

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 BANGKO 23124 01 OF 02 051037Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ADS-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----065785 051051Z /12

O 051009Z JUL 79
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9802
INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA IMMEDIATE
CINCPAC HONOLULU HI IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 BANGKOK 23124

EXDIS

CANBERRA & CINCPAC FOR SECRETARY'S PARTY

FOR HOLBROOKE, CLARK AND OAKLEY

EO 12065: RDS-1 07/07/09 (ABRAMOWITZ, MORTON I.) OR-M
TAGS: SREF, TH, CB
SUBJ: CARE OF REPATRIATED KHMERS: TALK WITH
PM KRIANGSAK

1. (SECRET - ENTIRE TEXT)
2. I HAD A TWO-HOUR CONVERSATION WITH KRIANGSAK
AFTERNOON JULY 4 COVERING MOSTLY THE REFUGEE SITUATION
BUT ALSO A NUMBER OF OTHER INDOCHINA SUBJECTS. THIS
CABLE COVERS PORTION DEVOTED TO REPATRIATED KHMERS.
3. I TOOK ABOUT 15 MINUTES TO REVIEW WHAT WE KNEW
ABOUT THE REPATRIATED KHMERS, THEIR PLIGHT, OUR
EFFORTS TO HELP THEM, AND THE CONCERN FOR THEM IN THE
U.S. THE PRIME MINISTER WAS SOMEWHAT SURPRISED BY OUR
INFORMATION AND KEPT ASKING WHETHER THE REFUGEES WERE
IN SUCH BAD CONDITION. I INFORMED HIM OF EVERYTHING
WE KNOW, INCLUDING LETTERS FROM THESE KHMER

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COMING TO US VIA THAI PEASANTS. I POINTED OUT FRAG-
MENTARY NATURE OF OUR INFORMATION.

4. I SAID URGENCY WAS ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY IN TRYING
TO GET FOOD IN THERE AND I WAS DISMAYED AT INABILITY SO
FAR TO MOVE THE FOOD WE HAD SUPPLIED. PM SAID HE HAD
GIVEN ORDER TO PURCHASE 200 TONS OF RICE AND OTHER

COMMODITIES TO BE DISTRIBUTED ALL ALONG THE BORDER TO THAIS AS WELL AS KHMER. HE SAID HE HAD TO INCLUDE THAIS TO MAKE IT PALATABLE TO THE PUBLIC. I ASKED WHETHER HE WAS SURE THAT THESE INSTRUCTIONS WERE BEING PROMPTLY CARRIED OUT. HE INSISTED THEY WERE.

5. I SAID I WAS DEEPLY CONCERNED AT THE POTENTIAL DISASTER TO THE PEOPLE AS WELL AS TO THE IMAGE AND POSITION OF THAILAND IN THE U.S. IF THE WORLD LEARNED THAT 5,000-10,000 KHMER REPATRIATES STARVED TO DEATH ON THE BORDER OF THAILAND. BECAUSE OF THIS I WANTED TO INFORM HIM THAT IF HE WANTED, WE WOULD TAKE 3,000 KHMERS ALONG THE BORDER NEAR PREAH VIHEAR AND MOVE THEM TO THE U.S. WITHIN 30 DAYS IF THAIS LET THEM INTO THAILAND. GIVEN THE NUMBERS THAT THERE WERE, WE COULD ALSO MOVE AN ADDITIONAL 2,000 BUT WE COULD NOT DO THIS BEFORE 60 DAYS. I WAS OFFERING THIS AS A WAY TO DEAL WITH THIS PROBLEM IMMEDIATELY. BOTH THIS PROPOSAL AND PROVISION OF FOOD WERE NECESSARY. WE WERE PREPARED TO DO THE FORMER BECAUSE WE FELT THE CONDITIONS WERE DESPERATE. I BELIEVED MOVING QUICKLY ON THIS PROBLEM WAS DEEPLY IN THAI INTEREST. I ASKED HIM IF HE WANTED ME TO ASSURE HIM IN WRITING ON WILLINGNESS TO ACCEPT KHMERS. HE SAID YES HE WOULD LIKE ME TO DO SO. WE AGREED IT WOULD BE BEST TO KEEP IT CONFIDENTIAL. I GAVE HIM AN ALREADY PREPARED
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WRITTEN RESPONSE ALONG LINES ABOVE.

