

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

~~SECRET~~

ACTION

March 18, 1974

MEMORANDUM FOR BRENT SCOWCROFT

OBE

FROM:

W.R. Smyser

SUBJECT:

Cable to Ambassador Kintner

Ambassador Kintner has sent us a very useful cable on troop reductions in Thailand (see Tab B). I would like to let him know our appreciation.

Recommendation

That you send the attached cable (at Tab A) to Ambassador Kintner.

Approve \_\_\_\_\_

Disapprove \_\_\_\_\_

~~SECRET~~ - XGDS

BYAUTH - HAKISSINGER; DECLAS - IMPDET

NSS, ARMY, OSD, USAF,  
State Dept. reviews  
completed

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Backchannel

TO: AMBASSADOR KINTNER  
BANGKOK

FROM: BRENT SCOWCROFT  
WHITE HOUSE

VIA:



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1. Dick Smyser has shown me your cable. We deeply appreciate your detailed look at the Thai domestic pressures for our withdrawal and your thoughtful recommendations.

2. We will be in touch as soon as decisions are made, and we will handle them in a way that will give you a full opportunity to consult with the Thai.

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FM BANGKOK

TO WHITE HOUSE

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FM AMBASSADOR KINTNER BANGKOK 850 SECTION 1 OF 4  
TO THE WHITE HOUSE FOR RICHARD SMYER  
FOLLOWING PARAGRAPHS DEAL WITH THE QUESTIONS RAISED IN  
YOUR MESSAGES OF MARCH 2 AND 15.

## POLITICAL ISSUES

YOUR FIRST QUESTION ON THAI INTERNAL PRESSURES FOR TROOP  
REDUCTIONS RELATES ALSO TO THE TIMING OF THE ELECTION. THE  
JUSTICE MINISTER, WHO IS SHEPHERDING THE CONSTITUTION THROUGH  
THE NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY (NLA), TOLD THE DCM MARCH  
15 THAT HE EXPECTS THE NLA TO COMPLETE THE FIRST READING OF  
THE CONSTITUTION BY MID-APRIL. THE NEXT STEP IS THE SECOND  
READING FOR FULL NLA APPROVAL, WHICH HE BELIEVES WILL TAKE  
TWO MORE MONTHS, MAKING PROMULGATION LIKELY ABOUT MID-JUNE.  
SINCE ELECTIONS CANNOT TAKE PLACE SOONER THAN 90 DAYS AFTER  
THE CONSTITUTION IS PROMULGATED, THE LIKELY ELECTION DATE WOULD  
THEN BE SOMETIME IN SEPTEMBER OR OCTOBER. WHILE WE HAVE RE-  
CEIVED SEVERAL ESTIMATES OF HOW LONG THIS TOTAL PROCESS MIGHT  
TAKE, THE JUSTICE MINISTER'S IS AS GOOD A PREDICTION AS WE  
CAN COME UP WITH AT THIS TIME.

THERE ARE MANY WAYS THIS SCHEDULE COULD GO WRONG. THE ASSEMBLY  
COULD MOVE MORE QUICKLY THAN MOST PEOPLE EXPECT; ON THE OTHER  
HAND, SEVERAL FACTORS LIKE FURTHER STUDENT UNREST, LABOR STRIKES,  
RAMPANT INFLATION, THE OIL CRISIS, OR A DECLINE OF SECURITY IN  
NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES COULD CAUSE DELAYS. WE STILL CONSIDER THAT,  
WHATEVER OCCURS, CAMPAIGNING IS MOST LIKELY TO BE IN FULL SWING  
BY EARLY SUMMER.

ASSUMING THAT THE ELECTION RESULTS PRODUCE A MAJORITY OF LEGISLATORS  
WHOSE LEADER AND PROGRAM ARE NOT UNACCEPTABLE TO THE THAI ESTABLISH-  
MENT (INCLUDING PARTICULARLY THE KING AND THE ARMY), THE NEW  
GOVERNMENT SHOULD TAKE OVER SHORTLY AFTER THE ELECTION.  
WHEN THE CAMPAIGN BEGINS, THE U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE IN THAILAND  
WILL BE A PROMINENT ISSUE, NOT BECAUSE A LOT OF THAI WANT US TO  
LEAVE COMPLETELY BUT MORE BECAUSE OF THE "FOREIGNNESS", SIZE,  
AND VISIBILITY OF OUR FORCES. WHEN SO MANY OF THAILAND'S  
PROBLEMS ARE INCAPABLE OF SHORT-TERM SOLUTIONS, THE AMERICAN

