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MC 2	PM 2	S/S 16
AGR	COM	FRB
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TR	XMB	AIR 5
ARMY 3	CIA 16	NAVY 5
OSD 34	USIA	NSA 3
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TO : Department of State

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Action Taken

DATE: August 19, 1970

Date of Action

FROM : AmEmbassy BANGKOK

Action Office Symbol

SUBJECT : Supplementary Comment on NSSM-51 Summary Paper

Name of Officer

REF : Bangkok's Telegram 10296

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Bangkok's RefTel 10296 commented on the major substantive points in the NSSM 51 Summary Report. The comments below supplement the Mission's cable on: I. CI, II. Economic Assistance, III. Political-Military Aspects and IV. Intelligence.

I. Counterinsurgency. Paragraph 5, RefTel, commented on the major issues involved. We would also make the following specific suggestions (References are to page and line numbers of the Summary Report):

1. Page 20, lines 5-6, replace by: "However, among the hilltribes of North Thailand and among ethnic Thai of Northeast and Mid-South Thailand the communists have exploited local economic and political grievances to build rural support."

2. Page 20, lines 18-20, replace by "particularly if better weapons and more funds are made available from China or North Vietnam."

3. Page 21, line 20, replace by "The Mission believes...weapons and the greater availability of funds to the insurgents, that external support is improving. Moreover, the number of indigenous cadre trained abroad is increasing. There is, however,..."

4. Page 23. With the return of Thai forces from Vietnam, and apparent stabilization in Cambodia, more Thai resources will become available for the CI effort.

4a. Page 26, final sentence. Thai capabilities and performance cannot be equated simply to U.S. involvement and commitment. Request deletion of the final sentence. If some estimate is needed along these lines, we propose: "The extent to which the U.S. can

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Drafted by: DS/RED/USOM/MACT/POMIL/SA/MC

Contents and Classification Approved by: DCM/GSMorgan

Clearances: (all in draft) MACTJ5/Col. Jones; MC/NGWThorne; USOM/Gajewski; DS/Mr. Stokes POMIL/JSnyder; RED/St. Lawrence; SA/RMagner; POL/RMcLenden; ECON

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By: Alan Lipton Date: 10-20-2008

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continue, with increasing Thai support, to maintain a neutral Laotian buffer, will be important in determining RTG ability to maintain internal security with its own combat resources, and to make continued progress toward self-sufficiency. The outcome in Vietnam and Cambodia will also be highly relevant factors."

5. Page 47, line 20, delete "rather than to promote" and replace with "in addition to promoting...particular program areas. U.S. assistance in the development, internal security, information, and intelligence fields has been provided to improve Thai CI capabilities, thereby permitting the Thai to maintain the internal stability essential for Thailand to play the important regional role which the U.S. envisaged."

6. Suggest deletion of page 47, line 21 through page 48, line 14. In the context of our total assistance program to Thailand and the many and varied objectives which these programs sought, it is wholly inadequate to select rhetorical comments out of context as epitomizing the rationale for a decade of assistance to Thailand. Purposes of U.S. aid should be distilled from the manner in which the assistance was actually applied in Thailand, and the results it produced. Unquestionably some of our military aid to Thailand during the mid-60's was given for political goals, but most of our aid was specifically related to concrete security objectives, and such aid had clearly defined program goals--not all of which, to be sure, were achieved to an optimal degree. As to Thai expectations, it is true that increased aid levels lead to expectancy of continuity in such aid, but hardly lead in themselves to Thai expectation of U.S. force commitments: for demonstration, see FonMin Thanat's highly negative presumptions on this score. We need not, in any case, be ruled by informal "Thai expectations" which have not been documented. We should restate the final paragraph on page 3 of the NSSM-51 draft in this light.

