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NW 78143
DOM/DL 9/1/08

EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
Bangkok, Thailand

June 26, 1969

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OFFICIAL-INFORMAL

Moncrieff J. Spear, Esquire
Country Director for Thailand/Burma
Department of State
Washington, D.C.

6/26/69
STATE DEPT. DECLASSIFICATION REVIEW
☑ Retain classification ☐ Change/classify to ____
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☐ after ____
EO 12958, 25X 6
FPC/HOR by ____ Date: 4/14/08
Withdrawal No. 319-41
(67-69 POL 23-4 THAI)

Dear Monty:

There is a number of items that I should mention to you, particularly growing out of the Ambassador's letter, and particularly on things that are happening here. However, the purpose of this letter is different. I noted your May 29 Weekly Status Report to Marshall Green, in which you mentioned the study prepared by the Thai National Security Council on the impact of U.S. forces and their possible withdrawal. I was very glad that you did bring this to Marshall's attention and that his subsequent memorandum to the Under Secretary incorporated your report.

In my estimation, this is a most important document for several reasons. First, I would draw your attention to what we here regard as the rather high-level of comprehensiveness and objectivity reflected in the paper. I know that we sometimes despair of Thai bureaucratic procedures and subjective biases, but in this case I think these are notably absent.

Secondly, I think that the content of the report was an excellent appreciation of the real facts of our situation in Southeast Asia. This is particularly important because it underlines the necessity of consulting very frankly and fully with the Thai. They know what is up and they will work better with us if they think we are leveling with them than otherwise. I don't know whether you had the time to read the whole report in full, but I would like to draw your attention to a few points which illustrate what I am talking about.

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Signed Leon B. Hanrahan
Counselor for Political Affairs

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A) The report reveals an excellent appreciation of the historic origin of U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia. The report frankly recognizes that the U.S. interest in Southeast Asia was secondary, in the U.S. view, both in time and priority to the "Far East," which means Japan, China and the Western Pacific. The report also recognizes that U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia has been limited by: (1) the requirements of our relations with our "allies," i.e., Europe; (2) the burden on the U.S. of post-war reconstruction in war-torn countries; (3) U.S. desire to avoid involvement in the preservation of European colonial interests.

B) The statement of U.S. purposes in Thailand is a virtual quote from our own statement, including (1) to strengthen Thailand against Chinese pressure, and (2) use of Thailand for containment of China.

C) The review of the origin of U.S. deployments to Thailand was quite realistic, noting: (1) the 1962 Communist threat to Nam Tha; (2) failure of SEATO to act; (3) Rusk-Thanat communique; (4) 1962 U.S. deployments; (5) later major deployments for war against North Vietnam; (6) the distinction between the early and late deployments, which is very important to the Thai. The 1962 deployments were related in the Thai view to SEATO provisions, whereas our later deployments were described as being based on "no written agreement but with RTG consent."

D) A mere listing of the reasons given in the Thai report for a probable U.S. partial withdrawal reflects a very sound appreciation of our situation: (1) effect of the war's economic burden; (2) the war's effect on U.S. domestic political arena; (3) American popular demand for withdrawal; (4) U.S. interest in Arab-Israel dispute; (5) distractions by Common Market differences between British and French; (6) Soviet naval build-up in Mediterranean.

E) The lengthy catalog of advantages and disadvantages to Thailand of the presence of U.S. forces in Thailand is both clear and rather objective and should be well understood in Washington as an insight into the probable RTG reaction to U.S. withdrawals. I do not intend to

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recapitulate this lengthy section here, but I would draw attention to the over-all thrust which is, as I read it, that U.S. forces in Thailand, while making political and military contributions to security and containment, as well as acceleration of Thai economic progress, have certain distinct disadvantages: (1) their presence encourages charges by neutral countries of U.S. interference in Thai internal affairs and, accordingly, generates suspicion of Thailand; (2) presence of foreign forces tends to encourage internal political tension whenever these forces behave in a way that does not conform to Thai law and customs; (3) their presence makes the RTG especially susceptible to U.S. pressure; (4) they provide a political target for the Communists and as a result have encouraged increased infiltration; (5) they have contributed to price increases and economic disparities, as well as encouraging certain tax evasions; (6) the cultural impact has been unsettling to morality and Thai customs.

We may not entirely agree with all of the foregoing points and we should not regard this paper as an attack upon us. On the contrary, the paper is an internal Thai document, not intended for our eyes, and under these circumstances it seems to me that these points are quite moderately made--certainly more so than they have been made openly and directly to us by some Thai officials. The Thai projection is that the U.S. will withdraw partially, but not entirely, and this seems to be a fairly accurate reading of our own present intentions. The conclusion that such U.S. withdrawals will not seriously affect the Thai economy also accords with our judgment.

As for the impact of withdrawal, most of the points mentioned by the report are the obvious reciprocals of the factors mentioned under the military impact. Four are, however, worth highlighting: (a) "necessitate that Thailand amend or change its political policies, especially those dealing with international politics"; (b) "necessitate that Thailand seek a new power to fill the gap left by the withdrawal of U.S. forces; this power could be the creation of a regional defense organization"; (c) weaken the nation against Communist threats; (d) reduce the promptness with which the U.S. could come to Thai assistance. I do not read anything sinister into the foregoing four

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points, but point them out only as evidence of the direction of Thai thinking and as a harbinger of what we can expect.

Finally, I would suggest that the Thai report is, in a way, a tribute to our own U.S. effectiveness in conveying our position and our intentions to the Thai. It shows that we are understood rationally and indeed almost in terms that we could have written ourselves. You may also be interested to know that we knew in advance when the Cabinet directed the preparation of this report and, as a matter of fact, we even had a hand (unseen, I trust) in influencing the outline of the report, although not the content. This latter point, however, I will not elaborate on and I trust you will handle it carefully.

Sincerely,

Norman B. Hannah
Charge d'Affaires ad interim

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