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Statement on Recent Presidential Correspondence Regarding U.S. Defense Commitments to

THAILAND

The basic United States commitment to defend Thailand's security is embodied in the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty of September 8, 1954, usually known as the SEATO Treaty. Article IV, 1 states that each signatory power recognizes that aggression by means of armed attack in the treaty area against any other signatory or designated state or territory would endanger its own peace and safety, and commits each contracting party to act in such an event to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional processes. Article IV, 2 provides that in the event of a threat arising from a fact or situation other than armed aggression and so viewed by any of the contracting parties, the signatories agree to consult immediately to agree on measures to be taken for the common defense. A United States understanding limits our undertaking under Article IV, 1 to Communist aggression; in the event of other aggression or armed attacks we would consult under the provisions of Article IV, 2.

On November 8, 1960 President Eisenhower wrote to Prime Minister Sarit Thannarat with reference to the recent vis of the King of Thailand to the United States recalling his

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reaffirmation at that time of our determination fully to honor our treaty commitments. The President assured the Prime Minister that Thailand will have our support, as an ally and friend, in resisting both Communist aggression and subversion. Thailand was described as a bulwark of free world strength in Asia whose contribution towards mutual objectives was of such significance that we must strive together to reinforce and sustain its strength and well-being. The letter went on to speak of our military and economic assistance programs to Thailand as firm evidence of our intentions.

Shortly after his inauguration, President Kennedy wrot to the Thai Prime Minister on February 28, 1961. He assured the Prime Minister that Thailand will continue to have our unswerving support in resisting Communist aggression and subversion, and reaffirmed his predecessor's conviction that preservation of Thailand's independence and integrity was of the highest importance. He confirmed our willingness to explore with Thailand measures for advancing economic development and mobilizing the resources of Thailand to which President Eisenhower had referred in his letter.

The Rusk-Thanat communique of March 1962 was paralleled by a March 5, 1962 letter from President Kennedy to Prime

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Minister Sarit stating that the communique fully reflected his own position and that of the United States on our security relationship and concern for Thailand.

President Johnson on November 25, 1963 replied to Prime Minister Sarit's message of condolence following President Kennedy's assassination. He recalled their conversations two years earlier and assured the Prime Minister that we will honor our commitments and stand by our friends, none more so than the Thai people.

General Thanom Kittikachorn assumed the office of Prime Minister on December 9, 1963 after the death of Field Marshal Sarit. In a December 14, 1963 letter President Johnson congratulated the new Prime Minister on his acccession to office and stated his view that our close alliance was essential to our mutual interest in peace and stability in Southeast Asia.

In a letter of June 18, 1964 President Johnson responded to Prime Minister Thanom's expression of appreciation of the value of U.S. commitments to various parts of the world. He declared that our defense commitment to Thailand was clear and that America would keep its commitments. He said we regarded Communist advances in Laos as a threat to the security of both countries and that he had, therefore, authorized the opening of consultations looking toward joint military planning for the contingency of a Communist drive toward the borders

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of Thailand. At the same time he emphasized that no opportunity for a peaceful settlement which preserved the interests of both countries should be overlooked. He stated our willingness to undertake consultations with the parties to the Geneva Agreement on Laos and our support for Souvanna Phouma's conditions for the convening of another conference on Laos.

President Nixon sent a letter to Prime Minister Thanom on March 26, 1969 to congratulate him on being designated Prime Minister following the elections for a National Assembly. The President took the occasion to reaffirm that we will continue to support Thailand and its resistance to Communist aggression and subversion and that we fully intend to honor our SEATO obligation.

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