

THIS FILE IS MADE AVAILABLE THROUGH THE DECLASSIFICATION EFFORTS AND RESEARCH OF:

THE BLACK VAULT

THE BLACK VAULT IS THE LARGEST ONLINE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT / GOVERNMENT RECORD CLEARING HOUSE IN THE WORLD. THE RESEARCH EFFORTS HERE ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DECLASSIFICATION OF THOUSANDS OF DOCUMENTS THROUGHOUT THE U.S. GOVERNMENT, AND ALL CAN BE DOWNLOADED BY VISITING:

[HTTP://WWW.BLACKVAULT.COM](http://www.blackvault.com)

YOU ARE ENCOURAGED TO FORWARD THIS DOCUMENT TO YOUR FRIENDS, BUT PLEASE KEEP THIS IDENTIFYING IMAGE AT THE TOP OF THE .PDF SO OTHERS CAN DOWNLOAD MORE!

~~SECRET~~



OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF DEFENSE RESEARCH AND ENGINEERING
WEAPONS SYSTEMS EVALUATION GROUP
WASHINGTON, D C 20305

15 August 1968

MEMORANDUM FOR THE CHAIRMAN, JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF

SUBJECT: Counterinsurgency in Thailand (U)

(U) The abstract of WSEG Report No. 133, "Counterinsurgency in Thailand," is contained in Section I below. Additional comments on the study are contained in Section II.

I. ABSTRACT

(U) Title: WSEG Report 133/IDA Report R-146, Final Report; Counterinsurgency in Thailand; June 1968.

(U) Conducted by: WSEG FOR: JCS

(C) Purpose: To determine what US military commitment to counter the insurgency in Thailand may have to be considered, in view of the effectiveness of an indigenous Thai counterinsurgency.

(C) Summary of Methodology and Discussion: The study bases are extensive examinations of written material on Thailand and interviews with US officials in the US and Thailand, plus extensive examinations of the past insurgencies in Malaysia, the Philippines, and Algeria, also including case study of the insurgencies in Viet Nam, Cuba, Kenya and Greece.

A qualitative analysis of the Thai insurgency considers the internal political, social, and economic factors aiding or damping the insurgency and counterinsurgency potential.

(S) Principal Findings: The study concludes that:

1. The Communist insurgency in the Northeast suffers under the following handicaps:

a. Friction among the top leaders in the Communist Party of Thailand.

b. Quantitative and qualitative deficiencies among the leadership which inhibit the ability to direct and coordinate insurgent activities effectively.

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

c. A weak and unreliable village infrastructure based upon recruitment by intimidation rather than dedication to the goals of the revolution.

d. A guerilla force which lacks sufficient strength to take the offensive.

e. An inadequate logistics support system.

2. Thailand has the political stability, economic resources, and military capability to defeat the Communist insurgency it now faces. No US commitment of military force will be required provided US economic and military assistance continue at the currently projected levels.

3. If the insurgent movements in Thailand expand it is probable that the Royal Thai Government will still be able to cope with the threat without direct US military involvement. In such a case, however, the Thai would require additional US military and economic assistance in addition to raising their own current force level.

4. If the Chinese and North Vietnamese increase their external support of the insurgent movements in Thailand by a major infusion of external forces, the Royal Thai Government will require the support of US combat units, the extent of such support not now capable of being estimated.

II. COMMENTS

(C) This study is responsive to the requirements contained in the memorandum from the Director, Joint Staff, dated 24 March 1967, as modified by his memorandum, dated 19 January 1968, to conduct a study of counterinsurgency in Thailand.

(C) No attempt was made to conduct original research. The study is based on examinations of written material on Thailand and on interviews with knowledgeable US officials. Written material consulted included documents from the following agencies:

Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
Department of State
Agency for International Development
Central Intelligence Agency
Defense Intelligence Agency

~~SECRET~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Headquarters United States Army
Headquarters Pacific Command
Headquarters United States Army, Pacific
Headquarters United States Military Assistance
Command, Thailand
Advanced Research Projects Agency
Research Analysis Corporation
Stanford Research Institute

Interviews were conducted with officials at the following agencies:

Headquarters Pacific Command
Headquarters United States Military Assistance
Command, Thailand
Department of State
Agency for International Development
United States Embassy, Bangkok
United States Offices in Udorn,
Sakhon Nakhon, and Chiang Mai

(U) It is considered that this study generally meets the task order requirements. The study should be particularly useful in discriminating between the natures of the insurgencies in South Vietnam and Thailand.

(C) The study does not analyze in detail selected levels of insurgency above the existing one. Had this been accomplished, a much better assessment of possible future requirements for US support could have been postulated.


K. S. MASTERSON
Vice Admiral, USN
Director

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~SECRET~~

REPORT R-146

COUNTERINSURGENCY IN THAILAND (U)

Volume I: Summary and Evaluation

June 1968

This report has been prepared by the International and Social Studies Division of the Institute for Defense Analyses in response to the Weapons Systems Evaluation Group Task Order SD-DAHC15 67 C 0012-T-138, dated 3 November 1967.



INSTITUTE FOR DEFENSE ANALYSES
INTERNATIONAL AND SOCIAL STUDIES DIVISION
400 Army-Navy Drive, Arlington, Virginia 22202

SPECIAL HANDLING REQUIRED
NOT RELEASABLE TO FOREIGN NATIONALS

GROUP 3
DOWNGRADED AT 12 YEAR INTERVALS;
NOT AUTOMATICALLY DECLASSIFIED

~~SECRET~~

DECLASSIFIED BY AUTHORITY OF

Joint Staff

22 Dec 93 91-F01-2232

DATE

CASE #

IDA Log No. HQ 68-8878


NOFORN

This page is UNCLASSIFIED

CONTRIBUTORS TO VOLUME I:

MGen. Donald M. Weller, USMC (Ret.), Project Leader
Mr. Donald J. Alderson, Assistant Project Leader
Mrs. Valarie Bristol
Dr. Nehemiah Jordan
Mr. David E. Lockwood
Col. Robert J. Lynch, Jr., USMC
Col. Charles M. Mizell, USA
Col. John B. Stirling, USAF
Col. William R. Washington, USA


NOFORN

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

FOREWORD

(C) This study responds to a request made by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Weapons Systems Evaluation Group and the Institute for Defense Analyses to undertake a study of counterinsurgency in Thailand.¹ The main objective of the study is to "provide data and a rationale to affect the recurrent policy decision on ways to counter the insurgency in Thailand while avoiding or minimizing US military involvement." In general, the study request requires an assessment of the capabilities and limitations of the Thai political, economic, social, paramilitary, and military institutions and programs for coping with the insurgency, and a determination of the degree of US support, if any, required to assist the Royal Thai Government (RTG) in countering the threat.

(C) The specific requirements of the study include:

- (1) "A description of the current insurgency and its growth potential.
- (2) An estimate of the maximum level of insurgency that the Thai military and paramilitary forces might be expected to counter without commitment of US military forces.
- (3) The capabilities and constraints of the Thai political, economic, and social institutions for countering insurgency.
- (4) Indications of where parallels and experience from past insurgencies, particularly in Vietnam, could apply to Thailand.
- (5) Missions and tasks of Thai military and paramilitary forces which, in the light of past experience and Thai non-military factors, could be most effective against insurgency.

1. DJSN 367-67 dated March 24, 1967, as modified by DJSN 64-68 dated January 19, 1968.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

CONFIDENTIAL

(6) Broad guidance for specifying how Thai military and paramilitary forces could be structured, organized, equipped, and trained to cope with the current and selected levels of increased insurgency growth and activity within Thailand, and if they cannot, to specify the short fall to illuminate the degree to which US military commitment and other US support may be required.

(7) Implications of the above for US support."

(C) On December 27, 1967, the Office of the Special Assistant for Counterinsurgency and Special Activities (SACSA) noted that "the increased control in the Northeast by the Thai Second Army has been viewed in some quarters with considerable concern as 'further militarization' of the counterinsurgency effort. Behind this concern lies a fear that undue emphasis will be placed on military suppression operations, that the various civil programs will suffer from lack of Army understanding and support, and that police effectiveness will be reduced by Army usurpation of police functions." Accordingly, SACSA asked the study group to make pertinent investigations and to reach conclusions with regard to the appropriate balance between the military and civil aspects of the counterinsurgency effort. This request for additional study was approved by Weapons Systems Evaluation Group Memorandum to SACSA dated January 12, 1968.

CONFIDENTIAL

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

PREFACE

(C) The main emphasis of this study is directed toward assessing the counterinsurgent capabilities and limitations of the police, paramilitary, and military organizations of the Royal Thai Government and toward appraising the insurgent threat. Accordingly, only those aspects of Thailand's political, economic, and social characteristics which bear directly on the Royal Thai Government's ability to conduct effective counterinsurgent operations are treated. Since the nature of insurgency in Thailand dictates that offensive military operations be conducted primarily by elements of the Royal Thai Army, the study concentrates on the Army's capabilities and limitations. The study does not purport to be, nor is it, a study in depth of the Thai political system, economy, or society.

(C) Case studies of past insurgencies, including Malaya, Algeria, the Philippines, Cuba, Kenya, Greece, and South Vietnam, were prepared as a basis for assessing the capability of the Royal Thai Government to cope with the insurgency. The lessons learned from these studies were synthesized into general principles of successful counterinsurgency operations and specific principles of military strategy and tactics for combatting low-level insurgency. These principles were prepared for the guidance of the study group and were not intended as scientific treatises.

(C) The study is based on extensive examinations of written material on Thailand and on interviews with knowledgeable US officials, both in the United States and in Thailand. No attempt was made to conduct original research. The written material consulted came from a variety of sources including the State Department, the Agency for International Development, the Central Intelligence Agency, the Defense Intelligence Agency, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the US Army,

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Commander in Chief of the Pacific, US Army Pacific, and the US Military Command Thailand. Studies by the Advanced Research Projects Agency of the Department of Defense, the Research Analysis Corporation, Stanford Research Institute, and other organizations were also consulted. Interviews were conducted with military personnel at CINCPAC and at the US Military Assistance Command, Thailand. Civilian personnel in the State Department and Agency for International Development in Washington, in the US Embassy in Bangkok, and in the US offices in Udorn, Sakhon Nakhon, and Chiang Mai were also consulted.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

TABLE OF ORGANIZATION

VOLUME I: SUMMARY AND EVALUATION

- SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS
- I SETTING FOR INSURGENCY
- II THE INSURGENCY
- III THE COUNTERINSURGENCY EFFORT
- IV PROSPECTS AND IMPLICATIONS

VOLUME II: POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, AND SOCIAL BACKGROUND

- I POLITICS AND ADMINISTRATION IN THAILAND
- II ECONOMIC BACKGROUND
- III SUSCEPTIBILITY OF THE THAI PEASANT TO COMMUNISM AT PRESENT AND IN THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE

VOLUME III: HISTORICAL ANALYSES OF OTHER COUNTERINSURGENCIES

- I INTRODUCTION
- II PRINCIPLES OF COUNTERINSURGENCY
- III MILITARY STRATEGY AND TACTICS IN LOW-LEVEL COUNTERINSURGENCY OPERATIONS

VOLUME IV: APPENDIXES: THE INSURGENT THREAT AND THE RTG COUNTERINSURGENCY EFFORT

- A. THE INSURGENT THREAT
- B. COORDINATION OF COUNTERINSURGENCY PLANNING AND PROGRAMS
- C. ROYAL THAI ARMED FORCES
- D. POLICE, VILLAGE SECURITY, AND PARAMILITARY PROGRAMS
- E. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT
- F. INTELLIGENCE CAPABILITY

UNCLASSIFIED

(This page is blank)

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

CONTENTS

Foreword	iii
Preface	v
Table of Organization	vii
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS	xiii
 I THE SETTING FOR INSURGENCY	 1
A. INTERNATIONAL SETTING	1
B. THAILAND AND ITS PEOPLE	2
C. THE ECONOMY	5
D. POLITICAL ADMINISTRATION	8
1. Central Government	8
2. Local Government	9
 II THE INSURGENCY	 13
A. NARRATIVE	13
1. Developments in the Northeast	14
2. Developments in the North	22
3. Developments in West Central Thailand	23
4. Developments in the Mid-South	23
5. Developments in the South	24
6. Recapitulation	25
B. THE THREAT	25
 III THE COUNTERINSURGENCY EFFORT	 39
A. ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CAPABILITIES TO COPE WITH THE COUNTERINSURGENCY	39
1. Economic	39
2. Political	42
B. CONCEPTS AND ORGANIZATION FOR COUNTERINSURGENCY . . .	45
C. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT	53

UNCLASSIFIED

D.	POLICE AND PARAMILITARY FORCES	57
1.	Evolution of the RTG Program for Police and Paramilitary Forces	57
2.	Current Status for Security Programs in the Northeast	60
3.	Evaluation of the Village Security Program	60
4.	Conclusions	64
E.	ROYAL THAI ARMED FORCES	66
1.	Mission and Tasks of the Royal Thai Armed Forces .	66
2.	Training and Leadership	74
3.	Intelligence	78
4.	Evaluation of the Intelligence Effort.	82
5.	Organization	85
6.	Equipment	85
7.	Logistics	86
8.	Conclusions	87
IV	PROSPECTS AND IMPLICATIONS	93
A.	THE GROWTH POTENTIAL OF THE INSURGENCY	93
1.	The Northeast	93
2.	The Central Plain	94
3.	The North	95
4.	The South	96
5.	The West Central Border Area	97
6.	External Support	98
7.	Conclusions	99
B.	CAPABILITY OF THE RTG TO COPE WITH THE POTENTIAL THREAT	100
C.	IMPLICATIONS FOR US SUPPORT	102

UNCLASSIFIED

FIGURES

MAP OF THAILAND	xxxiv
1. TOPOGRAPHY OF THAILAND	3
2. THAILAND: MAJOR ETHNIC GROUPS	6
3. THAILAND: ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISIONS, 1965	11
4. NUMBER OF ARMED ENCOUNTERS, PROPAGANDA MEETINGS, AND ASSASSINATIONS IN NORTHEAST THAILAND	27
5. RURAL SECURITY FORCES IN AMPHUR NAKAE	61
6. ARMY DISPOSITIONS, THAILAND, DECEMBER 1967	72
7. INTELLIGENCE ORGANIZATION AND FLOW, NORTHEAST THAILAND . .	80

TABLES

1. DISPOSITION OF MANEUVER BATTALIONS, ROYAL THAI ARMY, MARCH 1968	71
2. INTELLIGENCE STRUCTURE, ROYAL THAI GOVERNMENT	79

UNCLASSIFIED

(This page is blank)

UNCLASSIFIED

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

(S) Thailand has the political stability, economic resources, social cohesiveness, and military capability to defeat the Communist insurgency which it now faces. It can do this without a commitment of US military force, provided US economic and military assistance is furnished at approximately the levels that have been projected and provided the Royal Thai Government takes immediate steps to improve its effectiveness in the following areas:

- (1) Destruction of the Communist armed bands in the North-east through reinforcement of the Second Army Forward and increased emphasis on aggressive small-unit operations.
- (2) Conciliation of the hill tribes in the North through expanded and intensified civic action.
- (3) Destruction of the Communist armed bands in the North through unconventional military operations.

(S) The effectiveness of the counterinsurgency effort in all areas could be enhanced through:

- (1) Encouragement, exploitation, and rehabilitation of defectors through a thoroughly integrated national program.
- (2) Formation of adequate paramilitary forces to provide rural security pending the fielding of the contemplated Village Security Force.

(S) If the insurgent movements in the North, West Central Border Area, and Mid-South expand, and if the insurgency along the Malaysian border is redirected against Thailand and intensified, it is probable that the Royal Thai Government will still be able to cope with the threat. If these events occur, however, the Thais will have to raise additional military, paramilitary, and police forces, and they will require additional US military and economic assistance to support an expanded counterinsurgency effort.

~~SECRET~~

(S) If the Chinese and North Vietnamese increase their external support of the insurgent movements in Thailand through massive infiltration of men and supplies to the point where the problem changes from a "Mao-type" (essentially locally based) insurgency to, in effect, an invasion, the Royal Thai Government will be unable to defend itself without direct military support from friendly powers. Such an eventuality lies beyond the scope of this analysis, however, and the extent of US support which might be required cannot now be estimated.

(U) The principal findings on the insurgency, the Thai capabilities, and the Thai counterinsurgency effort are summarized below.

A. THE INSURGENCY

(S) The Communist Party of Thailand's attempt to create a revolution in Northeast Thailand is seriously handicapped by the absence of a "revolutionary situation." The ethnic Thai is basically satisfied with his means of livelihood, his ownership of land, his religion, his way of life, and his government. Only in some areas of the Northeast where the Thai villager exists at a bare subsistence level can the Communist organizers find genuine grievances to exploit. Yet, the potential for exploitation exists also among some ethnic minorities, notably the Vietnamese refugee community in the Northeast, the Meo and other hill tribes along the borders with Laos and Burma, and the Chinese and Malays in the Southern Peninsula.

(S) In the early stages of the insurgency, a thin and ineffective government presence in the Northeast and in the border areas enabled the Communists persuasively to charge government neglect and to propagandize and coerce the villagers almost without interference. Armed propaganda meetings and occasional assassinations served to demonstrate the impotence of the government, to demoralize the villagers, and to force them to provide support. Demonstration of effective power is impressive--indeed one of the principal complaints of the villagers is that the government has failed to protect them and has not provided them with the necessary arms to protect themselves. Yet, coercion alone cannot support a successful

SECRET

insurgency on the Maoist model; there must also be the positive "conversion" of significant segments of the population. Communist efforts to "convert" the ethnic Thai have been obstructed not only by the absence of revolutionary tinder but also by the inherent opposition of Thai cultural values to Communist ideology, underlying values, and modus operandi.

(S) These obstacles seem borne out by the Communist failure to erect a sound and durable infrastructure in the villages, the key to a successful revolution on the Maoist model. A series of joint US-Thai surveys has established the fact that while a Communist infrastructure has been found to exist in some of the villages in the Northeast, it appears to suffer from a number of weaknesses. The structure relies heavily on family ties rather than on ideological dedication or loyalty to the cadre. Security in the village cells seems generally weak and the structure breaks down readily under pressure. There is a shortage of cadre, as evidenced by the Communist inability to staff a "shadow government" in the Northeast. The top leadership of the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT) is weakened by frictions between Thai and ethnic Chinese members. Finally, the movement lacks a charismatic Thai leader.

(S) The armed guerrilla strength in the Northeast, estimated at 1,500 to 2,000, is not sufficient to overcome government authority in the region. The guerrilla bands share the ineffectiveness of the party structure; they are small, numbering about 20 to 30 men, and lightly armed. Military operations are focused on armed propaganda meetings rather than aggressive attacks against the government suppression forces. The insurgents have been forced by the Royal Thai Government to shift bases frequently. They seem to suffer from an inadequate logistical support system, and there is evidence that the growth of the armed bands is limited by food shortages.

(S) These deficiencies have prevented the insurgents from establishing political and military control over a sizable geographical area in the Northeast as a base for future expansion. However, even a relatively inefficient insurgency can tax the political, economic, and military resources of the Royal Thai Government.

SECRET

B. THE GOVERNMENT

(U) A stable and effective government is a prerequisite for a successful counterinsurgency effort since it provides the basic capability to plan, coordinate, lead, and sustain the total effort. The Royal Thai Government generally shows both stability and effectiveness, especially in comparison with other Southeast Asian governments.

(U) A major strength of Thailand is the homogeneity of the ethnic Thai, who constitute the large majority of the population. They generally accept the present government, which, despite its openly authoritarian nature, has been benevolent rather than repressive and has given the country more than nine years of political stability and economic prosperity. Moreover, the present military leaders in Bangkok have committed themselves in principle to the introduction of representative democracy modeled on Western lines, as reflected in a new and soon-to-be promulgated constitution.

(U) There are, however, some potential sources of instability in the Thai body politic. Rivalry among personalities and factions at the highest levels of government injects abiding uncertainty into Thai politics, all the more so because leadership in modern Thailand has usually been transferred via the coup d'etat rather than through orderly political processes. Two countervailing forces against potential instability, however, are the King and the civil service. The King, by virtue of the prestige of the monarchy and his personal popularity, can restrain excesses of policy and factionalism. The Thai civil service is one of the most professional and competently staffed services in Asia, enjoys substantial independence from the power struggles and shifts at the top level of government, and thus constitutes a conveyor belt of continuity and stability.

C. THE ECONOMY

(FOUO) The Thai economy is basically sound and is expanding rapidly. It supports the current level of counterinsurgency expenditures well, thanks in part to US economic and military assistance,

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~
This page is CONFIDENTIAL

and is capable of sustaining a higher level of effort without serious strain. It is estimated that the Royal Thai Government could increase its projected total expenditures (including counterinsurgency expenditures) for the period FY 1969 through FY 1971 by approximately 5 percent without risking serious inflationary pressures. Nevertheless, there are weaknesses in the Thai economy which require alleviation for counterinsurgency purposes.

(U) Agriculture is the mainspring of the Thai economy. Thailand grows more than enough food to feed its own population, and most Thai farmers own the land they work. Yet, agricultural production is now advancing less rapidly than that of manufacturing and the other industrial sectors, and the rural population is becoming relatively poorer at the same time that it becomes absolutely a little wealthier. The growing disparity in incomes between urban and rural areas could have important implications in the face of an insurgency which derives its strategic impetus from Mao.

(U) Furthermore, the rural areas in the Northeast, North, and South--all featuring some levels of insurgency--are disadvantaged by nature and remoteness from the centers of trade. The poorest region in the country is the Northeast, in which the Communist insurgency is currently the most widespread. A sharp increase in the present emphasis on agricultural production in Thailand--featuring additional incentives and assistance to the farmers to enable them to intensify and diversify their production--can help to improve incomes and living conditions in all the remote regions as well as in the Central Valley.

D. CONCEPT AND ORGANIZATION

(C) By the summer of 1962, with the assistance of the United States, the Royal Thai Government had formulated a broad concept of prevention and suppression, had established the National Security Command as a coordinating agency, and had launched the first of its special counterinsurgency programs.

~~SECRET~~

(S) The concept of prevention and suppression evolved in 1962 remains in effect in the Northeast today. Prevention entails winning the support of the villagers by improving their incomes and living conditions and by providing them with security against the insurgents; suppression entails destruction of the guerrilla bands through offensive operations. In the North, suppression has recently been stressed at the expense of prevention, and with counterproductive results among the hill tribes, but there is some evidence that the Royal Thai Government has realized the error of indiscriminate military action and is in the process of reviving its environmental improvement activities among the hill tribes.

(C) The structure for coordinating the counterinsurgency effort has undergone a series of evolutionary changes since 1962. The most significant was the establishment of the Communist Suppression Operations Command (CSOC) in 1965 at the national level. Concurrently, a regional organization, CPM-1, connoting its civilian-police-military makeup, was established in Northeast Thailand with subordinate CPMs at provincial and district levels. In addition, Communist Suppression Committees were formed in the remaining provinces.

(S) At the national level since 1965, representation of the various government departments concerned with environmental improvement has been increased and an intelligence and interrogation capability have been added. At the same time, however, the military planning role of the CSOC has been diminished as a result of pressures from the Royal Thai Army.

(C) At the regional level, CPM-1 in the Northeast has been superseded by the Second Army Forward Headquarters under General Dongcherm. Provincial and district CPMs have remained organizationally unchanged, but they have been strengthened by the assignment of more and higher caliber personnel.

