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TELEGRAM

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POL 33-3 THAI 1973

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NO.

PARTMENT OF STATE- 05

2 PM 1973

AN BUREAU OF EAST ASIAN BRANCH AFFAIRS

Action Assigned to

Action Taken

DATE: Aug 17, 1973

Date of Action

Action Office Symbol

Name of Officer

embassy BANGKOK

652: N/A

A CANAL

EN, PFOR, TECH, TH

ngkok Tel: 12584

RP, D.

IED. A summary of recent developments on anal, and particularly on the results of the meeting in Tokyo July 10-12, 1973, was in reference A.

consequence of the Tokyo meeting was the n that the canal project was feasible from nt of view, technical and economic, and that phase study should be undertaken after the f the pre-feasibility study had been accepted s on September 1 and subsequently approved

are copies of papers from the Tokyo meeting sent to the Embassy by the Kra Canal Survey Bangkok. Enclosure three in this package emoved because it duplicated the two copies nd's Kra Canal Project" forwarded to the by transmittal slip on on July 2. Included papers from the Tokyo meeting are copies of eches delivered by the Thai, European, Japan- nerican members of the Senior Review Group e Technical Advisory Group. Included among also s by the American participants are two by of the Livermore Laboratories and by rd Libby, respectively. Among the Thai nts was Dr. Svasti Srisukh, Secretary General ffice for Atomic Energy for Peace. END IED.

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	Drafting Date:	Phone No.:	Content and Classification Approved by:
	8/15/73		EWSchodt

OVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE : 1966 O - 202-219 (258)

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9/6/73 SCI/AE FYI

Withdrawn and returned to SCI
Note: Amb. Porter prepers to take this matter up orally with Mr. Keogh, USIA

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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ACTION MEMORANDUM

S/S

KJ

CONFIDENTIAL ATTACHMENT

D SEP 6 1973 9/6/73

Copies to:
NEA
PM
SCI
RF

To : P - Ambassador Porter

From : SCI - Herman Pollack

Proposed Letter to USIA - To sign

You will recall the concern about the proposed involvement of the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers in feasibility studies related to the use of peaceful nuclear explosives (PNE's) in constructing the Kra Canal in Thailand. Attached at Tab B is a copy of the cable to Bangkok announcing that the Corps of Engineers will not participate in this project.

The famous American nuclear scientist, Dr. Edward Teller, is a PNE enthusiast and has been highly influential in promoting interest in PNE's in various parts of the world. A trip to the Far East last year, sponsored by USIA, led to a number of inquiries from government officials in Thailand and Malaysia on this subject--inquiries which made clear that Dr. Teller's role as a private citizen had been widely misunderstood by officials who assumed that he must be reflecting USG policy.

State, DOD and the White House have all been put to considerable trouble in straightening out these misunderstandings. We now learn that Dr. Teller is planning further visits to various parts of the world, some of them under USIA sponsorship, and some of them to areas (e.g., Brazil, the Middle East) which are quite sensitive with regard to applications of nuclear explosives.

2

It is in the hope of avoiding future misunderstandings of the sort that have occurred in Bangkok that we have drafted the attached letter to Mr. Keogh requesting that Dr. Teller be asked to avoid discussions of PNE's while travelling under USIA auspices.

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SCI/AE:RT Webber:fej

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Not signed.

Recommendation

That you sign the letter at Tab A.

will take up orally

Concurrences:

NEA/EGY - Mr. Sterner RTW
PM/AE - Mr. Handyside
ARA/LA/BR - Mr. Low RTW
ACDA - Mr. Van Dore RTW

Attachments:

Tab A - Draft letter to Mr. Keogh.
Tab B - State Telegram 171431 to Bangkok, August 28, 1973 (Confidential).

Drafted by: RTW
SCI/AE:RTWebber:fej
8/30/73 Ext. 22432

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UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON

Dear Jim:

Dr. Edward Teller of the University of California has on several occasions been sponsored by USIA in visits to foreign nations where his lectures and other appearances have met with a highly favorable reception. The State Department has in its files messages from Ambassadors and Public Affairs Officers reporting their delight with Dr. Teller as a VIP American visitor to their host countries. The benefits the nation receives through Dr. Teller's efforts on these visits are, however, at least partially offset by a problem which I wish to bring to your attention.

