
174. National Security Study Memorandum 159¹

Washington, September 9, 1972.

TO

The Secretary of Defense
The Secretary of State
The Director of Central Intelligence
The Administrator, Agency for International Development

SUBJECT

U.S. Counterinsurgency Support for Thailand

The President has indicated his concern over the expanding insurgent threat to effective government control in a number of provinces in rural Thailand, particularly in the two areas bordering Laos in North and Northeast Thailand.

The President has requested a study addressing the following two issues:

—*RTG actions to increase its counterinsurgency effectiveness.* The repeated demonstrations of insurgent capability to thwart government efforts to counter the insurgent threat warrants an examination of alternative Thai programs and modes of operation which hold out the prospect of increased government effectiveness. The feasibility of such alternatives should be considered in the light of their impact on the balances within the Thai bureaucracy and their resource costs to the Thai government.

—*The U.S. role in promoting a more effective Thai counterinsurgency effort.* With limited security assistance resources and an uncertain ability to leverage even marginal changes in Thai direction, our assistance must be carefully organized and directed to ensure support for Thai actions which most effectively contribute to their counterinsurgency effort. Alternative adjustments in the U.S. counterinsurgency assistance program in terms of the allocation of our resources to various Thai programs and in our own management organization at all levels should be considered. The implications for RTG counterinsurgency efforts of either phasing out our counterinsurgency assistance or attempting to exert greater influence with increased levels of assistance should be assessed.

¹ Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 365, Subject Files, National Security Study Memoranda, Nos. 104–206. Top Secret.

This study should draw on work already done in connection with the study directed by NSSM 51 but should focus on the specific issues for decision concerning the Thai counterinsurgency program. It should be prepared by an NSC interagency ad hoc group comprising appropriate senior representatives of the addressees and the NSC staff and chaired by the representative of the Secretary of State.

The study should be submitted not later than November 15, 1972,² for consideration by the Senior Review Group. It will be reviewed in conjunction with the study prepared in response to NSSM 51.³

Henry A. Kissinger

² The Embassy in Thailand provided its assessments in a series of telegrams in late November and December 1972, including Bangkok 16953, November 30 (National Archives, RG 59, Central Files 1970–73. DEF 1–1 THAI–US); Bangkok 17264, December 7 (ibid., POL 23 THAI); Bangkok 17269, December 7 (ibid.); Bangkok 17354, December 9 (ibid.); Bangkok 17357, December 9 (ibid.); and Bangkok 17368, December 9 (ibid.).

³ See Documents 10 and 82 and footnotes thereto.