(S) While organizationally the structure at various levels is sound, qualitative deficiencies remain. At the national level, rivalry and factionalism weaken coordination. This factor may underlie the current uncertainty surrounding the future of the CSOC. In

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

late 1967, there was evidence of dissatisfaction in Bangkok with the broad role assigned to the CSOC and indications that the National Security Command was emerging as the principal policy-making agency for counterinsurgency, with the CSOC assigned to the implementing role. Whatever may be the future of the CSOC, US observers seem agreed that the RTG recognizes the essential need for a coordinating agency such as the CSOC and that such an agency will continue to exist.

(S) At the provincial and district levels, effective coordination is inhibited by the traditional centralization of authority at the national level, by lack of individual initiative derived from cultural factors, and by the "vertical" orientation of the various ministries and departments of the government. The defects at the local level can be overcome in part by dynamic leadership at the provincial level. Such leadership is beginning to emerge. An example is Governor Phat of Ubon province, whose coordination of the counterinsurgent effort is deemed the most effective in the Northeast.

(S) Another potential obstacle to coordination is the "militarization" of the regional command in the Northeast, reflected in the replacement in October 1967 of CPM-1 by a provisional military command drawn from the Second Army Headquarters, designated Second Army Forward, under command of General Dongcherm. Despite initial fears, however, General Dongcherm has demonstrated considerable restraint and circumspection in the exercise of his broad powers. He has not intervened in civil programs, has not usurped the functions of civil authorities, and has in fact established effective working relationships with the great majority of the provincial governors. This precedent is important in the light of a possible trend to place other regional organizations under military command as evidenced by the recent establishment of the Third Army Forward in the North.

(S) In short, the RTG has evolved an effective concept for counterinsurgency, stressing environmental improvement, village security, and suppression operations. It has developed an effective

~~SECRET~~

organization for coordinating counterinsurgency operations at the national, regional, provincial, and district levels of administration. The assignment of a military commander to head the regional organization in the Northeast has not led to a breakdown of coordination or an undue "militarization" of the counterinsurgency effort. Coordination continues to be marred, however, by rivalries in Bangkok and by the characteristic lack of initiative of subordinate Thai officials at the local levels, emphasized by the tradition of centralized decisionmaking and "vertical" loyalty within the various ministries and agencies. Nevertheless, strong leadership is beginning to emerge which may overcome these obstacles.

(S) In the North, however, the concept of heavy-handed suppression operations coupled with forced resettlement of Meo hill tribes, is counterproductive. There is some evidence that the RTG is re-appraising its concept and policies toward the hill tribes.

E. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT

(U) The Royal Thai Government employs a variety of special economic and social development programs to help win or retain the support of the villagers in threatened areas. These environmental improvement programs are now operating chiefly in the Northeast, with priorities assigned to road construction, improvement of health, and stimulation of agricultural production. Accelerated Rural Development (ARD) is the most important single program in the effort.

(U) The environmental improvement programs are a political necessity. If the RTG fails to take action to improve incomes and living conditions in insurgency areas, the Communists will inevitably continue to exploit the situation by charging "Government neglect!" Furthermore, economic development and environmental improvement are already under way in the Northeast. If the programs stop or stall now, discontent can be expected even without Communist provocation.

(U) The present geographical emphasis on the insurgent-threatened villages of the Northeast is sound. The Northeast is the poorest region of Thailand, it contains a third of the nation's

~~SECRET~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~
This page is FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY

population, it has traditionally attracted a smaller proportion of RTG expenditures than any other region, and it is the most beset with insurgency.

(FOUO) More attention needs to be paid to the North, however, where much of the goodwill built up by years of arduous civic action among the hill tribes has been lost through the recent suppression campaign. To regain lost goodwill and counteract further Communist infiltration, the Border Patrol Police Remote Area Security Development program in the North should be intensified and expanded, not cut as presently planned.

(U) The functional emphasis on roadbuilding, health improvement, and stimulation of agriculture is sound from a developmental point of view and also meets the main "wants and needs" of the Thai villages as determined in various surveys. The road network will have to be enlarged, however, before increased attention can be paid to the villagers' chief requirement, greater and improved water supply and control facilities.

(U) The organization of the environmental improvement effort is uneven by Western standards, but it has served to get the programs into the field quite rapidly, and it appears adequate at the present level of intensity and complexity of the counterinsurgency effort. It is hoped that planned increases in the effort will feature expanded staffing at the district level so as to get more projects into the villages--the target of the effort.

(FOUO) The Royal Thai Government is giving the effort considerable financial support, allocating sums that compare favorably with its other expenditures and scheduling twice as much support to the effort as the United States for the FY 1967 through FY 1969 period. The effort will be sharply increased in the near future, which appears prudent, since the developmental problems in the insurgency areas are enormous and the political problems should not be viewed with complacency.

(U) When the RTG and US contributions are considered together, they represent a sizable increase in investment in formerly neglected

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

border regions like the Northeast. US assistance to the environmental improvement effort and to other RTG programs has enabled Thailand to pursue its long-range developmental policies and to attain an economic growth rate which is itself an important asset in the fight against Communist insurgency.

(U) Although it is extremely difficult to determine the results of the environmental improvement effort precisely, even on the economic and social levels, there is little doubt that the programs have produced a favorable, if geographically limited, impact on incomes and living conditions. Politically, in areas where the programs have operated, what discontent there was appears to have diminished, and the loyalty of the villagers to the Royal Thai Government appears to have been strengthened. In other areas, because the effort is under way, villagers seem generally confident that the government is interested in their welfare and will improve their lot in the future.

(U) The programs have had the additional important effect of drawing a significant number of government officials into the insurgent-threatened areas, increasing personnel in one province by about 50 percent. The new roads built by the programs have also helped spread the government presence by making it possible for officials to visit the villages more frequently; they have also increased the mobility of the police and other security forces. Nevertheless, in spite of recent gains, the government presence in the countryside remains quite thin.

F. RURAL SECURITY

(C) The second element of the RTG concept is to provide security for the villagers. History indicates that economy of forces, continuity of local operations, and intelligence considerations generally favor the assignment of this mission to police and paramilitary organizations rather than to the military. The Royal Thai Government decided accordingly to expand its police and paramilitary forces to perform the rural security mission and the associated tasks of village

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

defense, local patrolling, and immediate reaction. As an interim measure, Army units were to provide local security to villages in areas of active military operations. This decision has proved basically sound.

(C) The initial programs adopted by the Royal Thai Government to implement the mission and tasks of rural security included an expansion of police forces from the district to the tambon (village cluster) level and the callup of the Volunteer Defense Corps, a paramilitary organization. Paramilitary programs for village security subsequently went through a series of overlapping evolutionary stages. In January 1968, the Royal Thai Government indicated an intent to activate a Village Security Force (VSF) along lines conceived by US officials in Bangkok. The program had not been activated by May 1968, however, because of unresolved differences of opinion between the Department of Local Administration and the Thai National Police Department. This disagreement has delayed the extension of protection to insurgent-threatened villages and will probably cause further delays.

(C) The progress of the RTG in achieving village security can be estimated by examining a typical district, Nakae, in a province of the Northeast where there is a high level of insurgency. About 21 of Nakae's 113 villages are protected by paramilitary security units, while seven are guarded by small Army units. Five of the 11 tambons now have a police post. It is expected that by the end of 1968, two 12-man paramilitary squads will be located in each tambon and three 40-man paramilitary platoons will be available at the district level to act as local patrol and reaction forces. When these forces are in place, the total security forces in the district will consist of about 1,000 men.

(C) The precise extent of the threat in the Northeast is difficult to measure. The guerrillas have seldom attacked villages directly, but armed propaganda meetings were employed extensively in 1967. However, even these sessions fell off sharply in the fall of 1967 and in the first three months of 1968. In view of the limited

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

number of attacks on villages, one could argue that the necessity for village security has not been demonstrated. However, even if evidence of overt pressure is not convincing, and even if the insurgency in the Northeast is considered relatively weak (as this study concludes), prudence dictates that village security be strengthened as a hedge against the possibility of a rising level of insurgency.

(C) Only about 25 percent of the villages in the insurgent-threatened provinces of the Northeast are defended in place, if the Nakae sample is reasonably representative. The remainder of the villages must be protected through a combination of offensive patrol and ambush operations by district and tambon police, paramilitary units, and Army units, at least until the VSF program is complete. Unfortunately, only 220 villages out of some 15,000 in the entire Northeast are slated to receive VSF security units in 1968. The entire VSF program, if implemented according to schedule by 1972, will provide security for only about 2,000 villages in addition to the estimated 550 now having a village security unit of some kind. It would appear, then, that some interim measures should be considered to accelerate the establishment of village security.

(C) Two possible interim solutions would be to (a) adopt a concept of dynamic collective defense for those villages which are concentrated in a small geographic area, utilizing paramilitary and other local security resources in a random pattern of night patrols and ambushes and (b) exploit the capability of the local villagers for security by the formation of "home guard" units under the supervision of the district, with arms and funding provided by the Royal Thai Government.

(C) While it is recognized that the "home guard" approach to security was abandoned because of the loss of some weapons to the insurgents and other deficiencies, Governor Phat of Ubon apparently has been successful with it. Perhaps the most important advantage of a home guard program is that it might serve to attract the "footloose youth" of the Northeast and consequently deny them to the guerrilla movement.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

SECRET

(C) The Remote Area Security Development program conducted by the Border Patrol Police (BPP) in the North was well on the way to winning the allegiance of the hill tribes when disrupted by indiscriminate military operations early this year. This combined security and civil action program should be reemphasized as soon as practicable.

G. SUPPRESSION OF THE ARMED BANDS

1. Mission and Tasks

(S) A study of past counterinsurgency operations shows that the mission of regular military forces should be to seize the initiative by offensive operations against the guerrilla forces, rather than to defend population centers and installations. (Police and paramilitary forces should perform static defense.) The tasks to be executed in the offensive mission are the fragmentation and attrition of the guerrilla forces. The Second Army Forward in the Northeast is now conducting its operations in consonance with the above mission and tasks.

(S) Tactical experience shows that the tasks of fragmentation and attrition can be accomplished better through small-unit patrol and ambush operations than through large sweeps and encirclements. The Second Army Forward in the Northeast is employing the bulk of its limited forces in small-unit operations and is superior to the guerrilla bands in tactics, as well as in organization, training, equipment, and logistics. On the other hand, the Third Army Forward in the North has not evolved effective tactics. It is hampered also by lack of combat experience, difficult terrain, inadequate intelligence, and marginal logistic support. Most importantly, it faces a more aggressive adversary, the Meo.

2. Disposition of Forces

(S) The Royal Thai Army has sufficient combat troops in the inventory to deal effectively with the current armed insurgency, but the troops are not deployed to maximum advantage. The six companies

SECRET

~~SECRET~~

permanently available to Second Army Forward for offensive operations in the Northeast are not adequate for the mission and tasks described above, much less for providing support to currently inadequate village security forces. The US Military Assistance Command, Thailand has estimated that 13 infantry battalions will be required to carry out widespread operations against the 1,500 to 2,000 guerrillas and to back up village security. In the North, Third Army Forward has enough combat troops to suppress the armed insurgency in its area. Its difficulties are not quantitative.

3. Quantitative and Qualitative Deficiencies of the RTA

(S) While the RTA has sufficient infantry battalions in the inventory to meet current requirements, the units suffer from a number of quantitative and qualitative deficiencies. The most serious quantitative deficiency is the shortage of company-grade officers and noncommissioned officers. Furthermore, there is an overall personnel shortage of about 50 percent of Table of Organization strength. Current RTA plans for augmentation of officer and enlisted strength will reduce but not eliminate these shortages.

(S) The most important qualitative deficiency is a lack of initiative throughout the rank structure, which can be overcome only through strong leadership at top echelons of command. Leadership at intermediate and lower levels of command cannot compensate for ineffective senior leadership in the Thai system, as it often can in Western armed forces. Fortunately there are strong leaders among the top command echelon. General Dongcherm has demonstrated the type of leadership required to exploit the capabilities of his units. In the opinion of knowledgeable US officials in close contact with the RTA, there are other general officers with equivalent qualities of leadership.

4. Training

(S) Training of the RTA does not measure up to requirements. Basic training lacks competent supervision and is incomplete; rifle marksmanship standards are not adequate for effective counterinsurgency

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

operations. Field training at all levels is severely restricted by a lack of per diem funds, although this deficiency will be remedied to some extent by increased funding during 1969.

(S) The United States has assigned a Special Forces company to assist the RTA in achieving a high standard of counterinsurgency training. Unfortunately, the impact of counterinsurgency training has been diluted by the low standard of basic training in the RTA. As a consequence, the Special Forces have been unable to concentrate on the high payoff areas of immediate action drills and combat marksmanship. If this training is to succeed, the United States must either insist on a higher standard of basic training prior to counterinsurgency training or concentrate on the high payoff areas without attempting to rectify basic training deficiencies.

5. Intelligence

(S) A sound national intelligence organization has gradually evolved and is now in place in Thailand. The Special Branch of the Police bears primary responsibility for targeting the CPT infrastructure and has achieved some success, highlighted by the arrest of about 50 Party members in August 1967.

(S) However, military intelligence acquisition and dissemination are inadequate. There is a need for timely, detailed intelligence which will enable the RTA to mount operations with reasonable assurance of contact under favorable tactical conditions. All components of the present intelligence structure require upgrading if this end is to be achieved.

(S) The most acute need for more effective production and dissemination of operational intelligence is in the Northeast. A principal source of intelligence for Second Army Forward, JSC 4, suffers from shortages of qualified personnel, and there is a lack of coordination between JSC 4 and Second Army. The G-2 division of the Second Army also suffers from quantitative and qualitative deficiencies. Two immediate steps are indicated: the exchange of liaison officers between JSC 4 and Second Army, and the assignment

~~SECRET~~

SECRET

of a qualified US Army intelligence specialist as adviser to the G-2 division of the Second Army.

(S) In addition, Second Army Forward has not exploited the intelligence potential of direct observation from low-performance aircraft. An even more significant weakness is the lack of an effective psychological warfare and defector program. Such a program would considerably facilitate achievement of the military mission as well as serve the overall strategy of the counterinsurgency effort. Finally, the RTG and the RTA show a disturbing disregard for the basic requirements of counterintelligence--the need to deny information to the Communist infrastructure and the guerrilla bands.

6. Organization

(S) As in other low-level insurgencies, the basic organization of the infantry battalion has proved adequate for the task. If the insurgency should increase to the point requiring additional forces, a fourth rifle company should be added to the infantry battalion in lieu of the creation of additional infantry battalions.

7. Equipment

(S) The current US Military Assistance Program for modernization of the RTA appears sound. Consideration should be given to accelerating the delivery of helicopters and to providing additional PRC-25 radio equipment to meet the operational requirements of small-unit patrols.

8. Logistics

(S) The logistics of the RTA suffers from a variety of ills including a lack of command interest, shortages of trained supply and maintenance personnel, delays in the supply of replacement parts, and a tendency to hoard supplies and equipment.

(S) The Joint US Military Advisory Group, Thailand reports that these deficiencies may be severe enough to prevent the RTA from supporting an increased level of troop deployment in the Northeast. It would appear, however, that the relatively low-level logistic

SECRET

SECRET

requirements of counter guerrilla operations in that region might be satisfied in part by utilizing commercial transportation and by air-lifting priority items.

H. GROWTH POTENTIAL OF THE INSURGENCY

(S) The growth potential of the insurgency in the Northeast and in the Central Plain and among the ethnic Thai in general is low. Intensification of suppression operations in the Northeast, together with a continuation of environmental improvement and village security programs, not only can arrest the insurgency but can critically weaken it. In the Central Plain, the Communists' prospects for creating a strong insurgent movement are even less promising than in Northeast Thailand. Since most of the ethnic Thais reside in the Central Plain, and since the Thai economy depends heavily on the agricultural production of the area, this region is of critical importance to the Royal Thai Government.

(S) The ethnic minorities of Thailand constitute significant potential sources of insurgency. They comprise about 4 million of the 33 million population and all have grievances of varying degrees against the government. Most of them lack the intrinsic cultural barriers to Communist methods and techniques which characterize the ethnic Thai.

(S) The growth potential is high among the hill tribes in the North. It is likely that the Communists will capitalize on the revolutionary situation in this area and the lack of government presence to spread the insurgency to tribes other than the Meo. Geographical considerations and a narrow population base limit the threat to Thailand as a whole.

(S) The growth potential of the insurgency along the Malaysian frontier is also high. The Communist Terrorist Organization has a viable infrastructure and a trained guerrilla arm. Peking directives could release this potential against the Royal Thai Government. However, considerations of geography and population limit the threat. The insurgency in the Mid-South appears to have a moderate potential for growth.

SECRET

~~SECRET~~

(S) The potential in the West Central Border Area is uncertain. However, the proximity of this area to the Central Plain and the possibility of a linkup with a hill tribe insurgency extending southward lend significance to the threat in this region.

(S) Depending on the outcome of the war in South Vietnam and other developments, the North Vietnamese or the Chinese may at some time in the future have a capability to furnish massive external support, including units of regulars or "volunteers," to the Thai insurgents. Were they to render support of that magnitude, however, the scenario would become one of outright invasion, and it would lie beyond the scope of this analysis.

I. CAPABILITY OF THE RTG TO COPE WITH THE POTENTIAL THREAT

(S) Continuing insurgency in the Northeast, coincident with an expansion of the hill tribe insurgency in the North, a redirection of the Communist Terrorist Organization against Thailand rather than Malaysia, and an intensification of the insurgent activities in the Mid-South and the West Central Border Area, would put severe pressures on the Royal Thai Government. The pressures would sharpen even more if the insurgency should spread to the mountainous areas bordering the Central Plain, thus gaining a base for disruptive raids against the population centers and economy of that vital region.

(S) An appraisal of the capability of the Royal Thai Government and its institutions to stand up under such pressures must be speculative at best. Nevertheless, the conclusion is that the RTG could probably muster the men, money, and materials to support the required expansion of police, paramilitary, and military forces to counter the threat. It is also probable that the political stability of the Royal Thai Government would not be threatened by the growth of the insurgencies in the North and South to their full potential. Indeed, there is the possibility that the stability of the government would in fact be enhanced by a greater threat from the ethnic minorities--that in such a circumstance the ethnic Thai would support the government even more actively than at present.

xxx

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

(S) In the North, expanded police, paramilitary, and military forces could probably confine the insurgency among the hill tribes to the border provinces and could protect the ethnic Thai population centers in the river valleys from raids and sorties. However, if recent operations in the North are any indication, insurgency among the hill tribes is not likely to yield to a purely military situation. According to a recent report, "the most critical factor in this area continues to be the residual psychological problem which has plagued the northern community for years. The ability of the Thai Government to successfully promote the understanding and full acceptance of tribal peoples is, in the final analysis, the hinge upon which the ultimate success of these operations depend."¹

(S) In the light of our own national experience with attitudes toward ethnic minorities, such a prescription is more easily stated than implemented. Nevertheless, if the RTG can bring itself to the hard decision of de-emphasizing suppression and adopting a conciliatory policy toward the hill tribes, and if it reinforces its decision with a renewed and intensified program of local development, the serious spread of insurgency may be averted. There is no evidence that the Communist influence is particularly widespread among the Meo; indeed some 10 years of Communist organizational efforts have reaped a fairly meager harvest. The case might even be made that if the RTG were to permit the hill tribes to continue their traditional practices of slash-and-burn agriculture, the growing of poppies, and the use of guns for hunting, the Communists might well find themselves without many openings for exploitation. This prospect might make it worthwhile to consider lifting the restrictions which vex the hill tribes.

(S) The agency most familiar with the hill tribes and their problems is the Border Patrol Police. An expansion of this paramilitary force would seem to be in order. It might also be desirable

1. Richard L. Weaver, "Thailand-Northern Insurgency and the Military Response," Military Assistance Command, Office of Historical Advisor (Bangkok, undated), p. 55. CONFIDENTIAL

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

to encourage the creation of hill tribe paramilitary units recruited locally and trained in unconventional operations by the Border Patrol Police. Such a force could be far more effective against hard-core insurgents than regular military units. A clear need is seen for an unconventional approach to the military aspect of the problem in the North.

(S) Insurgency in the South could be confined to the Peninsula, and Thai military pressure, in concert with Malaysian forces, might be able to defeat the insurgency there militarily.

J. IMPLICATIONS FOR US SUPPORT

(S) An expansion of insurgency in the North and an intensification in the South and West Central area might compel the Royal Thai Government to increase its military, paramilitary, and police forces beyond presently contemplated levels. The degree of force expansion cannot be accurately forecast. However, if it becomes necessary to increase RTG forces, US military and economic assistance should also be increased commensurately to equip new units and to support the nonmilitary programs of an expanded counterinsurgency effort.

(S) If Peking and Hanoi were to increase their external support of the insurgency in Thailand to invasion proportions, the RTG and its armed forces would be incapable of coping with the situation without direct military support from friendly countries. For example, if Hanoi were to infiltrate numerous North Vietnamese or Pathet Lao cadre or organized "volunteer" forces into the Northeast and mobilize the 50,000 highly disciplined North Vietnamese refugees in that region as active insurgents, the threat in the Northeast would take on grave new dimensions. Similarly, the infiltration of sizable forces of Pathet Lao cadre or North Vietnamese volunteers into the northern provinces through Laos could magnify the insurgency in that region to dangerous proportions.

(S) Large-scale intensification of external support to the insurgency on the order referred to above would dramatically change the Thais' problem from one of internal Maoist insurgency to what would

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

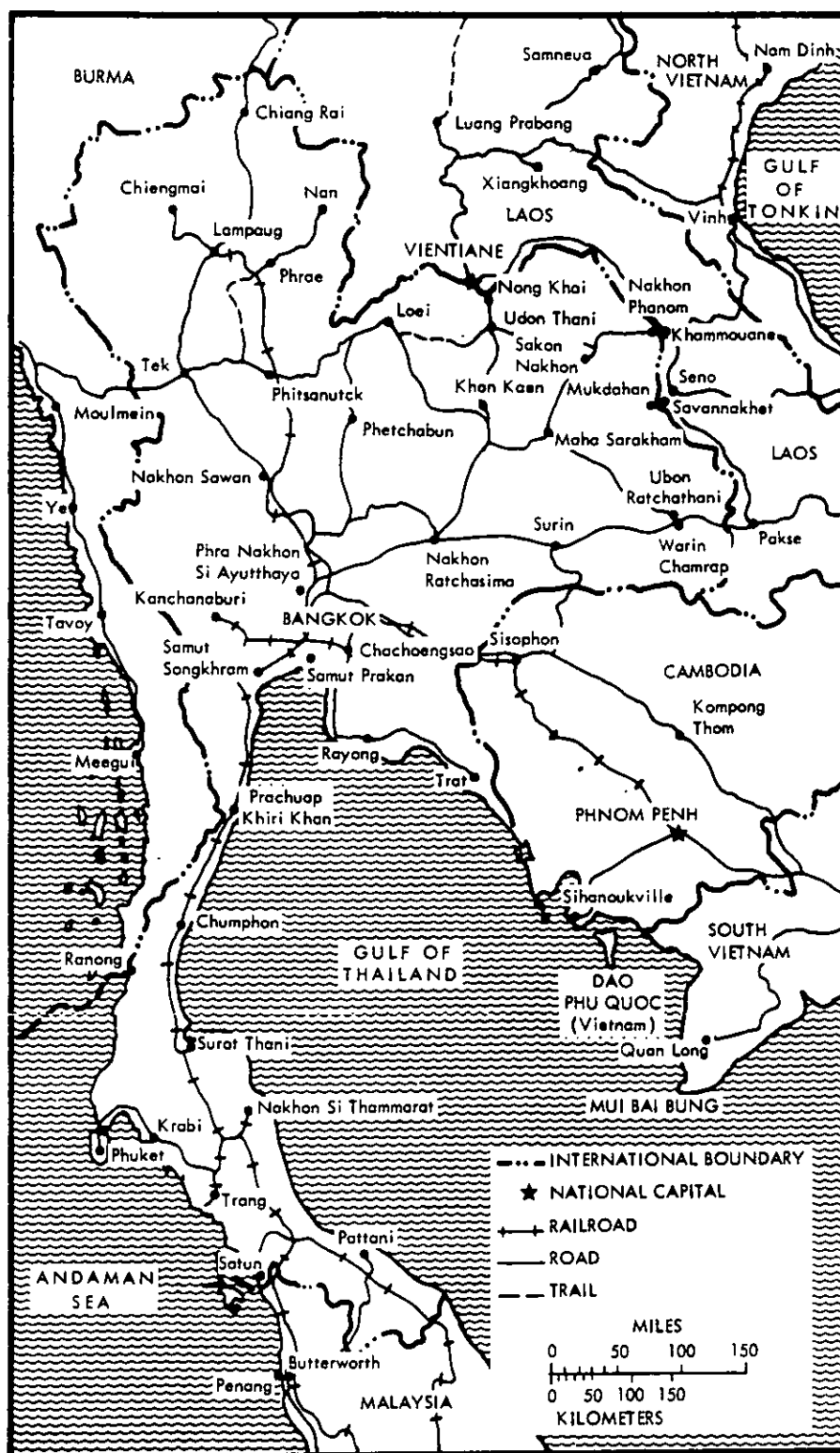
in effect be an invasion. The additional pressures would seriously threaten the stability of the Royal Thai Government and, as noted above, could not be relieved without external military support. The extent of the support which might be required in such an eventuality cannot now be estimated, nor is it within the scope of this analysis to consider the implications of a threat of invasion proportions.

xxxiii

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

This page is UNCLASSIFIED



16-10-68-1

Thailand (U)

xxxiv

~~SECRET~~

UNCLASSIFIED

I

THE SETTING FOR INSURGENCY

A. INTERNATIONAL SETTING

(U) The Thais take pride in the literal meaning of their country's name--"Land of the Free"--and the historical reality which the term reflects. Alone of the nations of Southeast Asia, they remained independent in the centuries when the rest of the area was colonized by Western imperial powers. One important consequence is that they are considerably more self-confident and less defensively suspicious about dealing with great powers than are most other Asians. They also consider that they owe their independence less to their own strength than to their skillfulness in gaining acceptance by stronger powers of their usefulness as a buffer state.