7. Pages 49-51 appear to refer to the period before 1968, to the meagre extent that they are valid at all. Since that time the U.S. Mission has substantially curtailed its staff, and has specifically avoided the presentation of "U.S. package proposals." In village security, for example, the Ambassador and the Deputy Prime Minister in 1968 agreed that the U.S. would consider supporting a Thai program when one had been developed and coordinated within the RTG. (The innovative PAT, VSO and VSF programs were all pre-1968.) Since 1968

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our aid emphasis has been heavily on Thai improvement of human resources ("training the trainers"), and on effective implementation and fulfillment of existing programs. Our assistance programs have become steadily less intimate in terms of U.S. involvement. The Mission is unaware of any existing "U.S. management" of Thai CI efforts: the USIS CI information program was the only case of its kind, and its phaseout is nearly complete. "U.S. CI planners" have not since 1967 "developed concepts and plans that guide Thai CI operations." Moreover, U.S. support for the RTG CI programs aims at improving Thai CI capabilities and increasing Thai self-sufficiency. It cannot be logically contended that programs designed to minimize U.S. participation and to maximize transfer of responsibilities to the Thai could be construed by them as implying an expansion of the U.S. commitment. (Changes are also required on page 78.)

8. In general, the Thais have shown initiative in developing concepts, institutions, and programs to deal with the insurgency, notably: the CPM (civil-police-military) concept, CSOC (Communist Suppression Operations Command), the ARD program, the MDU program, the VDC/VPT program, and more recently, the VSDU program, TNPD CI training, the Muban Police Program, hilltribe training and welfare programs, etc. In the last few years the U.S. role has been to support creative and innovati Thai programs rather than to develop CI action programs for the RTG. U.S. support and advice has been forthcoming to those Thai ideas and programs which were found to be sound and relevant in the context of the existing internal security situation. (This argues also for modification of second para, page 74.)

9. Page 49, lines 18-20, replace by "U.S. involvement in counterinsurgency operations and operational planning has been studiously avoided as a matter of Mission policy, and U.S. advis have been prohibited from participating, even as observers, in counterinsurgency operations."

10. Page 52, line 8--bottom of page. COMMENT: The Mission has moved into the sector approach in dealing with the village security question. We have said we would help if the RTG developed a sound program, but we have offered no indication as to the dollar level of our potential support, in order to discourage planning to fit the dollar amount offered instead of the problem to be remedied and permanent Thai supportive capabilities.

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11. Page 59, lines 14-19. COMMENT: There is no tradeoff required between RTARF and the village security program. The Prachuab Training Center is and will be turning out sufficient numbers of trained villagers for village defense. U.S. equipment support for village personnel would not require a major outlay. Problems of VSDU effectiveness have nothing to do with RTARF or with the level of U.S. assistance, but with endemic social and bureaucratic problems related to the arming and control of Thailand's rural populace.

12. Page 60, lines 5-10. COMMENT: Our present program includes an offer of support for such a village force once the RTG has agreed upon a village security program that we find sound in terms of concept and resources available.

13 Page 66c. The "Limited Program" for RDC-T approximates the current program more closely than the Comprehensive Program: the "limited" dollar level will not be exceeded.

II. U.S. Economic Assistance.

A. Multilateral. The Summary Report gives relatively little discussion of the relationships between RTG programs and multilateral assistance, or to the promotion of USG goals through multilateral programs where Thailand's participation is important not only for benefits gained by Thailand itself but for the enhanced success of such programs in regional terms. The Nixon Doctrine with its emphasis on Asian self-help and less direct U.S. involvement implicitly points to regional cooperation as one of the most effective routes toward U.S. policy objectives in SE Asia. There is little question that the U.S. views the efforts of the nations of SE Asia to draw together for common purposes--economic, political and defense--as a major element of its foreign policy objectives in East Asia. The Guam doctrine also calls for a style and approach which gives even greater emphasis to sharing responsibility, encouraging the formation of multilateral arrangements for common purposes and seeking increased participation on the part of like minded international agencies and foundations.

Over the past three to five years Thailand has played a leading role in the formation and encouragement of regional groupings. Thailand is deeply committed to the Mekong Committee, the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization, the regional Transportation and Communications program among others and has recently initiated a regional management program. Thailand also plays a leading and important role in ASEAN, ASA, SEADMIC, ECAFE. The U.S. should encourage Thailand to continue in its leadership role in SE Asia, particularly during the post-war era.

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Over the next five years we should consider, as it appears in U.S. interests, turning more of the Thai technical assistance program into multilateral and international grant and loan funding channels. This might include, among others, areas of transportation, water resources development--irrigation, and associated works, agricultural practices and innovation, certain elements of education, population control and medical research. U.S. assistance handled in such a manner would have the dual advantage of reducing both the American presence and cost while maintaining a desirable level of economic and political development.

