in the rising cost of living, the nation's inflation problem is far from solved. The annual inflation rate during May was 10.9 percent on a seasonally adjusted basis. That was a big improvement over the 18 percent annual rate during the first three months of the year.

Average gasoline prices rose less than 1 cent a gallon in May, the lowest increase in more than two years, the government said Tuesday. The May average price for all types of gasoline in U.S. cities was \$1.244, the Bureau of Labor Statistics said. The increase, only 1 cent above the April figure, marked the smallest percentage increase since March 1978.

On a seasonally adjusted basis, the price of gas actually declined slightly, according to the monthly Labor Department report. Officials said that decline was more statistical than real.

And recent price hikes by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries are likely to boost gasoline and fuel oil prices in coming months.

Food prices also declined more slowly in May, with food and beverages combined rising 0.3 percent, compared to 0.5 percent the month before. There were substantial declines in beef, pork and egg prices. But agricultural economists expect many food prices to rise in coming months.

Housing was a big disappointment in the May figures. The cost of financing a home rose a full 3 percent. While VA and FHA mortgage rates fell, conventional mortgage rates continued to climb.

The Labor Department said that is because recent declines in conventional mortgage rates quoted to customers around the country have not begun to show up in the figures for the Consumer Price Index, which is based on actual mortgage rate figures. These lag a month or two behind the quoted rates.

May Prices continued to rise faster than wages, and the purchasing power of the average worker continued to slide.

Hourly earnings of blue collar workers adjusted for inflation declined 0.2 percent from April to May. The number of hours per week worked by blue collar employees also declined, presumably because of recession layoffs. Thus, the spendable earnings of these workers and taxes and inflation declined even more sharply, down 0.9 percent the month.

In the area of energy prices, the Labor Department said natural gas and electricity charges both increased during the month (by 4.5 and 2.2 percent respectively). This resulted in a rise in the cost of household fuels, even though prices of home fuel oil declined.

Used car prices declined 1.7 percent for the month. But new car prices rose 1 percent. Automobile finance charges also continued to rise sharply, up 4.3 percent in May.

The cost of public transportation — which includes airline, taxi and intercity train — fares rose 1.5 percent for the month.

The price index for apparel and its upkeep declined 0.2 percent in May.

Medical care rose 0.5 percent, the smallest increase in the last year. Entertainment rose 0.6 percent, the smallest increase this year.

Bush tells supporters he would run with Reagan

United Press International
SAN ANTONIO — George Bush told a small private group of supporters that if asked he would agree to be Ronald Reagan's running mate, a newspaper reported Tuesday.

"If I'm asked by Governor Reagan to be the vice presidential nominee, I'll accept," Bush told a gathering of 35 local supporters Monday night, according to an exclusive story in the San Antonio Light.

However, the former presidential candidate told the gathering he wanted no part of any overt campaign for the vice presidential spot, a Republican ticket.

"I don't want to be a part of anything that's destructive to the public party," Bush told the couple gathering, which included Light reporter Joan Cheever.

He repeatedly said during the campaign that he wanted no part of the second spot on the GOP ticket but was fighting for the presidential nomination at next month's Reagan National Convention in Denver.

Bush maintained during his campaign that he had the best chance among GOP presidential aspirants of defeating President Jimmy Carter in November. After Reagan's loss in the primaries appeared unalterable, Bush said he would do nothing to "tear down Reagan" or the Republican Party.

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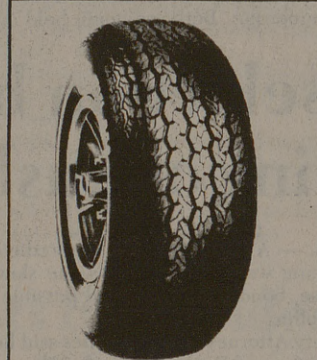
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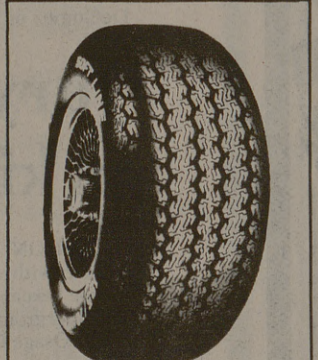
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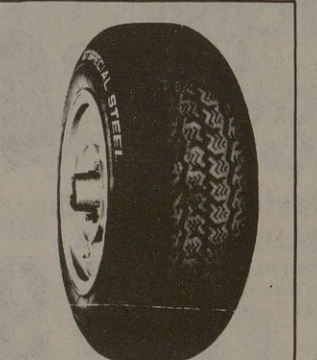
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