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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

BRIEFING MEMORANDUM

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EO 12958, 25X 6
FPC/HDR by JPH Date: 6/12/96
Re-review 2006
Withdrawal NR

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October 14, 1973

Declassified
Authority: 24622
By: Dorothy Gregory
Date: 01-20-2010

10/14/73

TO: The Secretary

FROM: EA - Arthur W. Hummel, Jr.

Overthrow of Thanom Government in Thailand

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Present Situation

The King of Thailand, at 7 a.m. this morning, announced the resignation of Prime Minister Thanom Kittikachorn and his Cabinet and named Sanya Thammasak, the highly respected Rector of Thammasat University, to form a new government. This development followed a confrontation between Thai students and the RTG which began with student protests against the October 7 arrest of 13 students and others charged with inciting public unrest. Student demonstrations grew to unprecedented proportions, culminating in bloody clashes on October 13 and 14 between students and other demonstrators and RTG forces in Bangkok resulting in at least 100 deaths. Most demonstrators have dispersed following the King's announcement but several thousand are still in sharp confrontation with the police with some police stations being hit with grenades, automatic weapons and Molotov cocktails.

A telegram received from Bangkok at 4 p.m. is attached.

No Change in Thai Military

This is the first time that student demonstrations have been on such a large scale and have resulted in the fall of a Thai government. Thus far, however, Thanom has retained his position as Supreme Commander and there has been no change in the Thai military leadership, which has governed Thailand for 16 years. We have no indication

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any impending or likely change in the Thai military power structure, but the possibility of an attempted coup by Thai military elements cannot be completely excluded in the still uncertain situation. It is too early to tell whether the military will accept instructions Sanya may give in the days ahead and how the military will react to their lessened role in the new government.

Short-Term Outlook

While the King and PM Sanya have appealed to all Thai to work together to restore the situation to normal, the continuing violence makes the situation still quite uncertain. The King's personal appeals and PM Sanya's promise of a new Constitution within six months should be powerful inducements to end the violence and disorders.

Our Embassy presently foresees no significant change in Thai foreign policy, including the RTG position on the US military presence. The US military presence and Thailand's association with the United States were very much a secondary issue in the student demonstrations, which focused throughout on the release of the detainees and the demand for a Constitution.

US Presence

Thai preoccupation with restoring calm and normality is likely to provide us with some "breathing space" in Thai pressures for further reduction in US forces. Nonetheless, the new Thai government is expected to maintain the RTG's position of asking for a reduction to the pre-1972 level of 32,000 men and the withdrawal of TDY B-52's and other strategic aircraft. Moreover, the new government will probably be more sensitive than the Thanom regime to domestic pressures for US reductions.

Thai Rice for Cambodia

The shipment of 12,500 MT of Thai rice, scheduled to begin loading in Bangkok on October 14, could well be delayed, exacerbating the already critical rice shortage in Phnom Penh.

The new government is not likely to change the RTG's strong support for the Khmer Republic in the UN. RTG preoccupation with the domestic scene might, however,

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impede the Thai delegation's heretofore active efforts to preserve the GKR's credentials in the UN General Assembly.

[redacted]

Our Press Position

In response to press queries, we are saying that our information generally accords with wire service reporting and that we have no comment to make. We will note, however, that we have no reports of any American citizens being wounded or killed, or even involved in the situation.

Attachment:

Bangkok's 16037

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 CIAE-00
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PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-00 ACDA-19 IO-15 OMB-01 AID-00 CU-04
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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, PINT, TH
SUBJECT: SITREP AS OF 2330 LOCAL TIME: THANOM ANNOUNCES SUPPORT FOR NEW PRIME MINISTER

REFS: A. FBIS BANGKOK 01412812 OCT 73
B. FBIS BANGKOK 0141333Z OCT 73
C. BANGKOK 16833
D. BANGKOK 16833

1. THE KING SPOKE OVER NATIONAL TELEVISION AT 1930, AND LATER OVER THE RADIO, TO ANNOUNCE THE CHANGE IN GOVERNMENT (TEXT CARRIED REF A). A RESIGNATION STATEMENT FROM FORMER PRIME MINISTER THANOM WAS READ OVER TELEVISION AND RADIO ABOUT 2000 (TEXT CARRIED REF B). JUDGE SANYA, THE NEW PRIME MINISTER, SPOKE OVER TELEVISION AT 2310. HE URGED ALL THAI--POLICE, MILITARY, AND STUDENTS--TO RESORT TO PEACE. HE PROMISED A NEW CONSTITUTION WITHIN SIX MONTHS. THE ELECTION OF REPRESEN-

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