\*\*\*\*\*WHSR COMMENT\*\*\*\*\*

SCOWCROFT, MCFARLANE, SMYER

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PRESENCE ALSO OFFERS A CONVENIENT WHIPPING BOY FOR POLITICIANS OF ALL PERSUASIONS. THE POLITICIANS WHO FORM THE NEW GOVERNMENT MAY WELL COME INTO OFFICE ALREADY SUBSTANTIALLY COMMITTED ON AMERICAN WITHDRAWAL; WE BELIEVE THAT THE BEST WAY TO DEFOUSE THE ISSUE DURING THE CAMPAIGN PERIOD IS TO AGREE WITH THE RTG NOW ON A PLAN FOR ORDERLY REDUCTIONS LASTING THROUGH THE CALENDAR YEAR WHICH WILL STAND AS EVIDENCE OF OUR RESPONSIVENESS. YOUR SECOND QUESTION WAS HOW DO DIFFERENT THAI PRESSURE GROUPS FEEL ABOUT WITHDRAWALS. THE SENIOR MILITARY LEADERS AND THE MONARCHY FAVOR A CONTINUED U.S. PRESENCE ALTHOUGH EVEN SOME IN THIS GROUP BELIEVE IT COULD AND SHOULD BE MUCH SMALLER. THE STUDENTS AND THE CIVIL SERVICE ARE DIVIDED AMONG THEMSELVES ON THIS ISSUE. MOST OF THE PROFESSORS AND INTELLECTUALS FAVOR GRADUAL BUT PROBABLY TOTAL WITHDRAWAL BECAUSE THEY DISAGREE WITH THE MILITARY RESPONSE TO THE NORTH VIETNAMESE THREAT TO SOUTHEAST ASIA. MOST UPCOUNTRY FARMERS ARE POLITICALLY UNAWARE. THE EVOLUTION OF GROUP ATTITUDES AS THEY INTERACT DURING THE COMING ELECTION CAMPAIGN, AND THE EFFECT OF OUR WITHDRAWALS, OR FAILURE TO WITHDRAW AT A RATE COMMENSURATE WITH THE ATTITUDES OF THE THAI BODY POLITIC, ON OUR POSITION HERE IS CENTRAL TO OUR ARGUMENT FOR FLEXIBILITY IN ADAPTING TO THE NEW SITUATION IN THAILAND. IF WE ARE SEEN TO BE REMOVING SOME FORCES, WHILE MAINTAINING OUR DETERMINATION TO MAINTAIN STABILITY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, WE WILL STRENGTHEN THE HANDS OF OUR FRIENDS AGAINST THE DEMANDS FOR TOTAL WITHDRAWAL. FURTHERMORE AS WE DRAW DOWN, RECOGNITION IN RESPONSIBLE THAI QUARTERS OF THE ECONOMIC AND SECURITY BENEFITS OF OUR PRESENCE MAY AFFECT THE ATTITUDES OF SIGNIFICANT ELEMENTS. ON THE OTHER HAND, IF INTERNAL PRESSURES AGAINST OUR MILITARY PRESENCE MOUNT, WE CANNOT COUNT EVEN ON THE THAI MILITARY TO STAND UP PUBLICLY TO DEFEND US; THE SANYA CARETAKER GOVERNMENT HAS PUBLICLY ENDORSED GRADUAL AND EVENTUALLY TOTAL WITHDRAWAL, WHILE JUSTIFYING OUR PRESENCE IN THE TOTAL SOUTHEAST ASIA SECURITY CONTEXT. THIS WISHY-WASHY GOVERNMENT COULD EASILY BE PRESSURED INTO A FAR LESS HELPFUL POSITION. YOUR THIRD QUESTION ASKED WHAT THE STUDENTS ARE REACTING TO. THE STUDENTS LOOK ON THE U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE AS A LIMITATION ON THAI SOVEREIGNTY AND INDEPENDENCE OF ACTION IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS, AS WELL AS A THREAT TO TRADITIONAL THAI SOCIETY AND A DANGER TO THAI MORALITY. (THEY ARE UNAWARE HOW IMMORAL THAILAND SEEMS TO WESTERNERS.) THE STUDENTS HAVE NOT COME UP WITH A COORDINATED PROGRAM AGAINST THE U.S. PRESENCE COUNTRY-WIDE, ALTHOUGH THEY HAVE TAKEN UP SPECIFIC PROBLEMS SUCH AS DOI INTHANON AND AIR AMERICA OPERATIONS IN UDORN. THE STUDENTS HAVE NOT DEMONSTRATED AT THE GATES OF OUR BASES NOR HARASSED AMERICAN MILITARY IN THE CITIES. THE BEST ANSWER TO THE TYPE OF PRESSURE WHICH THE STUDENTS HAVE THUS FAR BROUGHT TO BEAR ON THE GOVERNMENT APPEARS TO BE EVIDENCE THAT THAI/U.S. CONSULTATIONS ARE RESULTING IN CONTINUING REDUCTIONS CONSISTENT WITH THAI NATIONAL INTERESTS. YOU ALSO ASK HOW THE THAI MILITARY VIEW OUR WITHDRAWALS. THEIR

