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Viewing cable 05RANGOON893, SENIOR GOB OFFICIALS ADDRESS SUNDRY BILATERAL

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This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RANGOON 000893

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP/BCLTV; PACOM FOR FPA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/01/2015 TAGS: PGOV PHUM PREL CASC BM TT SUBJECT: SENIOR GOB OFFICIALS ADDRESS SUNDRY BILATERAL ISSUES

REF: A. RANGOON 888 B. RANGOON 887

Classified By: COM Carmen Martinez for Reasons 1.4 (b,d)

¶1. (C) Summary: At an August 1 farewell event, the COM pressed Deputy FM Maung Myint and the GOB to release ASSK and other political prisoners and allow their participation in the political process; urged the GOB to forget asking for "patience" and to make fundamental changes now; and requested that the MFA be more responsive on Amcit issues raised by the Embassy. We don't expect many of our messages to reach the SPDC, but the dialogue was a rare one and the DFM may have some influence, albeit small, on the regime's top generals. End Summary.

¶2. (C) On August 1, Deputy Foreign Minister Maung Myint hosted a farewell event for the COM, providing us an increasingly rare opportunity for direct discussions with the GOB on substantive policy issues (reftels cover discussions on the ASEAN Chair issue and efforts to block the G-4 UNSC reform resolution). A/DCM attended and additional MFA officials included DG for Political Affairs, Thaug Tun (former DCM in Washington); DG for Protocol, Thura U Aung Htet; Brig-Gen Kyaw Kyaw (DG-designate for Protocol); and DG for Planning and Administration, U Linn Myaing (former Ambassador to Washington).

DETENTION OF ASSK AND OTHER DEMOCRACY LEADERS

¶3. (C) The DFM acknowledged that Burma's image is one of a closed society, but said that the regime's National Convention would set the country back on track. "We can't allow any disruption to this process," he said, referring to Aung San Suu Kyi (ASSK) and other detained leaders of the democratic opposition. The COM said that the best thing Burma could do would be to free ASSK and other detainees, observing that "without them, you'll never have a credible process." The DFM complained that the GOB had invited ASSK to the Convention, but she and her NLD party "refused." The COM dismissed this standard regime argument and stated, "It's impossible to participate from jail."

VISIT OF EAST TIMOR FM RAMOS-HORTA

¶4. (C) Addressing the SPDC's decision to receive East Timor Foreign Minister Jose Ramos-Horta, a vocal critic of the regime's human rights abuses who visited July 21-24, DFM Maung Myint said that the visit was desirable because the Nobel Laureate "opposes economic sanctions." DG for Political Affairs Thaug Tun told A/DCM that he had briefed Ramos-Horta on Burma's political situation and asked the FM "not to request a visit to ASSK, because the answer will be 'no'." He said that Ramos-Horta, who met with Prime Minister General Soe Win, discussed establishing relations with Burma and East Timor's membership in ASEAN--and also left a letter for ASSK, "which we (the GOB) will deliver."

PRESSURE AGAINST THE SPDC

¶5. (C) The DFM appealed for "patience" from the U.S. in letting the GOB resolve its political problems, and complained that Burma gets singled out for poor treatment, adding that "everyone talks to (Pakistan's President) Musharraf, but not to us." The COM replied that 43 years of military rule, including 17 years by the current regime, has usurped all patience; the GOB itself has moved the country backwards and the time for fundamental change is long overdue. "You need to reach out and have a dialogue," said the COM, "that's how other countries are dealing with their crises." The DFM accepted this point, and surprisingly

responded, "The (SPDC) generals are not very clever in this regard."

AMCIT ISSUES

¶6. (C) The COM raised three ongoing cases involving U.S. citizens and appealed to the DFM for improved communication and responsiveness. DFM Maung Myint indicated that he was fully briefed on each of the three cases and promised an imminent response to each. He did not comment immediately on two of the cases (a 20-year prison sentence for possession of a small quantity of drugs; and a complex immigration fraud allegation).

¶7. (C) However, regarding the third case--which involves the GOB's cancellation of the re-entry visa for an Embassy contract employee who teaches at our American Center--the DFM said "she violated restrictions on political activities." The COM appealed for the teacher's return and the DFM said he would address the case in a subsequent meeting. The DG for Political Affairs told A/DCM that the employee had been deported because "she was teaching members of the NLD party." A/DCM observed that the NLD is a legal political party and that language instruction at the American Center is open to all members of the public. The DG, however, demurred and replied, "this is not my issue, it's for our Consular Affairs division."

COMMENT: MORE DIALOGUE?

¶8. (C) Although we expect few of our messages will be transmitted to the SPDC's senior leaders, we viewed this opportunity as a valuable one to deliver key policy messages to a senior GOB official. DFM Maung Myint is a career military officer--he held the rank of Brigadier General prior to his MFA appointment in 2004--and he is showing some signs of having influence, or at least input, on various regime decisions. The COM pressed for a regular dialogue and Maung Myint agreed. We'll continue, as always, to seek out similar opportunities. End Comment.
Martinez