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EXDIS

SUBJECT: Thai Relations with Soviet Union pol 1 Thai-US Seato 3

REF: A. Bangkok 16693 pol THAI-USSR C. State 019972 NOTAL
B. State 1444 NOTAL

1. Greatly appreciate useful and stimulating assessment in ref A of recent developments in RTG relations with Soviet Union, which has been subject extensive discussion within Department. Obviously this subject is of greatest importance in connection U.S. post-Vietnam policy not only toward Thailand but toward SEA as a whole and is thus immediately pertinent to studies now in progress on post-hostilities SEA policy and on Thailand (NSSM-51).

2. With these studies in progress it is not possible yet to

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EA - Mr. Green
EA - Amb. Brown (draft)
EUR - Mr. Swank
S/S - Mr. Hawley

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formulate definitive Washington position on how U.S. should react to possibility of significant change in Thai relations with Soviet Union and in any case it appears neither necessary nor desirable for us to express any view at this time to RTG. It is, however, important that we most carefully consider this issue internally and assure ourselves that all implications are fully examined. Following discussion is intended to raise questions and to stimulate further thinking and dialogue which may be helpful for policy decisions which we will have to address in coming months. Your comments will be greatly appreciated, and info addressee comments will also be welcomed.

3. Whatever may be real meaning of evidence cited para 2 ref A, we too deem it likely that Thai are (and logically should be) at this time considering what advantages they might derive from increased contacts with Soviet Union and that this is probably part of a general review of foreign policy which we

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would assume they must be undertaking. Clearly they face an uncertain future in which their security environment in the 70s will not be the same as in the 60s. Outcome Vietnam war will be major factor for change and neither we nor Thai can be certain of how developments in Vietnam and related developments in Laos will turn out. At same time it is already clear that U.S. posture in East Asia in the 70s will be different from 60s and there will inevitably be effect on US/Thai relations. Refs B and C have provided thoughts on our SEATO commitment, which obviously is matter of prime importance for Thai. We can expect that U.S. policy as represented by Guam Doctrine will continue emphasize Asian self-reliance and more rigorous definition U.S. security commitments. Even apart from effect of congressional attitudes, Executive Branch must be more conservative than before in considering contingencies in which

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it would risk armed conflict. Also, US/Thai relations are likely to be affected by continuing, even increasing, stringency in economic and military assistance appropriations.

4. We recognize that U.S. has continuing stake in close relations with Thailand for reasons outlined ref A, para 6, and appreciate that our present large military presence and our operational requirements for Vietnam make it vital that there be no slackening for short run in Thai cooperation. Obviously we must design our general approach to Thailand with view to preserving our short run interests as well as the important long term interests which will persist after Vietnam conflict has ended. We must consider, however, whether for the coming decade those interests will require a relationship with Thailand as close and dependent (on Thailand's part) as in the past. For one thing, Thailand has increasing capability and interest in fending more for itself; and it can be argued that some loosening

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up of our relationship may in fact be healthy for both U.S. and Thailand. Increasing Thai self-reliance is desirable for Thailand's long-range stability and future role as Asian leader. Excessive dependence on U.S. could become a source of increasing frustration and irritation on both sides although we of course recognize that too distant a relationship would also be unfortunate.

5. As part of adjustment in US/Thai relationship we assume that RTG would want to examine its relationships with all other countries having interests in East Asia and would not exclude Soviet Union. But what can the Thai expect to get from Moscow? We share your skepticism as to how far Thai/Soviet relations can develop for various reasons, not the least of which is Soviet record of ineptness in dealing with Asians of all political persuasions. Are they likely to develop greater finesse than they have shown in the past? More important we need to ask how

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much the Soviets would be prepared in foreseeable future to invest in establishing a political foothold in Thailand, and also to consider what price the Thai might have to pay politically--both internally and externally--to accommodate themselves to Soviet political objectives. What would the Thai really expect to gain from the Soviets in economic or security commitments substantial enough to compete with or replace U.S.?

6. This leads to question of how the U.S. role and interests in Thailand would be affected if Thai/Soviet relations were to improve to the extent one might consider realistically possible. Whatever Soviets may be prepared offer Thailand, could it be of sufficient worth to the Thai to prompt them reject economic and security advantages they can continue enjoy through association with United States? Is it not possible that we could manage our dealings with Thai during this critical period in

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such way that Thai-Soviet relations could improve without upsetting US/Thai relations or leading to a "replacement" of U.S. influence? Specifically, we wonder if it would not be possible to avoid an atmosphere in which a shift in Thai orientation of the type described need result in a request for our forces to vacate Thai bases and a general call for us to rapidly phase out our various activities in Thailand.

