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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

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E.O. 13526 (as amended) SEC 3.3

LRD 11-040: # 4

state dept. review 10/4/11

dal NARA Doc 2/2/13

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS: Brent Scowcroft
Ambassador Charles Whitehouse
William Gleysteen

DATE AND TIME: September 16, 1976; 3:30 p. m.

SUBJECT: U. S. - Thai Relations, and Thailand's Prospects

In answer to General Scowcroft's question, Ambassador Whitehouse described our situation in Thailand as "pretty well settled in". He stressed that the Thai want to be friendly with us. Even during the final paroxysm of the struggle over our residual military presence, the contest was between two groups friendly to us. One group feared that a continuing U. S. presence at Ramasun would be too much "like a thumb in the Vietnamese eye", while the other thought a modest U. S. presence would be useful. Both were basically well disposed to the United States. Scowcroft said he had not realized this. In any event, he said, we had lanced the boil and there was no longer anything to get upset about. Whitehouse added that it was conceivable that if we had not pushed so heavily, we might have been able to retain a somewhat smaller military presence than we were seeking at the time.

Scowcroft asked about the outlook in Thailand. Whitehouse said that the Thai want Americans around but not on their turf. The new arrangements at Takli were a good example of what the Thai found satisfactory. He went on to say that there was considerable stability in the domestic situation. Seni was, in his opinion, very representative, and his government accurately reflected the reduced clout of the military in Thailand. The government was not very quick nor very decisive, but it worked. Whitehouse noted that he himself had never expected a coup in recent months and expected general calm at least for the near future. He emphasized that apart from security we have substantial interests in Thailand, including trade and a far greater cultural involvement than he had

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imagined before arrival on post. There were enormous numbers of American trained individuals with a substantial stake in the U. S.

Whitehouse mentioned that although he had expected a significant increase in Vietnam's subversive involvement in Northeast Thailand, he had been unable to find evidence of a significant expansion of the Vietnamese role. He agreed with Scowcroft that there might be some increase in small arms and ammunition deliveries but the insurgent requirements for these items were very small. In the south the insurgent situation was more serious, involving more violence and potential for trouble.

Scowcroft asked how the Thai perceived their security situation. Intellectually, Whitehouse replied, they could sound just like Sir Robert Thompson, yet their anti-insurgency operations lacked any zip. Their real concern was that some day the Vietnamese dead-end kids were going to come across the border. This prompted the Thai military to make some fairly expensive purchases, such as F-5E's. Once they did so, however, they more or less sat back from active concern. The net effect was hardly helpful in countering insurgency. The Thai were a fun-loving, indolent, and slack society.

Whitehouse responded to Scowcroft's question about the adequacy of our programs with a comment that economic assistance was properly a thing of the past but that in the case of military assistance there was still some need for help. Psychologically, the Thai felt we should be aiding them since this was the moment of their peril; i. e., we were no longer in Thailand providing a shield. Given the prospect that the current Thai authorities, while not being able to hold on forever, could at least put off the evil day for a substantial period, Whitehouse suggested that we try to help in limited ways such as more generous terms for the sale of the AIT.

Noting Whitehouse's long-term assessment, Gleysteen asked how the demise of the current structure might occur. Whitehouse suggested that one obvious possibility would be a Vietnamese style insurgency moving to large scale military and logistical operations. If that were to happen, the government would collapse because it was soft whereas the opposition was lean, tough, and dynamic. Scowcroft concluded that Whitehouse was basically pessimistic, and Whitehouse agreed he was gloomy about the long run. Nevertheless, he did not rule out hope for heading off a collapse, and certainly Thailand was not about to collapse like a domino.