(U) Their active alliance with the United States--through SEATO and in support of the Vietnam war--is in some sense a departure from historic Thai policy. In another sense, it is an application of this policy, reflecting Thailand's acute awareness that China and the Vietnamese Communists represent the only serious threat it faces, and that US power represents the only effective support available for containing this threat, now and over the long term.

(U) The role of Thailand in the tides of conflict in Asia has long been overshadowed by the war in Vietnam. The very vicissitudes of the struggle in South Vietnam and the uncertainty of its outcome, however, have tended to shift concern with increasing frequency to neighboring Thailand. One need not accept the "domino theory" to recognize that powerful reverberations from the conflict in South Vietnam are acutely felt in Bangkok, nor to perceive that

UNCLASSIFIED

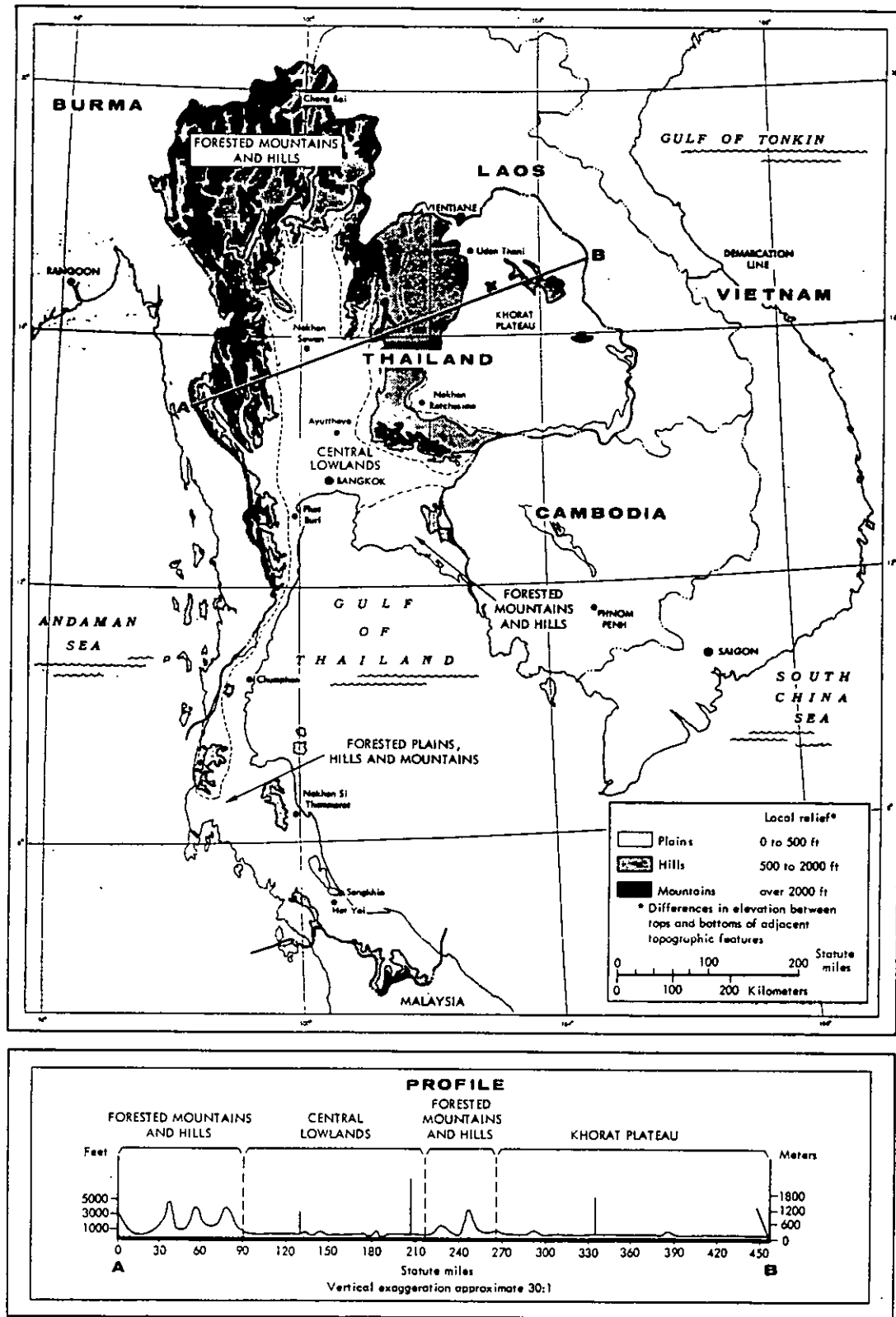
political shock waves emanating directly from Peking and Hanoi disturb the domestic tranquillity of this Asiatic "Land of the Free." Surrounded by Laos, Cambodia, and Burma, and sharing a brief peninsular border with Malaysia, Thailand suffers as well the centripetal pressures inherent in its geographic position in mainland Southeast Asia.

B. THAILAND AND ITS PEOPLE

(U) Thailand's geography is favorable to an insurgency. Some 3,000 miles of open border invite infiltration. External support to local insurgents could be readily injected into Thailand from Laos, Cambodia, Burma, and Malaysia across the Mekong River or over mountain trails (see Figure 1). The investment in resources to create an effective bar to infiltration would be prohibitive; only selected stretches of the Mekong could be effectively patrolled. Suitable guerrilla base areas exist in the extensive forested plains and mountains. Interregional communications by road and rail are adequate to support counterinsurgent operations, but regional communications, particularly in the northern, western, and southern border areas, cannot effectively support counterinsurgent operations. Airlift in these areas is essential.

(U) Thailand has a total land area of nearly 200,000 sq. miles. The nation is divided geographically into four major regions. The extensive Central Plain is watered by the Chao Phraya River, which brings silt to replenish the fields each year. The heavy, dark-clay soil is especially suitable for the production of paddy rice, and approximately 20 percent of the 43 million acres in this region is cultivated, mostly in rice. The North is a mountainous area covered with forests, but dissected by four major river valleys which provide rich farmland on 5.6 percent of its 24 million acres. The Northeast is separated from the Central Plain by a mountain range. It is an eastward sloping plateau with poor soil and an irregular water supply. Floods and droughts are not uncommon. Cultivated land covers about 20 percent of the 40 million acres

UNCLASSIFIED



15-22-68-1

FIGURE 1 (U). Topographical Map of Thailand (U)

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

in the Northeast. The South of Thailand contains 17 million acres of which 15 percent is cultivated. A variety of tropical crops is grown in this region in addition to rice.

(U) The variability and instability of the amount and distribution of rainfall are the major climatic hazards for agriculture. The heavy rainfall also leaches the soil of soluble chemicals and accounts for the low fertility of most Thai soils. Despite these conditions, Thailand is a country of lush growth where food has never been a serious problem to the population at large.

(U) The population of Thailand is remarkably homogeneous; 30 million inhabitants, 87 percent of the population, are ethnic Thais. The ethnic Thai is a rice farmer--a highly respected occupation buttressed by tradition and religion.

(U) Ninety percent of the Thai farmers own their own land. In the Central Plain, the Thai farmer is favored by nature and manmade improvements; he customarily grows enough food for his family along with a surplus to exchange for consumer goods. Markets are accessible through a well-developed communication system of rivers, canals, and highways. The Thai farmer in the Northeast, which hosts about one-third of the population, is less favored. While he normally produces enough food for his own needs, except during periods of extensive droughts, any surplus is limited or negligible. In the dry season, sources of drinking water might be as far as a mile away. Access to markets is difficult for some villagers even in the dry season; in the wet season it is impossible.

(U) Four out of five Thais live in a village, where lack of contact with the central government, and in some cases physical isolation, has sponsored an informal but effective grass-roots democracy. The villager customarily elects his own village headman by a show of hands, and he participates in village discussions which lead to an informal consensus on common programs. This tradition of informal, local democracy makes it difficult for outsiders to impose their programs, be they government officials

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

or Communist organizers. At the same time, participation in village affairs has generally not led the villager to demand a voice in the political process beyond the confines of his own village. His acceptance of the Buddhist principle of status--which holds that temporal position is earned through the acquisition of merit--leads him to accept authority inherent in a superior position, without demanding the right to influence the selection of those in authority. However, he expects that the authority be exercised "correctly"--that is, with due regard and consideration for the inferior. Otherwise he demonstrates considerable ingenuity in avoiding conformity to orders.

(U) The remaining 13 percent of Thailand's population, almost 4 million, is made up of a number of ethnic minorities (see Figure 2 for geographical distribution). Of these, the Chinese constitute the largest group, almost 3 million, with the majority located in Bangkok and a large concentration of the remainder located in the Southern Peninsula, which also hosts about 1 million Malays. A small Vietnamese minority of about 50,000 occupies a strategic area in Northeast Thailand. About 250,000 primitive hill tribesmen live in the rugged mountainous border areas of northern and western Thailand. Significant cultural differences exist among these minorities and between them and the ethnic Thais. Almost all constitute potential subversive threats of varying intensity to the stability of the Royal Thai Government because of their cultural antipathies and, with the exception of the Bangkok Chinese, exploitable economic grievances.

C. THE ECONOMY

(U) The Thai economy has expanded rapidly during the 1960's. The economy is still basically agricultural, but industry and commerce have grown at a faster rate than agriculture.¹

1. See Volume II, Part II, "Economic Background," for a discussion of Thailand's general economy, overall economic development, and economic capability to support the counterinsurgency effort.

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

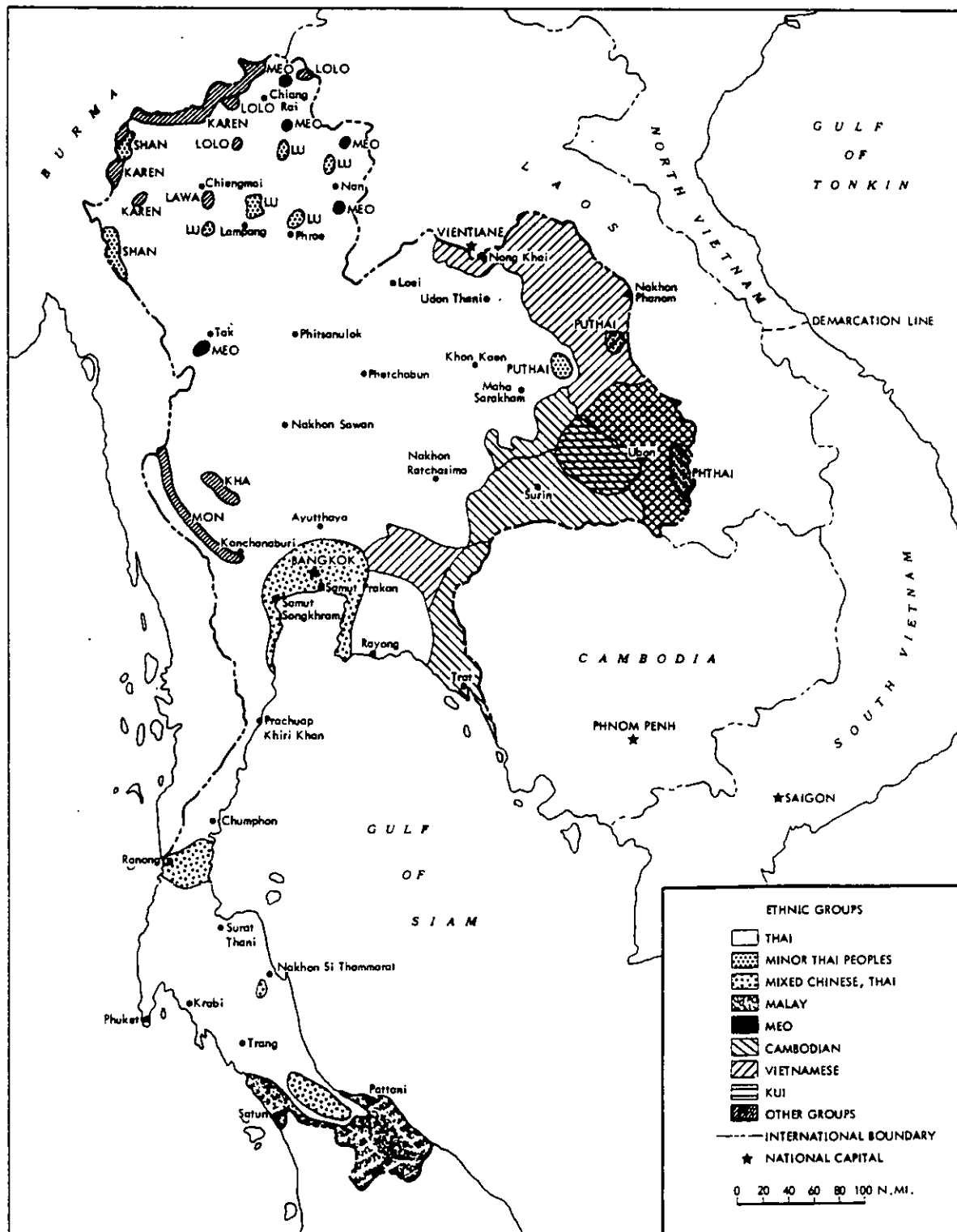


FIGURE 2 (U). Thailand, Major Ethnic Groups (U)

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

(U) Investment and savings rates have increased sharply in the past decade, capital formation has grown appreciably, and the Gross National Product has risen at an average annual rate of 7.5 percent between 1958 and 1967, reaching a level of \$4.7 billion. The monetary unit has remained stable, wholesale and consumer price indexes have shown only slight increases, and the advance in growth has been achieved essentially without inflation.

(U) Allowing for a population increase of 3.2 percent annually, the GNP has risen in real terms at slightly above 4 percent a year. Although incomes vary throughout the country, with the people in the Bangkok area receiving much higher incomes than the people in the predominantly rural areas, the rise in per capita GNP from \$112 in 1962 to \$140 in 1967 is a meaningful indicator of total economic growth.

(U) Agriculture is the dominant sector in the Thai economy. Significantly, the country produces enough rice to feed its own population and to sell a considerable amount abroad. The workers engaged in agriculture in 1966 represented 80 percent of the national labor force. This large element of the population produces a major part of the Gross National Product, but not in direct proportion to its size. In 1966 agriculture provided 32 percent of the GNP.

(U) Agriculture is the most important earner of foreign exchange for the country, providing approximately 80 percent of the total value of exported goods. These export earnings have been a large factor in providing Thailand with foreign exchange to pay for imports needed in the growth of nonagricultural sectors of the economy. In 1967, the Royal Thai Government derived 11 percent of its non-loan revenue directly from agriculture. Indirectly, the amount was much larger.

(U) A large part of Thai industry is based on processing agricultural products, for example, rice milling, cotton and silk textile production, gunnysack manufacturing, tapioca flour milling, lumber milling, liquor distilling, and cigarette manufacturing.

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

The marketing and distribution system is also largely based on purchasing rice and other farm products, transporting them, and selling manufactured goods to the farming community.

D. POLITICAL ADMINISTRATION

1. Central Government

(U) The central government in Bangkok and its administrative structure have remained relatively unchanged since the overthrow of the monarchy in 1932. Technically the government is a constitutional monarchy; in practice it is dominated by the executive branch. The power of the executive branch is concentrated in the hands of a small elite of military and civilians, among whom the military wield the most power.

(U) Its openly authoritarian nature notwithstanding, the present government has provided the country with a relatively stable and successful administration. Periodic coups have not led to a breakdown of government into political chaos. Since 1958, the Royal Thai Government has been dominated by a group of powerful military leaders with broad authoritarian powers. The relative absence of democratic principles notwithstanding, military rule has been benevolent rather than repressive and has brought the country nine years of political stability and economic prosperity. Moreover, although power is concentrated in the hands of a group of military leaders and civilians, this ruling elite is not completely free to do as it pleases. Theoretically, it is not subject to any of the checks and balances which characterize a Western democracy. In practice, however, some constraints on freedom of action exist. The first of these derives from rivalry within the government: the competition among individuals and factions is such that no single group is strong enough to assert full power.

(U) The monarchy also imposes some constraint on the ruling group. King Phumiphon is a respected symbol of national unity, is widely popular in his own right, and thus can and does invoke his

UNCLASSIFIED

prestige to influence government policies. Perhaps an even more formidable bridle on top-level policy--as well as a conveyor belt of continuity in policy--is the Thai civil service, considered one of the most effective in Southeast Asia. More than simply staffing the government bureaucracy proper, the civil service oversees wide ranges of national life: the railways, communications services, a number of industries and commercial institutions, the national education system, as well as the principal levers of the national economy.

(U) Two factors have contributed to the success of the Thai civil service. The first factor is its overall competence: the service has attracted the most highly educated and motivated members of the society; almost all university students aspire to careers in the civil service. The second factor is its carefully nurtured tradition of political neutrality. Despite frequent shifts of leadership, Thai civil service members have shown loyalty to the top leadership. The various regimes, on their part, have rewarded this loyalty by permitting the civil service rather broad authority within its spheres.

2. Local Government

(U) The populations of Thai villages vary from about 200 to 2,000. Groups of villages (typically from eight to 15) in turn are organized into communes called tambons, which are headed by a leader chosen from among the constituent village headmen. Neither the village nor the tambon headmen are civil servants although they are technically government employees. The lowest level at which an official government presence can be found is at that of the district, the administrative echelon in which three to 14 tambons are grouped. The district officer and his assistants are drawn principally from the Department of Local Administration of the Ministry of Interior, although other ministries concerned with such matters as education, health, and the like assign representatives to the district. At the beginning of the insurgency

UNCLASSIFIED

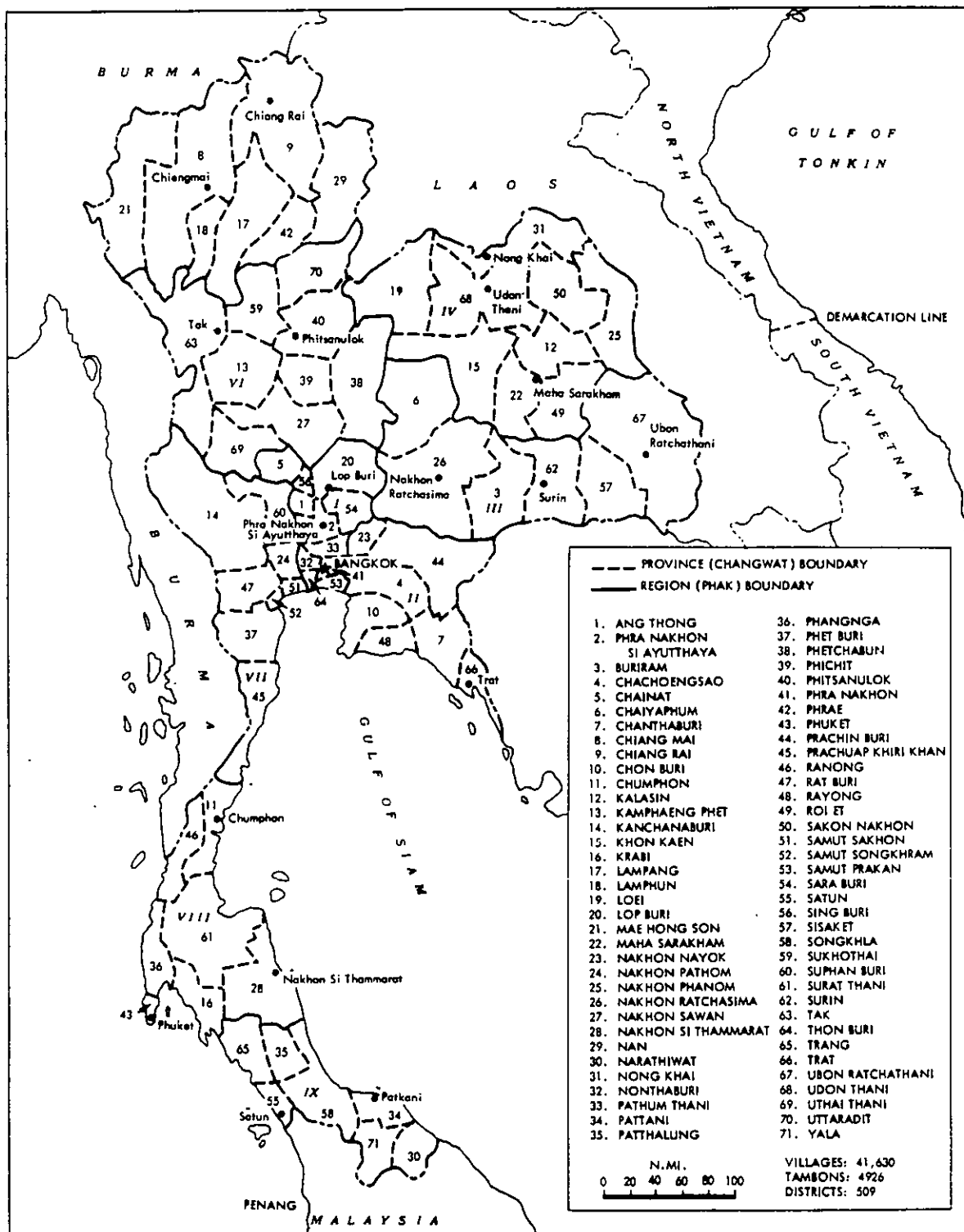
UNCLASSIFIED

in 1961, government representation in a typical district covering over 100 villages, about 700 square miles, and a population in excess of 50,000, consisted of only about 15 officials and a police force of about 40 constables. Sparse government representation, combined with inadequate or nonexistent roads and a shortage of transportation, has made contact between the government and villages infrequent. Some remote villages have had no contact with district officials whatsoever.

