

Message Text

SECRET

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S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 BANGKOK 28935

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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, TH, US
SUBJECT: TALK WITH KING'S PRIVATE SECRETARY

REF: STATE 254167

1. IN THE COURSE OF A LONG LUNCH TODAY WITH MOM LUANG THAWISAN LADAWAN, THE KING'S PRINCIPAL PRIVATE SECRETARY, THE FOLLOWING TOPICS WERE COVERED:

A. U.S. THAI RELATIONS

I EXPRESSED THE DESIRE OF THE USG TO MAINTAIN CLOSE AND CORDIAL RELATIONS WITH THE RTG AND ASKED THAWISAN TO CONVEY THESE SENTIMENTS TO HIS MAJESTY. I ALSO TOLD THAWISAN THAT I HAD SENT A SIMILAR EXPRESSION OF U.S. POLICY DISCREETLY TO ADMIRAL SA-NGAT. THAWISAN SAID THAT AS HAD ALREADY BEEN STATED BY PRIME MINISTER THANIN KRAIWICHIAN AND ADMIRAL SA-NGAT, THE NEW GOVERNMENT WAS RELYING ON THE CONTINUED FRIENDSHIP OF THE UNITED STATES AND ON OUR FUTURE ASSISTANCE AND COLLABORATION. HE SAID THAT THE THAI NEED FOR U S SUPPORT HAD INCREASED OWING TO THE MORE POSITIVE ANTI-COMMUNIST STANCE BEING TAKEN BY THE NEW GOVERNMENT. THIS POSITION WOULD DOUBTLESS AGGRAVATE THAILAND'S RELATIONS WITH ITS COMMUNIST NEIGHBORS AND INCREASE THE RISKS TO THE KINGDOM.

B. RELATIONS WITH HANOI, ET AL

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I INQUIRED WHETHER THE RTG HAD ABANDONED

HOPE OF ACHIEVING SOME KIND OF RECONCILIATION WITH VIENTIANE, HANOI AND PHNOM PENH. THAWISAN AT FIRST AGREED THAT THIS WAS SO AND THEN RESTATED THE THAI POSITION BY EXPRESSING VERY FERVENTLY THE HOPE THAT CALMNESS AND REASONABLENESS WOULD CHARACTERIZE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE STATES IN THIS PART OF THE WORLD. HE SAID THAT THE PREVIOUS THAI GOVERNMENT HAD BEEN TOO OBSEQUIOUS IN ITS APPROACH TO HANOI AND THAT HENCEFORTH THAILAND WOULD BE FIRM BUT NOT TRUCULENT. IN ORDER TO STAND UP TO THE COMMUNISTS ONE HAD TO BE STRONG AND IN THIS CONTEXT THAILAND WAS HOPING FOR CONTINUED AMERICAN ASSISTANCE AND SUPPORT.

C. THAILAND'S IMAGE ABROAD

THAWISAN SAID THE KING HAD ASKED HIM TO GET MY ADVICE ON HOW THAILAND COULD OVERCOME THE FALSE IMPRESSION WHICH HAD BEEN GIVEN IN EUROPE AND AMERICA OF RECENT EVENTS HERE. HE SAID THE KING HOPED THAT THERE WAS SOME WAY BY WHICH THE U S COULD EXPLAIN THAT THE CHANGE OF GOVERNEMENT HAD BEEN BROUGHT ABOUT AS A RESULT OF THE WEAKNESS OF TH SENI GOVERNMENT AND THE PROVOCATIVE ACTIONS OF COMMUNIST-INSPIRED STUDENTS.

I SAID THAT FRANKLY I COULD SEE NO WAY OF OVERCOMING THE WORLDWIDE IMPACT OF THE PHOTO AND TELEVISION COVERAGE OF THE EGENTS OF OCTOBER 6TH AT THAMMASAT UNIVERSITY. FRIENDS OF THAILAND COULD ONLY HOPE THAT THE KIND OF ADMINISTRATION WHICH THE NEW GOVERNMENT WOULD PROVIDE AND THE SORT OF LEADERSHIP IT WOULD GIVE THE COUNTRY WOULD ERASE THE IMAGES OF BRUTALITY WHICH HAVE BEEN SO WIDELY PUBLICIZED. THAWISAN AGREED THAT THIS WAS PROBABLY THE ONLY REASONABLE COURSE TO PURSUE.

D. NEW GOVERNMENT.

THAWISAN GAVE ME THE NAMES OF THE NEW MINISTER OF DEFENSE AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS WHICH WE WILL REPORT SEPTEL. HE COMENTED THAT THE MEMBERS OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT WERE ALL "CLEAN" AND THAT THE OTHER MINISTERS WOULD BE TECHNOCRATS OF ESTABLISHED STATURE. HE SAID THAT THE PRIME MINISTER MEANT BUSINESS ON THE SUBJECT OF CORRUPTION

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AND HE WAS ALSO DETERMINED TO CARRY OUT EFFECTIVE SUPPRESSION OF NARCOTICS TRAFFICKING.

