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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

AIRGRAM

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TO : Department of State

FROM : AmEmbassy BANGKOK

DATE: November 19, 1970

SUBJECT : New Governor of Chiang Rai

REF : Bangkok's A-439, August 17, 1970

Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Prapass Charusathiara told reporters September 29, 1970, that pending Cabinet approval Chiang Rai Vice Governor Sorasak Sumanathat would replace Governor Prayad Smanmit who was killed in a terrorist ambush September 20. Praphat also said that Colonel Prapark Phuvanatnurak of Supreme Command Headquarters would replace Sorasak as Vice Governor.

The 59 year old Sorasak holds a teachers certificate from Chulalongkorn University and a Bachelor's degree in law from Thammasat University. The Bangkok World reports that he has distinguished himself in the fields of administration and crime suppression while serving in various posts as a district officer, deputy governor, and most recently vice governor. He and his wife Samnuan have one daughter.

Following his graduation from Chulalongkorn in 1934 Sorasak was assigned as a teacher in Nakhon Sawan Province. He was later transferred to Chainat and in 1938 he moved to the Ministry of Interior and was appointed as a deputy district officer in Uthai Thani Province. Promoted to district officer in 1949 he served successively in Bangkok, Phichit, and Ban. He also served as the deputy governor of Petchabun, Lop Buri, and Nakhon Sawan. In October of 1969 he moved to Chiang Rai as Vice Governor.

Again, according to the Bangkok World, his competence in English has "served him well at international conferences and seminars during recent years."

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...te in Chiang Mai reports that Sorasak is well-to-do, ...his concession that is quite lucrative. Despite his age ...very active and still plays tennis regularly. He came to ...ng Rai with every expectation of retiring in September, 1971; ...nonetheless will probably not be content to just serve his ...time. He brings a considerable amount of valuable experience in dealing with hill tribes from his assignment in Phetchabun and is actively interested in the insurgency. Following Praphat's assassination Sorasak was asked by Deputy Under Secretary of State for the Ministry of Interior Chatchai Yanaputi to remain in Chiang Rai to participate in supervising suppression operations against the insurgents who had carried out the attack rather than going to Bangkok for Prayad's barbing rites. It was clear at the time he believed that Sorasak was capable of holding down the job of Governor in Chiang Rai, which the Ministry of Interior has traditionally regarded as one of the more important provincial posts, and Sorasak's subsequent appointment to the position indicates that Praphat concurred.

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