

Central Intelligence Agency



Washington, D.C. 20505

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

27 September 1983

Background on Thailand's Request for Technology Assistance

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The Thai economy has been one of the developing world's success stories over the past two decades, with economic growth averaging more than 7 percent a year. This impressive performance was based on the extension and diversification of agriculture and the expansion of technologically simple manufacturing industries such as textiles and food processing.

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The current Thai five year economic development plan (1982-86), however, calls for many projects that will require the acquisition of more sophisticated science and technology. Bangkok places the most emphasis on the expansion of the energy sector--both offshore and onshore--and on the establishment of a natural gas-based heavy industry complex to include petrochemicals and fertilizer plants. Bangkok also needs the technology to improve agricultural yields, among the lowest in Asia. Plans to acquire sophisticated military hardware, upgrade the communications network, and establish a labor-intensive, export-oriented electronics industry all require major advances in the level of technology employed.

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Over the last year, Thai officials have made increasing references in the press to the need to upgrade science and technology capability. Much of this effort has been spurred by the energetic Damrong Lattahaphitat, Minister for Science, Technology, and Energy, with the support of Prime Minister Prem. Damrong's ministry will take the lead in any discussions with the US on science policy. Damrong currently has no

This memorandum was prepared by [redacted] Office of East Asian Analysis, for Dr. George Keyworth, Presidential Science Adviser. Comments and queries are welcome and may be directed to Chief, Southeast Asia Division [redacted]

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authority over agricultural, biomedical, or industrial research, however, and shares authority for energy research with the Petroleum Authority of Thailand. [redacted]

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The US Embassy believes that while Thailand would welcome the joint US-ASEAN technology center proposed by the US, it is more interested in a bilateral agreement that would provide a 5-15 year package of science and technology assistance designed to complement the country's agricultural, industrial, and energy development projects. We believe that Bangkok is likely to continue to press for such aid even if the United States insists that much of the responsibility lies with the private sector. [redacted]


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