Among Dr. Teller's enthusiasms is a strong desire to utilize nuclear explosives in large earth excavation projects such as the construction of canals and harbors. The major projects which Dr. Teller has been advocating in his travels about the world include a proposed canal across the Kra Peninsula in Thailand and a deep water harbor in Kuching (Sarawak), both of which are located in very heavily populated areas, and a canal from the Mediterranean to the Qattara Depression in Egypt for a hydroelectric project. Dr. Teller is a member of the official Technical Advisory Group for the Kra Canal.

The promoters of the Kra project have been particularly interested in obtaining indications, if not commitments, that the United States would concur in the use of nuclear explosives and eventually provide assistance in this aspect of Canal construction, which is desired by the promoters. We have told them that we view the use of nuclear explosives as inconsistent with our Treaty obligations under the Limited Test Ban Treaty.

The Honorable
James Keogh, Director,
U.S. Information Agency.

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We have advised them that we do not see any U.S. interest that would justify our taking responsibility for the serious political problems that we foresee if the idea of nuclear excavation were to be pursued.

Although Dr. Teller has doubtless been conscientious in meeting his promise that he would identify himself clearly as a private citizen, and not as a USG representative, when discussing nuclear explosives with foreign audiences, I am sure you can understand that Dr. Teller's extraordinary eminence and reputation have made it difficult for foreign nationals to understand this distinction.

We wish to minimize the possibility of such misunderstandings as arose in Thailand arising in other sensitive areas of the world, including the Middle East and Brazil; and, to avoid to the extent possible speculation on and misinterpretation of this government's potential interest and role in projects involving nuclear explosives. I hope that USIA will find it possible to urge Dr. Teller to refrain from discussing the use of nuclear explosives for surface excavation purposes while abroad under USIA sponsorship.

With best wishes,

Sincerely,

William J. Porter

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Department of State TELEGRAM

CONFIDENTIAL 414

PAGE 01 STATE 171431

15
ORIGIN EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 SS-15 SCI-06 DODE-00 NSC-10 CIAE-00
INR-10 NSAE-00 RSC-01 EB-11 PM-07 OMB-01 L-03 AEC-11
ACDA-19 /109 R

DRAFTED BY EA/TB:JBDEXTER:FMK
5/31/73 EXT. 23698
APPROVED BY B - AMBASSADOR PORTER
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HITE HOUSE-MR. KISSINGER

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 171431

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: EGEN, PFOR, TECH, TH
SUBJ: KRA CANAL

1. WE HAVE REVIEWED CAREFULLY THE ISSUES POSED BY GENERAL PRAPHAT'S WRITTEN REQUEST FOR CORPS OF ENGINEERS REVIEW OF PRELIMINARY KRA CANAL STUDY. NOTWITHSTANDING OUR DESIRE TO AVOID OFFENDING PRAPHAT, WHO MAY HAVE BEEN LED TO BELIEVE THAT THE REQUESTED CORPS OF ENGINEERS PARTICIPATION WOULD BE ROUTINELY APPROVED, WE DO NOT CONSIDER IT PROPER OR ADVISABLE TO GRANT HIS REQUEST. OUR OBJECTIONS BOIL DOWN TO AN APPREHENSION THAT SUCH PARTICIPATION BY A US GOVERNMENT AGENCY COULD BE MISCONSTRUED OR MISREPRESENTED BY THE PROJECT'S PROMOTERS TO IMPLY AN OFFICIAL US INTEREST IN THE PROJECT. IN ADDITION, WE BELIEVE THAT SUCH REVIEW IS NOT NECESSARY AND THAT, IF CONSIDERED BY THE THAI

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Department of State **TELEGRAM**

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PAGE 02 STATE 171431

PROMOTERS TO BE TECHNICALLY USEFUL, IT COULD BE ACCOMPLISHED BY OTHER MEANS NOT INVOLVING THE US GOVERNMENT OFFICIALLY.

