

DDI# 5899-82

19 July 1982

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

FROM : David D. Gries
National Intelligence Officer for East Asia

SUBJECT : Your Question on ASEAN

1. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) -- consisting of Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines, and Thailand -- was founded in 1967 as an economic, social, and cultural organization; but its main achievements have been political and diplomatic. Initially, it devoted its energies to preventing bilateral squabbles from escalating into serious conflict; in the process member states developed the common objective of preserving ASEAN even at the cost of leaving some problems unresolved. In 1975 the emergence of Vietnam as a potential threat to regional stability, combined with ASEAN's perception of declining US interest in the area, gave the association the momentum and cohesion it previously lacked. As a result, its leaders began to try to exert direct influence on policy and events affecting the region.

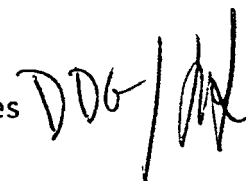
2. ASEAN has a system of "Dialogues" at the Cabinet level with the European Community, Japan and the United States. These are satisfactory to the US and do not impede our bilateral relationships with the five.

3. In contrast to its political and economic activities and structure, ASEAN has no formal or informal military functions, and this is likely to remain the case until relations between Singapore and Malaysia become more intimate. However, informal military cooperation without an ASEAN label continues to increase among various groupings of the five members.

4. Intelligence exchanges among ASEAN members are similarly advanced, again without the organizational label.

5. I am attaching a more thorough discussion of ASEAN's development and the latest cable on ASEAN and the Kampuchean resistance.

David D. Gries



Attachment: a/s

SECRET

25X1