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APPROACH IS MORE PRAGMATIC. THEY DON'T WANT TO BE TROUBLED BY UNINFORMED AND IMPETUOUS CRITICISM FROM POLITICIANS, STUDENTS, AND NEWSMEN. THEY FIND IT HARD TO EXPLAIN WHY SO MANY AIRCRAFT AND SERVICEMEN MUST REMAIN MORE THAN SIX MONTHS AFTER CONGRESS ENDED OUR AIR WAR OVER INDOCHINA. THEY BELIEVE THAT WE INTEND TO REDUCE OUR FORCES HERE, PROBABLY SOONER THAN LATER, AND WANT TO CASH IN ON OUR DEPARTURE BY TAKING OVER AS MUCH EXCESS EQUIPMENT AS POSSIBLE FOR MILITARY USE, OR DISPOSAL FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE GOVERNMENT OR THEMSELVES. AT THE SAME TIME, THEY HOPE TO USE OUR INTEREST IN STAYING HERE AS A MEANS OF GETTING EXTRA MILITARY ASSISTANCE ONE WAY OR ANOTHER. WE HAVE NO INDICATIONS THAT ANY FACTION IN THE THAI MILITARY WISHES US TO WITHDRAW COMPLETELY; SENIOR MILITARY LEADERS, AT LEAST, VALUE OUR SECURITY GUARANTEE AND WOULD WISH TO RETAIN CLOSE TIES WITH U.S. MILITARY SERVICES UNDER ALL FORESEEABLE CIRCUMSTANCES. YOUR NEXT QUESTION WAS WHETHER THE RTG COULD MAKE A VALID COMMITMENT ON REENTRY. DURING THE FORCE LEVEL TALKS LAST YEAR, THE THAI SIDE TOOK FOR GRANTED OUR RETURN IN CASE OF NEED, WHILE PRESSING FOR MOVEMENT OF B-52S AND OTHER AIRCRAFT FROM THEIR BASES. WE BELIEVE THAT THE SANYA GOVERNMENT WOULD BE EXTREMELY RELUCTANT TO MAKE ANY SUCH COMMITMENT PUBLICLY, BUT IT HAS SHOWN NO SIGN OF RENEGING ON PAST UNDERSTANDING. WE EXPECT THAT SUCCESSIVE GOVERNMENTS WOULD ALSO BE DISPOSED TO HONOR THEIR PREDECESSORS' COMMITMENTS. WE ALSO CONSIDER IT LIKELY THAT

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TO WHITE HOUSE

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FM AMBASSADOR KINTNER BANGKOK 850 (SECTION 2 OF 4 25X1  
TO THE WHITE HOUSE, FOR RICHARD SHYSER  
DEVELOPMENTS IN INDOCHINA WHICH WOULD WIN SUPPORT IN CONGRESS FOR  
REDEPLOYMENT AND COMBAT ACTION WOULD BE EQUALLY PERSUASIVE  
TO THE THAI GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE. NEVERTHELESS, WE SHOULD  
SEEK TO GET AS FIRM AN UNDERSTANDING AS POSSIBLE FROM THE PRESENT  
THAI LEADERSHIP IN CONNECTION WITH OUR NEXT ROUND OF TALKS. WE  
BELIEVE THAT ARRANGEMENTS COULD BE MADE WITH THE THAI GOVERNMENT  
NOW TO MAINTAIN OUR BASES OPERATIONALLY READY EVEN WITHOUT A  
RESIDUAL AMERICAN PRESENCE AT EACH BASE, IN WHICH CASE WE COULD  
PROBABLY ARRANGE IN ADVANCE FOR PERIODIC TRAINING EXERCISES OR  
OTHER DEMONSTRATIONS OF OUR ABILITY TO MOVE IN UNITS FROM GUAM  
OR THE CONTINENTAL U.S. WE THINK THE MOVEMENT OF COMBAT AIRCRAFT  
IN AND OUT OF THAILAND WITH MATTER-OF-FACT PRESS ANNOUNCEMENTS  
WOULD ATTRACT AS MUCH ATTENTION IN HANOI AS KEEPING A MUCH  
LARGER NUMBER PRESENT IN THAILAND WITH AN EXCESSIVELY LOW PROFILE  
TO AVOID EMBARRASSING OUR HOST GOVERNMENT.

