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Army Chief Calls Former U.S. Envoy 'Devil'

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[Text] Army Commander Wimon Wongwanit yesterday condemned former US ambassador to Thailand Morton Abramowitz as a "devil" and peddler in old news in his allegation in the WASHINGTON POST in May that the Thai military was still giving assistance to the Khmer Rouge.

"He is not an ambassador but a devil," said Gen Wimon claiming the allegation had greatly damaged Thailand's international reputation.

The army commander, speaking on his return from a two-week visit to Romania, Austria and Pakistan, said he did not consider Mr Abramowitz an ambassador but "an enemy of the Thai people and the Thai army". He distanced Mr Abramowitz from the American people saying the allegation "was the act of an American, not the whole nation".

"His article was based on old information and had not been polished. It is fake," he said.

Gen Wimon said the former ambassador served in Thailand at a time when Vietnam invaded Cambodia and the situation was very different from the present. He said Mr Abramowitz might still feel disgruntled with the Khmer Rouge for its role in overthrowing the Phnom Penh government in 1975 despite the support of the U.S. government.

Gen Wimon said he doubted whether any of the 14 Thais being held in Phnom Penh in connection with the coup attempt last Saturday were involved. He said he did not know who the Thai businessmen had contacted in Phnom Penh as they had nothing to do with the Thai army.

"The coup in Cambodia, if carefully probed and more details are available, might turn out to be a joke," he said without elaborating.

Gen Wimon said he would not delay taking decisive action against any of the 14 if it is proved they are Thai soldiers.