It is important to differentiate between "multilateral assistance" and "international lending." (The latter term is generally used in the Summary Report.) In some cases international lending would not be feasible or desirable particularly in projects which are not bank worthy, for example in the area of certain infrastructural programs (some aspects of education) or air-sea rescue (which RED has done feasibility studies and which we know must be funded by grants not loans). Another case for multilateralization would be costly projects--in the billion dollar area--the PaMong, for example, which no bank--international or otherwise can fund alone. In this case a number of countries would have to give support, probably through a bank to be sure, but where some aspects would have to be grant funds, e.g. resettlement.

Some specific suggested changes in the text:

On page 58 para 3 "and multilateralization" should be inserted between "toward - greater".

Page 58, para 2: "However in the past the Thai's have failed to lay etc." overstates the case and is not entirely true. It would be truer to say "The Thais while relying heavily on U.S. bilateral aid are slowly beginning to lay the ground work to attract international assistance."

Page 70 para 3: Beginning "The U.S. would inform etc." This idea implies an exclusivity, i.e. only the IBRD or the ADB - there are other lending agencies - other conglomerate loan facilities - private and otherwise which probably would be used. We would suggest:

"The U.S. would inform the Thai that they should rely on multilateral funding and international institutions such as the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank and that the U.S. would urge these institutions to increase their lending to Thailand as well as participate in multilateral funding schemes for economic development programs in Thailand."

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Page 73, top: Ought to read: "...and work with institutions such as the World Bank, etc. to increase the level of international grant and loan funding to Thailand."

Page 74 first word fourth line: Change "lending" to "assistance."

Page 80, last sentence top of page: Would better read: "...and work with institutions such as the World Bank and the ADB to increase international assistance to Thailand."

Page 88, last sentence para 2: Same as above.

B. Bilateral USG Assistance. One major element missing from the options is a description of the transition process in moving from an existing program to one of the proposed options. It should be remembered that the USOM has provided large amounts of equipment to Thai programs which will continue to require technical assistance at least for a limited amount of time.

Because the Thai economy is moving into a difficult period, as described in our Annex to the Country Field Submission, external resource requirements to maintain the economic growth necessary to finance security and development requirements will increase markedly. Analysis conducted by the World Bank, the U.S. Mission, and the RTG, supported by the NSSM-51 economic analysis (State A-59), indicates that the resource gap for the Third Five Year Plan period will probably not be filled. The government has already taken steps to stem the resource outflow. These steps will likely slow down the growth of the economy and concurrently the tax base. This situation may further limit the government's ability to muster resources for its development and security efforts. In this context options which include some economic assistance would appear to be the most realistic. In such case, the use of the sector assistance approach, as described on page 55, has considerable appeal since it could be provided without adding undue pressures on Thai absorptive capacity.

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III. U.S. Military Assistance and Political-Military Factors:

Bangkok's RefTel 10296 discusses the Mission view that U.S. interests must be treated from the broader perspective of regional objectives and strategy. This is particularly true in analyzing, and projecting U.S. support options for, Thailand's military problems. In addition to the general comment in the referenced cable, we would make the following suggestions:

page 3, last para: Issue is not whether we want to enlarge our commitments by involving us directly or indirectly in Thai activities... not question of enlarged commitments but of modified commitments.

page 4, top: Thai economy was not "unencumbered" by large Thai defense expenditures.

page 4, para 5: U.S. assistance to the Thai force in Vietnam should not be termed as U.S. assistance to Thailand. It is U.S. assistance to Vietnam. U. S. assistance in support of the Royal Thai Armed Forces during the period FY 66-69 was $318,126,651 (Source: CINCPAC Table 10 MAP Financial Summary).

page 5, para 7: We do not "have" the option of stationing ground or air forces in Thailand...this is an option for which the political preconditions must be maintained and cultivated, otherwise, it will be foreclosed.

page 8: Bases are under more than "nominal" Thai control.

page 45: Reference to support of Thai's troops in Vietnam as part of Thai defense programs should be corrected to read part of RVN defense program.