## FORCE REDUCTIONS

WITH REGARD TO WHAT TYPES OF WITHDRAWALS ARE MOST ESSENTIAL,  
THE THAI HAVE GIVEN THE HIGHEST PRIORITY TO SIGNIFICANT  
REDUCTIONS IN B-52'S. THEY MADE THIS OFFICIAL DURING THE  
SEPTEMBER NEGOTIATIONS HERE, AND CHARTICHAH ALSO RAISED THEM  
WITH DR. KISSINGER IN NEW YORK. THEY HAVE, HOWEVER, ACCEPTED  
OUR ARGUMENT THAT WE MUST MAINTAIN OUR PRESENT FORCES IN BEING  
DURING THE CURRENT DRY SEASON AND HAVE NOT HARPED ON THE SUB-  
JECT NECESSARILY BETWEEN NEGOTIATING SESSIONS. KNOWING THE  
CHARACTERISTICS OF THE B-52 AND HOW QUICKLY THEY COULD BE BACK  
FROM GUAM, OR EVEN FROM CONUS BASES, THEY FIND IT HARD TO UNDER-  
STAND WHY WE INSIST ON KEEPING ALL 50, INCLUDING EVEN THE 8  
TOY PLANES, IN PLACE AT UTAPAO, WHILE AT THE SAME TIME WE HAVE  
REMOVED MOST OF THE BACK-UP BOMBER FORCE FROM GUAM. I WAS IN-  
TERESTED TO LEARN AT UTAPAO LAST WEEK THAT IN FACT SAC KEEPS  
ONLY 30 B-52 CREWS IN THAILAND FOR THE 50 BOMBERS, RELYING ON  
PROMPT AUGMENTATION FROM GUAM IN THE EVENT OF ORDERS TO LAUNCH.  
TO TAKE AN EXTREME CASE, WE SUGGEST IT SHOULD BE POSSIBLE TO

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REDEPLOY ALL THE B-52'S OFFICIALLY TO GUAM, WHILE KEEPING FULL MAINTENANCE AND OPERATIONAL CAPABILITY AT UTAPAO TO SERVE AIRCRAFT VISITING FOR TRAINING OR SERVICING. THUS IN EFFECT REVERSING THE PRESENT PRACTICE OF ROTATING SOME OF THE B-52'S BASED AT UTAPAO TO GUAM FOR SPECIAL TRAINING AND KEEPING THE RESERVE CREWS AT GUAM.

FOR SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT REASONS REDUCTION IN THE USSAG HEAD-QUARTERS IS ALSO HIGH PRIORITY FOR THE RTG. ALMOST SEVEN MONTHS AFTER THE CONGRESSIONALLY-DICTATED BOMBING HALT, THE RTG FINDS IT INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND THE CONTINUED PRESENCE OF A FOUR-STAR GENERAL AND BATTLE STAFF IN THAILAND. FORTUNATELY BOTH GENERAL VOGT AND GENERAL DIKEEEE HAVE KEPT SUCH A LOW PROFILE THAT LITTLE PUBLIC ATTENTION HAS BEEN DIRECTED TO THE USSAG HEADQUARTERS AND IT HAS NOT BECOME A MAJOR TARGET FOR CRITICISM.

CURRENT PLANS FOR A PRESS VISIT TO USSAG IN EARLY APRIL MAY STIMULATE PUBLIC INTEREST. SINCE SECRETARY SCHLESINGER HAS ALREADY RECOMMENDED STEPS "TO PHASE DOWN AND ELIMINATE" USSAG/7AF BY JUNE 30, 1975, WE URGE THAT IT BE PHASED DOWN NOW, AFTER THE CURRENT DRY SEASON, MAINTAINING ONLY A STANDBY HEADQUARTERS FACILITY IN CASE OF NEED DURING THE NEXT YEAR.

