

Beat: News

Thai army chief seizes power in military coup etat

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USPA News - Thai army chief General Prayuth Chan-O-Cha announced Thursday that the country's military had seized power in a military coup d'état to "restore order and enact political reforms" after political leaders failed to make progress to resolve the months-long crisis. In a statement broadcast on all television and radio channels across the country, Prayuth and leaders of other branches of the armed forces explained that the National Peacekeeping Committee (NPKC) had come together to seize power over the country, just two days after they declared martial law without consulting the government.

"In order for the country to quickly return to normal, the National Peace and Order Maintaining Council, which includes the Royal Thai Army, the Royal Thai Air Force, the Royal Thai Navy and the national police, hereby announces that it is necessary to take control of the government, starting May 22, 2014, at 4:30 p.m. onwards," Prayuth said. The coup d'état came moments after a second round of meetings between political leaders concluded with no progress to resolve Thailand's political crisis. Prayuth said the coup was "necessary" to keep the Thai people safe and would allow for the country to "return to normal quick," according to local newspaper The Nation. Thursday's political meeting, mediated by Prayuth, was attended by representatives of the government, the Red Shirt movement, the Pheu Thai Party, the Democrat Party, the People's Democratic Reform Committee, the Senate and the Election Commission, The Nation reported. The location of acting prime minister Niwatthamrong Boonsongpaisan was not immediately known, but the military later announced that Prayuth would replace Niwatthamrong as acting premier. Niwatthamrong did not attend Thursday's meeting, stating that he would not attend a meeting chaired by the army's commander-in-chief, considering he had been appointed as prime minister after Yingluck Shinawatra's removal from office earlier this month. After the coup was declared, citizens were advised to go about their daily lives as usual, though the military announced a nationwide curfew from 10 p.m. until 5 a.m., but people going home from work or travelers going to or from airports would be allowed to travel during the curfew. Schools are expected to remain closed until Monday. "I ask everybody to stay calm and live your lives, and to continue working as normal," Prayuth said. But in the hours after the military coup, the military banned all protests and ordered all radio and television stations across the country, including foreign channels such as CNN International and the BBC, to stop broadcasting and to only show the army's announcements. An army spokesman defended the move, saying it was intended to ensure only "accurate news" would be released. Before Thursday's coup, Prayuth had announced on Tuesday that he had declared martial law, justifying it as a way to restore order due to anti-government protests which have occasionally turned deadly over the past few months. The military stated it was done "to restore peace and order for people from all sides" and at the time stressed that it was "not a coup," but troops were strategically deployed across the capital Bangkok. In Tuesday's televised statement, Prayuth said Red Shirt supporters had threatened a civil war if power was given to an unelected leader, but anti-government protesters refuse to participate in any elections. Moreover, protesters wanted the Senate to invoke a clause in the constitution to remove Boonsongpaisan and appoint a new leader.

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