

Security Operations and the Overall Political Situation in Thailand

- Following efforts by the authorities to cordon off the protest area at Ratchaprasong Intersection since 13 May 2010, it has become evident that armed elements among the protesters have conducted continuous attacks upon security forces manning the various checkpoints and instigated acts of violence, rioting and arson aimed at destabilising the situation.

- Consequently, on 19 May 2010 at 05.45 hrs., the Government began operations to tighten the cordon to secure the perimeter around the protest site at Ratchaprasong Intersection so that security officers would be able to better provide security and safety for the public in those areas – especially to protect them from those armed elements using weapons of war.

- The first phase of the operations was to secure the Lumpini Park area, which had been used by the protesters to hoard and hide weapons used by terrorist elements to attack security officers as well as innocent people.

- After being able to secure the Lumpini Park area at around 07.15 hrs., the security officers then moved to tighten the cordon around the Ratchaprasong area from three directions, namely, Sam Yan, Henri Dunant and Saladaeng Intersections. These operations were met with resistance from armed elements among the protesters who used weapons of war, including M79 and assault weapons. They also instigated incidents by breaking in and setting on fire many buildings. The CRES thus had to order security officers to move in. Under pressure, UDD protest leaders announced the end of protests at around 13.45 hrs., following which the security officers were ordered to halt their operations.

- Some of the protest leaders, such as Jatuporn Prompan and Natthawut Saikua, have turned themselves in with the police. As for other protesters, the officers are working to facilitate their safe passage home by arranging transportation for them.

- Despite the protest leader's call for protesters to end their demonstrations, however, some protesters, especially the hard core elements, have continued to instigate disturbances and rioting in some areas of the city, destroying properties and setting buildings on fire, targeting in particular members of the media whom they believed were responsible for reports not in their favour. It should also be noted that one protest leader was recorded on tape earlier inciting the crowd to commit such acts of arson.

- In the immediate term, security forces have continued working to stabilise the situation. In particular, priority has been given to providing security and medical care to those in need, as well as helping innocent demonstrators as well as other members of the public, both Thai and foreign, return home.

- Regarding events at Pathumwanaram Temple where a number of demonstrators and members of the public gathered after the protests ended, the authorities concerned had endeavoured to send in officers and medical teams to extend assistance but were met with violent resistance from armed groups. Meanwhile, those who tried to go from there to the National Stadium, used by the authorities as a staging point for their safe passage home, were attacked by those armed with weapons of war. It took several hours before security officers could clear access to the temple to bring those who had been injured or lost their lives out. Subsequently, a forensic team had been sent

to inspect the area. What took place at Pathumwanaram Temple was pre-meditated and reflects a well planned counter operation on the part of the armed group who knowingly took advantage of the temple's designation as a safe area for unarmed demonstrators, particularly, women, children and the elderly.

- As for the situation in other provinces, attempts have been made to instigate incidents, including arson, the burning of tires and looting. In response, security officers have been working in coordination with provincial authorities to ensure peace and order. Thus far, they have been able to control the overall situation, arresting in the process a number of perpetrators.

- As security officers and emergency response teams continue to work to control the situation, given these disturbances, the authorities have decided to extend the curfew to 20 - 22 May from 21.00 hrs. to 05.00 hrs. of the following day. People in Bangkok and the other 23 provinces where the Emergency Decree is in effect are asked to remain indoors during these hours, unless otherwise permitted by officials.

- With regard to calls for transparency and scrutiny of the authorities' operations, the Government has made it clear that in carrying out these operations, the officers – as in all other cases – abided strictly by the rules of engagement established by the Government in accordance with international standards. The operations were also conducted transparently, with members of the media, both domestic and international, able to report upon the security force's operations.

- The Government is open to scrutiny and stands ready to be accountable in accordance with the law. It also stands ready to cooperate with inquiries by independent agencies such as the National Human Rights Commission.

- The Government understands well that the country will have to go through a reconciliation process. That is precisely the reason why the Government will press forward with the five-point roadmap proposed by the Prime Minister, which addresses all of the legitimate grievances raised by demonstrators, including problems of poverty, social disparities and injustices, or misuse of media as tools to instigate hatred and division.

- Looking ahead, the Government will continue to reach out to all Thais throughout the country in working out the details of the roadmap, which has received broad based support from all segments of Thai society. It is therefore hoped that the demonstrators will agree with this approach to move the country forward and participate in the process.

- Last but not least, the Royal Thai Government attaches the utmost importance to the safety and well-being of foreign nationals and members of the diplomatic corps in Thailand. It will continue to do its utmost to provide security for them and stands ready to extend any necessary assistance which may be needed.