BEYOND THESE TWO PARTICULAR ITEMS, RTG ATTENTION SEEMS TO FOCUS ON TOTAL NUMBER OF PERSONNEL TO A FAR GREATER EXTENT THAN TOTAL NUMBERS OF AIRCRAFT OR THE REMOVAL OF IDENTIFIABLE UNITS AND SQUADRONS. NEVERTHELESS, THE ENTHUSIASM WITH WHICH THE SUPREME COMMAND WELCOMED OUR DECISION TO MOVE OUT THE LAST OF THE U.S. ARMY SPECIAL FORCES FROM THAILAND THIS MONTH WAS TO US A CONVINCING REAFFIRMATION OF THE RTG'S INTENSE CONCERN TO DEMONSTRATE THAT OUR BILATERAL DISCUSSIONS ARE RESULTING IN TANGIBLE AGREEMENTS AND VISIBLE REDEPLOYMENTS.

THE RTG INTEREST IN NUMBERS CAME OUT VERY CLEARLY DURING THE AUGUST AND DECEMBER DISCUSSIONS WHEN THE THAI SIDE INSISTED ON COMING UP WITH CONCRETE AND PROGRESSIVELY LARGER TOTALS. DURING SEPTEMBER THEY GRADUALLY WORKED OUR 2,500 WITHDRAWAL FIGURE UP TO 3550 AND 3650, AND IN DECEMBER INSISTED ON ANNOUNCING A LARGER TOTAL REDUCTION OF 3700. WE WERE ABLE TO ACCOMMODATE THESE DESIRES BECAUSE IN THE PAST THERE HAS BEEN A GENERAL SLIMMING DOWN OF EXCESS PERSONNEL AND OUR ACTUAL STRENGTH HAS RUN WELL BELOW THE AUTHORIZED MANPOWER SPACES USED FOR PLANNING AND BUDGETING PURPOSES. IN DECEMBER WE AGREED TO ANNOUNCE OUR TOTAL FORCE LEVEL AS ABOUT 35,000, BUT OUR ACTUAL STRENGTH IS STILL RUNNING CLOSER TO 36,000. WHEN WE GO INTO OUR NEXT QUARTER DISCUSSIONS IN APRIL, WE EXPECT THE RTG TO PRESS US FOR A REDUCTION FIGURE LARGER THAN THE TWO PREVIOUS ANNOUNCEMENTS WHICH, CONSIDERING THAT WE HAVE ALREADY ANNOUNCED 300 MEN LEAVING WITH THE SPECIAL FORCES, WOULD DROP OUR ANNOUNCED FORCE LEVEL TO 31,000 OR LESS. WE ARE AWARE THAT WASHINGTON PLANNING HAS ENVISAGED CUTTING BACK TO THE 32,200 LEVEL BY JUNE 30. THIS IS AN OLD BENCHMARK

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BECAUSE IT WAS THE LOWEST CEILING NEGOTIATED IN '69 AND '70 AND THE BASE FROM WHICH WE BUILT UP AGAIN TO COUNTER THE 1972 COMMUNIST EASTER INVASION IN SOUTH VIETNAM. IT WAS ALSO CHARTICHAI'S STATED GOAL LAST SEPTEMBER. ITS SIGNIFICANCE TO THE THAI HAS BEEN SOMEWHAT OBSCURED BY THE IRRESPONSIBLE DISCUSSION OF VARIOUS OTHER FORCE FIGURES RECENTLY, SUCH AS THE 25,000 MENTIONED BY NEWSWEEK AND 20,000 IN THE BANGKOK NATION, BOTH OF WHICH FIGURES WERE RAISED WITH SECRETARY RUSH. WE THINK THAT, GIVEN THE NUMBER OF AIRCRAFT AND IDENTIFIABLE UNITS WHICH CAN BE PUBLICIZED AS PART OF A MAY-JUNE REDUCTION, THE RTG WILL PROBABLY ACCEPT THE 32,200 TARGET FOR JUNE 30 IF THIS IS ONLY A WAY STATION ON A GRADUAL AND ORDERLY WITHDRAWAL PLAN FOR THE BALANCE OF THE CALENDAR YEAR. WE DO NOT THINK IT WOULD BE TENABLE OR ADVISABLE TO TRY TO HOLD FIRM AT 32,200 FROM JULY '74 TO MAY '75.