page 46, para I: The figures for "Thai defense programs" should be changed to (318) vice (344) (source CINCPAC table 10 MAP Financial Summary).

page 60, last paragraph: We interpret this paragraph as referring to the actual (assigned strength of the Thai army at home which is about 102,000. It seems the 11,000(+) RTAVF troops in RVN were included here. This applies also to the strength figure shown on the middle of page 62.

page 63, para (1): Reference is made to a 5-1/3 RTA division post-Vietnam baseline (bottom of page) which is correct if that figure is based on 4-2/3 divisions in Thailand and 2/3 of a division in RVN. However, the baseline is increased without explanation to 5-2/3 on page 64 and that figure is used from there, throughout the paper. If the brigade-increment in training in Thailand is considered, 5-2/3 is correct.

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page 66: Delete first paragraph and change to read: "The RTN has recently acquired a Mekong patrol mission and has implemented operations along a 60 km portion of the river near Nakhon Phanom." This operations plan may prove to be a more effective counter insurgent force than heretofore. Cambodian developments have resulted in a plan to extend the present Thailand air and surface patrols along the Cambodian coast at the request of the Cambodian Government. However, the plan has not been implemented.

page 66 et.seq: We don't agree with the treatment of conventional massive attack and proxy war. Only in a certain sense do preparations for the one cover the other. In many ways proxy war is more difficult to deal with and is more dangerous form of warfare, combined with war of liberation, as it is in Laos.

page 77, line 15: There is apparently no consideration given in this and other options to O&M costs of providing this much close air support of this magnitude to the Royal Laotian government. It is our opinion that the Thai would not participate to this extent without U.S. full assumption of O&M costs.

page 78, line 12: MACT does not agree that NCO and junior grade officer leadership is defective. The problem in this area is a quantitative one as opposed to a qualitative one. The real area of leadership weakness is at the battalion and regimental levels wherein the few capable leaders are precluded from exercising effective leadership by Bangkok constraints. The average Thai NCO and young officer can be depended upon to acquit himself well and, as is true in all armies, their performance is a direct reflection of leadership competence at the higher levels.

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page 79, 3rd line from bottom: We doubt that the Thai would across-the-board accept economic repayment for military ventures.

page 81, 9th line from bottom: Withdrawal of U.S. field advisors, in this and other options, might turn out to be not an unmistakable signal to the Thai that the U.S. is not satisfied with its CI program, but probably would be interpreted as a continuing diminution of U.S. interests in Thailand.

page 85, last line: MACT doubts that an extra division, i.e. to reach the 6-2/3 level, could be organized and trained to function out-of-country without U.S. advisory and training assistance.

page 93, Option 2: The strategic value of defending a Bangkok enclave is highly suspect and would appear to be hardly worth the effort assuming Communist control of outlying areas.

[redacted]

Concerning military assistance (page 61-67), the study should be changed to reflect present realities, e.g. we have started deliveries of a second airmobile (UH-1H) company to the RTA, so the option to fund only one company does not exist; likewise, we are becoming committed to supplying T-28s as the RTAF COIN aircraft vice A-37s or F-5s; for the RTAF, we have also supplied a UH-1H squadron which we expect to be used in the air assault role.

IV: Intelligence Matters:

It is our understanding that Thai-based installations are far more important than the discussion in the Summary Report (ref. page 9) implies. While a definitive evaluation could only be made in Washington, we would wish assurances that interested agencies had been consulted before accepting the report's conclusions as to the weighting of this factor.

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We would assume that the reference to [redacted] research of a limited scope on page 66c means the production of papers related to Communist activities, intentions and capabilities in Thailand that are prepared in the normal course of our analytic effort. [redacted] These points bear clarification in the report text.

We suggest that there be spelled out at some point in the summary the relative roles that unilateral and bilateral intelligence operations in Thailand should play in the next five years. These are reflected in the backup papers on intelligence but since the issue of intelligence is raised as a portion of nearly all the final options offered in the summary, some brief mention of the intelligence role seems warranted. A sentence to the effect that U.S. intelligence unilateral efforts in Thailand will be dictated by the level of U.S. policy interest and the evolving relationships between U.S. and Thailand in light of that policy in the next five years would seem to cover the issue. Bilateral activity --either increased or decreased-- would of course be dictated by the same considerations.

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