

## THAILAND



**Thailand** U.S. Government assistance will focus on the long-term, broad security partnership that is the cornerstone of U.S. relations with this major non-NATO ally. Programming will also support consolidation of democracy and promotion of good governance, promote access to justice, and bolster HIV/AIDS prevention efforts.

**FOREIGN RELATIONS:** Thailand's foreign policy emphasizes a close and longstanding security relationship with the United States. It also strongly supports ASEAN's efforts to promote economic development, social integration, and stability throughout the region. Thailand assumed the chairmanship of ASEAN in July 2008 and served as host to the ASEAN Summit (heads of government meeting) in February 2009, as well as the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting, Post Ministerial Conference, and Regional Forum in July 2009.

Thailand participates fully in international and regional organizations. It has developed increasingly close ties with other ASEAN members--Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Brunei, Laos, Cambodia, Burma, and Vietnam--whose foreign and economic ministers hold annual meetings. Regional cooperation is progressing in economic, trade, banking, political, and cultural matters.

Thailand continues to take an active role on the international stage. When East Timor gained independence from Indonesia, Thailand contributed troops and UN force commanders to the international peacekeeping effort. As part of its effort to increase international ties, Thailand has reached out to such regional organizations as the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Thailand has contributed troops to reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq.

**U.S.-THAI RELATIONS:** On March 20, 1833, the United States and Thailand, then Siam, signed the Treaty of Amity and Commerce, the United States' first treaty with a country in Asia.

Since World War II, the United States and Thailand have developed close relations, as reflected in several bilateral treaties and by both countries' participation in UN multilateral activities and agreements. Thailand and the U.S. became treaty allies in 1954 (Manila Pact). The principal bilateral arrangement is the 1966 Treaty of Amity and Economic Relations, which facilitates U.S. and Thai companies' economic access to one another's markets. Other important agreements address civil uses of atomic energy, sales of agricultural commodities, investment guarantees, and military and economic assistance. In June 2004, the United States and Thailand initiated negotiations on a free trade agreement which, when concluded, would reduce and eliminate barriers to trade and investment between the two countries. These negotiations were placed on hold following the dissolution of the Thai parliament in February 2006 and the subsequent coup in September.

The United States and Thailand are among the signatories of the 1954 Manila Pact of the former Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO). Article IV(1) of this treaty provides that, in the event of armed attack in the treaty area (which includes Thailand), each member would "act to meet the common

danger in accordance with its constitutional processes." Despite the dissolution of the SEATO in 1977, the Manila Pact remains in force and, together with the Thanat-Rusk communiqué of 1962, constitutes the basis of U.S. security commitments to Thailand. Thailand continues to be a key security ally in Asia, along with Australia, Japan, the Philippines, and South Korea. In December 2003, Thailand was designated a Major Non-NATO Ally.

Thailand's stability and independence are important to the maintenance of peace in the region. Economic assistance has been extended in various fields, including rural development, health, family planning, education, and science and technology. The formal U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) bilateral program ended in 1995. However, there are a number of targeted assistance programs which continue in areas of mutually defined importance, including: health and HIV/AIDS programming; refugee assistance; and trafficking in persons. The **U.S. Peace Corps** in Thailand has approximately 100 volunteers, focused on primary education, with an integrated program involving teacher training, health education, and environmental education. The United States and Thailand, through programs with USAID, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the Armed Forces Research Institute of Medical Sciences (AFRIMS), cooperate closely on a range of public health initiatives, including efforts to fight malaria, tuberculosis, dengue, HIV/AIDS, and avian/pandemic influenza.

Thailand has received U.S. military equipment, essential supplies, training, and assistance in the construction and improvement of facilities and installations for much of the period since 1950; since then more Thai have been trained under the International Military Education and Training (IMET) program than any other country. Over recent decades, U.S. security assistance included military training programs carried out in the United States and elsewhere. A small U.S. military advisory group in Thailand oversaw the delivery of equipment to the Thai Armed Forces and the training of Thai military personnel in its use and maintenance. As part of the mutual defense cooperation over the last three decades, Thailand and the United States have developed a vigorous joint military exercise program, which engages all the services of each nation and averages 40 joint exercises per year.