THIS DOES NOT MEAN THAT WE ARE ADVOCATING AN IMMEDIATE DRAWDOWN TO 25,000 BETWEEN MAY 1 AND JUNE 30, AS ENVISAGED BY ONE MILITARY PLAN. THE THAI DO NOT WANT TO BE FACED WITH THE SUDDEN ECONOMIC DISLOCATIONS AND THE SECURITY QUESTIONS WHICH WOULD BE RAISED BY SUCH AN APPARENT DECISION BY US TO GET OUT FAST. WHAT THEY WANT, AS THE THAI LEADERS HAVE MADE ABUNDANTLY CLEAR IN THEIR TALKS WITH ME, IS TO SHARE IN OUR PLANNING FOR PROGRESSIVE, GRADUAL AND STEADY REDUCTIONS SO THAT THEY CAN THEMSELVES ADAPT TO OUR WITHDRAWALS AND TO FIND NEW JOBS FOR THE THOUSANDS OF THAI EMPLOYEES WHO WILL BE RELEASED. AND OF COURSE THEY EXPECT US TO BE GENEROUS FINANCIALLY IN ASSISTING THEM IN THEIR READJUSTMENTS.

THE KEY THAI LEADERS WITH WHOM I HAVE DISCUSSED THIS MATTER HAVE PLACE PARTICULAR STRESS ON THE NEED FOR REAL COORDINATION IN ADVANCE; I BELIEVE THAT WE CAN WIN THEIR FIRM AND CONTINUING SUPPORT IF WE TAKE THEM INTO OUR CONFIDENCE REGARDING OUR

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 TO THE WHITE HOUSE, FOR RICHARD SMYSER  
 PLANS, AND IN PARTICULAR OUR FORESEEABLE LONG-RANGE INTEREST  
 IN MAINTAINING INTELLIGENCE STATIONS AND ACCESS TO THE  
 SATTAPHI-UTAPAO BASE FACILITIES.  
 A KEY ELEMENT IN THIS WITH RESPECT TO THE THAI IS THE NECESSITY  
 FOR CAREFUL HANDLING OF THE PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS OF OUR  
 WITHDRAWALS. YOU ARE WELL AWARE OF THAI SENSITIVITIES  
 TO WASHINGTON STATEMENTS WHICH MAKE IT APPEAR THAT THE THAI  
 ARE NO LONGER MASTERS IN THEIR OWN COUNTRY. WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK  
 OF THE DECISIONS NOW BEING HAMMERED OUT IN WASHINGTON,  
 I HOPE THAT I WILL BE GRANTED MAXIMUM FLEXIBILITY TO ORCHESTRATE  
 THE TALKS WITH THE RTG AND TO COORDINATE PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS  
 WITH THE THAI. AS YOU KNOW, I HAVE TAKEN SOME LUMPS IN THE  
 PRESS SINCE MY ARRIVAL AND I WOULD LIKE TO BE ABLE TO PLAY WHAT THE  
 THAI WILL REGARD AS GOOD NEWS REGARDING OUR FORCE REDUCTIONS  
 FOR MAXIMUM LOCAL IMPACT, PARTICULARLY WITH REFERENCE TO THE  
 UNCERTAIN PUBLIC ATTITUDES DURING THE ELECTION CAMPAIGNS.  
 IN MY EARLIER LETTER I SUGGESTED THAT THERE MAY BE OTHER WAYS  
 THAN THOSE ENVISAGED BY CURRENT JCS PLANS TO WORK OUR NUMBERS  
 DOWN WHILE MAINTAINING BASES IN OPERATIONAL READINESS STATUS  
 FOR PROMPT AUGMENTATION OR REENTRY OF COMBAT AIR UNITS DURING  
 THE NEXT DRY SEASON. BUT WE FIRMLY BELIEVE THAT WE  
 MUST MAINTAIN A RATE OF GRADUAL WITHDRAWAL WHICH WILL STRENGTHEN  
 THE HANDS OF OUR FRIENDS AND ALLOW US SOME FREEDOM OF ACTION;  
 IN OUR JUDGMENT AT THIS TIME THIS MEANS A STAGED DRAWDOWN TO  
 ABOUT 25,000 OVER THE JUNE-DECEMBER 1974 PERIOD, AND HOLD THIS  
 PLATEAU DURING THE NEXT DRY SEASON WITH A FURTHER DROP TO  
 BELOW 20,000 BY JUNE 30, 1975. THIS OF COURSE PRESUPPOSES  
 NO UPSETTING DEVELOPMENT DURING THE NEXT 15 MONTHS BY WAY OF  
 EITHER AN ASSURED PEACE OR RENEWED WAR IN INDOCHINA. IT ALSO  
 ASSUMES THAT THE COMING ELECTION CAMPAIGNS AND THE INSTALLATION  
 OF A NEWLY-ELECTED GOVERNMENT DOES NOT RADICALLY CHANGE THE  
 BASICALLY CONSERVATIVE AND SECURITY-CONSCIOUS ORIENTATION OF THE RTG.  
 YOU MENTION THE POSSIBILITY THAT WE SHOULD RETAIN SOME LESS