(U) Districts are grouped under a provincial echelon of administration. (Figure 3 shows the administrative divisions of Thailand.) A typical provincial office in the Northeast might be responsible for 10 districts, with a population of over 400,000 and an area of nearly 4,000 square miles. The provincial staffs have suffered from the same deficiencies as the district: there simply are not enough personnel to supervise the districts adequately. There are qualitative deficiencies as well. Harsh living conditions have led many civil servants to avoid service in the Northeast, and the central administration has tended to assign its less capable officials to this administrative Siberia.

(U) The authoritarian nature of the central government, reinforced by its concern for survival, has led to a concentration of decision-making in Bangkok and to discouragement of initiative at the local level. Initiative tends to be blunted also by the traditional veneration of higher authority, which is deeply rooted in the Thai culture. Nevertheless, its shortcomings notwithstanding, the fact that a civil administration did exist down to the district level was of prime importance when insurgency erupted. Unlike in Vietnam, where an administrative structure had to be created after insurgency broke out, in Thailand the task has been to improve an established system.

UNCLASSIFIED



16-10-68-3

FIGURE 3 (U). Thailand, Administrative Divisions, 1965 (U)

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

(This page is blank)

UNCLASSIFIED

SECRET

II

THE INSURGENCY

A. NARRATIVE

(U) In 1961, when the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT) adopted a resolution to conduct an insurgency in Thailand, the Party did not appear to pose a significant threat. Like most Southeast Asian Communist parties, it was established in the late 1920's by a few alienated intellectuals of Chinese and Vietnamese heritage, including Ho Chi Minh. When the Japanese overran Thailand, the Communists attempted to exploit the situation by creating front organizations in the labor unions of Bangkok, and staged an unsuccessful bid to capture the nascent resistance movement among the Thais. After Pridi Panomyong became Prime Minister in 1947, anti-Communist laws, enacted during the Japanese occupation, were repealed and the Party made some gains in influence among the Bangkok labor unions. A year later Pridi was overthrown, and the Party organization, although it continued to enjoy legal status, came under close government surveillance.

(S) In 1952, the CPT took the first major step toward active subversion in a resolution proclaiming the armed struggle as the path toward socialism and, faithful to Maoist theory, marking the villagers as the base for the revolution. The government immediately responded with repressive legislation outlawing the Party and moved vigorously to disrupt the clandestine organization, bringing Communist activity to a virtual halt. However, beginning in 1954, the return by the government to a more permissive attitude toward the CPT and its activities enabled the clandestine Party to revive its organization and focus its activities among the Bangkok laborers and the villagers of Northeast Thailand. In 1958, the coup which brought Marshal Sarit to power marked a shift once more to a policy

SECRET

of severe repression, but the Party, now boasting secure clandestine organization, was able to continue its subversive operations, albeit at a slower pace. With the termination of the Malayan Emergency in 1960, the remnants of the Malayan Communist Party, under Peng Chen, fled into Thailand, where they established themselves in the southern provinces bordering Malaya.

1. Developments in the Northeast

(S) The line of armed revolution adopted in 1961 by the CPT embraced the immediate goal of forming an infrastructure and guerrilla units pending the creation of a "revolutionary situation." The target chosen was the Northeast, where a small base for Communist organization already existed and where the lower standard of living, the isolation of the area from the influence of the government, and the lack of security offered possibilities for exploitation. Ease of access for external support through Pathet Lao-controlled territory in Laos also influenced the choice of target area. The Party attempted to achieve its goal by playing on local grievances, particularly alleged government neglect. Thai youths were recruited and sent to Laos and North Vietnam for indoctrination and guerrilla training; the more promising recruits were sent to Communist China. In this early phase, the CPT, controlled by Peking, was the leading actor, supported by the Communist Party of North Vietnam, the so-called Lao Dong Party.¹

(S) In the meantime, the policy of armed revolution in the rural areas was affirmed by the Politburo members of the CPT at a meeting in Peking and later in another meeting in the Northeast. In addition to propaganda and persuasion, a limited measure of terror was also authorized. Yet, the guerrilla units were strictly enjoined from clashes with RTG paramilitary and military forces in order not to jeopardize the priority tasks of building an infrastructure, organizing guerrilla forces, and establishing a secure

1. See Volume IV, Appendix A, "The Insurgent Threat," for further discussion.

SECRET

base prior to the initiation of offensive guerrilla tactics against the Royal Thai Government.

(U) In 1963, the government took the first of a series of steps designed to extend government influence into the Northeast in order to counter the spread of the insurgency. In time, these steps were to include improvements in the governmental structure to coordinate programs at the national and regional levels, the development of economic programs to counter the Communist claim of government neglect, the expansion of the provincial and district civil service to implement the new programs, the improvement of village security by expansion of police and paramilitary forces, and the commitment of Royal Thai Army (RTA) units to suppression operations.

(S) The first step in 1963 was a vigorous crackdown on the Communist infrastructure. Two high-ranking cadres of the CPT were executed and numerous suspected members were confined. At the same time that these immediate measures were being taken, the RTG was quickly recognizing the longer-range problems, particularly the fact that the normal governmental structure could not muster the kind of effective coordination of operations required to arrest the insurgency and that a specialized agency for coordination would have to be created. The result was the formation of a special coordination and operational body in April 1962--the National Security Council--charged with formulating policies for countering Communist activities by both passive and active operations. Subordinate to the Council was the National Security Command with regional sub-commands in the Northeast, North, and South. Local paramilitary and police forces were assigned to these regional commands. At this particular stage, suppression missions were conducted by police and paramilitary forces.

(U) The RTG also recognized the need for preventive measures and inaugurated special developmental programs in the impoverished Northeast during the early 1960's. The US AID mission encouraged the government in this direction and often initiated suggestions and plans for specific programs.

SECRET

SECRET

(U) The initial step in the prevention program was the organization of the Mobile Development Units (MDUs) in August 1962, entrusted with the mission of rendering general service to local citizens with the view of strengthening the relations between the RTG and the population.

(U) In 1964, under the persistent spur of Communist charges that the Northeast was neglected, the Royal Thai Government and the United States recognized the need to place additional emphasis on relatively short-term, high-impact projects such as roadbuilding. The Accelerated Rural Development program (ARD) was established in that year to provide the governors of selected provinces with the capability to plan and construct roads and village-level projects. Eighteen provinces, 14 in the Northeast and four in the North, were initially chosen for ARD attention. Additional civil service personnel were assigned to each province to assist the governor in planning and implementing the ARD program. At the same time, the United States was able to persuade the RTG to allocate ARD funds directly to the provincial governors--an unprecedented step in decentralization of Thai authority.

(S) In June 1963, the RTG moved to improve its meager intelligence capabilities in the Northeast. The Special Branch of the Provincial Police, charged with the detection of internal subversion, had been established on the Scotland Yard model in 1932, but its effective scope-of-operations was limited to major population centers. Accordingly, the RTG established Division VII of the Special Branch with field offices in the Northeast, North, and South, with the mission of targeting the infrastructure of the CPT. These field offices were progressively expanded.

(S) Further improvements in the intelligence structure were introduced in June of 1965, when the first of several regional intelligence centers was established in the Northeast on the advice and with the support of US officials. These Joint Security Centers (JSCs) were placed under the management control of the Special Branch, and their membership was drawn from the Provincial and

SECRET

~~SECRET~~

Border Patrol Police and the military. Later, an additional JSC was established in the Northeast, as well as in the Northern, West Central and Mid-Southern regions. The Thai-Malaysian Intelligence Headquarters sustained responsibility for intelligence coordination in the southern provinces bordering on Malaysia.

(U) In late 1963 Field Marshal Sarit died and was replaced as Prime Minister by General Thanom. Some US officials feared that power struggles and confusion would attend the change in leadership, but the transition was smooth and the government continued to function in an orderly fashion. Prime Minister Thanom generally continued the policies, both domestic and foreign, of his predecessor.

(S) In the meantime, during 1963 and 1964, guerrilla operations continued in low key. The insurgents avoided contact with the police and paramilitary forces while sustaining their efforts to create a revolutionary situation, establish an infrastructure, and recruit guerrilla forces by means of propaganda, coercion, and terror. Assassinations rose from one in 1962 to four in 1963 and to seven in 1964.

(U) The RTG, responding to the heightened insurgent activities, took two additional steps to expand the government presence in the Northeast. One was a program to improve local security in the threatened provinces by increasing the number of police posts at the district and tambon levels. The ultimate goal was to extend the police presence to 1,152 tambons in the provinces threatened by insurgency, and to expand the force from 56,000 to 100,000 by 1972.

(U) The second important step was the reinforcement of the police and paramilitary forces in the field with regular military units of the Royal Thai Army. This bolstering of units in the field brought about an increase in contacts with the guerrillas, who were still anxious to avoid combat.

(S) The increased effectiveness of government suppression operations, combined with the growing presence of US forces in South Vietnam and Thailand, apparently forced the CPT, under Peking direction, to abandon the classic Maoist formula of establishing a

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

viable infrastructure, mustering a sizable guerrilla force, and consolidating a base prior to shifting to an offensive strategy. In mid-1965, the CPT Politburo declared a new phase of the revolution in which guerrilla units were ordered to attack government forces and to conduct forced propaganda meetings in the villages.

(S) In late November 1965, a new guerrilla offensive, climaxed by the bloody ambush of a police patrol, forced the government to reappraise its policy. This reappraisal led to an important change in the counterinsurgency structure. It was concluded that the National Security Command, with its civilian membership, was not an adequate agency for direction and coordination. Accordingly, the Communist Suppression Operations Command (CSOC) was organized with General Praphat as its commander. The practical result was that the National Security Command lost most of its power, retaining command only of the Mobile Development Units and responsibility for suppression operations in southern Thailand adjacent to the Malaysian border, in cooperation with Malaysian authorities.

(S) The CSOC was charged with overall direction of the counterinsurgency operations. The civilian, police, and military components of the new authority were assigned co-equal roles in planning, but primary responsibility for the execution of suppression operations was retained by the police. Military forces were given a subordinate and supporting role except when military units exceeded company size, whereupon the military assumed command. The Royal Thai Army service and support elements were also tasked to provide logistic and administrative support for suppression operations.

(S) Field agencies subordinate to the CSOC were created in seven of the 15 provinces of the Northeast where insurgent activity was taking place. These agencies, called CPMs, connoting their civil-police-military membership, were under the direct command of the provincial governors. In addition, CPM-1 was established to act as a field agency for the CSOC in coordinating the allocation of resources and interprovincial operations.

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

(S) As a result primarily of greater aggressiveness on the part of the suppression forces, armed encounters in the Northeast rose sharply from 15 in 1965 to 216 in 1966. Similarly, assassinations rose from 31 in 1965 to 116 in 1966, and the incidence of forced propaganda meetings in villages, initiated in 1966, reached a total of 143. During that year, low-level insurgency activities spread to the West Central and Mid-Southern areas.

(S) The CSOC was an obvious improvement over previous organizational structures. Nevertheless, the first eight months of 1966 bared some salient deficiencies in the coordination of counterinsurgency operations. A key one was the inability of the Civil Affairs Division of the CSOC to coordinate the civil development programs involving various ministries and departments. Accordingly, General Praphat ordered the Director of the Department of Local Administration with a staff of representatives from the Ministries of Interior, National Development, Agriculture, and Education, and other government departments and bureaus involved in counterinsurgency programs to reinforce the Civil Affairs Division of the CSOC.

(S) Additional bolstering of the organizational structure and counterinsurgency programs was undertaken during the first eight months of 1966. Thus a Psychological Warfare Section was created in the CSOC in recognition of the need to coordinate activities in this important realm. Similarly, recognition of the value of systematic interrogation of prisoners and defectors prompted a training program for interrogators and the establishment of interrogation centers in the Joint Security Center in the Northeast and in the CSOC.

(S) Events had demonstrated that village security in the threatened areas was inadequate: the traditional local defense units formed in some villages were not providing full protection against the insurgents, and the expansion of the police down to the tambon level was not proceeding rapidly enough. Early in 1966, at CSOC direction, members of the Thailand National Guard, the Volunteer Defense Corps (VDC), were called to active duty to assist in village security. Later in October 1966, two programs for village defense were adopted

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

largely as the result of US initiative and support--the Peoples' Assistance Teams (PATs) modeled after the Revolutionary Development Teams in Vietnam and the Village Security Officers (VSOs). Both groups were staffed by local villagers who were given special training; in effect they constituted a home guard. In addition, the police began to form tactical units to provide reaction forces to support tambon and district police and village security units. These consisted of Provincial Police Special Action Forces and Border Patrol Police Mobile Reserve Platoons. In order to improve the planning for local security, the RTG decided to assign military officers to the district offices in the Northeast.

(S) The tactics of the Royal Thai Army in the Northeast were reappraised in the light of a growing recognition that the battalion-size military sweep operations were expensive and largely ineffective. A new concept for military operations abandoned unproductive sweeps in favor of concentration of military forces in selected areas of high guerrilla activity ringed by villages which provided support in the form of recruits and food. The plan to implement this new concept, known as the 0910 Plan, was launched in mid-January 1967, and targeted 11 areas of high guerrilla activity in six Northeast provinces with the design of concentrating military, police, paramilitary, and civil forces to clear the guerrillas and to provide local security, civic action, and short-term development projects for the villagers. To compensate for the shortage of local security resources in the affected villages, combined forces of police, village security forces, paramilitary elements, and military forces were garrisoned in the villages.

(S) In the summer of 1967, rumors in Bangkok that the Royal Thai Army was maneuvering for a greater role in the counterinsurgency effort seemed borne out by events. In late October, General Dongcherm, the Second Army commander of RTA forces in the Northeast, was directed to take over responsibility for CPM-1, the regional organization responsible for coordination and direction in the Northeast under the CSOC.

~~SECRET~~

The CSOC chain of command to CPM-1 was altered so that CSOC direction of military operations flowed through the RTA and thence to Second Army Forward. This shift concerned US officials as a harbinger of a "militarization" of the counterinsurgency effort at the expense of local development. Apparently, however, General Dongcherm understood the need for a coordinated civil-military approach to the problem in the Northeast and did not interfere with civil programs of development and village security.

(S) Coincident with the above events, RTG and US officials undertook an evaluation of experiences with the village security program represented by the Village Security Officers and People's Assistance Teams. This appraisal bared the need for additional screening of personnel; improved training of security forces, not only in security functions, but also in intelligence and community development; modern small arms; and more certain remuneration. In early January 1968, the RTG indicated its intent to implement the Village Security Force program (VSF) with some US financial support. As of June 1968, training of the initial increment has not been executed.

(U) In February 1968, the government took an important step toward legitimization and liberalization of the political structure. After more than eight years of discussion and debate, a new constitution was accepted by the National Assembly and forwarded to the King for approval and promulgation.

(S) Incident reports through March 1968 suggest an increased level of armed encounters. Significantly, in February 1968, clashes initiated by the insurgents exceeded those initiated by the RTA for the first time since May 1967. The incidence of meetings and assassinations was below that of 1967. Increasing Pathet Lao and Viet Minh infiltration was reported from some sources in the field, but was unconfirmed. In general, infiltration of personnel into the Northeast, as well as into other regions, has been in the form of returning Thai trainees and occasional foreign cadres, rather than in the form of substantial numbers of foreign organizers or guerrillas. If a recent US mission estimate of 1,500 active insurgents is accurate, guerrilla

strength in the Northeast has remained roughly the same during the last 15 months.

2. Developments in the North

(S) Evidence of Communist subversion among the Meo hill tribes in the northern provinces of Nan and Chiengrai came to light in December 1966, and was dramatized by two armed clashes between Border Patrol Police and Meo tribesmen in February and September 1967. In December 1967, the RTG, in conjunction with the Lao government, dispatched troops to conduct an operation against Kuomintang (KMT) bands whose activities were becoming untenable. In the engagements that ensued, Royal Thai Army and Border Patrol Police units engaged in about 20 clashes with armed Meo tribesmen, suffering 50 casualties.

(S) The RTG's response to this new threat was immediate and heavy handed. The Third Army was ordered to establish a forward command post in Nan province with the equivalent of about five understrength infantry battalions. Later Royal Thai Air Force elements, including T-28 fighter bombers, helicopters, and observation aircraft, were assigned to support suppression operations including air strikes against several Meo villages. At least one village was attacked with napalm. In addition to suppression operations, the government began a program of resettling Meos into camps in the lowlands--an action that was all the more severe in light of the known aversion of the Meos for living in low altitudes.

(S) The guerrilla forces operating in Nan and Chiengrai provinces, consisting of Meo and some Yao tribesmen, are led by Sino-Thai, Vietnamese, some Laotians, and possibly some ethnic Thais. Some of the leaders have received training in Laos and North Vietnam. Captured documents indicate that the CPT, under the direction of Peking, is the dominant force behind the operations, with Hanoi rendering support. It is estimated that there are 150 to 200 tribesmen operating in relatively small bands of about 30. They are armed with a variety of small arms, including some submachine guns and AK-47 rifles. Their tactics seem to be aimed at avoiding close

~~SECRET~~

contact with government forces, but they are harassing RTG patrols with booby traps and small-arms fire.

(S) Government forces are severely handicapped by the difficult terrain, the lack of road communications, and relative unfamiliarity with the area of operations. They are heavily dependent on helicopters for deployment and logistic support.

3. Developments in West Central Thailand

(S) Reports of subversive activity in the border areas of West Central Thailand had been noted by the RTG earlier, but the first proof came with the assassination of a government official and a villager in November 1966. The government responded with a sweep through five West Central provinces, with negligible results. In August and September 1967, two successful ambushes of police forces by the insurgents inflicted 21 casualties, including the regional Border Patrol Police chief. In September 1967, the RTG responded by establishing a special CSOC suppression staff on the model of CPM-1 in the Northeast. Command was assigned to the First Army commander, with the regional Provincial Police chief, a representative from the Ministry of Interior, and the provincial governors serving as advisers. A company of the First Army was assigned to augment local Border Patrol and Provincial Police forces. Additional forces have been alerted for possible reinforcement.

(S) Insurgent operations have continued in low key. In all, three successful ambushes have been carried out by the insurgents plus occasional clashes with government forces. The US Mission estimates the insurgent strength in this area at 75.

4. Developments in the Mid-South

(S) Intelligence collected on subversive activities in three Mid-South provinces during 1966 resulted in an estimate that the armed insurgents totaled about 200. The first three months of 1967 witnessed nine incidents, of which five were the result of government initiative. While the level of incidents did not rise during the next three months, the RTG nevertheless established a CSOC organization similar

~~SECRET~~

to CPM-1 in Northeast Thailand under a regional Military Circle commander with the regional Police chief as deputy. One regiment of the Royal Thai Army is assigned to the Military Circle.

(S) There have been several forced propaganda meetings and assassinations, but insurgent recruitment activity has decreased significantly in these areas. Most guerrilla leaders appear to have moved into more secure areas in the mountains--sorties into the lowlands seem to be limited to food-gathering activities and some recruitment. Nevertheless, occasional clashes with government forces continue to occur. The estimate of guerrilla strength remains at about 200.

5. Developments in the South

(S) Operations in the South have continued in low key, no doubt reflecting the orientation of the Communist Terrorist Organization (CTO) against Malaysia and the desire to avoid clashes with the RTG forces in order to preclude more vigorous suppression operations. However, low-level engagements between the CTOs and the joint Malaysian-Thai forces continue. The US Mission estimates the operational strength of the CTO at 800.

(S) The command and control organization in the South differs from that employed in other insurgent areas. It was originally established under the National Security Command in 1962, where it remained in spite of the shift to the CSOC organization in December 1965. As now organized, it reflects a joint Malaysian-Thai approach to counterinsurgency in the border area. The General Border Committee is composed of RTG-Malaysian civil and police officials. The operating body is the regional Border Committee which is jointly chaired by the chief police officer of the State of Kedah in Malaysia and the senior Thai police officer of the 9th Region in South Thailand. A regional Border Committee Office, composed of three divisions, including Operations, Intelligence, and Administration, is located in Songla. Thailand is responsible for planning and implementing operations. The equivalent of about two police platoons is available for routine operations supported by police reinforcements.

~~SECRET~~

6. Recapitulation

(S) During the period from the establishment of the National Security Command in 1962 to the approval of the draft constitution in 1968, the RTG has taken a series of steps to counter the insurgent challenge of government neglect of the Northeast. Communications have been opened up through road construction. Nine out of ten villages are within one day's walk of a road, as contrasted with only one out of ten in 1959. The government presence in the Northeast has been expanded from the district into the tambons and villages by increases in civil personnel. Police presence has been extended from the district level to many of the tambons in the provinces threatened by insurgents, while some villages have been provided with full-time security by a combination of police, paramilitary, and military resources. RTA units are operating offensively against the guerrilla bands.

(S) A structure for coordination and implementation of counter-insurgency programs has evolved at the national, regional, and subordinate levels in the form of the CSOC in Bangkok, the Second Army Forward in the Northeast region, and the provincial and district CPMs. An organization for intelligence collection, dissemination, and distribution has come into being with the creation of the Joint Security Centers in all regions.

B. THE THREAT

(U) This section describes the insurgent threat and the tactics employed by the enemy in his attempts to establish a viable infrastructure and gain the active support of the Thai villagers. An evaluation of the insurgents' strengths and weaknesses is also made, focusing on insurgent operations in the Northeast.

(S) One of the significant indicators of the Communist insurgent threat is the number of incidents that occurred in the Northeast during 1967 and 1968. Statistical analysis of these incidents in the Northeast shows that armed encounters peaked in January through March

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

of 1967, coincident with the RTG offensive operations of the 0910 Plan. (See Figure 4.) After the first three months of 1967, operations tended to average about 25 encounters a month, with a sharp drop in December. In January and February 1968, encounters again rose to about 38 a month, but fell off to roughly half that number in March. Similarly, the number of armed propaganda meetings fell to below five after October 1967 and continued at that rate through March of 1968. Assassinations followed the same general pattern, reaching in March 1968 the lowest monthly average number since 1965.