E. U S PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

THAWISAN DISCUSSED RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE U S PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN AND HIS KNOWLEDGE OF THE RESULTS OF VARIOUS POLLS INDICATED THAT HE AND THE KING ARE FOLLOWING THE CAMPAIGN VERY CLOSELY.

F. DEPARTURE OF THANOM

I ASKED THAWISAN WHAT HE THOUGHT MIGHT HAPPEN NEXT IN THE SAGO OF FORMER FIELD MARSHAL THANOM. THAWISAN REPLIED THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD UNDERTAKEN TO COMPLETE AN INVESTIGATION BY THE END OF THE MONTH AND THAT THE PRIME MINISTER WOULD KEEP THIS TASK ON SCHEDULE AS HE HAD PUBLICLY PROMISED TO DO. THANOM WAS "NOT A BAD MAN" BUT HIS FAMILY WERE A PROBLEM. WORD HAD BEEN SENT TO COLONEL NARONG THAT UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES SHOULD HE RETURN TO THAILAND. IT WAS HARD TO TELL WHAT THE UPSHOT OF THE THANOM AFFAIR WOULD BE. THAWISAN SAID THAT THERE WAS A CONSPIRACY THEORY BEING GOSSIPED ABOUT BY MANY PEOPLE ACCORDING TO WHICH THE RETURN OF PROPHAT AND THANOM AND THE EVENTS OF THAMMASAT UNIVERSITY HAD ALL BEEN PREMEDITATED. THAWISAN SAID THAT THIS WAS RIDICULOUS. THANOM HAD COMPELLING PERSONAL REASONS FOR RETURNING AND PROPHAT HAD MADE A VERY CONVINCING CASE OF HIS VARIOUS AILMENTS AND DESIRE TO RETURN TO HIS HOMETLAND.

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G. FUTURE RISKS

THAWISAN SAID THAT HE WAS CONCERNED OVER THE SECURITY OF THE KING AND QUEEN WHO WERE BEING BLAMED IN CERTAIN QUARTERS FOR THE FALL OF THE SENI GOVERNMENT AND FOR THE EVENTS WHICH HAD TRANSPIRED AT THAMMASAT. AN UNDETERMINED NUMBER OF STUDENTS WERE HEADED FOR THE JUNGLE AND THE INTENSITY OF THE INWURGENCIES AND OPPOSITION TO THE CROWN MIGHT INCREASE. HE SAID THAT THE CPT WAS STILL OBEDIENT TO MAOIST CONCEPTS OF RURAL INSURRECTION BUT THAT THE STUDENTS AND OTHER URBAN LEFTISTS HAD BEEN INFLUENCED BY THE RUSSIANS AND WERE LIKELY TO SEEK THE OVERTHROW OF THE GOVERNMENT THROUGH ACTION IN URBAN AREAS, IN ACCORDANCE WITH MARXIST/LENINIST PRINCIPLES.

I SAID THAT HIS THEORY WAS AN INTERESTING ONE AND MIGHT WELL BE SUPPORTED BY THE INABILITY OF THE CPT LEADERS IN THE JUNGLE AND THE LEFT WING STUDENTS TO RECONCILE THEIR DIFFERENCES. I SAID I WAS UNDER THE IMPRESSION THAT THE STUDENTS WHO HAD

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GONE TO THE JUNGLE IN THE PAST HAD SOON RETURNED TO THE MORE FAMILIAR URBAN ENVIRONMENT.

H. FBIS

THAWISAN SAID THAT THE KING WAS FOLLOWING CLOSELY THE VIOLENT COMMENTS OF RADIO HANOI WITH INTERCEPTS. COMMENT: I AMCHECKING WITH FBIS TO SEE WHAT I CAN ARRANGE.

2. CONCLUSIONS. ON HIS DEPARTURE, THAWISAN REPEATED HIS PREVIOUS STATEMENT WITH REGARD TO THAILAND'S HOPES FOR CLOSE COLLABORATION WITH US. THE TONE OF HIS PRESENTATION WAS VERY CONFIDENT AND PURPOSEFUL. I WOULD JUDGE FROM HIS MANNER THAT THE MOOD IN THE PALACE IS ONE OF SATISFACTION THAT A NEW CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT IS ABOUT TO BE FORMED, WHICH HAS THE FULL SUPPORT OF THE THAI MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT AND THAT THE KING AND HIS ENTOURAGE WERE RELATIVELY OPTIMISTIC WITH REGARD TO THE MANNER IN WHICH THAILAND WILL SURMOUNT ITS PRESENT DIFFICULTIES.

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