

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

OCA
INCOMING

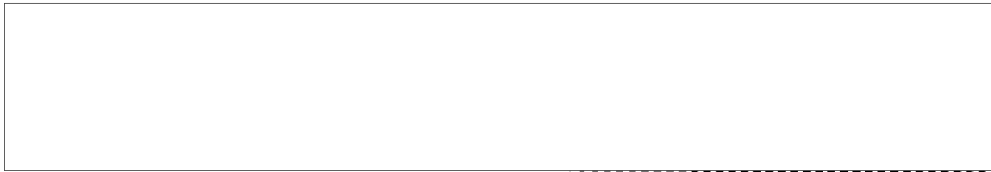
/ /

CONFIDENTIAL
PRIORITY

FRP: . . 3.

STATE

25X1



86 0005987 SCP

PAGE 001
TOR: 230104Z FEB 86

NC 0005987
BANGKO 08852

PP RUEAIIB
ZNY CCCCC ZDC STATE ZZH
VSK116 612 STU5740
PP RUEHSD RUEHC
DE RUEHOK #8852/01 0491230
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 181228Z FEB 86
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1291
INFO RUEHJA/AMEMBASSY JAKARTA 9540
RUEHKL/AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR 0558
RUEHGP/AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE 6197
RUEHCR/AMEMBASSY BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN 0732
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 1637
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 2433
RUMJFS/AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE 0517
RUMJIA/AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI 1913
ZEN/AMCONSUL SONGKHLA
RUMJUD/AMCONSUL UDORN 9760
RUHQHQA/USCINCPAC HONOLULU HI
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEHML/AMEMBASSY MANILA 8003
BT

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ BANGKOK 08852

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (MANILA ADDED AS ADDEE)

USCINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 12956: DECL: OADR
TAGS: MARR, PREL, TH, US
SUBJECT: SPECULATIONS ON US BASES IN THAILAND

REF: A) FBIS BK 151022, B) FBIS BK 150916,
- C) BANGKOK 71959 (NOTAL)

1. (U) THE RECENT ELECTIONS IN THE PHILIPPINES, SENATOR DOLE'S PLAN TO INTRODUCE LEGISLATION CALLING FOR A DOD FEASIBILITY STUDY ON US BASES, AND A COMMENT BY A THAI CABINET MINISTER HAVE TOUCHED OFF A NEW ROUND OF FRONT PAGE SPECULATION AND COMMENT ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF THE "REESTABLISHMENT OF US BASES" IN THAILAND. STRESSING ISSUES OF SOVEREIGNTY, CULTURAL POLLUTION AND FOREIGN POLICY, MUCH OF THE COMMENTARY IN THE PRESS AND BY THAI OFFICIALS HAS STRONGLY OPPOSED THE IDEA. THERE HAS BEEN SOME, ALBEIT LIMITED, FAVORABLE COMMENTARY WHICH HAS EMPHASIZED POSSIBLE ECONOMIC AND SECURITY BENEFITS OF HOSTING US BASES AT A TIME WHEN THAILAND FACES A WORSENING ECONOMIC SITUATION AND INCREASED SOVIET SUPPORT FOR AND PRESENCE IN VIETNAM.

2.8(U) DEPUTY PRIME ME
PSTERGSONTHI DUNYACHAI BEGAN THE
RENEWED SPECULATION ON FEBRUARY 13 BY OPINING IN A PRESS INTERVIEW (REF A) THAT "NO MATTER WHO WILL HEAD THE NEXT PHILIPPINE GOVERNMENT, THE RELOCATION OF THE TWO (US) BASES SEEMS LIKELY," AND COUNSELING THAT THE RTG SHOULD PREPARE ITSELF FOR A US APPROACH "TO MOVE THEIR MILITARY

