

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS: President Nixon
SEATO Secretary General Sunthorn
Major General Brent Scowcroft, Deputy Assistant
to the President for National Security Affairs

DATE: Friday, September 21, 1973

PLACE: The Oval Office

The President: Are you on your way to New York?

Sunthorn: We are having a SEATO meeting on the 28th, but we are having a cultural meeting on the 27th.

The President: How are my friends in Thailand?

Sunthorn: They are all fine.

The President: I have visited there many times.

Sunthorn: I remember meeting you. I flew from London to Bangkok just to meet you. I still remember a fruitful time as Ambassador here. Your talk and reassuring statements.

The President: I wish I could have seen you more often. The Vietnam war, of course, made it difficult. With the war over, and speculation about the U.S. role in the Pacific, I want to assure you the U.S. values SEATO. It is important to our foreign policy and to Southeast Asia and Thailand. This is important to me for a variety of reasons, official and personal.

The organization has my continued support. With the war over and the situation in flux, there must be no indication that we will withdraw. That

PREPARED BY Brent Scowcroft

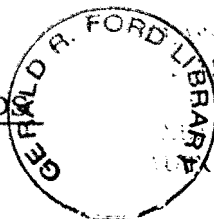
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DECLASSIFIED
E.O. 12958, Sec. 3.5
Memos, 11/24/98, State Dept. Guidelines
By Lt. NARA, Date 1/16/00

would leave a vacuum. Congress and many people want us to get out of anywhere. But we are important to peace and stability. There will be no signals that they will have a free hand in the area. I wanted you to hear it first hand.

Sunthorn: That is reassuring to hear. I will pass it on. I am new to the job, but am convinced SEATO can play a useful role.

The President: Tell me about it.

Sunthorn: A lower profile is necessary, but the threat of subversion may be even higher now.

The President: I agree.

Sunthorn: Despite the aid which may have given to Thailand and the Philippines on a bilateral basis, we think SEATO can supplement that. If we did not make efforts on projects, bilateral aid might not be coming.

For example, in Northeast Thailand we need 5,000 tube wells. Your government and my government have been working, but only about 500 have been dug.

When Mr. Faulkner of New Zealand came to see me, he said New Zealand would help us but bilaterally because SEATO aid is not effective. I told him that SEATO aid could be very effective and complementary to the bilateral. Both are necessary and don't duplicate each other.

The President: We will consider that carefully. That can give meaning to the organization. The military is very important, but this is also helpful.

Sunthorn: As Dr. Kissinger said [in his testimony], we have to emphasize humanitarian assistance and downplay the military. Both Thailand and the Philippines need aid.

The President: The Philippines and Thailand are the vital hinges of Southeast Asia. How do the Philippines feel about SEATO?

Sunthorn: That is a good question. I met with President Marcos, but General Romulo doesn't have the same enthusiasm as President Marcos



for SEATO. President Marcos assured me that SEATO has a useful role and I will support it. Romulo may feel differently.

The President: We are in a difficult period. You must wonder if you are just a caretaker. I talk now to you as a Thai. Thailand is the key -- it is a place the Communists would like to get. They must not -- the SEATO context is important to protecting Thailand.

We must put up a warning flag that the U.S. is supporting SEATO and the SEATO umbrella is helpful to protect the area. It gives us a reason to say "look here, we have a treaty commitment." It is better than a unilateral commitment. SEATO was a big umbrella before I got here -- not that it was wrong. Better than 17 million people now live in freedom. Our opponents have complained -- about the Christmas bombing, etc. But Southeast Asia would have suffered irreparable damage if we hadn't stood fast.

Sunthorn: Thailand stood by you.

The President: Your leaders must know they have a strong friend in this office. We won't let them down, despite what our newspapers say.

Sunthorn: I will convey this, Mr. President.

The President: How are things in Thailand? How are you doing meeting inflation?

Sunthorn: As you know, we depend on rice. Prices went very high. We had queues of people, which is unusual for us. Now the situation is much better.

As you know, the former rice exporting countries have no more rice, except the Thais. Everyone wants our rice.

The President: There is right now a world-wide food shortage. There used to be a surplus. Now people are eating better. We have got to figure out ways to produce more.

Sunthorn: Cambodia used to export. Now they import.



The President: I hope Cambodia can survive a while. I am surprised. Congress has imposed a bombing halt. This is important to the Thai border.

Sunthorn: Our economy is generally good. The rubber price is high, also tin. Our price index is up 30% because of the rice. Otherwise we are doing well.



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P Going to NY?

S Having SEATO early on 18 last October
with on 27

P Asian friends in Thailand

S They are fine

P Visited many times there

S Remember with you. I flew from London
to Bangkok just to meet you
Still under fraternal ties as don't have
your talk + reassuring statements when
presented cred under

P US with cred under you more often.
VN, etc. US favor cred + oper relation
about US role in Vietnam, I want to
ask you US under SEATO. Important
to FR to SEA + Thailand. Thai
→ important to me personally of
Nasser official + personal
critique - say what does Deft mean
now - will have a worse people
Deft has my continued support. W/ war
role + situation in flux, want to
we indicate that we will w/ draw
that would have mean. Congress
+ very insistent is to get out of under. We
all important to peace + stability. No
signals that they will have a
full hand in cred. I wanted you
to have it just now

S Reason to have with you - I don't
want to job, but am convinced sent



can play useful role
P Tell me about it

S Lower project mess, but amount
of submissions may be more high

A eyes

S Despite aid which may have given
Thair + Phil on bilateral basis, we
think Sents can supplement that,
if we did not make efforts on projects, bilateral
aid might not be coming.

Example in NE Thair we used some
told us, your govt, my govt had been
working, but only about 5000 have been
done.

When the Fairbank N2 came to see me
he said N2 would help us but bilaterally
cause Sents aid not effective. I told him
that Sents aid could be very effective &
complementary to bilateral. Both are
necessary & don't duplicate.

V ~~That~~ We will consider carefully. That
concerning crystal building very
important, but this helpful

S Ask said interesting, we have to
emphasize humanitarian assist show
play mid. Both Thair + Phil need aid.

P Phil + T hand are what high of SRA
How do Phil feel about Sents?

S Good position - I met at Marcos, but
Gen Romulo doesn't have same authority
as Marcos for Sents.



Tommy assured me Sate has agreed
that I will support it. Books may fall
differently.

D We in good difficult period. You must
wonder if you are just curators. I
talk now to you as at law. Thailand
is key - is a plan costs would like to get.
Trust not - Sate context is important
to protecting Thailand

Must put up wearing flag by
US supporting Sate + Sate market
is helped to protect canon. Good no
a reason to say "let's have we have
a treaty constant with them bilateral

Sate was by market before I got here -
not that it was wrong. Better that 12 million
live in freedom. Opponents complained -
Kings bombing, etc. ^{See} we would have suffered
irreparable damage if we hadn't stood
fast

S This stood by you

P Your books must know they have a
strong friend in this office. We won't
let them down, despite some newspapers

S I will cease

P How are things in Thai. Inflation

S As you know we liquidated rice. Price
went very high. We had purposes of growth,
market for us. Now situation is
much better.

A year back, price rise x controls



has no more rice, except I have.
Everyone wants our rice

P There is right now world wide food shortage
used to be a surplus. Was people
getting better.

S Govt to figure ways to produce more
S Cambodia used to have NL

P Hope Cambodia can survive a while. I
am surprised. Long use my old
banking habit. This important to their banks

S Economy really good. Rubber prices high,
also tin. ~~Other~~ prices really up 30%
because of rice. Otherwise we doing well