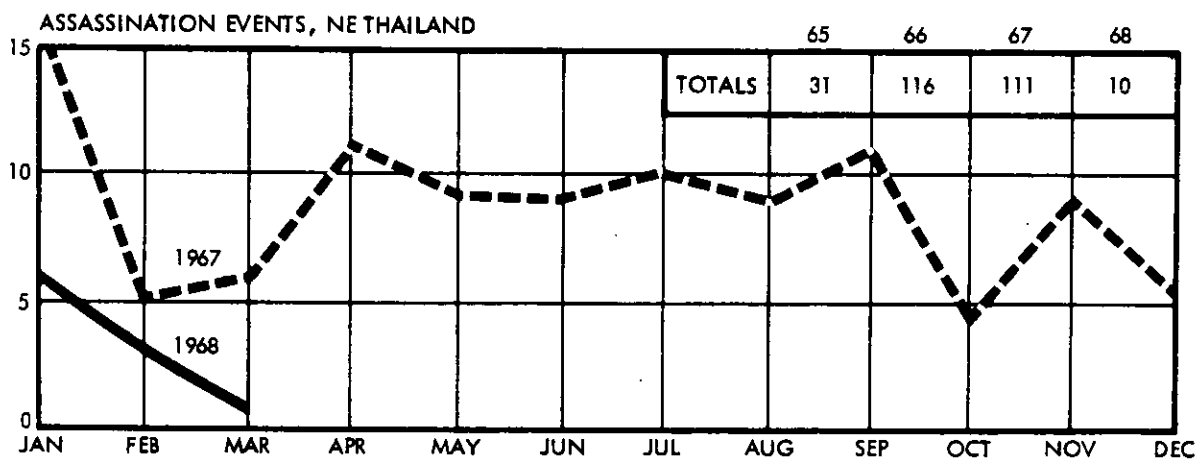
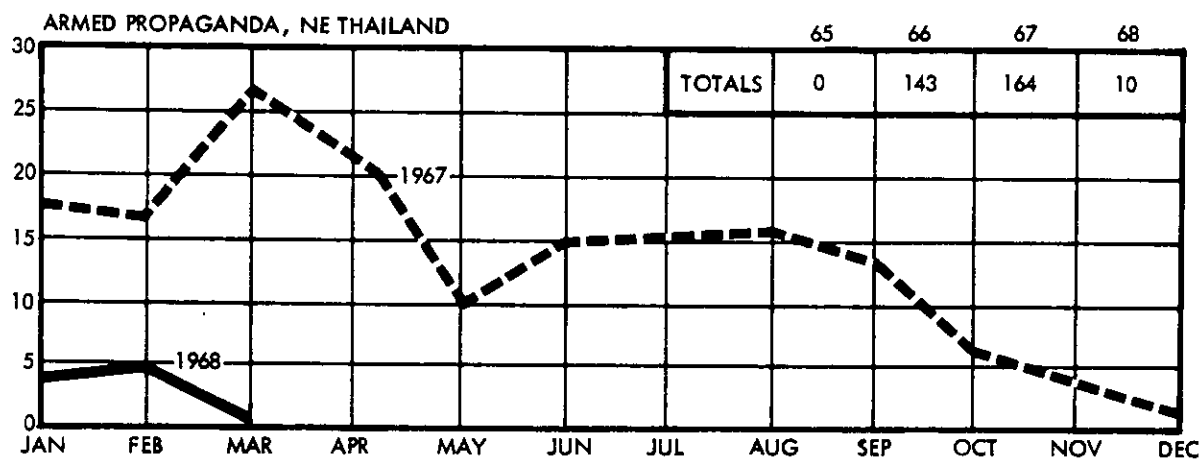
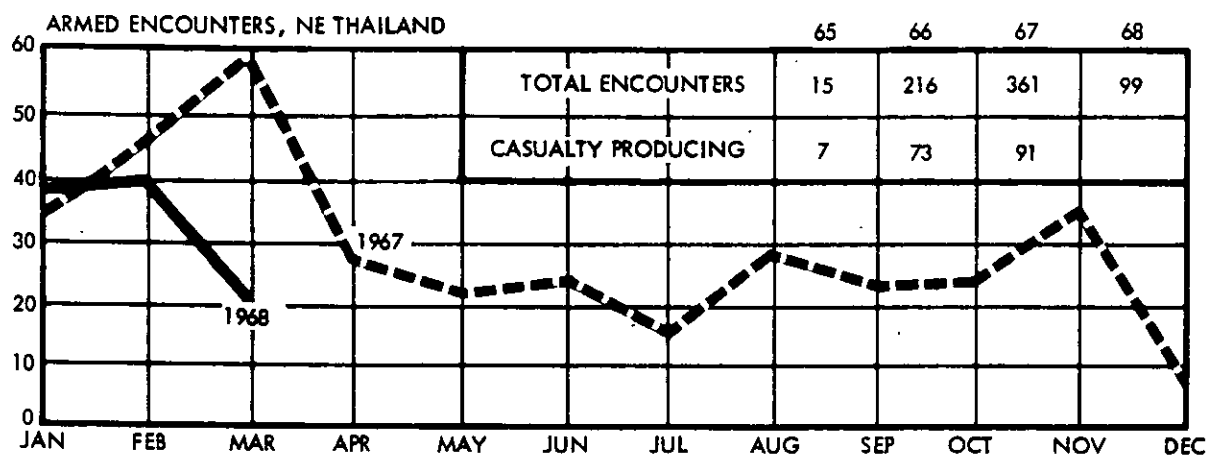
(S) Two diametrically opposed conclusions can be drawn from this quantitative analysis. The first is that RTG measures to arrest the insurgency have borne fruit, resulting in the gradual reduction of insurgent activity and an implied weakening of the insurgent structure. The second and opposite conclusion is that the insurgent efforts to establish an infrastructure within the villages have met with success, so that assassinations and armed propaganda meetings are no longer required as instruments of coercion. This conclusion might be supported by the fact that in January and February of 1968 armed encounters have again risen to above the 1967 level, suggesting a gain in guerrilla strength and a consequent increase in aggressive action.

(S) The first conclusion is immediately placed in question by the unhappy lessons which the United States derived from reliance on purely statistical indicators in Vietnam. Quite clearly, a solid evaluation must rely on more than just statistical evidence: it must probe more deeply into the structure and fabric of the insurgency on the one hand and that of the Royal Thai Government and its people on the other.

(S) The absence of a "revolutionary situation" among the ethnic Thai population has seriously handicapped the insurgents. At the same time, they have been able--particularly during the early stages of the insurgency--to exploit a major weakness of the RTG, namely the lack of government presence in the Northeast and the inability of the RTG to maintain law and order. The insurgents have capitalized on this weakness through a combination of persuasion and coercion.

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~



16-10-68-5

FIGURE 4 (S). Number of Armed Encounters, Propaganda Meetings, and Assassinations in Northeast Thailand, 1965 to 1968 (U)

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

The campaign of local recruitment has followed the time-honored pattern of first persuading the villager to assist the guerrillas materially and then, once he has become "involved," to convert him ideologically.

(S) The propaganda of persuasion has emphasized such themes as the corruptness of the current Thai government, the US threat to Thailand's sovereignty, and the low standard of living of the villager, which is attributed to government neglect and corruption. The promise is held out that under Communism, everyone will enjoy equal status, dignity, and high incomes. Specific material rewards are dangled: tractors for farmers and training in professions for young men and women.

(S) Coercion is mixed with persuasion. The principal levers are assassinations and armed propaganda meetings, usually staged in conjunction. In a typical situation, a village is surrounded in the late afternoon by armed bands and the villagers are assembled and harangued by the leaders of the invading force. The intent is to demonstrate to the villager the impotence of the government, to demoralize the village leadership and the villagers, to force the villagers to provide supplies, and by virtue of this compromising act, to become a base for further exploitation. Occasionally, the assassination of a villager as a "government informer" reinforces the message.

(S) As demonstrations of effective power, the armed propaganda meetings have made their impact: a recurrent complaint by affected villagers has been that the government has failed to protect them or to provide them with the means of self-protection. Nevertheless, the dictates of successful revolution, particularly on the Maoist model, suggest that coercion alone cannot carry the day. In order for passive support to be transformed into the necessary active involvement, substantial segments of the population must be "converted." And here the Communists have run up against a cultural barrier. Not only is there in Northeast and Central Thailand an absence of an exploitable "revolutionary situation," but Communist

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

ideology and its underlying value structure and modus operandi are in direct conflict with the cultural values of the ethnic Thais. This conflict is described in greater detail in another part of this report;² suffice it here to sketch a comparison of the cultural values of the ethnic Thais and the Communists:

<u>Ethnic Thai</u>	<u>Communist</u>
1. Extreme individuality.	1. Total discipline and responsiveness to the Communist organization.
2. An emphasis on enjoyment and gratification from life.	2. Derogation of pleasure and insistence on a form of ascetism.
3. A Buddhist religious orientation which leads to acceptance of a hierarchical society.	3. Egalitarianism.
4. A limited interest in material satisfaction.	4. A stress on material goals.

(S) The conclusion that the Communist insurgents are not meeting measurable success in converting the populace can be tested in terms of two primary indicators: their progress in establishing a durable organization and their success in organizing an effective guerrilla force. Mao's principles of revolutionary warfare hold that, in the absence of a solid "infrastructure," revolutionaries become nothing more than "roving insurgents" bereft of a popular or territorial base. Without an expanding guerrilla force, recruited locally, the revolutionary movement cannot extend its sway progressively over the populace to the point where it can seriously threaten the existing government. As Mao says:

... The Red Army fights not for the sake of fighting but in order to conduct propaganda among the masses, organize them, and help them to establish revolutionary political power. ... Without these objectives, fighting

2. See Volume II, Part III, "The Susceptibility of the Thai Peasant to Communism at Present and in the Immediate Future."

~~SECRET~~

loses its meaning and the Red Army loses the reason for its existence.³

(S) Evidence of the Communist efforts to establish a village infrastructure in Thailand is available from joint surveys conducted by Thai and US officials in the areas of highest insurgent activities in provinces of the Northeast, and from analyses of defector and captured prisoner interrogations. The surveys drew on information obtained from village chiefs, schoolteachers, members of the Volunteer Defense Corps and People's Assistance Teams, and from the files of the police, the Joint Security Centers, the Communist Suppression Operations Command, the relevant provincial and district CPMs, and the Royal Thai Army units operating in the Northeast. The surveys were all made in 1967, the year in which the RTG initiated and conducted the 0910 Plan in the Northeast.

(S) The surveys revealed the cellular type insurgent infrastructure in some tambons and villages of the Northeast. In Kut Bak, one of three tambons in Sakon Nakhon where insurgency is concentrated, 26 cells, most of them composed of three members, were identified in three villages out of a total of 30. The most thoroughly organized village visited in this survey featured 17 cells with a typical Communist organizational hierarchy, including the political chief, who organized liaison and bi-weekly food deliveries to the guerrillas. Another official was charged with recruiting, and a third with intelligence.

(S) Another survey conducted in tambon Nanai, in Nakhon Phanom province, an area of high guerrilla activity, uncovered a total of 21 three-man cells in six of the 13 villages in the tambon. Similar data applied to another district of the same province. Existence of cellular organization in the southern provinces of the Northeast was also established, but on a smaller scale.

3. Mao Tse-tung, Selected Works, Volume I (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1965), p. 106.

~~SECRET~~

(S) While a Communist infrastructure undeniably exists in some villages in the Northeast, it seems to suffer from significant deficiencies. In the first place, the structure appears to be heavily dependent on kinship ties. In the majority of the cells surveyed, there were links of family or friendship between cell members and members of the guerrilla bands. Kinship among the Phu-Thais, a minority group of Thai subculture, appears to be a salient factor in the infrastructure in Sakon Nakhon, another province of high guerrilla activity. Of the 14 villages which were found to contain cells, seven were completely Phu-Thai, three were partly populated by the latter, and two were composed of Thai-So, another minority group. The difficulty with a kinship-based organization is that, lacking an ideological commitment, members frequently drop out when their relatives are killed, captured, or defect.

(S) The second deficiency revealed in the surveys was the lack of characteristic Communist security and thoroughness in organizing the cells, as demonstrated by the quick breakdown of the structure under pressure. In the village with the highest degree of organization encountered, the survey team identified 30 supporters and rapidly acquired confessions from the cell members. Many interrogees seemed eager to give information and to cooperate with the officials; they informed not only on the organization in their own village, but on others as well. After the questioning by the survey team, about 70 members left the village for district headquarters, voicing fear of Communist reprisals and expressing reluctance to return until a village security unit had been established. Similar results were reported by another survey team.

(S) The apparent unreliability of the infrastructure at the village level has been compounded by a shortage of hard-core leadership, which has prevented the Communists from establishing a government parallel to that of the Royal Thai Government in the provinces and districts of the Northeast. There is evidence that the CPT was organized in 1962 theoretically along regional, provincial, district, and tambon lines, but that the Party has been

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

unable to find enough personnel to man such an organization. As a consequence, control and direction of insurgent operations relies on an ad hoc organization, and guerrilla commanders must often double as political and military leaders. This lack of an adequate command structure, aggravated by difficulties of communication, is bound to create problems of coordination and to debilitate the insurgency.

(S) Captured documents, for example, have contained references to the CPT's "inadequate understanding" of problems facing the insurgents, and suggest that individual insurgent groups are unaware of where the leadership is coming from. Poverty of central direction is revealed also by a profusion of conflicting nomenclature and ideological terminology. Moreover, coordination among insurgent bands is tenuous.

(S) Other problems beset the movement. Friction between Chinese and Thai members has been continuous since the CPT's founding. Although some effort has been made to appease the Thai members--for example, by appointing Thais to higher committees--the real power at the Party center rests firmly in Chinese hands. The inner circles of the Politburo and the Central Committee are made up predominantly of Chinese who maintain liaison with the Chinese Communist Party and dispose of the Party funds, which emanate primarily from China.

(S) The friction between the Chinese and Thai members is manifested in policy quarrels. Many Thai members still long for a peaceful revolution or do not deem the time ripe for armed revolution. There is evidence that Thai Communists continue to chafe under internal Chinese domination of their Party as well as the external control exercised by Communist China. They believe that the decision to initiate armed revolution reflected primarily a Chinese and North Vietnamese decision to use the CPT as a pawn of Chinese foreign policy in Southeast Asia, and that Thai national interests are being sacrificed. Evidence suggests that some Thai Communists, even though they do not take open issue with the Party

~~SECRET~~

command, will tend to "sit on their hands"--for example by invoking a variety of excuses not to go to the Northeast. The Party leadership appears impatiently aware of these shortcomings. Thus, a captured Communist document refers to the cadre as "rather addicted to such traditional vices as stealing, smuggling, fighting, narcotics, gambling, and boasting. They are self-seeking and unwilling to make sacrifices." Even more damaging to clandestine movement, the cadre "cannot keep secrets, even when it has been shown that lives are lost as a result."⁴

(S) Some of the Party's problems might be overcome by the emergence of a charismatic leader. A former Thai prime minister, Pridi, who fled to China in 1948 and has since remained in exile there, could have filled this need. However, Pridi has apparently refused--he is reported to be opposed to the Maoist strategy for revolutionary war in Thailand.

(S) Lack of sophistication and effectiveness plagues the guerrilla bands themselves. These bands are small, numbering from 20 to 30; they combine occasionally into groups as large as 100 to conduct armed propaganda meetings. Their armament is limited to a variety of small arms ranging from homemade weapons to a few AK-47s. These small bands occupy crude camps in the Phu Phan Mountains--a relatively low range in the Northeast which reaches a maximum altitude of 2,000 feet and extends about 150 miles in the shape of a rough crescent. Potentially, this mountain range, which is generally covered by forest, offers a vast sanctuary, but the scarcity of food in the mountains forces the guerrillas to establish small camps near the villages; their supporting infrastructure is not sufficiently developed to provide a system of logistics reaching deep into the mountains. Since 1967, when the RTG initiated more vigorous offensive operations, the guerrillas have been forced to move frequently--breaking into 10-man bands which slip into areas

4. Central Intelligence Agency, Directorate of Intelligence, Communist Insurgency in Thailand: Strengths and Weaknesses, Intelligence Memorandum No. 1595/66, 11 August 1966. SECRET

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

not covered by suppressive operations, or retreat into the mountains. Sooner or later they attempt to return to the lowlands to restore contact with their support organization.

(S) As early as 1960, political and military training of promising recruits was commenced in Hoa Binh, west of Hanoi, and in camps in Laos. Since that time an estimated 1,000 recruits have passed through these training courses and have been returned to Thailand. Although some members of this group were drawn from the hill tribes and from the West Central and Mid-South areas, the majority apparently came from Northeast Thailand. In large part, these trainees make up the leadership of the political and military apparatus.

(S) Local military training is usually given to the more promising members of the village cells in the mountain and jungle camps. The training is relatively unsophisticated. Principal attention is given to weapons training, with some instruction in patrol and ambush tactics. As has been pointed out, however, the decision in 1965 to shift into the offensive notwithstanding, military operations have been limited chiefly to shows of force through armed propaganda meetings and assassinations. Thus, ambush is seldom employed, and armed encounters tend to be defensive actions against RTG patrols.

(S) The guerrilla logistics are focused almost entirely on food. Their main sources of food are relatives of the guerrillas, organized in some cases into rudimentary cells. Food is collected by sending guerrillas into villages under cover of darkness, through delivery by village supporters, or through stealthy purchase in the local market. There is some evidence that food is shipped out from villages in which local security forces are stationed. However, there is also considerable evidence that food is a major problem preventing the expansion of the guerrilla bands themselves. Defector reports abound with complaints of lack of food, and hunger is universally cited as a cause of defection.

(S) In general, the testimony of defectors seems to bear out the incompatibility of the Thai culture with the rigorous demands of a

~~SECRET~~

Communist movement, the lack of any deep-seated and dedicated involvement on the part of the Thais with the insurgent movement, and the failure of the insurgents to create a strong village infrastructure. The element of coercion used in initial recruitment tends to encourage defection, particularly in view of the hardships in the guerrilla base areas. Complaints about shortages of food; the failure of the Communists to fulfill their promises of education, money, and other recruiting inducements; separation from families; disagreements with the guerrilla tactics; and the rising pressure of government suppression operations are common threads running through interrogation reports.

(S) A US intelligence evaluation gives the following analysis:

The recent sharp rise in insurgent defections probably results from the disillusionment of recruited support elements who are unable or unwilling to bear the hardships of jungle living. Significantly, however, recent defections have also included fully recruited members of armed guerrilla units. These individuals have indicated various motivations for their defections.

Their debriefings indicate in general that both the absence of strong ideological attachment to the insurgent cause and the element of coercion involved in most initial recruitments encourage defection as the hardships of survival in the jungle bear down on the individual insurgent. Additionally, recent defectors spoke of fear of government attack, dissatisfaction with long separation from their families, and disagreement with a projected shift to more violent tactics as reasons for their defection.⁵

(S) To summarize, the Communist insurgency in the Northeast suffers from the following handicaps:

- (1) Friction among the top leaders in the Communist Party of Thailand.
- (2) Quantitative and qualitative deficiencies among the leadership which inhibit the ability to direct and coordinate insurgent activities effectively.

5. Central Intelligence Agency, Communist Defections, August 1967.
SECRET NOFORN

(3) A weak and unreliable village infrastructure based upon recruitment by intimidation rather than dedication to the goals of the revolution.

(4) A guerrilla force which lacks sufficient strength to take the offensive.

(5) An inadequate logistics support system.

(S) These deficiencies have prevented the insurgents from establishing political and military control of a geographical area in the Northeast as a base for future expansion.

(S) The contrast between the insurgencies in Thailand and South Vietnam is readily apparent. At the close of the Indochina War in 1954, the Vietnamese Communists had already established a viable, durable, and reliable political and military infrastructure in South Vietnam. This infrastructure controlled extensive base areas, such as Zone D and the Plain of Reeds in the Mekong Delta, and Quantri province on the Coastal Plain--base areas that were denied to the government forces until after the buildup of US military units in 1965. The guerrilla arm was led by veteran military cadre, many of whom were members of the Communist Party and had gained broad experience in military operations against the French. While these forces had been initially small, they were able to extend military and political control over ever-expanding areas. This expanded control gave them a larger base for recruitment, for food, and other support. By 1963, the guerrillas were fielding battalion-size and regiment-size units which contested government forces for control. Clearly, the insurgency in Thailand holds few of these assets and prospects.

(S) It appears, then, that the drastic decrease in incidents of insurgency taking place in the Northeast during the past year cannot be attributed to Communist success in building a viable infrastructure. The probable explanation is that the Communists have recognized their own failures and are now reappraising their tactics.

(S) The picture, however, is by no means completely favorable. Even a relatively inefficient and low-level insurgency can continue

~~SECRET~~

to put pressure on the Royal Thai Government and tax its political, economic, and military resources. Moreover, the insurgency could spread. Recent indications of insurgency among the Meo (and possibly the Yao) hill tribes are ominous.. Some of the other hill tribes, as well as the sizable Muslim Malay minority of over a million and the Chinese located in the Peninsula, bear serious grievances toward the RTG. There is evidence that an effective infrastructure is in existence among the Malay Communists in the Peninsula, and may be building among the hill tribes. The Communists may choose to violate Mao's doctrine and attempt to enlist the Chinese in Bangkok in an urban insurgency. It must be assumed that the leaders in Peking are fully alert to these opportunities and will attempt to capitalize on them. Their success in exploiting them will depend on the strengths and weaknesses of the RTG political, economic, and military institutions. An evaluation of these strengths and weaknesses follows in Section III.

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

(This page is blank)

~~SECRET~~

This page is UNCLASSIFIED

III

THE COUNTERINSURGENCY EFFORT

(U) This section evaluates the elements of strength and weakness of the Royal Thai Government, its institutions, and its programs for countering the threat. The analysis includes an assessment of the capability of the economy of Thailand to support the counterinsurgency effort; of the stability of the Royal Thai Government with emphasis on its ability to withstand the pressure of the insurgency; of the adequacy of the concepts and organization for counterinsurgency; and of the effectiveness of measures taken through environmental improvement programs to counter the Communist charge of government neglect. Finally, the adequacy of measures taken to provide security for the villager and the effectiveness of the Royal Thai Army in the conduct of suppression operations against the armed guerrilla bands are appraised. The evaluation focuses on counterinsurgency operations in the Northeast.

A. ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CAPABILITIES TO COPE WITH THE COUNTERINSURGENCY

1. Economic

(U) A sound economy is an obvious prerequisite for successful counterinsurgency operations. It provides the money and materials required by national strategy, it furnishes possible remedies for causes of popular discontent, and it offers the population hope for the future.

(U) Prudent fiscal policies, a good infrastructure, a responsive private sector willing to invest in the country, a strong demand for the country's agricultural exports, and an adequate inflow of capital from foreign sources have all contributed to

Thailand's emerging prosperity. The country is still poor by US standards, with an average annual income of only \$140, but per capita income is rising an impressive 4.5 percent a year despite an annual population increase of 3.2 percent.

(U) The Thai economy as a whole is growing at an average annual rate of 7.5 percent, a performance which is outstanding in Southeast Asia and which places the nation in the first rank of less-developed countries throughout the world. Prospects for continued growth are generally bright, although the estimated rate of expansion for the period 1967 to 1971 has recently been revised from an optimistic 8.5 percent to 6 to 7 percent as a result of droughts, floods, and dips in several world commodity prices.

(FOUO) Thailand has recently increased its expenditures for counterinsurgency, but the net diversion of funds from developmental activities will produce only a slight reduction in the expected growth rate of the economy. The United States directly reinforces Thailand's economic capability to support the counterinsurgency by contributing substantial economic and military assistance (the approximate financial equivalent of US aid in FY 1968 amounted to 12 percent of the entire Thai budget for that year). A comprehensive US Embassy to Thailand analysis has concluded that the Royal Thai Government can increase its projected total expenditures (including counterinsurgency expenditures) by approximately 5 percent for the period FY 1969 through FY 1971 without risking serious inflationary pressures.

(U) The Thai economy, therefore, is basically sound and is expanding rapidly. Thanks in part to US economic and military assistance, it supports the current level of counterinsurgency expenditures well and is capable of sustaining a higher level of effort without serious strain. In economic terms, the only effect of the insurgent threat has been a slight reduction in the government's economic development appropriations to pay for increased security expenses, and a diversion of some development funds to border areas where the economic returns are marginal. The

This page is UNCLASSIFIED

insurgency has so far not reduced the willingness of domestic and foreign investors to place their capital in the Thai economy.

(U) Although the economic outlook is generally favorable, there are sectoral and regional weaknesses in the Thai economy which require strengthening to eliminate grounds for economic discontent and to improve the economic capability to support a prolonged counterinsurgency effort. The major weakness in the Thai economy is in the agricultural sector, where additional incentives and assistance are needed to enable farmers to intensify and diversify their production. Without increased production of marketable crops (rice in particular), the 80 percent of the total population who depend directly on agriculture for their livelihood will not begin to share equitably in the new wealth which is accompanying the economic development of the nation. Agriculture is the mainspring of the Thai economy, still furnishing one-third of the Gross Domestic Product and earning three-fourths of the foreign exchange obtained through export sales, but agricultural production is now advancing less rapidly than that of the manufacturing and other industrial sectors, and the rural population is becoming relatively poorer at the same time that it becomes absolutely a little wealthier. The growing disparity in incomes between urban and rural areas could have sharp implications in the face of an insurgency which draws its strategic impetus from Mao Tse-tung.