2. WE ARE PARTICULARLY SENSITIVETOTHE POSSIBILITY OF MIS-UNDERSTANDING BECAUSE OF THE PERSISTENT EFFORTS THAT HAVE BEEN MADE IN THE PAST BY K. Y. CHOW AND HIS ASSOCIATES TO OBTAIN AN EXPRESSION OF USG INTEREST IN AND EVEN OF SUPPORT FOR THE PROJECT. PRESUMABLY, THEY HOPE TO USE INDICATIONS OF US SUPPORT IN THEIR EFFORTS TO ELICIT SUPPORT FROM POTENTIAL FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTORS (EVEN FROM THE USG ITSELF) AND PERHAPS IN THE END TO GAIN OUR DIPLOMATIC BACKING AND

OUR PARTICIPATION IN AT LEAST THE NUCLEAR EXCAVATION ASPECT OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT. WE DO NOT BELIEVE IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE TO AVOID THESE DANGERS BY SIMPLY STRESSING THE LIMITED AND TECHNICAL CHARACTER OF THE CORPS ROLE.

3. TO ELABORATE FURTHER ON THE FOREGOING, WE FORESEE THE POSSIBILITY, EVEN THE LIKELIHOOD, OF SERIOUS DIFFI-CULTIES ALONG THE FOLLOWING LINES:

A. REGARDLESS OF THE CAVEATS SURROUNDING A CORPS REVIEW, THE REVIEW ITSELF WOULD BE INTERPRETED OR PUBLICLY PORTRAYED AS A CLEAR SIGN OF USG INTEREST AND APPROBATION, AT LEAST INITIALLY;

B. IF THE CORPS, AFTER REVIEW, WERE TO CONCUR IN THE PRE-FEASIBILITY STUDIES (ASSUMING CONCLUSIONS ARE ENCOURA-GING) THE IMPACT OF THEIR FINDINGS WOULD PROBABLY BE DETERMINING. CONCURRENCE WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY BE VIEWED AND REPRESENTED AS A SIGNAL OF USG APPROVAL OF PROJECT AND MIGHT WELL LEAD TO QUICKENED INTEREST IN PROJECT ON THE PART OF FINANCIERS ET AL. IF AT SOME LATER STAGE SOMETHING WERE TO GO WRONG, EITHER TECHNICALLY OR FINANCIALLY, THE USG COULD BE HELD LIABLE FOR A CONSIDERABLE PORTION OF BLAME;

C. ON THE OTHER HAND, IF THE CORPS FOR TECHNICAL REASONS FELT COMPELLED TO DISAGREE WITH A FAVORABLE PRE-FEASIBILITY SURVEY, THE CONSEQUENCES FOR THE U.S. MIGHT BE EVEN MORE SERIOUS. THE U.S. COULD BE HELD RESPONSIBLE

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Department of State **TELEGRAM**

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 STATE 171431

FOR ATTEMPTING TO BLOCK A PROJECT OF ENORMOUS POTENTIAL BENEFIT TO THAILAND;

D. FINALLY, TO ENABLE THE CORPS TO PROVIDE MORE COMPREHENSIVE FINDINGS, WE CAN FORESEE THAT IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO RESIST PRESSURE FOR CORPS ENGINEERS TO MAKE AN ON-SITE INVESTIGATION IN THAILAND, ETC.

4. BECAUSE OF THE ABOVE-MENTIONED CONCERNS, YOU SHOULD ADVISE PRAPHAT THAT AFTER CAREFUL STUDY WE HAVE CONCLUDED THAT THE REQUESTED CORPS OF ENGINEERS REVIEW WOULD NOT BE APPROPRIATE. WE SUGGEST THAT THE US POSITION BE CONVEYED TO PRAPHAT IN A BRIEF LETTER RESPONDING TO HIS LETTER OF APRIL 18. THE LETTER WOULD SAY SIMPLY THAT, WHILE SYMPATHETIC TO THE RTG DESIRE FOR AN IMPARTIAL REVIEW AND WHILE GRATIFIED BY RTG CONFIDENCE IN THE CORPS OF ENGINEERS, WE MUST REGRETFULLY DECLINE IN ORDER TO AVOID ANY POSSIBLE MISINTERPRETATION OF THE US GOVERNMENT POSITION ON THE CANAL PROJECT. THAT POSITION IS THAT THE US GOVERNMENT IS NOT PREPARED TO COMMIT ITSELF IN ANY WAY WITH REGARD TO THE TECHNICAL, ECONOMIC, OR POLITICAL FEASIBILITY OF THIS PROPOSED PROJECT AND WE DESIRE THAT NO US GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS OR AGENCIES BECOME INVOLVED IN A MANNER THAT COULD BE MISCONSTRUED.

