

U.S. Will Withdraw Yemen Aid Mission

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WASHINGTON, April 28—The United States, its relations with Yemen strained almost to the breaking point, announced today that it would withdraw its aid mission from Yemen and quickly evacuate the dependents of all American officials there.

State Department officials, angered by a mob attack on the American aid mission two days ago and the arrest of four American aid officials, indicated that if the Yemen Government did not abide by recognized "minimum diplomatic standards" it could lead to a break in relations.

The unexpected crisis in Yemen could, if the situation continues to deteriorate, have an impact on the American role in trying to contain the mount-

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ing conflict between Arab radicals and conservatives in the Arabian peninsula. The United States and Italy are the only major Western powers that have diplomatic ties with Yemen. Communist states are well represented there.

The State Department reacted sternly today to Yemeni charges that two American aid officials had been guilty of sabotage by firing two bazooka shots at an ammunition dump in Taiz in an effort to "completely destroy" the city. The department said the charges were "a total fabrication."

Robert J. McCloskey, the department spokesman, said the United States decided to withdraw the Agency for International Development Mission after the Yemen Government radio announced last night that Yemen would unilaterally end her aid agreement with Washington.

A department spokesman said the United States had strenuously demanded the release of the two Americans, Stephen Liapis, 33 years old, of Grand Forks, N.D., and Harold Hartman, 36, of Baltimore. The United States also demanded compensation for the damage to the aid mission caused by a Yemeni mob Wednesday.

Mr. Liapis and Mr. Hartman were described as Arabic-speaking employes of the United States Bureau of Public Roads who had been working under contract with the Agency for International Development.

Two other American aid employes have been released in the last 24 hours, United States officials said.

The State Department warned today that the United States would hold appropriate authorities in Yemen "fully responsible for the safety of all American personnel" in the country, especially those "still being held under unwarranted detention."

Robert J. McCloskey, the State Department spokesman, denied press reports in the

United Arab Republic that said the United States had given Yemen an ultimatum threatening to break diplomatic relations if the two imprisoned Americans were not released by today. He added:

"The nature of our future relations with the Yemen Government will be determined by the outcome of the current crisis."

The United States took the controversial step of recognizing the republican Government of Yemen in December, 1962.

The Soviet Union, Communist China and several East European countries have sizable missions in Yemen.

Western diplomats have been concerned about the growing Communist presence in the southwest corner of the Arabian peninsula, especially with the mounting conflict in Aden, where radical Arab nationalists are battling conservative Arab rulers for power as Britain prepares to withdraw from the area in 1968.

Since the removal of a partially independent Yemeni Government by Egyptian authori-

ties in September, Western diplomats have come to regard the Egyptians, who have about 40,000 troops stationed in Yemen, as the de facto power in that country.

Washington has also noted that the Egyptian press and radio have quickly picked up and given wide dissemination to Yemeni charges against the American aid officials.

The speed with which Cairo reacted has led well-informed diplomatic circles to suspect that the anti-American incidents were deliberately staged by Egyptian and Yemeni officials to provoke the ouster of the American aid mission or even a diplomatic break between the United States and Yemen.

These sources believe that the incidents were an outgrowth of Cairo's irritation over Washington's refusal to meet Egyptian requests for large-scale food aid, the increasing Arab nationalist campaign on the Arabian peninsula and Arab suspicions that Americans in Yemen were engaged in espionage.