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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR ENGAGES PM ABHISIT AND DEFENSE MINISTER
ON VIKTOR BOUT EXTRADITION CASE

Classified By: Ambassador Eric G. John, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (S) Summary. During a February 12 meeting, the Ambassador raised with Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva the ongoing extradition case concerning Russian international arms trafficker Viktor Bout and serious concerns that Bout's associates had been able to influence testimony given by [xxxxxxxxxx]. Abhisit told the Ambassador that he would address any "irregularities" in the case through "appropriate channels." The Ambassador also raised USG concerns with the xxxxxxxxxx testimony during a February 13 introductory call with Defense Minister Prawit Wongsuwan. Prawit committed to looking into the testimony in order to determine the truth.

2. (S) Comment. Since Viktor Bout's arrest in Bangkok almost a year ago, moving towards a successful extradition to the United States has been at the top of our bilateral agenda here. In addition to Embassy efforts over the months, President Bush raised it with then-Prime Minister Samak during his August 2008 visit to Bangkok. Overall, our sense has been that while the extradition proceedings have been painfully slow (and have required constant nurturing by our DOJ and DEA personnel every step of the way), they are moving in the direction we want. Lately, however, there have been disturbing indications that Bout's xxxxxxxxxx and Russian supporters have been using money and influence in an attempt to block extradition. The most egregious example was the false testimony of xxxxxxxxxx that Bout was in Thailand as part of government-to-government submarine deal. Thus, we felt it was time to once again raise the matter at the top of the government and make clear that, while we understand the judicial process must take its course without political interference, we insist that the process be free of corruption and undue influence. We will continue to do so in the months ahead. We understand AG Holder may soon call the Thai AG to review the case (as previous AG Mukasey did three times in addition to his visit to Bangkok last summer). Combined with our efforts this week, the call will make for an important one-two punch. End Summary and Comment.

ABHISIT PROMISES TO LOOK INTO IRREGULARITIES IN BOUT CASE

3. (S) During a February 12 meeting at the Parliament, the Ambassador raised with Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva the ongoing extradition case concerning international arms trafficker Viktor Bout. (Note: Bout faces terrorism-related charges in federal court in New York for conspiring to sell millions of dollars of weapons to the FARC for use in killing Americans. He has remained in custody in Bangkok since his arrest on March 6, 2008. End note.) The Ambassador noted that, while the U.S. and Thailand enjoy a strong extradition relationship, our countries must ensure that the bilateral extradition treaty worked in our most important cases, such as those involving terrorism. In this regard, the Ambassador emphasized to Abhisit that the extradition case against Bout is a high priority for the United States. Citing the United Nations' sanctions against Bout, the Ambassador also noted that the extradition case is one of global importance.

important that the Thai Navy or the Ministry of Defense correct this falsehood with testimony to the court. Doing so would ensure that the proceedings were kept on track and would publicly clarify that the Thai military was not associated with a U.N.-sanctioned arms trafficker. Prawit told the Ambassador that he was unfamiliar with the case but that he would give priority to looking into the issue to determine the truth regarding the testimony ofxxxxxxx. The Defense Minister also committed to examining a non-paper with more details on the testimony of xxxxxxxxxx that the DOJ Attache provided to an aide to Prawit. JOHN