

THE WHITE HOUSE

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WASHINGTON

January 9, 1985

NATIONAL SECURITY DECISION
DIRECTIVE NUMBER 158

UNITED STATES POLICY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA
(The Kampuchea Problem) (U)

I have reviewed the interagency study on Kampuchea, NSSD 2-84. Our interests and objectives, the basic policy lines and strategy are approved as outlined below. (S)

UNITED STATES INTERESTS AND OBJECTIVES

-- Global as well as regional US interests are affected by the situation in Kampuchea and its outcome. To protect these interests we seek to restore a neutral Kampuchea as a buffer between Thailand and Vietnam; to minimize Soviet influence and presence in the area; and to enhance cooperation with ASEAN in ways that also enhances or does not significantly harm our China relationship. (S)

KEY ELEMENTS

-- Thailand -- its security interests, and stability along its border with Kampuchea -- is central. Despite differences of perception, the ASEANS all regard Thailand as the "front line" state, and its interests as paramount. China currently plays a constructive role, but Thailand should not become overly dependent on China. Thai backing for the resistance, and access through Thailand to supply resistance forces, are critical. If the resistance appeared to increase the Vietnamese threat to Thailand, however, Thai policies could change. (S)

-- ASEAN's goal is a negotiated, compromise solution, leading to a Vietnamese withdrawal. A return to power by the Khmer Rouge would be unacceptable to the ASEANS. The ASEANS want us to play a greater role in supporting the non-communist resistance, in order to further their strategy and counterbalance China. (S)

-- China provides generous military and financial support to the Khmer Rouge, and insists that it play a full role at the present time in coalition political and military affairs. China has said it will not insist on a particular postwar government in Phnom Penh, but rather accept the results of a genuine choice by the Khmer people. Beijing provides weapons,

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14 OF 5 PAGES

ammunition and other support to the non-communist factions in limited quantities. It is possible that China's and ASEAN's policies will diverge in the future. (S)

-- Vietnam's motivations in Kampuchea include fear of Chinese influence on its western flank, and a desire to extend its hegemony throughout the former French Indochina. Consolidating its hold on Kampuchea, however, would be arduous and lengthy. At a minimum Vietnam would want influence over any government in Phnom Penh and a veto over policies and actions that could threaten Hanoi's interests. (S)

-- Moscow's subsidies for Vietnam's Kampuchean military venture are costly and inhibit better relations with ASEAN, but provide it with a secure base of influence and access to military facilities on China's southern flank. The military benefits also include a strategic position that could threaten US and allied military facilities and lines of communication. (S)

SIGNIFICANT VARIABLES

-- Non-communist military forces are weak, but they started from a low base and are growing. Growth of Khmer Rouge strength and influence, to the point where it appeared ASEAN/US/China policies would lead to its return to power, would have very destructive effects. (S)

-- Questions remain about China's willingness to accept a solution short of Khmer Rouge restoration; about the effect of Sino-Soviet talks on prospects for a Kampuchea solution; about the long-term effect of Vietnam's occupation on Khmer nationalist attitudes; and about the course of Soviet-Vietnamese relations. (S)

UNITED STATES STRATEGY

-- The US should continue the main lines of current policies. An outcome acceptable to ASEAN -- as long as it includes a strong non-communist role -- is likely to be acceptable to us. We should follow ASEAN's lead rather than getting out front, should continue measures that isolate Hanoi but be flexible and hold out the prospect of dialogue should the SRV be willing to negotiate a settlement (and adequately address POW/MIA resolution); continue to provide diplomatic and humanitarian support for Sihanouk and Son Sann; and eschew contact with the Khmer Rouge. (S)

-- The US should work closely with ASEAN to ensure that the non-communist resistance elements grow in strength and influence vis-a-vis the Khmer Rouge as well as the Vietnamese.

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China should be encouraged to provide more support to the non-communists; remove the most infamous Khmer Rouge leaders responsible for the atrocities of 1975-78; and not pursue a Khmer Rouge return to power as part of a political solution. (S)

-- Broader support for Thai and ASEAN security as a whole will reinforce our Kampuchea policies. We should take timely political and military supply measures vis-a-vis Thailand in the event of border incursions by the Vietnamese, as well as providing longer-term assistance for military modernization for the ASEANs, including air/sea capabilities covering the South China Sea. In a related vein, Thailand should be reassured it will not be left with a residual refugee population. (S)

-- Increasing contacts with Vietnam, while maintaining current policies that keep Hanoi isolated diplomatically and economically, could be useful in impressing upon the Vietnamese the costs of their Kampuchean venture and the potential gains if they changed their approach. Such contacts should be subject to consultation with ASEAN. Thus, in implementation of this policy, increased contacts with the Vietnamese are authorized, as appropriate, to advance our interests. (S)

Ronald Reagan

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14 of 5

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