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ESSENTIAL UNITS IN THAILAND TO THROW TO THE WOLVES IN THE EVENT OF OVERWHELMING PUBLIC PRESSURES LATER ON. I AGREE THAT IT IS ALWAYS USEFUL TO HAVE A FEW CARDS UP THE SLEEVE IN AS UNCERTAIN A SITUATION AS WE FACE HERE, BUT I DO NOT BELIEVE WE COULD EASILY JUSTIFY THE CONSCIOUS RETENTION OF ANY UNESSENTIAL UNITS WHEN THE ECONOMIC AS WELL AS POLITICAL COSTS OF KEEPING OUR FORCES HERE IS RUNNING SO HIGH. IN FACT I HAVE BEEN URGING AT LEAST PROPORTIONATE REDUCTIONS IN ALL MILITARY ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING INTELLIGENCE COLLECTION, AS WE DRAW DOWN OUR TOTAL PERSONNEL. I HAVE DONE THIS ALSO WITH THE HOPE THAT WASHINGTON WOULD MAKE SOME HARD DECISIONS ABOUT EXACTLY WHAT OUR REAL NATIONAL PRIORITIES ARE IN THAILAND.

I WILL GO TO ANY LENGTH TO OBTAIN RTG CONCURRENCE AND SUPPORT FOR OUR ESSENTIAL MILITARY ACTIVITIES HERE, BUT I CANNOT BELIEVE THAT THERE IS NOT SOME FAT IN A MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT OF 35,000 MEN, AND WE THINK WE HAVE SPOTTED A NUMBER OF ACTIVITIES WHICH HANG IN HERE FOR BUREAUCRATIC REASONS WITHOUT REAL JUSTIFICATION. SECRETARY SCHLESINGER'S DECISIONS TO CUT HEADQUARTERS STAFFS BY 30 PER CENT, STREAMLINE THE COMMAND LINES, AND REVIEW MILITARY INTELLIGENCE NEEDS ARE MOVES IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION. I BELIEVE WE COULD COUNT ON SOLID THAI SUPPORT FOR AN AUSTERE MISSION-ORIENTED MILITARY FORCE, BUT THAT IS NOT OUR PRESENT POSTURE HERE.

REGARDING YOUR QUESTIONS ABOUT BANGKOK, I DO NOT CONSIDER THAT IT IS ESPECIALLY THE PRESENCE OF OUR GI'S IN THE CITIES WHICH CAUSES THE ADVERSE REACTION; IT IS MORE A GENERALIZED CONCERN WITH THE IMPACT OF THE AMERICANS, THE PACE-SETTERS OF THE MODERN WORLD, ON TRADITIONAL THAI SOCIETY, TOGETHER WITH APPREHENSION OVER A FANCIED DEROGATION OF THAI SOVEREIGNTY AND SOME CONCERN OVER WHETHER OUR FRIENDSHIP HAS REALLY BEEN SUCH A GOOD THING FOR THE THAI NATION. IN BANGKOK THE RELATIVELY SETTLED AMERICAN MILITARY PERSONNEL, MANY WITH FAMILIES, ATTACHED TO MACHTAI AND OTHER ELEMENTS ARE NOW AN ACCEPTED PART OF THE COMMUNITY. NEVERTHELESS, WE ARE SEEKING TO IDENTIFY UNITS WHOSE PRESENCE IN BANGKOK IS NOT ESSENTIAL, WITH A VIEW TO MOVING THEM OUT OF THAILAND, OR AT LEAST RELOCATING THEM TO THE UTAPAO/SATTAPHI AREA.

OF THE SEVERAL BASES, TAKHLI IS THE OBVIOUS CANDIDATE FOR EARLY CLOSURE. IT WAS CLOSED BEFORE IN 1971 AND THE F-111'S BASED THERE ARE, OF ALL TACAIR SQUADRONS, THE EASIEST TO MOVE ACROSS THE PACIFIC. IF REDEPLOYING THE F-111'S BACK TO THAILAND AFTER THEIR WITHDRAWAL IS NECESSARY, WE WOULD URGE THAT CONSIDERATION BE GIVEN TO CONTRACTING WITH THE RTG TO MAINTAIN THE TAKHLI FACILITIES NOW USED BY THE F-111'S IN OPERATIONAL READINESS FOR REENTRY THROUGH 1975. WE BELIEVE THAT THE SAME PROCEDURE COULD BE USED WITH THE OTHER BASES AS LONG AS REENTRY RIGHTS MAY BE REQUIRED ON SHORT NOTICE; OTHERWISE, EVEN WITH A SMALL U.S. MILITARY CARETAKER UNIT, WE MUST EXPECT THAT THE FACILITIES WILL BE PILLAGED SOON AFTER OUR MAIN FORCES

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DEPART.

