

5/27/53

TOP SECRET

COPY NO. 24

U. S. PSYCHOLOGICAL STRATEGY WITH RESPECT TO THE
THAI PEOPLES OF SOUTHEAST ASIA (D-23, May 19, 1953)

Key Decision-Points and Major Areas of Controversy

1. In view of working-level disagreements, as manifested at the Panel meeting of May 25, 1953, resolution of the differences is required before a final draft can usefully be attempted. There was no difference of view as to the seriousness of the communist threat to Southeast Asia nor as to the importance of holding Thailand and other parts of the area. Panel discussion resulted in a number of useful suggestions for improvement of the Plan, particularly in regard to Sections III and IV.

The major points at issue are as follows:

a. Thailand as the central geographical focus of the proposed strategy, as recommended in the underlined sentence on Page 5 of the present draft.

This basic concept is not accepted by the State Department member of the Panel who reiterated State's position against regional handling in Southeast Asia.

b. Utilization of the U. S. position in Thailand to project U. S. leadership throughout the area in order to create a "climate of victory".

The State member rejects this concept, which the Staff considers basic to the Plan, while the CIA member recommends modifications. CIA feels that while substantial overt indications of interest are important, U. S. participation should be to "activate" and "support" Thai efforts, which leads to recommendations for some substantive changes in Section IV. State questioned whether such a dramatic stepping up of our leadership as is proposed in PSB paper, would be

NSC review(s) completed.

TOP SECRET

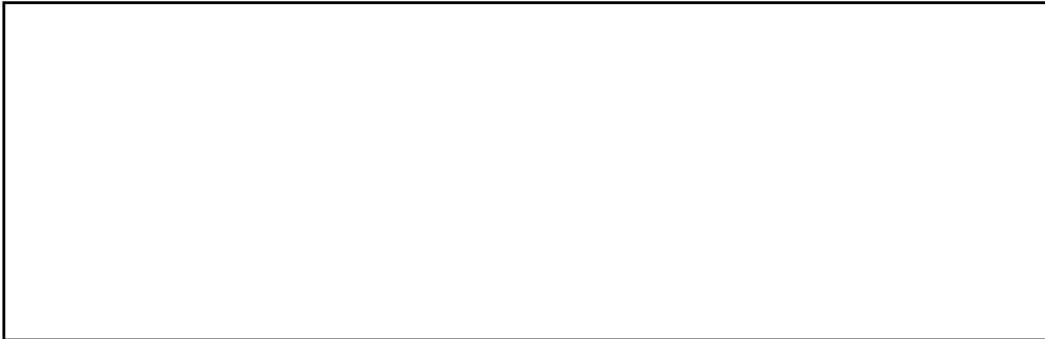
TOP SECRET

25X1

acceptable to the French and British who have made large military commitments, and whether the independent nations of Southeast Asia would be prepared to acknowledge and support U. S. leadership, particularly in the absence of any clear definition of what we would do in the event of serious trouble. The Defense member felt that in the absence of real intent to increase substantially Defense and MSA programs in Thailand there would be lacking the basic element needed for success in the proposed strategy.

c. Regional co-ordination of U. S. activities in Thailand, Indochina and Malaya.

State, CIA and MSA Panel representatives all reject this concept. Less formal, more flexible, and less visible co-ordination machinery than is proposed in the present draft would be compatible with the intent of the Plan, but the need for some field co-ordination is considered basic by PSB Staff.



25X1

e. Desirability of associating the U. S. with Asian nationalism at the village level.

State held that because of our limitations of language and manner of life our technique of reaching the village level was through middle and upper class westernized people who had use of a western language. More study needs to be made of how otherwise to reach the village level. In view of the great practical difficulties in any U. S. grass-roots approach in Asia, resolution of this controversy may not be essential, but in the Staff view the problem is sufficiently

TOP SECRET

TOP SECRET

25X1

important to deserve some recognition in the Plan.

2. The following points will eventually require high level decisions but up to the present have not had full discussion in the Panel:

[Redacted]

25X1

b. The strengthening of USIS in Thailand, especially the stationing of the VOA relay ship "COURIER" in Bangkok, the setting up of a mobile radio transmitter at or near the Thai-Laos frontier, and the establishment of a special purpose post or USIS center in northeast Thailand. (CIA feels that, in general, support to appropriate Thai information and PW media would be preferable to an expanded U. S. program.)

25X1

c. Discussions with the French for purposes of [Redacted]

[Redacted] a shift in military tactics, and to establish a better political base in Indochina.

d. Air and naval demonstrations in Thailand.

e. Consultation with military experts of other nations on matters relating to jungle and guerrilla warfare in Southeast Asia.

Psychological Strategy Board

[Redacted]

TOP SECRET

3
of 3 Pages

25X1

25X1

25X1A