(U) Closely linked to the broader weaknesses in the agricultural sector are the economic deficiencies in the outlying regions. Considerably less favored by nature and farther from the center of trade, the rural areas in the Northeast, North, and South suffer accentuations and harsh variations of the adverse conditions found in the Central Valley. The poorest region in the country is the Northeast, where the Communist insurgency is currently the most widespread. Next poorest is the North, where small but intense uprisings have broken out among the hill tribes. The third poorest is of course the South, where the Communists have established a

strong presence. A sharp increase in the present emphasis on agricultural production in Thailand can help to improve income and living conditions in all the remote regions, as well as in the Central Valley.

(U) A shortage of trained manpower pervades all sectors of the Thai economy and will emerge as an increasingly serious constraint on development as the economy simultaneously expands and becomes more complex. Since a major foreseeable limitation on economic development implies a corresponding degradation of the counterinsurgency effort in time, the need for increased investment in secondary and advanced education, vocational schooling, and in-service training is obvious.

(FOUO) The detailed economic analysis presented in Volume II of this study suggests the following conclusions:

(1) The Thai economy is capable of supporting the present level of counterinsurgency effort with only a slight reduction in the expected rate of national economic growth.

(2) The Royal Thai Government could increase its projected total expenditures (including counterinsurgency expenditures) for the period FY 1969 through FY 1971 by approximately 5 percent without risking serious inflationary pressures. (For comparison, Thai expenditures on the Armed Forces currently account for about 15 percent of the national budget.)

2. Political

(U) Successful counterinsurgency operations require a stable and effective government with the capability to plan, coordinate, lead, and sustain the total effort. The Royal Thai Government is generally both stable and effective, especially in comparison with the governments of other Southeast Asian countries. Its strengths--and its weaknesses--stand out clearly when attention is focused on four key areas: (1) groups and institutions, (2) the Royal Thai Government, (3) national policy, and (4) local administration.¹

1. These four areas are discussed in detail in Volume II, Part I, "Politics and Administration."

UNCLASSIFIED

(U) By far the greatest barrier in Thailand to a successful Communist insurgency has been the basic contentment of the ethnic Thai. His economic satisfaction, his sense of well-being derived from his religion and culture, and his general acceptance of established authority do not provide the Communist organizer with many openings to exploit.² Only in some areas in the Northeast where the Thai villager lives in a bare subsistence economy are there any genuine grievances to capitalize upon.

(U) On the other hand, the ethnic minorities, including the Chinese, Malays, North Vietnamese, and hill tribes are susceptible in varying degrees to subversive influences and, as such, constitute a potential source of instability. These minorities and their grievances can fuel the insurgency to the point where it could place a much heavier burden on the government. Nevertheless, it is doubtful that they could in and of themselves pose a vital threat to the security of the government as long as the great majority of the Thai people continue, as they have in the past, to support their government.

(U) The Thai civil service is another major asset of the Royal Thai Government. Politically neutral, staffed by an educated and highly-motivated elite, and administering a wide range of national programs and services, the civil service has done much to maintain the stability and continuity of the government since 1932.

(U) The stabilizing influence of the civil service notwithstanding, a potential weakness in the Thai political system stems from the absence of regularized procedures for passing of power from one administration to another. Since the fall of the absolute monarchy in 1932, changes in government have taken place only through the expedient of the top-level coup, in which power is grasped by one faction in the ruling elite from another. These periodic coups have not resulted in a breakdown of government and political chaos, but the possibility remains.

2. See Volume II, Part III, "The Susceptibility of the Thai Peasant to Communism at Present and in the Immediate Future."

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

(U) There are encouraging trends which may alleviate or eliminate this potential weakness in the Thai political system. Many influential Thais, most notably the King, have felt the need for broadening the base of representation within the government and regulating the transfer of power. This recognition is mixed, at the same time, with an awareness that a Western-style democracy cannot be introduced overnight in Thailand. The Thais remember past political chaos triggered by experimentations with democracy, such as the period from 1946 to 1951.

(U) The new constitution, in preparation for the past nine years, has been accepted by the military regime, and sent to the King for his signature and promulgation. The constitution provides for a liberalization of the political process and for the regularization of the passage of power. However, it also provides for a strong executive in order to ensure the continuation of stable government. When promulgated and implemented, this instrument should mitigate a potential source of government instability.

(U) The close ties between the Royal Thai Government and the United States are another political feature with important implications for stability. The present alliance with the United States, which represents a sharp departure from previous traditions of flexibility and nonalignment, entails both apparent advantages and drawbacks. American economic and military assistance has certainly contributed to the security and prosperity of the country. At the same time, the identification of the Royal Thai Government with the United States makes its leaders vulnerable to US policy shifts. Specifically, negotiations with North Vietnam over the future of South Vietnam (as well as Laos and Cambodia) have strong implications for US-RTG relations as well as for the future government of Thailand. If a Vietnam settlement should establish North Vietnam in de facto control of the line of the Mekong, the Chinese and the North Vietnamese, either separately or in concert, could sharply increase pressures on the Royal Thai Government through intensification of insurgency in Thailand, supported by external threats.

UNCLASSIFIED

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

This page is UNCLASSIFIED

In this event the Royal Thai Government might have to choose between two alternatives--to accommodate with China and North Vietnam or to seek direct US intervention in Thailand. The decision of the Royal Thai Government would probably turn on the appraisal of its leaders as to the willingness of the United States to become directly involved through the commitment of military forces, as well as on the extent to which the Royal Thai Government feels its policies and interests to be entwined with those of the United States. At this writing, the Royal Thai Government would have extreme difficulty in gauging confidently the credibility of a massive US commitment to Thailand's abiding defense. On the other hand, the elite now ruling Thailand may deem the country's fortunes so closely linked with the United States that they could not readily sever the ties. In either event--whether the Royal Thai Government chooses to reach an accommodation with the Communists or to resist Communist pressure in the hope that the United States would come to the rescue--the Royal Thai Government would be subjected to stresses and strains that would materially weaken the country's stability and consequently its capability for resistance.

(U) On balance it is concluded that the Royal Thai Government has sufficient stability to plan, coordinate, and implement an effective counterinsurgency strategy. However in the event that the external support of the insurgency provided by Peking and Hanoi should be increased by an order of magnitude, this stability would be severely taxed.

B. CONCEPTS AND ORGANIZATION FOR COUNTERINSURGENCY

(U) Having concluded that, barring drastic external changes, the basic stability so fundamental to a successful counterinsurgency effort exists in Thailand, it remains necessary to examine the performance of the Royal Thai Government in evolving a concept, priorities and programs for implementation of the concept, and the organizational structure for coordination of the counterinsurgency effort.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

(C) A successful counterinsurgency demands that many agencies and departments of the government participate in a coordinated effort and that this coordination be carried out effectively at both the national and regional levels. Unfortunately, as discussed earlier, the traditional centralization of authority in Thailand at the Bangkok level tends to inhibit initiative and coordination at the local levels of administration in the province and the district. This tendency is reinforced by the deference of inferior to superior, an ingrained cultural characteristic derived from Buddhism. Loath to act on their own authority, regional officials tend to regard themselves strictly as implementers and not innovators.

(C) The traditional centralization of authority is reflected in and strengthened by the vertical orientation of the ministries and departments. Representatives of the various ministries tend to report directly through the ministerial chain of command rather than to the district or provincial chief official, thus stinting the lateral coordination required for effective counterinsurgency operations at the province and district levels where the insurgency must be fought.

(C) Defects in initiative and coordination do not stop at the city limits of Bangkok. Rivalry and factionalism between individuals and cliques in the capital, as noted above, place limits on the arbitrariness of the government, but they also debilitate effective interministerial coordination. The necessity of keeping the political system in equilibrium--that is, preventing any individual or clique from achieving an inordinate share of power--is in itself an obstacle to any attempt to establish a coordinating agency which, in order to be effective, would perforce have to assume broad powers over the entire RTG administration.

(C) With the outbreak of insurgency in the Northeast in 1961, the RTG acted to evolve a concept for counterinsurgency, to draft programs consistent with that concept, and to establish coordinating machinery for execution of the programs. By 1962 a broad concept stressing prevention and suppression had been formulated and a supra

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

agency, the National Security Command, had been created with the mission of coordinating prevention and suppression efforts. The object of the prevention mission was to strengthen relations between the RTG and the local population by providing general economic and social services and local security against the insurgents. The suppression mission was defined as one of putting pressure on the guerrilla bands by offensive operations conducted by police and paramilitary forces.

(C) This basic concept of gaining the support of the villager through environmental improvement and security, at the same time that offensive military operations are being aimed against the insurgents, remains in effect today (with the exception of efforts in the Northern region, which will be discussed below). As might be expected, these programs to implement the concept, appraised in greater detail in the subsequent sections, have undergone a series of changes. Suffice it to state here that the Royal Thai Government must be credited with evolving a basically sound concept at a relatively early stage in the insurgency.

(S) The structure for coordination of the counterinsurgency effort has evolved from the National Security Command in 1962 to the Communist Suppression Operations Command (CSOC) in 1965. In addition, the CSOC has undergone a series of organizational and mission changes since 1965. These changes have been prompted in part by politics and in part by revealed organizational deficiencies. Specifically, the dissatisfaction of the Royal Thai Army with the major military planning role which supposedly had been assured by the CSOC led to the return of this function to the Army. Deficiencies in the representation of the various ministries and departments involved in environmental improvement were partially remedied by upgrading and broadening representation in the CSOC. An intelligence structure was also added and an interrogation capability incorporated. The organizational concept of the CSOC as it appears today seems fundamentally sound.³

3. For a detailed description of the evolution of CSOC, see Volume IV, Appendix B, "Coordination of Counterinsurgency Planning and Programs."

~~SECRET~~

(S) Nevertheless, the future role of the CSOC is somewhat obscure. In late 1967 there were indications of dissatisfaction with the broad CSOC role, as evidenced by a move to restore the National Security Command as the principal policy-making body for the counterinsurgency. As of March 1968, the views of the US official community on the role of the CSOC varied widely. Some US observers held that the NSC might well recapture the policy-making role; there was also some feeling that the CSOC and the NSC might be merged. Others were of the opinion that the recent withdrawal of some US financial support for the CSOC might tend to reduce its role. Still others predicted that the CSOC would continue its role of direction and coordination of the counterinsurgency effort. Nevertheless, there was general agreement that the RTG clearly recognized the need for continuing a coordinated civil-military approach to the counterinsurgency effort and that a formal coordinating structure such as the CSOC must continue in operation.

(S) The organization for coordination at the Northeast regional level, CPM-1, also came in for its share of reorganization. In October 1967, General Dongcherm, the Second Army commander in the Northeast region, whose only responsibilities for counterinsurgency operations in the Northeast had been those of furnishing military units, military staff assistance, and logistic support to CPM-1, was directed to assume command of the regional counterinsurgency effort. Accordingly, CPM-1 was replaced by a provisional Second Army Headquarters Forward under General Dongcherm's direct command.

(S) As indicated earlier, this dramatic shift of responsibility for direction and coordination of the regional effort was of concern to US officials in Bangkok and Washington. Did it indicate the abandonment of a coordinated civil-military approach for one of "militarization" of the counterinsurgency effort?

(S) A precise reason for this shift is difficult to identify in the light of the intricacies of Thai politics. Nevertheless, there are several plausible explanations. In the first place, the RTG was dissatisfied with the counterinsurgency effort. While the insurgency

~~SECRET~~

in the Northeast appeared to have been blunted, it was still far from under control. In addition, the spread of the insurgency to the Mid-South and the West Central regions, coupled with evidence of Communist penetration of the Meo hill tribe in the North, no doubt contributed to the uneasiness of key government officials.

(S) It was also clear that the Civil Affairs Division of the CSOC, with ministerial representation from elements of the RTG, had failed to perform effectively. This deficiency was duplicated at the civilian level in the provinces. Finally, it was apparent that the paramilitary and police lacked sufficient resources to provide the required security. Until expansion of police and paramilitary programs caught up with the demand--and this was a long way off--the only forces available to fill this gap would have to come from the Army.

(S) Probably the main reason for the shift, however, was the Royal Thai Army's concern over the loss of influence and direction of the military effort. The CSOC Directorate of Operations, under Lt. General Saiyud, not only was coordinating the civilian and military effort, but had largely taken over the normal military planning role, thereby cutting out the RTA headquarters in Bangkok and the Second Army in the Northeast. This was unacceptable to the Army. Undoubtedly the RTA viewed the major expansion of the police and the establishment of Provincial Police Special Action Forces and Border Patrol Police Mobile Reserve Platoons as intrusions into its domain. Strains placed on the officer corps to man the various counterinsurgency organizations, including the CSOC, were also a factor, particularly in light of the impending deployment of a reinforced battalion to South Vietnam. The necessity for martial law in order to provide a legal basis for the Royal Thai Army to engage in battle within Thailand also was relevant.

(S) In any case, the political leverage of the RTA was sufficient to bring the Army back into a dominant role in military planning. General Praphat, head of the CSOC and the RTA, either willingly sided with his Army subordinates or gave way under pressure, and the

SECRET

Second Army "takeover" of the regional coordination role in the Northeast became an accomplished fact.

(S) The powers delegated to General Dongcherm in his charter for regional coordination did little to still the apprehensions of US officials of a "militarization" of the counterinsurgency effort. The military was given authority to

issue instructions to police, civil, and government officials with regard to counterinsurgency operations as specified in the 9th Article of Martial Law, which states that "military have power over civilians in matters pertaining to maintenance of peace; civilians must obey tactical requirements of military officers" and "because military have authority over civilians in areas of effective martial law, all development and security programs conducted as part of the suppression campaign must go through Second Army." However, there was a mitigating note in the statement that "usually military officers should not interfere with civilian operations, except when operational necessity demands."⁴

(S) It is clear, then, that the broad powers delegated to the Royal Thai Army, if arbitrarily executed, could have led to a serious dislocation of a coordinated effort. Civil programs addressed development and security and could have easily been thrown into disorder, with serious implications for a successful counterinsurgency effort.

(S) Initially, General Dongcherm's actions may have confirmed these fears. Summoning the provincial governors and regional police commanders to his headquarters, he informed them that he was assuming full responsibility for the entire counterinsurgency effort. The reaction of the governors was ambivalent. On the one hand they resented the intrusion of the army into what they deemed a civil responsibility. On the other hand, they evidently were also relieved by the presence of a powerful individual who could share responsibilities for failures. General Dongcherm's summary abolishment of

4. See Volume IV, Appendix B, "Coordination of Counterinsurgency Planning and Programs."

SECRET

~~SECRET~~

the posts of Deputy Commander of CPM-1, one of which had been occupied by a high-ranking civil servant and the other by the regional chief of the Provincial Police, and the substitution of advisory posts exacerbated their resentment. The regional police force reacted by withdrawing its support and cooperation.

(S) Nevertheless, as time passed it became increasingly apparent that the military did not intend to interfere with the direction of the civil effort for security and development. Specifically, they did not intervene in the rural development programs of the governors. Similarly, the responsibilities of the governors for local security in their provinces were left intact, except for areas of high guerrilla concentrations. The broad powers to substitute military courts for civil jurisdiction were not exercised, nor were curfews or road patrols instituted. Similarly, the responsibilities of the police were not altered, and the intelligence responsibilities of the Special Branch and Provincial Police were not usurped. In short, civil responsibilities continued as they had in the past.

(S) The restraint exercised by the military in dealing with problems in the Northeast has overcome much of the initial resentment among the civil officials. General Dongcherm has established effective working relations with 13 of the 15 provincial governors in the Northeast. The exceptions are Governor Phat of Ubon province and Governor Bodaeng of Sakon Nakhon. Since Governor Phat has apparently implemented the most effective counterinsurgency programs of security and development in the Northeast, largely on his own initiative and with minimal resources, this rift is not serious. Nor may the rift with Governor Bodaeng prove damaging, since the latter is scheduled to retire during 1968. There are indications also that the animosity of the police toward the Second Army takeover is waning and is gradually being replaced by a spirit of cooperation.

(S) It appears clear, then, that the "militarization" of the counterinsurgency effort in the Northeast has not resulted in undue military domination of the effort or a breakdown of the coordinated approach to the problem. Military operations have made use of the

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

sparse forces available to fragment and attrite the guerrilla strength, rejecting the nonproductive tactics of large sweeps in favor of saturation patrols. Troops have been held under firm discipline, and the Royal Thai Army has improved its image among the villagers.

(S) The civil-police-military organization (CPM) subordinate to the CSOC chain of command has continued in seven provinces and their subordinate districts in the Northeast without fundamental change. The structure appears sound. The RTG has taken steps to correct deficiencies in the territorial administration by increasing the number of officials assigned and by selecting high-caliber men. Evidence suggests that in sharp contrast to previous years, service in the Northeast is now considered as a "status symbol" by the civil service.

(S) Coordination of the environmental improvement and security programs is slowly improving. The required dynamic leadership is beginning to emerge. An example is Governor Phat of Ubon province in the Northeast, where counterinsurgency programs are considered to be the most effective in the Northeast. Another forceful leader is Mr. Saisit, chief of one of Ubon's districts (and now Deputy Governor of Ubon), who developed a defector program which is credited with making major inroads in the guerrilla strength in northern Ubon.

(S) The RTG concept developed in 1962 for countering the insurgency, consisting of environmental improvement and security of the villagers, appeared to be applicable to the hill tribes of the northern border regions as well as to the ethnic Thai. With the assistance and support of the United States, the RTG in the late 1950's had adopted a policy of modest development and civil action among the tribal groups. The responsibility for implementing this program was assigned to the Border Patrol Police, the only agency of the RTG which had contact with the hill tribes. As was pointed out above, however, in December 1967 when insurgent operations surfaced in the North, the RTG response was immediate and heavy handed. Suppression operations included the napalming of at least one Meo village and the forced resettlement of many Meo villagers. It appears, however,

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

that the government is now reassessing its approach toward the hill tribes, and there are indications that it will return to a policy of modest development, along with greater restraint in suppression operations.

(S) In sum, therefore, the RTG has developed what appears to be an effective organizational concept for counterinsurgency. The structure for coordinating counterinsurgency operations at the national, regional, provincial, and district levels of administration seems to be sound. The assignment of a military commander to head the regional organization in the Northeast has not led to a "militarization" of the counterinsurgency effort: rather, coordinated civil and military programs have continued. Coordination, however, continues to be handicapped by the characteristic lack of initiative of subordinate Thai officials, the tendency of the RTG to centralize decision-making at the Bangkok level, and by the reluctance of local officials to coordinate their operations in the provinces and districts. Nevertheless, leadership is beginning to emerge which encourages initiative and promises to overcome some of the time-honored barriers to coordination, especially at the crucial local levels.

C. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT

(U) The Royal Thai Government invokes a variety of special economic and social development programs to support the counterinsurgency effort in critical rural areas. These environmental improvement programs⁵ are now operating chiefly in the villages of the Northeast, with priorities assigned to road construction, improvement of health, and stimulation of agricultural production. Accelerated Rural Development (ARD) is the most important single program in the effort.

5. See Volume IV, Appendix E, "Environmental Improvement," for a description of these programs.

~~SECRET~~

This page is UNCLASSIFIED

(U) The prime objective of the environmental improvement effort is political--to help win or retain the support of the rural population in the fight against Communist insurgency. The political motivation, relatively short-term outlook, and local orientation of these programs distinguish them from the conventional long-range economic and social development programs of the Royal Thai Government, which also play a part in the counterinsurgency effort.

(U) The question is sometimes raised as to whether a major political goal can be achieved by means of programs that are predominantly economic and social in content. In the Thai context, two special considerations make the programs a political necessity. First, if the government fails to take action to improve incomes and living conditions in insurgency areas, the Communists will inevitably continue to exploit the situation to their own political advantage by charging "Government neglect." Second, the processes of economic development and environmental improvement are already under way in the Northeast, people are generally aware of the programs and their goals, and some of the villagers have experienced beneficial results. If the programs stop or stall now, discontent can be expected even without the intercession of Communist agitators. The Royal Thai Government therefore has no reasonable alternative but to press on toward the current objective, adjusting the emphasis, organization, and pace of the effort where necessary to meet changing situations.

(U) The pattern of emphasis of the environmental improvement effort is basically valid, as pointed out below. Two areas in which the application of additional effort might substantially increase overall effectiveness are also noted.

(U) The present geographical emphasis on the insurgency-threatened villages of the Northeast is sound--as has been pointed out. The Northeast is the poorest region of Thailand, it contains a third of the nation's population, it has traditionally attracted a smaller proportion of RTG expenditures than any other region, and it is the most beset with insurgency.

~~SECRET~~

FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY

(FOUO) There should be additional stress on the North, however. Much of the goodwill built up by years of arduous civic action among the hill tribes in that region has been lost through the recent suppression campaign. To regain lost goodwill and to counteract further Communist infiltration in the North, the Border Patrol Police Remote Area Security Development program should be intensified and expanded, not cut as present plans contemplate.

(U) The functional emphasis on roadbuilding, health improvement, and stimulation of agriculture is sound from a developmental point of view. It also meets the main "wants and needs" of the Thai villagers, as determined in various surveys, although the road network will have to be enlarged before increased attention can be paid to the villagers' chief requirement--more and better water supply and control facilities. (Water development projects are spread among a variety of programs in the Thai system, and it is difficult to identify them as a separate activity.)

(U) The emphasis on Accelerated Rural Development, the largest single program in the effort, also appears well placed. The ARD program is an omnibus activity concerned with road construction, water development, health improvement, and increased agricultural production. It provides coordination to the overall effort, especially at the provincial level, has backing in the highest Bangkok circles, and appears to be working effectively. One of the ARD programs, now in the pilot stage, may prove capable of stimulating rather dramatic increases in agricultural production in the Northeast. This is the Agricultural Package Program, modeled on successful experiments in India and the United States. If the program shows promise, it will be desirable to expand it substantially, since improvement of conditions in the Northeast is firmly bound to growth in agriculture.

(U) The organization of the environmental improvement effort is uneven by Western standards, but it has served to get the programs into the field quite rapidly, and it appears adequate at the present level of intensity and complexity of the counterinsurgency effort.

The organization undoubtedly reflects skillful accommodation to the realities of Thai politics, in which new accretions of power are regarded warily. The proposed Northeast Economic Development Plan may lead to closer coordination of planning and implementation of activities at the regional level, which would appear desirable. It is hoped that projected increases in the environmental improvement effort will particularly strengthen staffing at the district level in order to get more projects into the villages--the target of the effort.

(FOUO) The impact of the effort is ultimately governed by the level of its financial support. The RTG environmental improvement programs, including US support, will cost an estimated \$153 million for the three-year period, FY 1967 through FY 1969. The FY 1969 estimated cost of \$67.6 million represents more than a 50 percent increase over the FY 1967 and FY 1968 costs, thus indicating a sharp acceleration of effort in the near future. Since the developmental problems faced by the effort are enormous and the political problems should not be viewed with complacency, the contemplated increase in pace appears prudent.

(FOUO) It should be noted that the RTG is giving the effort considerable financial support. The RTG share of the \$153 million three-year cost is equivalent to about 10 percent of the cost of the total contemplated RTG economic and social development effort, including the special programs, for the period. That effort, in turn, accounts for about 32 percent of the Thai national budget. When the RTG and US contributions are considered together, they represent a sizable increase in investment in formerly neglected border regions like the Northeast. US assistance to the environmental improvement effort and to other RTG programs has enabled Thailand to pursue its long-range developmental policies and to attain an economic growth rate which is itself an important asset in the fight against Communist insurgency.

