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WASHINGTON

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May 6, 1968

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

Subject: Your Meeting with the Prime Minister of Thailand

Thanom will have three major concerns:

The U. S. commitment to Thailand, particularly after your term of office.

Where we are headed in Viet-Nam.

U. S. support for Thai development and counter-insurgency programs.

A. U. S. Commitment to Thailand

Thanom and his colleagues are deeply concerned about an early, large-scale U. S. withdrawal from SEA under your successor and will be making their own first-hand appraisal of the U. S. political situation as it affects Thailand. Thanom has asked that USAF units remain in Thailand, in reduced numbers, after U. S. withdrawal from Viet-Nam.

Suggest you give Thanom a full, frank explanation of the domestic political scene, particularly as it relates to Southeast Asia. Also agree to consultations on withdrawal of U. S. units in Thailand.

B. Viet-Nam Issues

1. Military Situation. Thanom will want to know how we see the military situation developing. Thai leaders have felt that we have given insufficient priority to making the GVN and ARVN effective and Foreign Minister Thanat has offered to speak to GVN leaders, urging them to work together.

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Suggest that:

a) You tell him where we are going in the war;

b) You express appreciation for Thanat's willingness to talk to the Vietnamese leaders, but explain that others have done so recently and Thanat's approach might be interpreted at this time as "ganging up."

c) Stress the need for arrival of the Thai division on schedule in July.

2. Negotiations. The Thai, with unhappy memories of the Geneva negotiations of 1962, are skeptical about negotiations and will press for fullest consultation and eventual participation.

Suggest that:

a) You stress we are entering negotiations from a position of strength;

b) Review the course of our efforts to establish contacts with NVN, explaining the reason for our positions;

c) You go over Ambassador Harriman's instructions in general terms;

d) You assure Thanom that our position in negotiations will be based on the Manila communique and the 14 points and we stand on effective implementation of the Geneva Accords on Laos and Viet-Nam, and for free choice in South Viet-Nam;

e) You stress that by removing the war and negotiations from the political campaign, you are freer to do what is necessary to pursue these matters to a successful conclusion.

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C. Support for Thai Counter-Insurgency and Development

Concerned over possible U. S. withdrawal, the Thai want to be in a position to defend themselves under any circumstances. Thanom will press for accelerated delivery of MAP and AID equipment for countering Communist insurgency in Thailand. Thanom might also ask U. S. assistance in road-building in Northeast Thailand.

Suggest that:

a) You express satisfaction at Thai determination to lick insurgency on their own and the progress they are making;

b) Assure them we are seeking to expedite MAP and AID deliveries and of our continuing support;

c) Express hope they will continue to allocate even greater Thai resources to rural areas threatened by insurgency;

d) We are exploring ways of assisting in road-building. Ambassador Unger will follow up on this back in Bangkok.

D. In addition, we wish to make the following points:

1. Status of Forces Agreement. We are pleased that talks are now under way on a SOFA and hope that our two Governments can conclude an agreement promptly. In the interim, we hope the Thai Government will continue its forbearance in matters of jurisdiction over U. S. military personnel in Thailand.

2. Neutralizing U. S. Security Expenditures in Thailand. Thailand's growing economic strength should enable it to assist us further in our balance of payments program. Our State and Treasury officials are looking forward to discussing this matter with Thai financial leaders. We hope the Prime Minister will support these efforts.

E. Foreign Minister Thanat has asked to be present during your discussions with Thanom. This would be desirable to insure effective communication since the Prime Minister's English is not as good as it appears to be.

Dean Rusk

Clearances:

L - Mr. Aldrich
EA/VN - Mr. Burke
EA - Mr. Bundy
ISA - Mr. Devine

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