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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

REPORT NO. [redacted]

INFORMATION REPORT

CD NO.

COUNTRY Thailand

DATE DISTR. 27 December 1949

SUBJECT Current Political Crisis in Thailand

NO. OF PAGES 2

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PLACE ACQUIRED [redacted]

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SUPPLEMENT TO REPORT NO.

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[redacted]

1. A coup attempt was planned for 14 December. Tension had increased in Bangkok with the anti-Government group angered over the opium smuggling whitewash and the Phibun group worried over the increasing friendliness between the Navy and the Air Force. The coup plot was along the lines of the October 1948 attempted coup. The coup plotters had scheduled a meeting at the Ministry of Defense for the night of December 14. The Thai Navy sent eight truckloads of arms from Sattahip. A leak of information from officers on the staff of Maj. Gen. Surit Sarithi Thanarat caused Phibul to abruptly retire Air Marshal Luang Devaridh from his post.

2. On 15 December planning for the coup was still under way. Phibul learned that Col. Khun Silsornchai, Director of the Territorial Department of the Ministry of Defense, was involved in the plot. After a heated argument with Phibul, Col. Khun Silsornchai retired from his post. This retirement, coupled with the retirement of Air Marshal Devaridh, broke the back of the coup plot as the Territorial Forces of Khun Silsornchai were to be the main body behind the coup.

3. Adul Adulet Charat was involved in the plot. He was placed under house arrest.(B-1) Luang Chart persuaded Gen. Phao Sriyanon to release Adul on 19 December because control over the police could not be maintained if too harsh measures were taken against Adul.

4. Col. Prasert Ruchirawong openly admitted to Phibul that he was involved in the coup plotting and said that, if not arrested, he would go on plotting. Prasert advised Phibun to retire Gen. Surit and Gen. Phin Chunhawan who had become involved in numerous unsavory deals rather than retire the best men in the Army and Air Force.

5. Phibul is stunned at the situation and has taken no action as yet. He wants the crisis rumors to die down as he is currently negotiating with Malcolm MacDonald, the British SEA Commissioner, for arms. There will probably be further retirements in January with Gen. Surit "kicked upstairs" to a staff post. Phibul is uncertain who he can trust for key spots. The plot has resulted in the speedup of attache and other foreign appointments in order

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to get potential plotters out of Bangkok. The position of the Thai Navy remains influential in the background. The Navy now allows no one with arms to enter Navy-controlled areas and is currently chasing down opium runners regardless of whether or not their jurisdiction is involved.*

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*[redacted] Comment. The following reports contain previous information on the development of the political crisis in Bangkok: [redacted]

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[redacted] Comment. This report differs somewhat from the information contained in [redacted] [redacted] is inclined to give the present report a higher evaluation than [redacted] but it is possible that a double crisis exists and both reports are correct. Following are the apparent cliques as of the present (23 December). There is a great amount of interweaving and shifting between the various groups. Eventual outbreaks are probable.

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a. Luang-Kach-Surit

b. Phin-Phao-Phibul

c. Navy-Air-Adul

d. Col. Prasert Ruchirawong

e. Col. Khun Silsornchai

f. Pridi

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