(U) Although it is extremely difficult to gauge precisely the results of the environmental improvement effort, even on the economic

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

and social level, there is little doubt that the programs have produced a favorable, if geographically limited, impact on incomes and living conditions. Unfortunately, the developmental problems facing the Royal Thai Government in the outlying regions and especially in the Northeast are of such magnitude that no imaginable programs could lift those entire regions to the level of the Central Plain in the space of a few years. Politically, in areas where the programs have operated, what discontent there was appears to have been diminished, and the loyalty of the villagers to the Royal Thai Government seems to have been strengthened.

D. POLICE AND PARAMILITARY FORCES

(C) This section contains an analysis of the missions and tasks of the Thai police and paramilitary forces which in the light of past experience and the Thai environment could be most effective against insurgency. Broad guidance is also developed for structuring, organizing, training, and equipping police and paramilitary forces to cope with the current level of insurgency as well as plausible increases in the threat.

1. Evolution of the RTG Program for Police and Paramilitary Forces

(U) A salient characteristic of insurgencies in general is that they invariably erupt initially in areas remote from government influence and control--areas in which civil administration, including police forces, is minimal or nonexistent. The insurgency in Thailand is no exception.

(U) When insurgency began in Northeast Thailand, the only forces of law and order on the scene were the district police--typically a force of about 40 constables was responsible for a district with 25 to 150 villages, covering an area as large as 700 square miles, and with a population reaching 70,000 or more. Inadequate to protect the villagers from bandits and thieves, these tiny forces were all the more helpless against armed insurgents.

(U) A standard problem facing a government combatting insurgency is how to fashion the forces charged with the basic task of village

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

security. Two broad choices are open: regular military units can be charged with the task, or police and paramilitary units can be created or expanded to carry out the mission. Experience gives the nod to the latter alternative; the comparative advantages lie in economy of force, continuity of operations, and effective intelligence. Economy of force favors the assignment of paramilitary forces because static security can be provided by forces with lower standards of training than those boasted by regular combat forces. Paramilitary forces provide for greater continuity of operations because army units may be shifted in response to the changing demands of the tactical situation, and in any event individual members of the regular forces tend regularly to be transferred through promotion or other occupational demands. This lack of continuity on the part of regular forces inhibits their effectiveness in key local counterinsurgency operations, including intelligence.

(U) The rationale for the composition of reaction forces to reinforce village security units is not as clear. The training of regular military forces fits them for such a mission. Here, too, however, lack of continuity becomes a penalty inasmuch as the patrol missions typically assigned to reaction forces require familiarity with the local area. This fact, along with the desirability of concentrating regular military forces in offensive operations, favors the organization and training of paramilitary forces as backup for village defense units.

(C) The basic counterinsurgency planning of the RTG has followed the above rationale. In 1965, a program was adopted providing for the expansion of a police presence from the district down to the tambon level. The goal was to provide a police post of 20 constables in 1,150 of the 5,000 tambons by 1970. Of this number, 592 tambon police posts were to be established in the 1,273 tambons in the Northeast. The implementation of various programs requires an increase in total strength from 56,000 in 1966 to about 100,000 in 1972.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

(U) The next step was the callup of selected members of the Thailand "National Guard," the Volunteer Defense Corps (VDC), in early 1966. Later in October, two programs for village defense were adopted as the result of US initiative and support--the Peoples' Assistance Teams (PATs) and the Village Security Officers (VSOs). In the same year, reaction units were formed to act as backup forces for the tambon police posts and Border Police patrols. These forces are known as Special Action Forces (SAF) in the Provincial Police and Mobile Reserve Platoons (MRP) in the Border Patrol Police. To provide mobility for these reaction forces, the police undertook to bolster their Air Division with increases in their inventory of helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft.

(C) In 1967, the 0910 Plan assigned the task of village security for the 180 villages in the 0910 target areas to composite teams of VDC, police, and elements of the Army; an infantry platoon was deployed to each of the 11 target areas for the reaction role. In late 1967, RTG and US officials analyzed the lessons learned from the VSO and PAT programs. Their conclusion was that additional screening of personnel and improved training were necessary--not only in security but also in the related fields of intelligence and community development. It was also concluded that higher standards of performance in turn required more effective small arms and more regular compensation for services.

(C) In early January 1968, the RTG decided to implement a village security program which had been conceived by US officials in Bangkok and which incorporated the lessons learned from previous village security efforts. The goal of this program was to organize and train 2,000 village security teams of four to 14 men each by 1972, with the intermediate goal of 220 teams during 1968.

(U) The problem of providing security among the hill tribes in the rugged mountainous regions of the North is more difficult than in the ethnic Thai villages in the lowlands. There are about 1,200 hill tribe villages in the North which, for the most part, can be reached only on foot or by helicopter. In 1955, the government

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

decided to establish a presence in the area through the newly formed Border Patrol Police. Since that period, the Border Patrol Police have conducted patrols and launched a modest development program designed to win the support or, at least, passivity, of the hill tribes. Communications in the area have been improved by construction of helicopter and light-aircraft landing areas. Experience in this program has given the Border Patrol Police a better understanding of the hill tribes and their problems and generally has made them reasonably effective within the limitations of the available personnel resources.

2. Current Status for Security Programs in the Northeast

(C) The RTG progress in achieving village security can be best illustrated by examining a typical district in a province of the Northeast, Nakae, with a high level of insurgency. Nakae district in Nakhom Phanom province encompasses a part of the Phu Phan Mountains and the foothills and lowlands to the north. It commands an area of about 700 square miles with a population of about 70,000. About 21 of Nakae's 113 villages are protected by VDC or VSO security units, while seven are guarded by small regular army units. Five of the 11 tambons now have a police post. By the end of 1968, two 12-man VDC squads will be located in each tambon to act as a local patrol and reaction force. In addition, three 40-man VDC platoons will be available at the district level as a patrol and reaction force. There are no Provincial Police Special Action Forces or Border Patrol Police Mobile Reserve Platoons in the district. Once the tambon VDC and district forces are emplaced, total civil security manpower in the district will be about 1,000. (See Figure 5.)

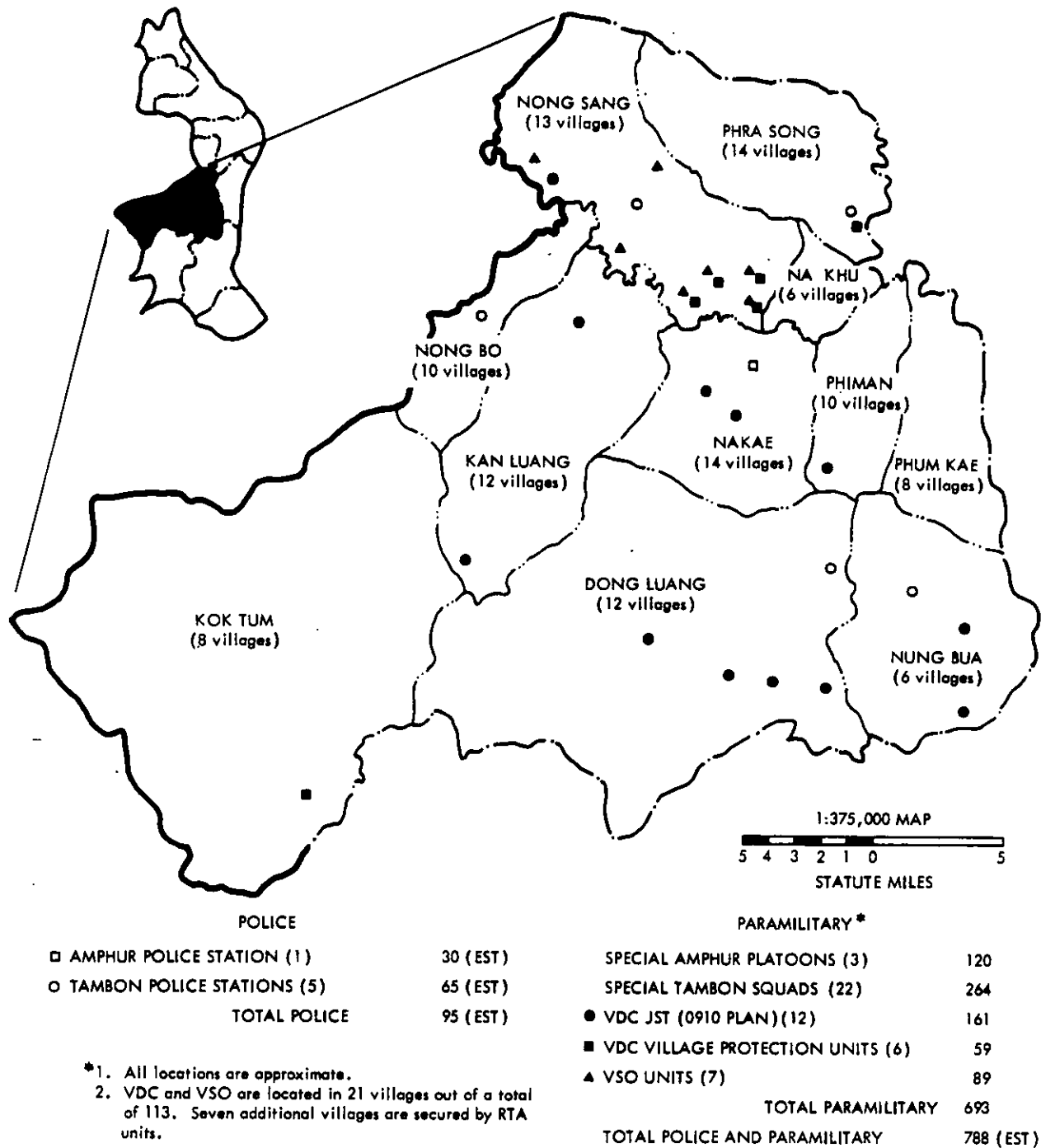
3. Evaluation of the Village Security Program⁶

(C) The precise nature of the insurgent threat to the villages is difficult to measure. The record indicates that the guerrillas

6. This evaluation is based on the assumption that the village security and related programs for the Nakae district of Nakhom Phanom are reasonably typical of those of other districts and provinces of the Northeast in areas of high insurgency.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

CONFIDENTIAL



I5-22-68-7

FIGURE 5 (C). Rural Security Forces in Amphur Nakae (U)

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

have seldom engaged in direct attacks on villages. In 1967, armed propaganda meetings in the villages were extensively employed. However, as previously noted, the incidence of these meetings decreased sharply in the fall of 1967 and in the first three months of 1968. In view of the limited number of overt attacks on villages in the Northeast, one could argue that the necessity for village security has not been demonstrated. However, even if evidence of overt insurgency pressure is not significant, and even if the insurgency in the Northeast is considered relatively weak (as this study concludes), prudence dictates that village security be strengthened against the possibility of a rising level of insurgency. Nevertheless, if the Nakae sample is reasonably accurate, it would appear that only 25 percent of the villages are protected. The remainder must be secured by a combination of offensive patrol and ambush operations by tambon and district VDC units, police, and regular army units, at least until such time as the Village Security Force program is complete. Unfortunately, only 220 of the 15,000 villages in the entire Northeast, in addition to the 550 already provided with security, are slated to receive VSF security units in 1968; the entire program, if it goes according to schedule, will provide security for only about 2,000 villages by 1972. Some interim measures, therefore, seem in order.

(C) Two such interim measures suggest themselves. The first of these is a concept of active and collective defense of clusters of villages concentrated in a small geographical area, rather than the static defense of each individual village. In Nakae district--specifically in four of the 14 tambons centered astride the main east-west highway--several village concentrations are candidates for this type of defense. One example shows 10 villages located in a rough rectangle measuring three by four miles. These villages could be given some degree of protection by deploying tambon VDC and police squads in random patterns of night patrols and ambushes.

(C) The second interim measure would be to capitalize on the desire and tradition of the villagers to contribute to their own

CONFIDENTIAL

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

defense through a local "home guard." It is true that the "home guard" approach has been largely discarded because of deficiencies, including the loss of some weapons to the insurgents. Nevertheless, there are examples of success--e.g., in the program adopted by Governor Phat of Ubon. Perhaps the key merit of a "home guard" program is its likely attraction to the local "foot-loose youth" and its prospect of thus denying them to the guerrilla movement. A village survey conducted by the Advanced Research Projects Agency during 1967 indicates that these youth

want to join organizations which give them a privilege to bear arms, particularly modern weapons. This feeling is especially strong among those in the late teens' and in the early twenties'. They are among the most excited groups about new developments--village patrol teams, VSO, VDC, etc.--and they tend to be more eager to accept new ideas and urban influence. Because of this strong desire to be a part of larger organizations, young people now can be a dangerous two-edged sword. Failure on the part of the RTG to recruit, train, and organize or stabilize these people to play a more important and more fruitful role for the country, may result in general disillusion with the Government. They may jump into the Communist-oriented Front Organizations and fancy themselves as a force of "national liberation"--again playing a "patriotic role" to "liberate" the country out of "fascism, corruption, and U.S. occupation."⁷

(C) Some general constraints are worth noting in this context. One is the rather unfavorable image of the police among the villagers. This is a function in part of the universal problem that police are required to enforce unpopular laws--in the case of Thailand, for example, the prohibition against local brewing of alcoholic beverages and wood-cutting without a permit. There are, however, some more significant grievances. Thus, Thai police are accused of not administering justice fairly and of releasing bandits and thieves without

7. Somchai Rakwijit, "Some Preliminary Hypotheses About Young Men in Northeast Thailand--A Revised Version," Department of Defense, Advanced Research Projects Agency (Bangkok, March 1968).

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

CONFIDENTIAL

punishment. The suspicion is widespread among villagers that the police are open to bribes. A more general, and probably more important, complaint of the villagers is that the police do not behave "correctly" toward them, and tend to act in an arbitrary and authoritarian manner.

(C) These complaints are recognized by the Royal Thai Government and attempts are being made to upgrade the police image by improving their performance and attitude toward the villagers. Nevertheless, images change slowly and improvements are also likely to be slow. Therefore, the expansion of the police posts to the tambon level may well carry with it a counterproductive impact.

(C) The second constraint relates to the fact that the village security programs have been organized under the Department of Local Administration rather than under police jurisdiction. As a result, the necessary cooperation between village security units and the police tambon posts may suffer. A concerted effort is necessary to ensure a coordinated working relationship between village security units and the police if the two programs are to achieve their potential.

4. Conclusions

(C) This section has touched briefly on the overall missions and tasks of the Thai police and paramilitary forces and suggested guidelines for their future development. This subject is treated more fully in Volume IV, Appendix D, "Police, Village Security, and Paramilitary Programs." The following conclusions are derived from the previous discussion and Appendix D:

(1) The RTG concept for providing rural security through increased police presence at the tambon level, organization and support of an indigenous village security force, and civil controlled police and village security forces to combat small insurgent bands is in accordance with experience gained in other insurgencies and is considered basically sound.

(2) The orientation of RTG police programs is also appropriate for the long haul and planned expansions should be continued. Current plans should be broadened

CONFIDENTIAL

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

to include extending a police presence to additional tambons beyond the 1,150 now planned.

(3) The performance and requirements of the Police Air Division should be closely monitored and coordinated with RTA and RTAF helicopter-lift capabilities. The provision of additional helicopter-mobility capability may at some point be more effective than marginal increases in police, paramilitary, and military force levels.

(4) Efforts to ensure fair and just treatment of the population by the police in order to improve the police image require continued RTG emphasis.

(5) Village Security Force program goals, by their sophistication (requirements for eight weeks training at a central VSF school, employment of VSF on a full-time basis, and the like) are causing and may continue to cause delays in providing protection to security-sensitive villages. As interim measures, consideration should be given to: a concept of active and collective defense of those villages which are concentrated in a small geographic area, utilizing VDC and other local security resources in random patterns of night patrols and ambushes; and exploiting the capability of the local villagers for security by the formation of "home guard" units under the supervision of the district, with arms and funding provided by the Royal Thai Government.

(6) The Border Patrol Police capabilities for remote area development and security should be further exploited, particularly vis-a-vis the hill tribes in the North. The expansion of the Border Patrol Police to fulfill this role warrants consideration.

(7) The Provincial Police Special Action Forces and the Border Patrol Police Mobile Reserve Platoons provide an appropriate contribution for long-haul security of the rural areas of Thailand in an insurgency atmosphere. They ensure a permanent tactical capability in a given geographic area and can function independently under police control or as a part of joint counterinsurgency forces in high threat areas where military commitment has been necessary. Expansion beyond the programmed 24 Mobile Reserve Platoons and 36 Special Action Forces should be based upon an increased insurgent threat. The immediate goal should be to improve equipment and maintain training and inspection procedures which assure maximum effectiveness from existing police-paramilitary forces.

(8) The VDC Special District Company program being supported by the US Military Assistance Program, if implemented and supported as planned, will provide a positive contribution to the improvement of rural security. The RTG ability to activate and deactivate VDC units provides a flexible means of countering variable insurgent threat levels.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

(9) Provisions for country-wide rural security in Thailand cannot await development of insurgent threats, but must be pursued on a priority basis throughout the country in order to ensure physical and psychological security for all the people.

E. ROYAL THAI ARMED FORCES

(C) This section analyzes the missions and tasks of the Thai military forces which, in light of past experience, could be most effective against insurgency, and develops broad guidance for structuring, organizing, equipping, and training Thai military forces to cope with the current levels of insurgency, as well as selected levels of insurgency growth and activity within Thailand.

(U) The nature of the insurgency in Thailand dictates that the Royal Thai Army perform the principal offensive military role. Accordingly, this analysis concentrates on the Army. The evaluation is based on the lessons learned from a number of insurgencies as set forth in "Military Strategy and Tactics of Low-Level Insurgency," Volume III, Section III.⁸

1. Mission and Tasks of the Royal Thai Armed Forces

(U) The history of past insurgencies, particularly those in Indochina, illuminates the vital need of arresting the expansion of guerrilla forces from small units into large, conventionally organized and equipped forces of a regular character. Unless such expansion is arrested, the insurgent forces grow ultimately to a size and sophistication which permit them to challenge the government forces. By the same token, experiences in Malaya, the Philippines, Algeria, and South Vietnam show that the primary mission and tasks of the regular armed forces are the seizure of the initiative through offensive operations aimed at fragmentation and attrition of the guerrilla forces.

8. This section also draws on material in Volume IV. See Appendix C, "Royal Thai Armed Forces"; and Appendix F, "Intelligence Capability."

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~SECRET~~

This page is CONFIDENTIAL

(U) Unfortunately, most insurgencies witness competing demands for military resources which lead to a dissipation of military forces and inhibit offensive operations. This competition evolves from the fact that insurgencies usually begin in areas remote from government influence--areas in which civil administration, including police and local security forces, is minimal or nonexistent. The government then faces the dilemma of whether to employ armed forces in static security to compensate for the lack of police forces or to concentrate them against the guerrillas.

(U) Experience also shows that even after a government decides to concentrate the armed forces in an offensive against the insurgents, operations initially suffer from deficiencies in doctrine, intelligence, training, and equipment. A period of trial and error spanning several years is standard before civil and military plans and programs are meshed in effective coordination, an intelligence system becomes effective, and deficiencies in military tactics, training, and equipment are overcome.

(U) The principal tactical deficiency revealed by the record of past insurgencies is the predilection of the high commands for conventional tactics of large sweeps, flanking maneuvers, and encirclements. Invariably, guerrillas escaped these cumbersome operations by slipping out of the target area before the counterinsurgency forces were in position, or by slipping through the gaps in the lines. Two or three years invariably elapsed before the unproductive results of these tactics dictated a shift. This occurred in Malaya and the Philippines, for example, where large sweeps were ultimately abandoned in favor of small-unit operations by combat patrols.

(C) The evolution of strategy and tactics in Thailand has followed a similar pattern. During 1966, the first year in which battalion-size units were employed in the Northeast against the insurgents, tactical operations consisted of large sweeps involving at least one battalion, supplemented by paramilitary and police forces and at times supported by attack aircraft armed with rockets and napalm. The results of these operations were largely negligible.

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

(S) The RTA decided to abandon these tactics at an early stage. In 1967 the RTG decided on a more sophisticated tactical approach which was incorporated in the 0910 Plan prepared by the CSOC. The basic concept of the plan was to (a) provide security for selected villages adjacent to guerrilla bases in 11 target areas in 6 North-east provinces, (b) isolate the guerrillas from the villagers, and (c) fragment and attrite the guerrilla forces by offensive patrol operations.

(S) Forces assigned to the 0910 Plan included Border Patrol Police, Provincial Police, and Royal Thai Army units, supplemented by the Volunteer Defense Corps and the Village Security Officers. Provincial Police augmented these local forces to form Joint Security Teams, with approximately 12 men in each team; the teams were located in villages in the selected target areas.

(S) The tactic employed in the 0910 Plan was the garrisoning of a ring of villages in each of the 11 target areas. In all, 180 villages out of 5,000 were protected in the provinces in the Northeast with high insurgency. A platoon-size reaction force was available in each of the 11 areas to support the static security forces. Meanwhile, Army units conducted intensive patrols in the forests in the vicinity of the selected villages.

(S) The insurgents suffered a significant setback as a result of 0910 operations. Not only did they suffer 190 casualties, or roughly 10 percent of their estimated strength, in addition to yielding a significant number of prisoners, but they were cut off effectively from the 180 villages included in the 0910 Plan. Defectors confirmed that the guerrillas were suffering from food and equipment shortages. Defections rose, while assassinations and armed propaganda meetings fell off. The selectiveness of the operation enabled the bulk of the guerrillas to shift to new areas not covered by the 0910 Plan, where they could proceed to establish new bases of support. Nevertheless, the underlying concept of the 0910 Plan, coupled with effective implementation, was a significant step in countering the insurgency.

~~SECRET~~

SECRET

(S) In October 1967, Second Army Forward Headquarters, under the command of General Dongcherm, replaced CPM-1 as the controlling headquarters for military operations in the Northeast. Forces assigned to General Dongcherm were the equivalent of about three battalions of infantry, of three rifle companies each. These forces were employed in three missions as follows:

- (1) Village Security--one rifle company,
- (2) Patrol and Reaction Forces--two rifle companies (one platoon assigned to six 0910 target areas), and
- (3) Offensive Operations--3rd Battalion, 6th Infantry (less one rifle company); 3rd Battalion, 13th Infantry (less one rifle company); two rifle companies in the final phase of counter-insurgency training were temporarily assigned for five weeks; one airborne rifle company of two rifle platoons and one mechanized platoon.

(S) The tasks of the six rifle companies assigned to offensive operations were and still remain the fragmentation and attrition of the guerrilla bands. The most common tactic employed is the selection of a zone of operations in which guerrilla bands are known to be operating. This zone, usually about 3,000 meters in diameter, is surrounded by two or more infantry companies. The companies then converge on the guerrilla base areas. After this initial operation, the infantry units break into small units which patrol and conduct ambushes in an area of about 10,000 square meters. These operations continue until contacts with the guerrillas cease, at which time the units are moved to another target area to repeat the process.

(S) In the period from October 1967 through February 1968, 81 armed clashes with the guerrillas were reported. Of these, only five incidents were initiated by the guerrillas, and even these appear to have been for the purpose of covering their withdrawal. The following results were reported:

Guerrillas killed in action	56
RTA killed in action	2
Guerrillas captured	342
Guerrillas surrendered	286

SECRET

SECRET

(U) The US Army liaison officer with the Second Army Forward has expressed confidence in the reliability of the above casualty figures-- although the number of guerrillas captured or having surrendered may be inflated by suspects. Be that as it may, the relative effectiveness of the RTA emerges clearly.

(C) The RTA thus seems to have evolved in the Northeast a fundamentally correct strategy and the tactics to implement it. After less than a year's experimentation with large sweeps, the mission and tasks are now clearly the fragmentation and attrition of the guerrilla bands through offensive operations conducted by small-unit patrols and ambushes.

