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MEMORANDUM

NODIS

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

SECRET

NW 28143
By DM/AL Date 9/12/08

July 3, 1967

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

NODIS REVIEW
Cat. A — Caption removed; transferred to O/FADRC
Cat. B — Transferred to O/FADRC with additional access controlled by S/S
Cat. C — Caption and custody retained by S/S
Reviewed by: Raymond L. Perkins FSO-2
Date: 6/10, 1975

Date: June 27, 1967

Present: President Johnson
King of Thailand
Under Secretary Katzenbach
W. W. Rostow

After preliminary conversation on the King's travels in the U.S., the President asked if Thailand were getting the Communists under control. The King replied that they were stepping up their efforts.

The President indicated he was sending Under Secretary Katzenbach out to Viet Nam with Secretary McNamara shortly.

The King observed that U.S. Government departments treat the war in Viet Nam as though it were a separate war. In fact, the whole of Southeast Asia is involved in a single war, including the Communist efforts in Thailand.

He then went on to observe that it would be wise for us to keep our bombing pressure in the North and other pressure on the enemy steady rather than sporadic. He said we were taking propaganda costs in any case and we should at least have the advantage of persistent rather than intermittent operations.

(3) The President pointed out that the apparent irregularity of our air operations was caused by weather rather thanby policy shifts in response to propaganda.

The King said he was concerned over the propaganda war against us. We must not only try to give the people in Thailand security but also fight off the propaganda that is conducted within our countries and throughout the free world. He cited, as an example, a publication called "Minority of One," printed in New Jersey, which disseminates Chinese Communist propaganda. He said in Thailand certain newspapers are paid to publish apparently harmless material which is, in fact, damaging propaganda.

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The President then posed the problem raised for us by the need to respond to General Westmoreland's request for an additional 200,000 troops. He cited a recent letter from Senator Byrd of the Armed Services Committee. He said it will be impossible for the President to get support for such additional forces unless the troop contributing allies also put in more troops on a proportional basis.

His Majesty stated that, so far as Thailand is concerned, they are fighting a real war and have troops tied down in their country for that purpose. The President responded by pointing out that the U.S. also has important commitments outside Viet Nam -- for example, Germany and Korea. He said we all had to focus on the additional requirements of Viet Nam where the outcome was crucial for Thailand and Southeast Asia in general.

Thanat pointed out that when the Thai government asked for 2,500 volunteers to fight in Viet Nam, 50,000 had come forward. The King said the problem was not men willing to fight, but training and weapons. The President said that we could help with training and equipment. The problem was to get a distribution of the 200,000 which was fair and equitable.

The President then asked Mr. Rostow on the basis of population, how might the extra 200,000 be distributed. Mr. Rostow replied that it would come out to something like 125,000 U.S. troops and 75,000 from the other troop contributors, with Thailand required to put up about 20,000 as its share.

The King then cited three problems:

-- The quality of the recruits; to which the President said we also had to draw on and train men of lower IQ and physical quality than we might wish.

-- The training and equipment of additional troops.

-- The improved equipment of the forces left behind in Thailand.

The King elaborated at some length on the psychological and political problem posed by the latter element. He said it was very hard for the military to accept sending troops abroad well equipped when they themselves were lacking in modern equipment.

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When pressed, he cited these four categories of additional equipment required in Thailand beyond that required for additional forces that might be sent to Viet Nam:

-- Helicopters (they now only have 3, they want 20).

-- Short take-off and landing aircraft.

-- Heavier weapons for the Thai border patrols which now must fight with carbines against Communists who have machine guns.

-- Communications equipment.

The King emphasized repeatedly the critical importance of re-equipment of forces remaining behind, if additional forces were to be mobilized, trained and equipped to fight in Viet Nam.

The President then telephoned Sec. McNamara and informed him of the King's response. Sec. McNamara said that it would not be worth our while to train and equip a few thousand more Thais for Viet Nam, but if Thailand could furnish 10,000 he could guarantee their training and equipment.

President pointed out there had been 50,000 volunteers and he was interested not in 10,000 but 47,000 since less than 3,000 have, in fact, been mobilized and sent to Viet Nam. Sec. McNamara said that the problem of training and equipment could be solved up to that level if, in fact, Thailand could mobilize the men.

The President said: I expect you to be prepared to meet these requirements. Sec. McNamara responded that he would be prepared.

Turning to His Majesty, the President asked if he was reassured. He replied, firmly, no: the question remains of the regular troops and their re-equipment inside Thailand. He referred again to the helicopters, etc.

The President responded, we'll see. Perhaps we can modernize some of the equipment for those who remain in Thailand. The King suggested that perhaps we could rotate forces from Thailand to Viet Nam and back again.

The President then, turning to Thanat, asked that he formulate Thai requirements both for the equipping of men for Viet Nam and under the headings outlined; that is, 20 helicopters; short take-off and landing aircraft; perhaps 20,000 machine guns; and signal equipment. He should then get in touch directly with the Department of Defense.

W. W. Rostow

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