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TO Department of State BUREAU OF EAST ASIAN AND PACIFIC AFFAIRS

Date of Action 12/13/73 4 PM 1973

Action Office Symbol EA/TTS

Name of Officer VCI

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS : PFOR, PGOV, TH
FROM : Amembassy BANGKOK

December 4, 1973

SUBJECT : The Current Position and Influence of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Within the Royal Thai Government

REF :

SUMMARY: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) has what is probably the highest calibre of personnel of any Thai ministry. The staff, and the ministry itself, have been underused over the years because of long time Foreign Minister Thanat Khoman's penchant for doing many things himself without informing the line departments. The RTG military leadership exacerbated this situation by bypassing MFA in many of its important dealings, especially those pertaining to the establishment of U.S. military presence in Thailand. Beginning with the National Executive Council takeover in November 1971, MFA has manifested an increasing importance within the RTG foreign affairs decision making machinery. It has been a leader within the RTG on seeking a wider relationship with the People's Republic of China, and has also been somewhat out ahead of the rest of the government on agitating for a reduced and regularized U.S. military presence in Thailand. It has championed regionalism and improvement of relations with Thailand's neighbors. While former Under-Secretary of State Charunphan Isarangkul Na Ayutthaya has leapfrogged over Deputy Minister Chartchai Chunhawan to become Minister, we believe that Chartchai will ultimately accede to more important positions within the ruling circle. We also believe that MFA's prominence will continue and possibly increase in the elected government that is expected to be formed within a year. END SUMMARY

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Drafted by:	Drafting Date:	Phone No.:	Contents and Classification Approved by:
POL:HPClarkJr:bd	12/3/73	411	POL:TJBarnes

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1. Personnel: The MFA attracts what is probably the highest caliber of Thai government officials. Virtually all of them with whom we have had contact have been well educated, alert, well read, and of course well traveled. A great many have studied abroad, particularly in England and the United States, and to a much lesser extent in non-English speaking European countries. They have often been underused, however.

2. Recent History: The Ministry has suffered from neglect over the years because Thanat Khoman, Foreign Minister from 1959 to November 1971, made all the important decisions personally. He relied on a small private staff for leg work, and appointed nonentitites as Directors General of the Departments. Operating not unlike John Foster Dulles, Thanat seldom involved or even informed the line departments and divisions within the Foreign Ministry of what he was doing.

3. In November 1971, with the National Executive Council (NEC) takeover, Thanat Khoman lost his job, and the present Foreign Minister, Charunphan Issarangkun Na Ayutthaya, took over the operating responsibility for the Ministry as Under Secretary of State. He reported to NEC Chairman Thanom through the NEC Secretariat. The line divisions of the Ministry began to play a more active role in the staffing and execution of Thai foreign policy and affairs.

4. Major General Chartchai Chunhawan became Deputy Foreign Minister in December 1972 when the RTG returned to constitutional rule, and Thanom assumed the portfolio. Because of Chartchai's flashy personality and greater access to the military leadership and because he had Thanom's confidence, the Foreign Ministry began to come into its own as a major voice in the Thai foreign affairs community.

5. Following the recent change of government, Charunphan leapfrogged over Chartchai to become Foreign Minister, while the latter remains as Deputy Minister. This situation has caused Chartchai some embarrassment, and will probably end for the time being much of his active leadership in Thai foreign affairs. We doubt, however, that this is anywhere near the end of Chartchai's professional upward mobility, and we would not be at all surprised to see him emerge again as a central figure in some future cabinet.

6. The Pattern of our Relations with the Ministry: During the ten years of the Thanom Government (1963-1973) the Foreign Ministry was largely eclipsed by the military leadership's preference for handling many foreign affairs matters itself. This habit pertained in particular to our dealings with the RTG over the establishment and maintenance of the US military presence here. At the express behest of the

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military leadership, we customarily bypassed MFA in favor of the Supreme Command Headquarters (Forward) staff. MFA in general, and Thanat Khoman in particular, resented this pattern of our relations considerably.