Thailand remains a trafficking route for narcotics from the Golden Triangle--the intersection of Burma, Laos, and Thailand--to both the domestic Thai and international markets. The large-scale production and shipment of opium and heroin shipments from Burma of previous years have largely been replaced by widespread smuggling of methamphetamine tablets, although heroin seizures along the border continue to take place with some frequency. The United States and Thailand work closely together and with the United Nations on a broad range of programs to halt illicit drug trafficking and other criminal activity, such as trafficking in persons. The U.S. supports the International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA) in Bangkok, which provides counter-narcotics and anti-crime capacity-building programs to law enforcement and judicial officials from a number of regional countries.

**Peace and Security:** Thailand is a critical partner of the United States in regional and global security efforts, law enforcement, and counter-terrorism. Military assistance will support Thailand's efforts to enhance its training command. It will provide education and training to support a professional military that respects civilian control, to improve communication and language capabilities that enhance Thai interoperability with U.S. forces, and to strengthen management of defense resources. U.S. programs will also seek to advance conflict mitigation efforts in southern Thailand, where an ethno-nationalist separatist insurgency continues to claim casualties and inflict hardship on the local population. Programming will focus on promoting minority rights and addressing national-level consensus building. Thailand's relatively large economy and central location in the region make it the critical link in efforts to suppress transnational crime, including financial crime (especially money laundering), and trafficking in narcotics,

endangered species, and persons. A law enforcement advisor and technical assistance program will provide counsel on legislation that will aid prosecution of transnational crime. It will also support legal and legislative reforms and improve law enforcement and judicial capacity. The strategic goal is a stronger and more respect-worthy criminal justice system. U.S. assistance will fund a broad curriculum of counter-terrorism training courses for Thai security officials, including prevention of terrorism and improving the criminal justice system. Requested funds will also support the expansion of the Personal Identification Secure Comparison Evaluation System to additional Thai border crossing points and a wide range of non-proliferation strategic trade control assistance, from licensing and legal and regulatory technical workshops to providing detection equipment and training border control and enforcement agencies.

**Governing Justly and Democratically:** Although an elected government took office in February 2008 and the country avoided an extra-constitutional change of government during months of political unrest, stronger institutions are necessary to ensure the durability of Thai democracy. U.S. assistance will build the capacity of governmental and non-governmental entities that are working to strengthen respect for human rights and promote public policies that reflect citizen interests; combat corruption and conflict of interest; bolster the rule of law through a more credible and fair justice system; and support a free and independent media.

**Investing in People:** The U.S.-Thai partnership in disease research pays dividends locally and globally. U.S. assistance will support comprehensive program activities that develop intervention models targeting the most-at-risk populations for HIV/AIDS. The 2008 HIV prevalence survey data shows signs of a resurgence of the HIV epidemic in Thailand, specifically in Bangkok, Chiang Mai and Pattaya. Prevalence rates among several most-at-risk populations are high or increasing steadily. The U.S. Agency for International Development's implementing partners will provide technical assistance to the Global Fund for AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria to help ensure effective implementation of HIV/AIDS programs in Thailand. Linking with the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR): Thailand will receive significant support to build partnerships to provide integrated prevention, care and treatment programs throughout the country and to support orphans and vulnerable children.

**Focus on Performance:** Thai civil society organizations (CSO) and media are critical interlocutors to the state, and have already begun to serve as alternative voices by exposing vulnerabilities of the political system and advocating for key policy reforms. Momentum for change is growing, and CSOs and media leaders are playing a key role in promoting a political culture of checks and balances. Despite inroads some Bangkok-based CSOs have made into national policy-making processes, CSOs in rural Thailand have weak capacities and limited opportunities to engage with government. Increased funding in FY 2010 will be used to enhance training and technical assistance to CSOs in participatory development planning and issue-based advocacy to ensure more effective grassroots engagement with local government bodies. The funds are expected to further strengthen the capacities of CSOs – particularly human rights NGOs – and provide opportunities for expanded public awareness, issue-based advocacy campaigns and policy research on human rights and rule of law issues that will be useful for constructive engagement between CSOs, academics and members of independent agencies.