6. GIVEN THE PROBLEM IN THE AREA, I ASKED HIM HOW COULD WE BE SURE THAT THIS COULD BE CARRIED OUT QUICKLY AND QUIETLY. HE SAID HE WOULD GET SUPREME COMMANDER GENERAL SERM OVER RIGHT AWAY AND HE WOULD TAKE CARE OF IT. HE THEN WENT INTO A REMARKABLE DESCRIPTION OF HIS PROBLEM IN MANAGING REFUGEE PROBLEMS. HE COULD NOT TRUST MANY PEOPLE IN HIS GOVERNMENT ON THIS. THERE WERE TOO MANY THAIS, PARTICULARLY MILITARY, OPPOSED TO ANY HUMANITARIAN APPROACH TO THIS PROBLEM. HE FELT THAT ONLY A LIMITED NUMBER OF PEOPLE COULD BE RELIED ON TO CARRY OUT HIS INSTRUCTIONS. HE SAID THAT HE WAS HAVING A VERY DIFFICULT PROBLEM ON APPROACH TO REFUGEE PROBLEM WITH PERHAPS HIS CLOSEST ADVISER, INTERIOR MINISTER LEK. LEK FELT STRONGLY THAT THAILAND MUST MAINTAIN A HARD LINE. THIS WAS THE FIRST TIME I HAD EVER HEARD HIM EVEN SLIGHTLY CRITICIZE LEK.

7. I AGAIN EMPHASIZED URGENCY OF PROBLEM. HE SAID HE WOULD CALL SERM OVER AND HALF-HOUR LATER SERM APPEARED. HE WENT THROUGH THE WHOLE THING AGAIN. PM WANTED THOSE

WHO CAME OUT TO BE GRADUALLY MOVED TO PROCESSING CENTERS. THERE WOULD BE NO BIG MOVEMENTS AND EFFORT WOULD BE HANDLED QUIETLY. SERM SAID HE WOULD DO IT, ALTHOUGH PERSONALLY HE DID NOT LOOK TO BE TOO HAPPY ABOUT IT. PM LATER TOLD ME THAT SERM AGREED WITH HIM ON THIS ISSUE AND WOULD FAITHFULLY CARRY OUT HIS INSTRUCTIONS.

8. I MADE IT CLEAR TO THE PM THIS WAS A ONE-TIME SHOT. IT WAS LIMITED IN NUMBERS AND APPLIED ONLY TO REPATRIATED KHMER. THERE WERE DANGERS TO IT BUT THAT THE URGENCY OF SITUATION REQUIRED WE MAKE EVERY EFFORT. HE SAID HE CLEARLY UNDERSTOOD THAT OFFER DID NOT IMPLY ANYTHING ABOUT THE FUTURE. HE WOULD TRY AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE TO DEAL WITH THE SITUATION ON THE BORDER.

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9. COMMENT: I AM CONCERNED ABOUT THAI ABILITY TO DE-

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ACTION SS-25

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S E C R E T SECTION 02 OF 02 BANGKOK 23124

EXDIS

CANBERRA & CINCPAC FOR SECRETARY'S PARTY

FOR HOLBROOKE, CLARK AND OAKLEY

EO 12065: RDS-1 07/07/09 (ABRAMOWITZ, MORTON I.) OR-M
TAGS: SREF, TH, CB

SUBJ: CARE OF REPATRIATED KHMERS: TALK WITH
PM KRIANGSAK

LIVER THE FOOD. I THOUGHT IT WAS NECESSARY TO MAKE
THIS OFFER TO GALVANIZE ACTION BY THAIS. I INTIMATED
THIS TO DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER ARUN BEFORE I DEPARTED
BALI AND THE CHARGE ALSO INDICATED OUR WILLINGNESS TO
ACCEPT SOME REPATRIATED KHMER. I AM NOT OBLIVIOUS TO
THE PROBLEM INVOLVED, BUT I SAW NO OTHER RECOURSE.

10. I DO NOT TAKE KRIANGSAK'S PROTESTATIONS AT FACE
VALUE, ALTHOUGH I AM CONVINCED HE WILL TRY TO HELP. I
REMAIN CONCERNED ABOUT GENERAL THAI ABILITY TO FOLLOW UP.
THE THAI ARMY'S WILLINGNESS TO HELP ALONG THE BORDER
WILL BE UNCERTAIN AT BEST. BUT WE WILL CONTINUE TO PRESS
THROUGH A VARIETY OF MEANS, INCLUDING THE OTHER EMBASSIES.
I HOPE WE CAN DO OUR BEST TO KEEP WHAT WE ARE DOING OUT
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OF THE PRESS AT LEAST FOR A WHILE. ABRAMOWITZ

SECRET

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