

C A B I N E T M I N U T E

Canberra, 15th May 1962

Decision No. 240

Without memorandum - Possible Stationing of Australian
Forces in Thailand.

1. The Cabinet, noting that the United States Administration had decided, as a precautionary measure, to send a combat force to Thailand and on the assumption that the Thais themselves would be willing to fight to defend their own frontiers, decided that, if the Thai Government were to request us to supply military assistance (not yet requested), Australia, in accordance with its obligations under SEATO and acting pursuant to these obligations, and if possible with other members, would send a military contingent to Thailand.

2. Factors considered important by the Cabinet were -

- (a) the action, which must be justifiable in our future relations with Asian countries, should be a SEATO action. Even if all members do not agree to contribute contingents, the participating members should act as SEATO powers in performance of SEATO obligations;
- (b) our objectives would be to build up the effectiveness of SEATO and to assure Thailand that its territorial integrity would be maintained;
- (c) it is desirable to inform the United States without delay and without equivocation that Australia approves the decision taken by the United States and is willing, upon request from the Thai Government, to provide a small contingent;

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- (d) action need not await the agreement of all the SEATO members, but should, if possible, not be exclusively by "white" powers. Preferably it should include Pakistan and the Philippines;
- (e) however, whilst it is desirable to have wider participation, Australia would be prepared to send a contingent even if the United States and Thailand were the only other members with forces in Thailand; and
- (f) action should not be taken by Australia in the absence of an invitation from the Thai Government.

3. The Cabinet noted that it was not feasible to return the "Air Cobra" contingent, but requested that the Chiefs of Staff should be asked, as a matter of urgency, to suggest a comparable contingent.

CIRCULATION:

Deputy Prime Minister
Min. for E.A.
Min. for Defence

Secretary, Dept. of E.A.
Secretary, Dept. of Defence
Acting Secretary, Dept. of Treasury.

Certified correct,

J. F. Linnans
Deputy Secretary to Cabinet.

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