

541. **Telegram From the Embassy in Thailand to the Department of State**<sup>1</sup>

*Bangkok, January 17, 1960—1 p.m.*

1920. Reference: Embtel 1834.<sup>2</sup> Thai Government and press continuing comment re adequacy US aid to Thailand compared grant aid other Asian countries. Specific instances since *Bangkok Post* article reported reference telegram follows:

1. *Bangkok World* morning January 13 carried excellent editorial (by editor Darrell Berrigan) expressing surprise at criticism by "unnamed officials" re aid to Thailand compared Laos, Cambodia, India, Viet Nam and Taiwan. Burden of editorial is that Thailand has advanced so far that aid requirements much less; other countries "poor, backward . . ."<sup>3</sup> and only just begun utilize benefits type of freedom Thailand has had since early history". Furthermore US not "aiding" Thailand, but rather "joining" her in programs initiated by Thais themselves. Maintaining freedom uncommitted countries as important to Thailand as to US, and editorial ends with prediction within very few years Thailand will join US in giving rather than receiving aid to other countries.

2. Evening January 13 *Bangkok Post* carried news story claiming Sarit had told Cabinet January 12 "Thailand will not be asking US for more aid than it is getting. It is matter of national honor. Thailand will in future work only for its own interests." *Post* also cited sources "close to Prime Minister" as stating Prime Minister believes US aid to Thailand "relatively little", and US appears proportionately less interested in needs of countries "whose friendship US feels certain" than those which play international policies [*politics*] to obtain as much as possible from both US and Communist countries.

3. January 15 *World* front-paged side by side two articles on subject: (A) First reported views of Thanat given to editor Berrigan as result January 13 editorial. Thanat "took issue with those who believe

<sup>1</sup> Source: Department of State, Central Files, 792.5-MSP/1-1760. Confidential. Repeated to Phnom Penh, Vientiane, Saigon, New Delhi, and CINCPAC for POLAD.

<sup>2</sup> Telegram 1834, January 9, reported on a front-page article in the *Bangkok Post* concerning heavy criticism by unnamed high Thai officials regarding the quantity of U.S. aid. The Embassy speculated that the source of the article was probably Thanat, but this was not certain. Of greatest significance was the fact that the article had brought into the open those Thai grievances against U.S. aid which had previously been aired only in private conversations. It was also significant that the article had appeared in the English language press and not in the Thai press where it might stimulate anti-Americanism. (*Ibid.*, 792.5-MSP/1-960)

<sup>3</sup> All ellipses in this document are in the source text.

US aid should go first to countries uncommitted in cold war rather than to those countries, like Thailand, which is shouldering responsibility of defending anti-Communist position in Asia". (B) Second reported Sarit views in informal press conference. Sarit said arguments over US aid "are old and often repeated" and policy Thai Government is to "accept only assistance that is vital and necessary to us"; Thailand accepting US military and economic aid "in manner acceptable to both parties." "Thailand has been independent country all along with secure economic and political status and we have never pleaded or demanded aid from US . . . there is no change in policy of Thai Government or Cabinet in attitude toward US . . . and Thailand does not wish accept any kind US assistance which injurious to honor".

4. *World* January 16 reported statement from Prime Minister's office read on Radio Thailand previous evening.<sup>4</sup> Statement said "not correct" compare amount US aid to Thailand with that given other countries "because condition and financial status countries concerned are different . . . as for those countries which have just got independence, they have had to have special assistance from US because financial system unstable . . . besides, national honor must be considered before pleading for assistance from other countries. We must not hold that amount of financial aid is most important thing. Assistance is result of policies and understanding of countries concerned. Thailand and US have been giving each other good cooperation all along and it is more important to have good will than anything else . . . it is important because if there is any real need or emergency we can be sure that US will increase assistance to suit occasion."

5. Meanwhile, Chargé called Thanat January 14 to inquire if Sarit statement (paragraph 2 above) carried implication Thai Government policy changes. Thanat said he had no knowledge of interview and not in position interpret but said no one could take exception to statement country would work for own interests. Thanat much more interested in Berrigan editorial (paragraph 1 above) and intimated it had been inspired if not drafted by Embassy; this charge categorically denied.

6. Vernacular press played foregoing developments as news, but gave relatively light editorial attention. After initial *Post* article (reference telegram) two articles appeared (*Sarn Seri* and *Chao Thai*) stressing magnitude Communist aid to Cambodia and comparing US aid to Thailand and Cambodia on per capita basis, but fairly heavy

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<sup>4</sup> The full text of the Prime Minister's statement as issued by the Thai Public Relations Department was sent to the Department as an enclosure to despatch 402 from Bangkok, January 20. (Department of State, Central Files, 792.5-MSP/1-2060)



news play given to Sarit statements January 14 (paragraph 3, subparagraph (B) above). Editorial comment somewhat diverted by current alarm over reported plans for heavy US rice exports to Singapore.

*Comment:* Sarit interview (paragraph 3) and statement from his office (paragraph 4) could be interpreted as fairly pronounced divergent opinions between Thanat and Sarit (and between *Post* and *World* editors), since Thanat, both in conversation with Chargé and in *World* interview (paragraph 3), did nothing to dispel Embassy's conviction he source original critical views published by *Post* January 7. This, however, should not be over stressed, since divergence probably one of tactics rather than beliefs. Even though Sarit appears attempting put end to polemic for moment, and especially dispel any idea change in policy toward US contemplated, line is one which can and probably will be taken when future aid levels and forms of aid are discussed.

Thanat's efforts at this time may be aimed at minimizing future cuts in US aid, and obtaining liberal DLF loan treatment.

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**542. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Thailand<sup>1</sup>**

*Washington, February 3, 1960—6:21 p.m.*

1995. For Ambassador from Parsons. Embtel 2079.<sup>2</sup> Re Sarit comments cited reftel, Thai sensitivity re comparative aid levels has, as you know, always been and will continue to be major factor taken into account in our annual pie slicing process. I personally feel we did very well by Thailand in FY 1960 considering funds available. Sarit's letter to you (Emdbdes 290)<sup>3</sup> seems to confirm this. Your successful efforts keep Thai dissatisfaction within reasonable limits strongly commended. Recognize that key to future aid relationships lies in solution

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Department of State, Central Files, 792.5-MSP/1-2960. Secret; Priority; Limit Distribution. Drafted by Robert G. Cleveland; cleared with SEA and FE and with ICA, U/MSD, and the Department of Defense; and approved by Parsons. Repeated to CINCPAC for POLAD.

<sup>2</sup> In telegram 2079, January 29, the Embassy again called attention to complaints from Sarit on the insufficiency of U.S. aid and on the problems caused by U.S. sales of rice to Asian countries under P. L. 480. (*Ibid.*, 792.5-MSP/1-2960)

<sup>3</sup> See footnote 2, Document 535.