

Message Text

PAGE 01 BANGKO 18853 051013Z

15
ACTION SS-30

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /031 W
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O P 050931Z DEC 73
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 8734
INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA PRIORITY
AMCONSUL CHIENG MAI
AMCONSUL UDORN
AMCONSUL SONGKLA

S E C R E T BANGKOK 18853

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS : PGOV, PINS, TH
SUBJECT : THE KING'S BIRTHDAY

REF : BANGKOK 18840

1. BANGKOK CELEBRATED KING BHUMIPHOL ADULYADEJ'S 46TH BIRTHDAY IN HIS ABSENCE DECEMBER 5. SEVERAL FACTORS INDICATE THAT THE KING MADE HIS DECISION TO ABSENT HIMSELF FROM BANGKOK AT THE LAST MOMENT. THOUGH THE BANGKOK POST OF DECEMBER 5 SAYS THAT THE KING'S CANCELLATION OF CERTAIN FESTIVITIES WAS MADE FOR REASONS OF ECONOMY AND AUSTERITY, ALL THE FOOD FOR THE DIPLOMATIC RECEPTION HAD ALREADY BEEN PREPARED. MOREOVER, THE FOREIGN MINISTRY HAD ALREADY SENT OUT THE MINUTE PROTOCOL INSTRUCTIONS FOR FOREIGN AMBASSADORS. THE INSTRUCTIONS ARRIVED NEARLY SIMULTANEOUSLY WITH THE NOTICES OF CANCELLATION.

2. IT APPEARS THAT THE FULL STORY REGARDING THE KING'S WHEREABOUTS HAS NOT BEEN GIVEN TO THE PRESS. THE DECEMBER 5 BANGKOK POST SAYS THAT, ALTHOUGH HIS MAJESTY HAS CANCELLED HIS PUBLIC APPEARANCES, HE IS IN QUIET SECLUSION IN CHITRALADA PALACE. THE NATION ON THE OTHER HAND, CARRIES THE ACCURATE ACCOUNT THAT THE KING IS
SECRET

PAGE 02 BANGKO 18853 051013Z

SECLUDED IN ISOLATED KANCHANABURI PROVINCE.

3. WE BELIEVE THAT, WHATEVER IS ON HIS MIND, THE KING WOULD NOT TAKE LIGHTLY THE DECISION TO ABSENT HIMSELF

FROM ONE OF HIS MOST IMPORTANT ANNUAL CEREMONIAL FUNCTIONS. WE HAVE KNOWN AND REPORTED FOR SOME TIME THAT KING BHUMIPHOL IS GRAVELY CONCERNED WITH THE CURRENT UNREST IN THAILAND. WHILE THE LABOR AND STUDENT STRIKES ARE NOT YET IN ANY WAY A SERIOUS THREAT TO THE ECONOMY OR TO THE GOVERNMENT'S STABILITY, THEY GIVE AN UNCOMFORTABLE IMPRESSION OF TURMOIL AND UNREST WHICH FEEDS THE FEARS TO THOSE, WHICH MAY INCLUDE THE KING, WHO BELIEVE THAT DIABOLICAL "THIRD HAND" FORCES ARE STIRRING UP TROUBLE IN THE KINGDOM.

4. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT THE KING IS DISAPPOINTED WITH THE SANYA GOVERNMENT'S PERFORMANCE TO DATE, AND MAY BE CONTEMPLATING EITHER ARRANGING FOR, OR TACITLY APPROVING, A MORE VIGOROUS ROLE FOR THE MILITARY IN CONTROLLING THE STRIKES AND OTHER MANIFESTATIONS OF PUBLIC UNREST DURING THE PERIOD AHEAD. THIS MIGHT INVOLVE SOME CHANGE IN THE PRESENT CIVILIAN-MILITARY MIX IN FAVOR OF THE LATTER.

5. IN THIS CONTEXT, THE KING'S DEPARTURE FROM TOWN MAY BOIL DOWN TO GETTING AWAY FROM IT ALL FOR SOME CAREFUL AND DIFFICULT THINKING REGARDING THE SITUATION IN THAILAND, THE PERFORMANCE OF THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT AND HIS IDENTIFICATION WITH THAT GOVERNMENT.

KINTNER

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