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

CONFIDENTIAL

86 0005987

SCP

PAGE 002

NC 0005987

TOR: 230104Z FEB 86

BANGKO 08852

BASES IN THE PHILIPPINES TO THAILAND" SINCE IT "IS VERY LIKELY" THAT THE US IS LOOKING AT THAILAND AS A POSSIBLE HOST. SONTHI REPORTEDLY ALSO SUGGESTED THAT THE US MIGHT ATTEMPT TO USE BASE REESTABLISHMENT AS A TRADE-OFF FOR LENIENCY IN IMPLEMENTATION OF PROTECTIONIST LEGISLATION LIKE THE FOOD SECURITY ACT ("FARM BILL"). DEPUTY DEFENSE MINISTER ACM PHANIANG KANTARAT, PROBABLY IN RESPONSE TO PRESS PRODDING FOR A REACTION TO SONTHI'S REMARKS, A DAY LATER ATTEMPTED TO THROW WATER ON THE SPARKS SNTHI HAD STIRRED UP. HE NOTED THAT WHILE THE US MIGHT BE INTERESTED IN THE IDEA, IT HAD TO OBTAIN CONGRESSIONAL APPROVAL, OFFICIALLY RAISE THE MATTER WITH THE RTG, AND CONSIDER THE "LESSONS" IT HAD LEARNED FROM THAI STUDENT ACTIVISTS IN THE MID 1970'S--"THAT THEY WERE NOT WANTED." HE ALSO CAUTIONED THAT THAI PUBLIC OPINION, QUESTIONS OF SOVEREIGNTY AND INTEGRITY, AND OTHER FACTORS WOULD NEED TO BE WEIGHED CAREFULLY "IF THERE WAS SUCH A REQUEST FROM THE US" (REF B). WITH CHARACTERISTICALLY CUTTING WIT, FORMER PRIME MINISTER KHUKRIT PRAMOT, WHO PRESIDED OVER THE DISMANTLING OF US BASES IN THAILAND IN 1976, REACTED TO SONTHI'S REMARKS BY SAYING THAT IF THEY "HAD COME FROM A GRANDMA SELLING RICE AND CURRY, THEY WOULD HAVE CAUSED LAUGHTER, AND POSSIBLY A JOKE ABOUT HOW SHE WOULD FEEL ABOUT HER DAUGHTER."

3. (U) IN LICMIED COMMENT FROM PARLIAMENTARIANS NOTED THUS FAR, AN OPPOSITION THAI NATION PARTY (TNP) MP FROM CHAIYAPHUM, SIHANAT LUCHA, TOLD A THAI DAILY ON FEBRUARY 18 THAT HE STRONGLY OPPOSED REESTABLISHMENT OF US BASES, BECAUSE THAILAND WOULD "SUFFER FROM SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DECLINE", US ABUSE OF ITS PRIVILEGES, AND WOULD BECOME A POTENTIAL MILITARY TARGET. HE ALSO REASONED THAT THE MOVE WOULD TOUCH OFF A REGIONAL ARMS RACE AND HINDER THAILAND'S FOREIGN RELATIONS. SENATOR PATHOM SOEMSIN, A FORMER SUPREME COMMAND CHIEF OF STAFF AND CURRENT MEMBER OF THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON MILITARY AFFAIRS, COMMENTED ON THE POSITIVE ASPECTS OF A US MILITARY PRESENCE BY NOTING THAT IT WOULD STRENGTHEN THAILAND'S DEFENSIVE CAPABILITY.

4. (U) PRESS COMMENTARY HAS GENERALLY BEEN STRONGLY OPPOSED TO THE POSSIBILITY. "THAI RATH", THAILAND'S MOST POPULAR DAILY, CALLED THE IDEA "TREACHEROUS" AND BLAMED PREVIOUS US PRESENCE IN THE AREA FOR SOCIAL PROBLEMS LIKE ILLEGIMATE CHILDREN AND FOR CREATING REFUGEES AND "THE EMERGENCE OF THE TYRANTS" (THE THANOM/PRAPHAT REGIME OF THE 1960S-70S). THE USUALLY ***** MESSAGE SECTION 2 NOT IN DAQ *****
END OF MESSAGE

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL