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FROM : AmEmbassy BANGKOK Date of Action 8/6 DATE: July 29, 1970

SUBJECT : U.S. Commitments to Thailand: Parliamentary Interpellation and RTG Comments

REF : A. Bangkok 7915 Action Office Symbol PS

Date of Officer

B. Bangkok 9279

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A recent parliamentary interpellation on U.S. commitments to Thailand provided an interesting example of the relative freedom enjoyed by government critics in Parliament even on sensitive issues of security.

The parliamentary interpellation occurred July 16, when the Speaker of the Assembly moved People's Party MP Khaisaeng Suksai's question on military commitments onto the day's agenda as an urgent matter. The verbatim transcript of the interpellation is transmitted as an enclosure as further background to Bangkok 9279 and because it conveys some of the flavor of parliamentary interpellations.

The priority accorded Khaisaeng's interpellation, on an already crowded agenda, pointed up the RTG's willingness to discuss Cambodia and related security issues in Parliament (and in public), although it continues to refuse requests to allow a general debate on the subject.

Khaisaeng, a leftist MP of the small (two seats) People's Party, is one of the most outspoken critic of government policy in the Assembly. In the question submitted, Khaisaeng asked that in light of the recent resolution passed by the United States Senate, to what extent could Thailand depend on the United States in the event that war breaks out. Prime Minister Thanom, responding as

Enclosure:
Prime Minister Thanom's statement of July 16, 1970

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Minister of Defense, replied he had the personal pledge of the President of the United States, which was repeated by the Secretary of State at the recent SEATO conference, that the United States would carry out its commitments. Thanom added that the RTG, however, recognized the political situation could change and therefore the Ministry of Defense was following a policy of making the country self sufficient to the extent possible.

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