

Thai PM says won't buy back satellite firm
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Thailand's prime minister has said his government will not try to regain control over satellites bought by a Singapore firm.

Thailand's coup leader General Sonthi Boonyaratglin had vowed to take back the kingdom's only satellite operator, Shin Satellite, which was bought by Singapore's Temasek Holdings in a politically explosive deal last year.

Temasek bought the company from the family of ousted prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra, sparking street protests that precipitated a bloodless coup by Sonthi in September.

But in an interview with the official Bernama news agency, military-installed premier Surayud Chulanot appeared to distance himself from Sonthi's comments, saying it was up to Thai companies to buy back the satellites.

"If they want to buy, let them buy in the exchange market. We are not going to get involved," Surayud told the official Bernama news agency in an interview.

"If they want to take a risk, that's fine. They have to make their own estimations of the risk assessment, whether it will be beneficial for them or not," he said.

ShinSat's four satellites are owned by the Thai government but are controlled by Temasek.

National assets

Sonthi has described the telecom satellites as "national assets" that should revert back to Thai control, and voiced fears Singapore will use them to spy on Thailand.

But Surayud said diplomatic ties with Singapore were still unchanged despite the strains over the purchase and Thaksin's visit to Singapore, during which he met with a top government official.

"There have been a lot of suggestions, a lot of concerns over various things, but for the government we still stick to our fundamental policy in foreign relations," he said.

"I can assure you I don't see any conflict at the national level at the moment," he said.

Singapore has denied spying and said relations with Thailand overall remain good.

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