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SUBJECT: ASEAN NEUTRALIZATION PROPOSAL — POL 8 ASIA SE

REF: (a) State 209716; (b) Kuala Lumpur 4050

1. Instructions contained reftel(a) conveyed authority to posts at ASEAN countries to communicate US view of proposed ASEAN neutralization declaration, but should of course be done in manner which these posts consider most appropriate. Department view based primarily on language of Thai draft, which, it was recognized, would

(19)

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11/18/71	22420	EA:Marshall Green

EA/RA:RDNethercut:bc

NSC - Mr. Holdridge (substance)
EA/RA - Mr. Moore (draft)
EA/PHIL - Mr. Usher
EA/IMS - Mr. Grant

EA/TB - Mr. Dexter (seen)
INR/REA - Mrs. Barnett

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probably not emerge in recognizable form from Kuala Lumpur meeting, but which had triggered urgent queries from other ASEAN members, especially GOI and GOP, as to US position. Intent of instructions was to provide guidance and talking points for posts to use, as appropriate, in responding to these queries.

2. U.S. not trying to kill ASEAN initiative on future security of SEA but trying to clarify for the benefit of ASEAN nations the US position with respect to the neutralization proposals which are under immediate consideration. This clarification deemed necessary in part because Malaysian officials have asserted that US approves GOM neutralization proposal in principle.

3. U.S. not necessarily in opposition to neutralization concept and, as noted reftel A, commends Asian initiatives re their regional security, but we do consider a vague, sweeping proclamation of SEA neutrality by ASEAN members -- without bringing in other SEA nations -- is ill-considered at this

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stage and could have adverse consequences for US in the near term.

4. Seems to us that GOP and Malaysians themselves may be on right track in contemplating a study committee to explore all ramifications "neutralization" proposal and to sound out other nations, especially the non-communist Indochina states. Denouement of 1962 Geneva Agreements on Laos indicate Hanoi and Peking have their own interpretation of "neutrality" and "neutralization"; and non-communist Indochina states will presumably view with apprehension proclamation of SEA "neutrality" at this juncture. US feels strongly, as noted in our suggested talking points, that ASEAN members should conside carefully whether proposal would embrace states that might subscribe to declaration but continue to carry out subversion which they would categorically deny.

END

ROGERS

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