7. The value in Soviet role as potential contribution through multilateral institutions such as ADB and ECAFE to SEA economic development is also a factor to be weighed in connection with the future of Thai/Soviet relations. If Thai foreign relations were to become somewhat less one-sided, Soviets might be more willing to be more active in this field. Whether this would strengthen prospects for the kind of regionalism the U.S. has long tried to encourage should be considered. In this connection we should also consider the possible effect on North Vietnam's

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attitudes towards its non-communist SEA neighbors and its willingness to participate in regional economic cooperation.

9. As foregoing questions suggest, we feel need for fresh look at our traditional and by now almost reflexive tendency to view with alarm evidence of Thai initiatives to Soviet Union. The extreme intimacy of ~~XSX~~ US/Thai relations in recent times is a product of the early cold war period and of special conditions of Vietnam war. Meanwhile, Thailand has made notable progress economically and politically. It is time to consider now whether the intensity of our current relationship is still appropriate for the 70s and the post-hostilities political environment that Thailand and U.S. both face, internally and internationally. Both U.S. and Thai steps with regard to external relations should ideally be consistent with U.S. efforts expand dialogues with Moscow and Peking and with general policy, if Communist performance permits, of moving from

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"era of confrontation to era of negotiation." We would reject of course any thought or suggestion of a US/USSR condominium or collective action against China.

10. It would therefore not be appropriate under any set of assumptions for us actively to encourage closer Thai/Soviet relations. However, we might well want to adopt more detached attitude while we concentrate on preserving our own essential interests on realistic basis of mutuality. In sum, would it or would it not be possible for Thailand to achieve a more independent stance while still preserving a friendly, healthy relationship with the U.S. in which we continued important support, retained vital facilities and other interests and maintained significant influence? We have great confidence in ~~the~~ traditional Thai capacity to assess their environment and their own interests and establish relationships with other nations

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so as to assure their continued independence and that, after all, is our common objective. Moreover, we believe our own interests are compatible with more flexibility in Thai foreign policy than we have seen over past decade and that they can survive hardheaded policy reappraisals on both sides.

END

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SUBJECT: PRAPHAT ACCUSES SOVIET OFFICIALS OF SUBVERTING THAI STUDENTS.

SUMMARY. DEPPRIMIN PRAPHAT STATED ON JULY 26 THAT SOVIET EMBASSY OFFICIALS WERE ENGAGED IN EFFORTS TO SUBVERT THAI STUDENTS. PRAPHAT'S COMMENTS REPRESENT FIRST PUBLIC STATEMENT BY RTG LEADER ON THIS SUBJECT IN SEVERAL YEARS. REMARKS WILL ADD TO STRAIN PLACED ON THAI/SOVIET RELATIONS BY DE CHAMPLAIN CASE. PRAPHAT ALSO SEEMS TO HAVE AIMED AT COOLING INTEREST OF SOME THAI IN ESTABLISHING RELATIONS WITH PRC BY DEMONSTRATING DANGER WHICH WOULD BE POSED BY PRESENCE OF PRC MISSION IN THAILAND. END SUMMARY.

1. BANGKOK POST JULY 27 CARRIED FRONTPAGE ARTICLE REPORTING JULY 26 STATEMENT BY DEPPRIMIN PRAPHAT CHARUSATHIRA THAT SOVEIT OFFICIALS HAVE BEEN IN CONTACT WITH SOME THAI STUDENTS FOR THE PURPOSE OF SUBVERTING THEM. PRAPHAT SAID THAT SOVIET OFFICIALS "SPEAKING THAI AND LOOKING LIKE ASIANS" WERE USED IN CONTACT WORK WITH STUDENTS AND OTHER THAI. PRAPHAT SAID THAT SOME THAI STUDENTS WHO HAD BEEN RECRUITED BY SOVIET OFFICIALS HAD SO INFORMED RTG AUTHORITIES. AND HE URGED OTHER STUDENTS INVOLVED WITH COMMUNIST AGENTS TO REPORT TO AUTHORITIES WITHOUT FEAR OF PUNISHMENT. HE SAID THAT SOVIET OFFICIALS HAD TRAVELLED TO VARIOUS PARTS OF THAILAND INCLUDING A RECENT TOUR OF THE SOUTHERN PROVINCES WHERE COMMUNIST TERRORISTS ARE OPERATING. PRAPHAT FURTHER INDICATED THAT RTG WAS KEEPING A CLOSE WATCH ON ACTIVITIES

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