Scowcroft suggested Thailand's problems appeared primarily social and political rather than economic. Whitehouse agreed, citing Thailand's more than \$1.4 billion foreign exchange as evidence of a reasonably good economic situation. Thailand's difficulties consisted of a social problem, a leadership problem, and an integrity problem. Scowcroft noted that changes of this kind were hard for any society. Whitehouse said hopefully that while this was so, there was a tough, bright, new generation in Bangkok coming along after the current generation of leaders. Men like Anan might be able to break the debilitating pattern of their elders.

Whitehouse described his current mission problem as a need to pull things together, get people into one building, cut operations down in size, and clear up lines of authority. Scowcroft asked if he were worried about the visibility of our presence, and when he said he was not, Scowcroft asked why he wanted a cutdown in the U. S. presence. Whitehouse said it was simply a question of management control.

Scowcroft summed up Whitehouse's views as conveying a picture that was "not bad, at least for the moment". Whitehouse said that was a fair characterization. The Thai saw Vietnam as the real threat and China as a rather benevolent power even if some Thai also recognized that this benevolence stemmed from China's self-interest. While Thai views of China were a bit naive, the Russians were not making headway in Thailand. If a Russian were to jump up on the hood of Whitehouse's car, all the Thai would assume that the Soviet KGB had paid him to do it.



MEMORANDUM

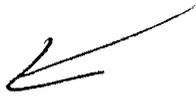
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NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

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ACTION

September 21, 1976

MEMORANDUM FOR: BRENT SCOWCROFT 

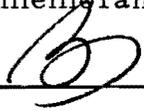
FROM: WILLIAM GLEYSTEN 

SUBJECT: Memorandum of Your Conversation with
Ambassador Whitehouse of Thailand

Attached at Tab A is a memorandum of your conversation with Ambassador Charles Whitehouse on September 16 at 3:30 p. m.

RECOMMENDATION:

That you approve the memorandum of conversation at Tab A.

APPROVE  DISAPPROVE _____

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DECLASSIFIED
 E.O. 12958, Sec. 3.5
 NSC Memo, 11/24/98, State Dept. Guidelines
 By ttt, NARA, Date 1/3/2000



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NSC CORRESPONDENCE PROFILE

DOC		RECD			LOG N	ER
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INITIAL ACTION O

SOURCE/CLASS/DESCRIPTION

TO: PRES _____ FROM: SECSTATE _____ S/S _____ UNCLAS LOG IN/OUT _____

SCOWCROFT _____ SECDEF _____ LOU NO FORN NO DIS _____

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DAVIS _____ STATE EXSEC _____ (S) COEWORD _____

OTHER Hyland _____ TS SENSITIVE

SUBJECT: Memorandum of Scowcroft conversation w/ Amb Whitehouse of Thailand

DISTRIBUTION/INITIAL ACTION ASGMT

INTERNAL ROUTING AND DISTRIBUTION					REC CY FOR
ACTION	CONCURRENCE	COORDINATE	INFO		
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CONGRESSIONAL					
ECONOMIC					
EUR/CANADA/OCEANS					
FAR EAST/PRC					
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LATIN AMERICA					
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PROGRAM ANALYSIS					
SCIENTIFIC					
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ACTION REQUIRED

MEMO FOR SCOWCROFT _____

MEMO FOR PRES _____

REPLY FOR _____

APPROPRIATE ACTION _____

MEMO _____ TO _____

RECOMMENDATIONS _____

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ANY ACTION NECESSARY? _____

CONCURRENCE _____

DUE DATE: _____

COMMENTS: (INCLUDING SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS)

SUBSEQUENT ROUTING/ACTIONS

DATE	FROM	TO	STATUS	SUBSEQUENT ACTION REQUIRED (OR TAKEN):	DUE	CY TO
9/21		Scowcroft	X	Decision	(9/30)	
10/10		NSC/S	C	Scowcroft approved memo		

NSC/S INSTR

DISPATCH _____ NOTIFY _____

SPECIAL DISPOSITION: _____

SPECIAL INDEXING: _____

SUSPENSE CY ATTACHED

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M/F/D **OCT 14 1976**

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