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NEJ 94-360~~SECRET~~By sig, NARA, Date 4-13-95 Tuesday, September 12, 1967*Pres file*
sent to Pres
9/17/67
8:45 AM

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: Possible government shuffle in Thailand

General Praphat, Thailand's Deputy Prime Minister, is planning to push Prime Minister Thanom out of office and place himself at the head of the Thai government. The current rumor is that Praphat will move against Thanom shortly after the Thai constitution is promulgated on December 5.

Praphat is the "boodle boy" of Thai politics and his assumption of the leadership would probably involve corruption in Thailand on a scale not seen in recent years. Its effect upon constitutional development is uncertain, but Praphat is no friend of representative institutions and would surely go as slowly as he could, even if he found it impolitic to bring the movement toward constitutionalism to a total halt. On the other hand, Praphat is an able administrator and would certainly continue Thailand's military cooperation with us, albeit on a more hard-eyed, tit-for-tat, basis. Praphat's assumption of power would be unpopular with the international press and we would undoubtedly be criticized for supporting "another corrupt military dictator".

It is by no means certain that Praphat can win the highest job, although he seems already to have organized some impressive supporters. Ambassador Graham Martin thinks the game is still in play and believes we should operate discreetly to discourage Praphat's efforts. As Martin sees it, this can be done through:

1. An October invitation to Thanom to pay a state visit to you in the spring of 1968.
2. Notably favorable treatment of Praphat's number one opponent, Minister of National Development Pote Sarasin, during Pote's October visit to Washington.

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3. Prompt approval by Washington of an incoming package of assistance to Thailand keyed to their additional troop contribution in Viet-Nam.
4. In general, a more forthcoming and generous response to Thailand's military assistance requirements.

The first two of Martin's proposed courses of action seem to me relatively painless and I think we should go along with them. We will also make sure that the support package for additional troops is acted on promptly. As to military assistance in general, Thailand should continue to enjoy a priority claim, but specific action will have to await the details of Thai desires measured against what we have available.

W. W. Rostow

Action:

1. Invite Thanom:

APPROVE _____
DISAPPROVE _____
SEE ME _____

2. Arrange White House call for Pote:

APPROVE _____
DISAPPROVE _____
SEE ME _____

MW right:hg

cc: Mr. Jorden

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