5. IT WOULD PROBABLY BE APPROPRIATE TO HAVE THE WRITTEN RESPONSE SUPPLEMENTED BY FURTHER ORAL EXPLANATION, TOUCHING ON THE FOLLOWING ADDITIONAL POINTS:

A. CORPS OF ENGINEERS REVIEW OF THE CONSULTANTS' REPORT COULD BE CRITICAL IN DETERMINING WHETHER THE RTG DECIDES TO PROCEED WITH THE PROJECT OR NOT. THIS WOULD INEVITABLY PLACE A HEAVY BURDEN OF RESPONSIBILITY ON THE CORPS AND IMPLICITLY UPON THE US GOVERNMENT. WE DO NOT WANT THIS RESPONSIBILITY;

B. GIVEN THE ENORMITY OF THE PROJECT, IMPLEMENTATION OF ANY RECOMMENDATIONS BY THE CORPS OF ENGINEERS COULD EASILY GIVE RISE TO CONTROVERSY IN THAILAND WHICH COULD BE EMBARRASSING TO THE US GOVERNMENT;

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Department of State **TELEGRAM**

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 STATE 171431

C. THE FIRMS ENGAGED AS CONSULTANTS ARE HIGHLY QUALIFIED AND WE SEE NO NEED FOR REVIEW PRIOR TO THE MORE DETAILED FEASIBILITY STUDY THAT WOULD FOLLOW IF THE INITIAL STUDY SHOULD LEAD TO A DECISION TO MOVE AHEAD. IF THE RTG SHOULD HAVE DOUBTS ABOUT THE VALIDITY OF TECHNICAL FINDINGS IN THE PRE-FEASIBITY STUDY, EXPERTISE FOR REVIEW COULD BE SOUGHT FROM SOURCES OTHER THAN THE CORPS OF ENGINEERS. ONE POSSIBILITY WOULD BE ANOTHER ENGINEERING CONSULTING FIRM COMPARABLE TO TAMS. ANOTHER WOULD BE AN AD HOC TECHNICAL REVIEW GROUP COMPOSED OF INDIVIDUAL CONSULTANTS WITH SPECIAL COMPETENCE IN THIS FIELD. IN THIS CONNECTION THE RTG MIGHT CONSIDER THE EXAMPLE OF THE USG PANAMA CANAL STUDY, FOR WHICH A SPECIAL FIVE-MAN PANEL OF EMINENT GEOLOGISTS AND ENGINEERS WAS ENGAGED TO ADVISE AND REVIEW THE WORK OF THE CORPS OF ENGINEERS. WE COULD PROVIDE THE NAMES OF THOSE INDIVUALS -- WHO COULD INCLUDE SPECIALISTS WITH CORP OF ENGINEERS EXPEREINCE, WHICH HOPEFULLY WOULD SATISFY THE RTG'S DESIRE TO AVAIL THEMSELVES OF THE CORPS' EXPERTISE.

D. IN DISCUSSING THE KRA PROJECT WE WOULD LIKE TO MAKE ONE OTHER MATTER CLEAR: THE USG INTERPRETATION OF THE LIMITED TEST BAN TREATY WOULD RULE OUT PARTICIPATION IN ANY CONTEMPLATED NUCLEAR EXCAVATION BY SIGNATORIES TO THAT TREATY AND WE REGRET VERY MUCH IF ANY AMERICAN

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Department of State **TELEGRAM**

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 05 STATE 171431

OFFICIAL OR PRIVATE CITIZEN HAS LEAD HIM TO BELIEVE THAT WE ARE CONSIDERING US PARTICIPATION.

6. THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE CONCURS IN THE POSITION DESCRIBED ABOVE AND HAS BEEN ASKED TO MAKE ARRANGEMENTS TO ASSURE THAT ALL ELEMENTS OF THE CORPS OF ENGINEERS ARE INSTRUCTED NOT TO BECOME ASSOCIATED WITH THIS PROJECT IN THE FUTURE IN ANY WAY WITHOUT PRIOR CLEARANCE FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE. RUSH

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