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CONFIDENTIAL PART IV OF IV

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation

DATE: January 29, 1973

1/29/73

SUBJECT: Thailand in the Post-War Period

PARTICIPANTS:

H.E. Anand Panyarachun, Thai Ambassador to the United States
Mr. Wichian Watanakun, Thai Embassy Counselor
Marshall Green, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs
Arthur W. Hummel, Jr., Deputy Assistant Secretary EA
Alf E. Bergesen, Acting Director for Thailand and Burma Affairs

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The discussion turned briefly to Thailand's position in the post-ceasefire era. Mr. Green said he had told PM Whitlam that if he wished to see a non-aligned SEA, do not pull SEATO out from under Thailand; don't take her bargaining counters from her. Mr. Green said he had discussed this problem in some detail in an on-the-record interview with an Australian reporter and asked that a copy of this interview be given to Ambassador Anand (This was done late afternoon January 29). Anand mentioned the rising problem of US use of Thai air bases. Mr. Green said that with a genuine ceasefire, there were major openings for Thai diplomacy.

Anand expressed considerable indignation about an editorial in the Washington Post on Saturday, January 27. (Attached). He said that the editorial took Thailand seriously

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to task for two charges contained in the HFAC staff report: the return (to Burma) of a 27th ton of opium instead of burning it last March, and the charge of Thai collusion with U Nu. Anand seemed to be seeking to get the Department to write a letter to the editor of the Post or otherwise take public issue with this editorial. Anand said that it was much less useful for a foreign embassy to write to the press because such letters were dismissed as self-serving. (Note: It was unclear whether Anand was taking issue with the charges or with the Post editorial on them. He had not at that point seen a copy of the report which has since been sent to him. Later in the afternoon it was explained to Wichian that the information on the "27th ton" which had appeared in the HFAC report had not come from American sources but rather from Thai sources and that we had known nothing about it at the time the 26 tons were destroyed).

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The Washington Post

AN INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER

Stepping Up the War on Drugs

One merciful byproduct of a Vietnam settlement is that it will free Mr. Nixon of any residual political inhibitions that may have limited his prosecution of that terrible urgent "other" war—the one against drugs. For it is beyond cavil that the United States did not take every step possible and necessary to halt narcotics traffic in South Vietnam, Laos and Thailand, while it sought their cooperation in the war against the Vietcong and Hanoi. Particularly when pressed by Senator McGovern, Mr. Nixon insisted that his vigilance and effort were matchless. With the big war over and, along with it, the rationale for indulging allies' narcotics corruption and neglect, an unchecked assault on the international drug trade in Southeast Asia can proceed.

Fortuitously, just this month the House Foreign Affairs Committee issued a staff report indicating the latest dimensions of the problem and suggesting ways to attack it. Much of the material is familiar; some of it is shocking: in the infamous and questionable $1 million preemptive buy-and-burn of a supposed 27 tons of opium in Thailand last year, Thai and American authorities actually turned the 27th ton back to the (Chinese) sellers for lack of the extra cash needed to buy it. The report details the local laxness and connivance and the American political disablement that have made the authorities in Southeast Asia so slow to work on even that part of the narcotics trade within their actual reach.

One passage is especially revealing: Burmese cultivators grow more than half of the vast opium tonnage produced in the "Golden Triangle." Yet the Thais, to fend off a feared Communist insurgency, allow former Burmese Premier U Nu to run an anti-Rangoon insurgency from Thai territory—an insurgency financed in part by production and transit of Burma-grown opium. In retaliation, Burma refuses to cooperate with Thailand in narcotics suppression. The Thais, pressed by the U.S., shrug and make gestures. Partly because it holds the U.S. responsible for U Nu, Burma has kept its relations with us so low as to prevent effective American influence on opium control.

Even more startling in a way is the report's finding that "acetic anhydride is an essential element in the production of heroin. The bulk of this chemical used in Southeast Asia heroin laboratories is processed in Japan. There are no government restrictions, controls, or monitoring of its export." The organization and operation of the highly touted Nixon drug control machinery is also critically examined.

By now, few Americans are so naive as to think the drug traffic can be shut off even by the most determined and politically unfettered American assault. Production and use of narcotics are too large a part of the traditions and economies of other countries to yield to such a unilateral thrust. Moreover, the United States must accept a full measure of responsibility for its own heroin demand and for the inadequacy of its own control and treatment programs. Yet it is enraging to learn authoritatively again that there are steps the U.S. might have taken but did not take—for reasons of high policy, low bureaucracy or whatever. The Vietnam settlement removes the final alibi for not doing everything this country can do to cope with the supply problem in Southeast Asia.