NKP IS A SPECIAL CASE BECAUSE IT IS THE SITE OF THE USSAG/74F HEADQUARTERS SITE, BUT THE STRIP AND SUPPORT FACILITIES ARE INSUFFICIENT FOR JET FIGHTER/BOMBER AIRCRAFT. SECURITY AT UDORN IS DIFFICULT SINCE THE TOWN NOW SURROUNDS THE AIRFIELD. IT SHOULD BE HIGH ON OUR LIST OF BASES TO CLOSE OR PUT ON STANDBY STATUS WHEN THE TIME COMES. WHILE WE HAVE NO AUTHORITATIVE INDICATION OF WASHINGTON'S THINKING ABOUT OUR LONGER TERM MILITARY PRESENCE IN THAILAND, WE BELIEVE UTAPAO IS THE MOST VALUABLE FACILITY AND SHOULD BE RETAINED TILL LAST. NEXT IN ORDER OF UTILITY OVER THE LONG HAUL WOULD BE UDORN AND KORAT, ALTHOUGH IN THE LATTER CASE IT SHOULD BE BORNE IN MIND THAT SOME THAI BELIEVE KORAT HAS GOOD COMMERCIAL POTENTIAL FOR AN INDUSTRIAL ESTATE COMPLEX AND RTG MIGHT WISH TO RESUME CONTROL FOR THIS PURPOSE.

FINALLY I WISH TO STRESS AGAIN THE IMPORTANCE OF FORWARD PLANNING AND FULL CONSULTATION WITH OUR THAI HOSTS. THEY ARE ALL AWARE OF DR. KISSINGER'S ASSURANCE TO GENERAL CHARTICHAT, WHICH HAS EVEN APPEARED ON LOCAL FRONT PAGES, THAT THE U.S. WILL FOLLOW RTG WISHES REGARDING OUR FORCE LEVELS AND RATE OF WITHDRAWAL. THIS HAS OF COURSE ALWAYS BEEN A FACT, BUT IN THEIR OWN WAY THE THAI HAVE GIVEN US A VERY FREE HAND IN THE PAST. IF WE LEVEL WITH THEM AND LET THEM WORK WITH US, I BELIEVE THAT, EVEN IN THE UNCERTAIN POLITICAL CLIMATE WHICH LOOMS AHEAD, WE CAN COUNT ON THEIR INNATE COMMON SENSE TO KEEP THEM SUPPORTING US. BUT WE MUST AVOID EMBARRASSING THEM THROUGH SUDDEN MOVES, SURPRISE ACTIONS, AND THE APPEARANCE OF TAKING UNILATERAL DECISIONS AND ACTIONS IN THAILAND WITH THAI-BASED FORCES.

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FM AMBASSADOR KINTNER BANGKOK 850 FINAL SECTI 25X1 4  
 TO THE WHITE HOUSE, FOR RICHARD SMYER  
 I HOPE THE CURRENT POLICY DISCUSSIONS WILL RESULT IN DECISIONS  
 TO AUTHORIZE ME TO REVIEW WITH THE THAI LEADERSHIP OUR LONG-RANGE  
 THINKING ABOUT COOPERATION WITH THE RTG FOR SEA SECURITY,  
 INCLUDING THE MAINTENANCE OF RESIDUAL AMERICAN MILITARY INTELL-  
 IGENCE AND OPERATIONAL CAPABILITIES AT BASES IN THAILAND. I  
 WOULD FURTHER HOPE THAT THIS WOULD PROVIDE A BASIS FOR SOME  
 FIRM UNDERSTANDINGS NOW WITH THE THAI LEADERSHIP WHICH HAS  
 ALREADY PROVED ITSELF SOLID IN ITS PURPOSE TO COOPERATE WITH  
 US, AS WELL AS MARKING THE START OF A MORE MATURE U.S.-THAI  
 RELATIONSHIP, MORE APPROPRIATE TO THE WORLD OF THE '70'S  
 AND THE PRESIDENT'S POLICIES THAN THE FREEWHEELING AND PATER-  
 NALISTIC REPUTATION WE HAVE ACQUIRED IN THAILAND.  
 WITH WARM PERSONAL REGARDS,  
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