7. In the last two years MFA's long standing resentments have contributed markedly to our difficulties with it over some of the housekeeping arrangements for which it has the follow-up responsibility. One example of this is the difficulty we have had in obtaining duty free import of privately owned vehicles for certain categories of military personnel who are not covered explicitly by one or another of our bilateral agreements.

8. The New Prominence: The recent MFA prominence has manifested itself in the ministry's leadership within the RTG on pursuing a wider relationship with the People's Republic of China (PRC), on seeking a resolution to the enmity with North Vietnam, on reducing and regularizing the U.S. military presence in Thailand, and in particular on asserting its bureaucratic prerogatives by insisting that dealings that this Embassy formerly had directly with the Supreme Command structure now be shared with or channeled through MFA. The Ministry has championed regionalism, particularly through the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, and has improved Thai relations with Burma.

9. While the present Minister, Charunphan, is no fireball, he is a competent bureaucrat who can be expected to permit his staff increasing scope in presenting their ideas. Combined with Deputy Minister Chartchai's flare for showmanship, Charunphan's leadership should assure MFA a continuing prominent place in RTG foreign affairs decision making.

10. Implications for U.S. interests: If elections come off as expected, and the next government is predominantly civilian, the days seem gone forever when we can make hasty and ambiguous arrangements with the military leadership of Thailand to deploy and support large numbers of U.S. troops in the Kingdom. Every request promises to be carefully scrutinized by the Foreign Ministry, not to mention other RTG agencies, particularly those concerned with generating revenue. We may well find that the MFA has a somewhat different concept from the military of where Thailand's real interests lie, and this difference will color its willingness to acquiesce to the kind of arrangements we have been able to make heretofore.

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11. While this implies greater initial difficulties for the U.S. in making necessary arrangements for the U.S. military presence, it does have distinctly healthy aspects in that the kind of arrangements the MFA will allow the RTG to conclude are more likely to be acceptable to the students and the people at large than the kind the previous government made.

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CHIEF OF STAFF

Congress of the United States
Committee on Foreign Affairs
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

October 16, 1973

ACTION
is assigned to
L-A

Honorable Marshall Wright
Assistant Secretary
for Congressional Relations
Department of State
Washington, D. C. 20520

Dear Marshall:

First, I want to thank you for your gracious letter of October 11th, and to take this opportunity to comment on the magnificient job you and your staff have done in your liaison work with the Congress. I have been a member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee since the late 1950's and I don't think anyone has filled your position better than you have.

Because of the crisis in Thailand, I would like to request that a responsible official of the Department of State appear before the Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs on October 24, 1973, in Room H-227 of the Capitol, at 2:00 p.m., in order to brief the Subcommittee members on the Thailand situation. We would welcome as many accompanying State Department personnel as the Secretary would care to send to assist us in this briefing. The meeting will be an Open Session. We would like to have 50 copies of the statements 48 hours in advance of the hearings delivered to the Subcommittee office.

Once again, I would like to thank you and your staff for their cooperation and assistance to the Subcommittee.

Sincerely,

Robert N. C. Nix
Chairman
Asian and Pacific Affairs
Subcommittee

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THE ROYAL THAI EMBASSY
2300 KALORAMA ROAD, N. W.
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20008

No. [illegible] /2516

July 31, 1973

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The Royal Thai Embassy presents its compliments to the Department of State and has the honour to inform the latter that the Royal Thai Government has recently established a national bureau in the office of the Prime Minister to deal with the problems concerning particularly with youth in the nation. Consequently, comparative study of problems of other nations, different methods of solution and the results obtained as well as any useful information from other countries in regard to this problem would be of great help to the Royal Thai Government. The Office of the Prime Minister would, therefore, like very much to obtain documents concerning the United States youth organization and its policies as well as legal basis and activities of the said organization. These documents will certainly assist the Thai authorities in the planning and programming of the Thai youth organization.

The Royal Thai Embassy will, therefore, be grateful to the Department of State if the above request be forwarded to the United States authorities concerned for their consideration.

The Royal Thai Embassy avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Department of State the assurances of its highest consideration.

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