(C) Not only are the military tactics sound, but General Dongcherm, as has been pointed out above, has clearly recognized the imperative of conducting operations with an eye toward winning the villagers' support. He has continually impressed this need on his commanders. Generally, offensive operations have avoided the use of artillery fire, bombing, strafing, and rocketry. These restraints, combined with circumspect behavior by the troops toward the population, have created a favorable image of the RTA among the villagers in the Northeast.

(S) While sound strategy and tactics have been developed in a relatively short period of time, the implementation of the mission is severely handicapped by a shortage of military forces. As has been described, guerrilla base areas in the Northeast center in the Phu Phan Mountains and the forested areas extending north toward the Mekong in the form of a rough crescent covering about 5,000 square miles. The six rifle companies available for offensive operations can cover an area of about 150 square miles in each operation. The guerrillas, therefore, have ample freedom to clear the area of operations and to return after offensive operations have ceased. Many guerrilla base areas remain untouched.

(S) It follows that additional forces must be assigned to the Second Army Forward. This conclusion is independent of whether the insurgent movement is deemed weak (as this analysis holds) or strong.

SECRET

In either case, the goal should be to break the back of the insurgent movement before it has an opportunity to expand. This conclusion is enhanced by the fact that the strategy and tactics of the Second Army Forward are fundamentally sound and that additional forces could be effectively deployed without running the risk of alienating the villagers.

(S) The US Military Assistance Command, Thailand, has estimated that 13 battalions of infantry would be sufficient to provide security for the villages and to conduct saturation patrols and other offensive operations against the 1,500 to 2,000 guerrillas. General Dongcherm has requested up to 10 battalions.

(S) In terms of gross numbers of infantry battalions in the RTA, the necessary forces to reinforce General Dongcherm's command are in the inventory. (See Figure 6 for the Army dispositions.) Thirty-five infantry battalions and six cavalry squadrons are available in three and one-third infantry divisions and one cavalry division (see Table 1). The Second Army area alone has six additional infantry battalions which, if assigned to General Dongcherm's operational control, would largely satisfy his estimate of requirements. In addition, the Marine Brigade, with a strength of three infantry battalions, could contribute at least one battalion.

Table 1

DISPOSITION OF MANEUVER BATTALIONS,
ROYAL THAI ARMY, MARCH 1968

<u>Battalions</u>	<u>1st Army</u>	<u>2nd Army</u>	<u>3rd Army</u>	<u>5th Military Circle</u>
Infantry (includes one airborne battalion and one Special Forces Group)	17 (1/3) ^a	9 (3)	6 (4)	4 (1/3)
Tank	1	1	1	-
Cavalry	<u>4</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1 (2/3)</u>	<u>-</u>
TOTAL	22	11	8	4

a. Figures in brackets indicate the number of battalions assigned to suppression operation.

SECRET

SECRET

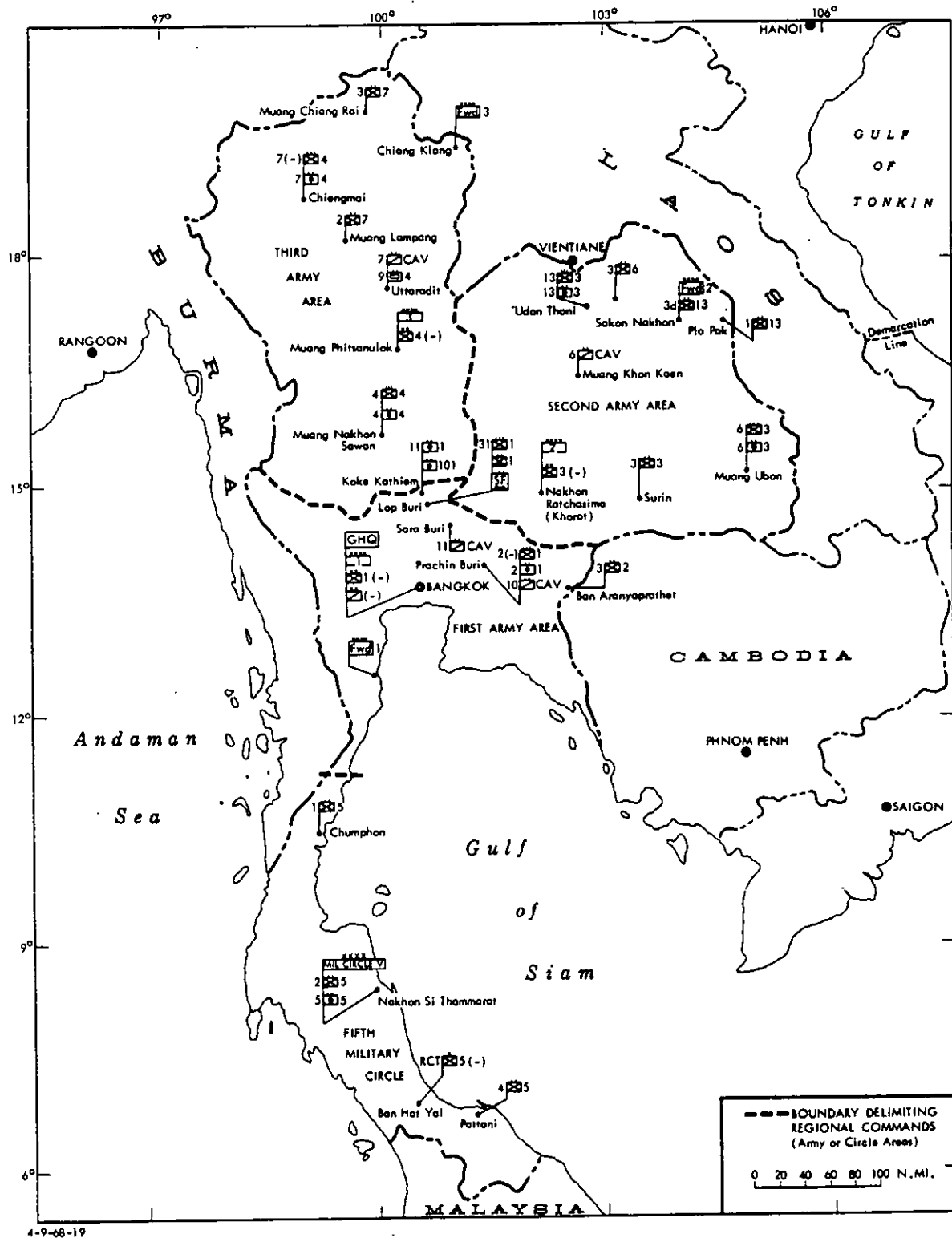


FIGURE 6 (S). Army Dispositions, Thailand, December 1967 (U)

SECRET

~~SECRET~~

(S) While enough infantry battalions are available to meet the requirements, the picture is not so bright when one examines the duty strengths of these units. The authorized strength of the Royal Thai Army was 141,756 as of December 1967; the assigned strength was only 102,678, or 72 percent. Other factors reduce the effective strength still further. Thus, officers and men are assigned to special missions, including security officers in the provincial and district CPMs, Mobile Development Units, and Special Operations Companies, but they continue to be carried on the rolls of their parent organization. Consequently, infantry battalions habitually operate at about 50 to 60 percent of Table of Organization strength when personnel on leave, sick, and on special details are taken into consideration. The deployment of a division to South Vietnam will further deplete the personnel strength of the RTA battalions. The plans of the RTA to rectify these quantitative deficiencies do not appear adequate. The objective of 74 percent of full TO and E strength by September 1968 and 84 percent by January 1970 appears to fall short of requirements.

(S) The most critical quantitative deficiency in the RTA is the shortage of company-grade officers and noncommissioned officers. As of December 31, 1967, reported strengths were:

	<u>Officers</u>	<u>NCOs</u>
Authorized	13,460	55,310
Assigned	<u>8,993</u>	<u>39,317</u>
Shortage	-4,467	-15,993

Further, almost 50 percent of this shortage falls in the company grades--2,000 or about 40 percent of company grade requirements. When special duty assignments are taken into consideration, a rifle company with an authorized strength of six officers is unlikely to have more than two officers on duty. Plans for alleviating the company-grade officer shortage, even if met, will still leave a deficiency of about 1,000. The shortage of NCOs is similarly serious. The plans to remedy this deficiency will still fall short of required levels by about 10,000 to 12,000--roughly 20 percent. These shortages

SECRET

become all the more significant in the light of the general need for leadership in the Royal Thai Army.

2. Training and Leadership

(U) A study of past insurgencies suggests that, even after an offensive concept is formulated and forces necessary to implement the strategy are assigned to the field commanders, a number of constraints can inhibit implementation. The nature of guerrilla tactics is one of these constraints. In the initial phase of the insurgency, the insurgents generally strive to build up their infrastructure and expand their forces. Toward the end, they seek to avoid combat in order to conserve their resources. Even when they clash with government forces, they usually attempt to disengage unless they perceive a tactical advantage in sustaining contact. During this phase, then, government units soon recognize that the guerrillas threaten them only when cornered--and this can only happen when government forces press their attacks with vigor.

(U) In conventional operations, an offensive spirit can gradually be infused through planning and training. In counterinsurgency operations, by contrast, contact can rarely be planned with confidence. Furthermore, the adverse conditions of terrain and weather associated with counterinsurgency operations tax the physical capabilities of the troops, wear down their resistance, and weaken their resolve and aggressiveness.

(U) In the typical operations of squads, platoons, and companies during the early stages of insurgent warfare, the influence of battalion and other senior commanders cannot be asserted as effectively as in conventional operations. Instead, the command influence in these operations is limited to company-grade officers and non-commissioned officers. The leadership in this group is even more critical than in conventional operations. This group suffers from quantitative and qualitative deficiencies, there is a dearth of company-grade officers to man the units, and those officers who are available lack training.

CONFIDENTIAL

(C) These typical constraints are operative in Thailand. The shortage of company-grade officers has already been noted. Yet, an even more serious constraint in Thailand is a qualitative one: it relates to the unique Thai cultural pattern which seriously discourages the exercise of initiative by subordinates in the military chain of command.

(U) Nevertheless, these qualitative constraints can be mitigated through realistic training and dynamic leadership. Perhaps the best example of the role of training in instilling aggressive spirit into small units is that of the British in Malaya. The British learned that once contact with the guerrillas had been made, the reaction of the patrols had to be immediate--almost instinctive. To inculcate the hair-trigger response, the British instituted immediate-reaction drills in their Jungle Training Center. These drills were rehearsed until reaction to contact became instantaneous. The British also learned the value of individual marksmanship in small-unit encounters, and their marksmanship training set a standard of achieving a "kill" in two to three seconds. The British system of training then inculcated an instinctive aggressive reaction to guerrilla contact, superb marksmanship, and a high degree of jungle know-how--British and Colonial units became confident that they could beat the CT's at their own game--which they did time and again. The role of training in achieving this goal cannot be overestimated.

(C) Unfortunately, routine training in the RTA is deficient. Field training is not intensive enough, and marksmanship schooling is neither efficient nor uniform. Field training has been stunted by the provision that per diem be paid to units away from their base camps. In 1969 this constraint may be eased by an increase in funding for routine field training from 12 days to 38 days annually.

(C) The United States has assigned a company of Special Forces to assist the RTA in achieving a higher standard of training. During 1966 and 1967, 36 RTA rifle companies completed five weeks' training, followed by an assignment to the Second Army Forward in the Northeast (or the Fifth Military Circle in the Mid-South) for five weeks of

CONFIDENTIAL

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

active operations. Unfortunately, the Special Forces instructors have found it difficult to focus training on immediate action drills and marksmanship because of gaps in basic training of the company units undergoing this schooling--most of the riflemen are recent conscripts with only about three months' service. Consequently, the Special Forces have attempted to remedy gaps in basic training rather than specialized training. Some changes therefore seem to be indicated. The US advisers should insist that basic indoctrination and instruction in small-unit tactics be given before assignment to training by the Special Forces. Alternatively, the Special Forces instructors should concentrate on the high-payoff areas of immediate reaction drills and marksmanship on the assumption that basic training will be provided by the Royal Thai Army.

(C) While training can do much to instill in small units an aggressive response to guerrilla contact, it cannot in itself solve the broader problem of the lack of initiative found throughout the RTA chain of command. Before examining the role of dynamic leadership in mitigating this problem, it may be useful to examine the characteristics of the RTA officers and men.

(C) The average Thai soldier is generally described as intelligent, cooperative, and adaptive to military discipline. He learns rapidly and is capable of acquiring technical skills. He tends to be in excellent physical condition, and this factor, combined with his predominantly rural background, prepares him well for the hardships of small-unit patrol operations. He has the capability of becoming a good marksman, although ineffective small-arms training does not exploit this capability. Buddhist teachings do not debilitate his effectiveness. In short, the Thai soldier is potentially a good soldier when he has effective leadership. He has demonstrated his merit in Korea and appears to be performing well in South Vietnam.

(C) The noncommissioned officers are professionals of long service; they have had at least two years' of schooling. The task of training falls mainly on their shoulders. Because of officer

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~SECRET~~

This page is CONFIDENTIAL

shortages, many platoons are commanded by master sergeants who are considered thoroughly competent--but they, too, require leadership.

(C) The company-grade officers are of two types, those appointed from the NCO ranks and those who are military academy or college graduates. Those rising from the ranks are handicapped by age--formerly 15 years of service was a prerequisite for appointment, with the result that most officers in this category were at least in their mid-thirties. Recently the Army has set an age ceiling of 35 years for all officer candidates, but age remains a constraint on their effectiveness in the field. Nevertheless, this group is considered to be reasonably competent and effective.

(C) The academy graduates are rated by the American military advisers as the group with the highest potential in the RTA. They are more responsive to US advisory efforts, are well schooled, and are now acquiring some command experience in counterinsurgency operations.

(C) Field-grade officers are also credited with good potential, particularly those majors who have attended US resident courses. Colonels and special colonels tend to vary sharply in capability; some are well schooled and veterans of service in Korea, others lack professional competence, are over-age, and unimaginative.

(C) The entire command structure of the RTA lacks combat experience and reflects the lack of realistic peacetime training. Since ingrained cultural characteristics inhibit initiative at subordinate levels, leadership must come from the top--it cannot be inserted laterally at subordinate levels of command as in Western-oriented armies.

(C) Fortunately, there is evidence of dynamic leadership and the encouragement of initiative. General Dongcherm is a prime example. He has demanded that his staff take action in any situation arising during his absence from his headquarters. He expects his subordinate commanders to make decisions without waiting for orders from Second Army Forward. He has insisted on a pattern of flexible operations against the insurgents, and he appears to have inculcated

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

a sense of dedication and motivation in his staff and field units. His headquarters has been on a seven-day week schedule--a condition hitherto unheard of in the Royal Thai Army. Some of his offensive units have been continuously in the field since October 1967. He has insisted that his troops not damage their image with the villagers through indiscriminate operations or plundering.

(C) The qualities of leadership shown by General Dongcherm are not unique. Knowledgeable US officers, including the Commanding General of the US Military Assistance Command in Thailand, regard the First Army Commander and his deputy as equally capable. General Saiyud, the Director of Operations at the CSOC, is similarly rated. And there are others. It appears, then, that lack of initiative in the RTA is gradually being overcome by positive leadership.

3. Intelligence

(U) A principal lesson from past insurgencies is that an offensive concept of operations and an aggressive spirit on the part of small units are not in themselves enough for effective counter-insurgency operations. Timely intelligence is essential to provide contact with the guerrillas under favorable tactical conditions.

(U) Targets for intelligence fall into two categories: the military arm of the insurgents and their political infrastructure. These intelligence requirements cannot be compartmented; intelligence regarding infrastructure often yields vital military information, and military intelligence can aid in the detection and elimination of cadre. It follows, then, that effective operations require coordination of all agencies involved in intelligence.

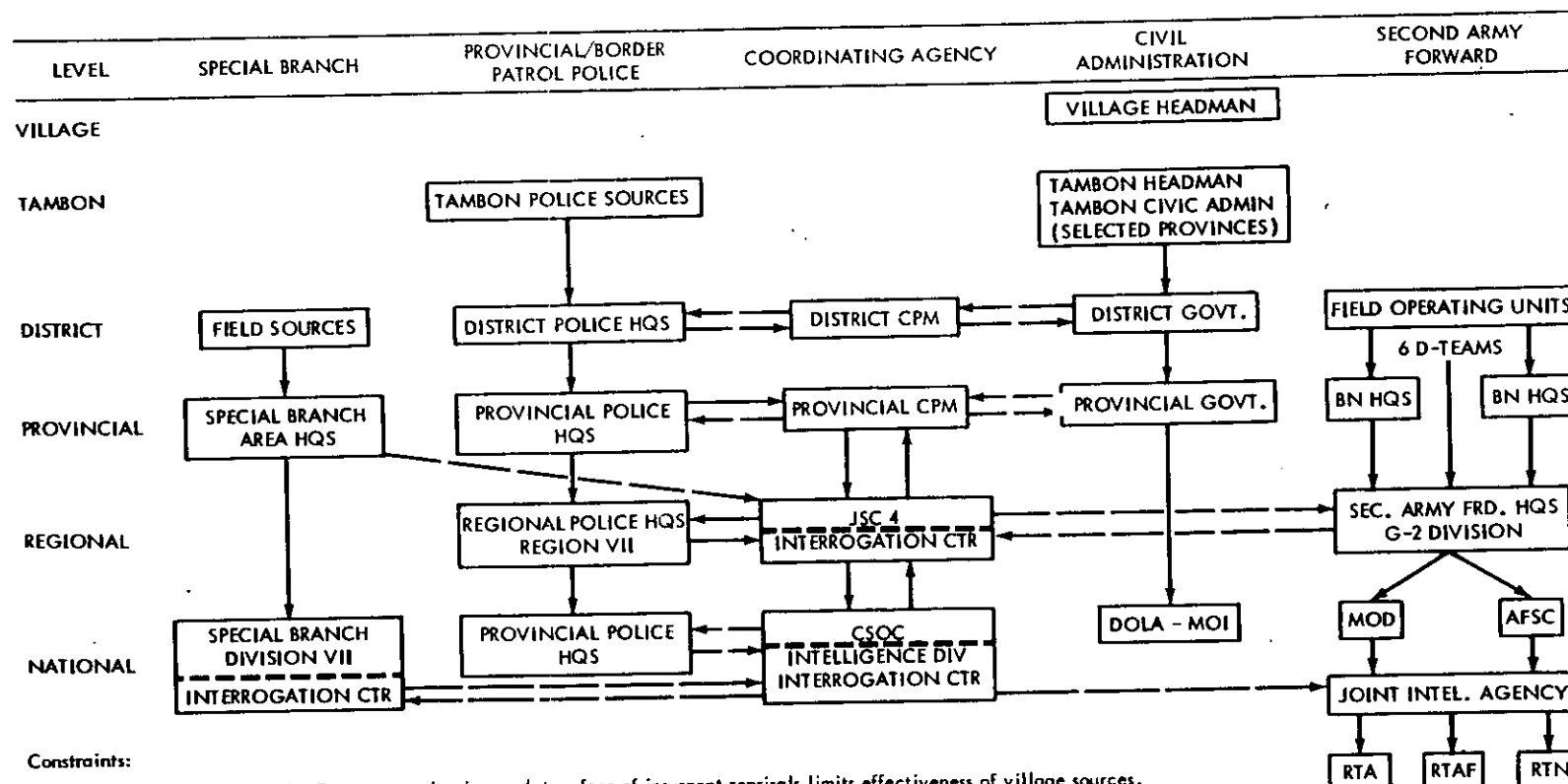
(S) As in many insurgencies, the intelligence structure in Thailand was gradually evolved with experience. The current structure is shown in Table 2 and Figure 7. The principal field agencies include Division VII of the Special Branch, which is targeted against the Communist infrastructure; the National Police; elements of the local civil administration in CPMs at provincial and district levels; and the Second Army Forward, with its assigned units. The principal

~~SECRET~~

Table 2

INTELLIGENCE STRUCTURE, ROYAL THAI GOVERNMENT

FUNCTIONS	SOURCES	ORGANIZATIONS
Village level: Raw intelligence collection	Village headman Village Security Forces (VSO, PAT, etc.) Village agents Census Aspiration Teams	None
Tambon level: Raw intelligence collection	Tambon Police	None
District level: Collection Minor collation and evaluation for local operations	District Police District civil officials Agents Volunteer Defense Corps patrols	District CPM
Provincial level: Limited interrogation Some collation, interpretation and evaluation for provincial level operations	Provincial Police Special Branch Agents (including SB) Prisoners and Defectors Captured documents VDC patrols Military Units in static defense Mobile Development Units	Provincial CPM Special Branch Area Headquarters
Regional level: Interrogation for tactical operations Complete intelligence production for dissemination to Second Army Forward and Provincial CPNs	JSC interrogation JSC intelligence production Second Army Forward, 6 "D" teams assigned to target areas Military units in field Prisoners and defectors Captured documents	JSC 4-Udon JSC 3-Korat (SB, PP, BPP, RTA) JSC interrogation center G-2 Division-Second Army
National level: Interrogation for tactical and strategic operations Complete intelligence production to serve as a basis for operations Dissemination laterally to other agencies involved in COIN and downward to field agencies	CSOC/SB interrogation CSOC/SB production AFSC production	Special Branch-Div. VII National Police (PP and BPP) CSOC: Intelligence Division Interrogation Center J-2 Supreme Command RTA-RTAF-RTN NSC Intelligence staff Armed Forces Security Center Joint US/RTC



Constraints:

Village level: Village Security Force expansion incomplete--fear of insurgent reprisals limits effectiveness of village sources.

Tambon level: Tambon Police expansion incomplete--resulting in a lack of police presence in many villages.

Provincial level: Provincial governors fail to pass prisoners and defectors to JSC for interrogation. Provincial Police not fully cooperative with Second Army.

Regional level: Intelligence production by JSC 4 not yet adequate for military operations. Procedures for coordination between JSC 4 and Second Army not yet effective. G-2 Division has inadequate resources, both numerically and technically.

National level: Limited coordination between SB and CSOC interrogation.

General constraints applying to all levels of the Intelligence structure:

"Three urgent steps are necessary in the intelligence field to assist the counterinsurgency planners and commanders in the performance of their functions: (1) The improvement of sources which must be undertaken on a service by service basis, including training and retraining of personnel; redefinition and assignment of priorities to specific areas of source acquisition; and the assignment of some additional personnel to high-priority requirements. (2) Better organization of intelligence resources from the national level down is required to insure that information received is adequately indexed, filed, collated and disseminated so as to reach counterinsurgency planners and commanders in timely useable form. (3) Interrogation and document exploitation must be centralized so as to insure full intelligence value is derived from each prisoner, defector or document obtained."

SOURCE: U.S. Embassy, Bangkok, Improving Intelligence Posture, 28 Feb. 1968, SECRET NOFORN

16-10-68-4

FIGURE 7 (S). Intelligence Organization and Flow, Northeast Thailand (U)

intelligence coordinating agencies are the CPMs at district and provincial levels, the Joint Security Centers, and the Second Army Forward Headquarters. At the national level, the foregoing line agencies are represented, while the coordination function is performed by the Communist Suppression Operations Command. Other agencies involved in the intelligence process include the Armed Forces Security Center (AFSC) and the Joint Intelligence Agency under the Minister of Defense.

(S) Intelligence sources at the grass roots include the village headmen, village security elements, Census Aspiration Teams making village surveys, agents, Community Development workers, and school-teachers. Of these, only the village headman is common to all villages.

(S) The potential for intelligence is one of the principal justifications for the newly developed program for village security, the Village Security Forces. Personnel for this program will be recruited, trained, and returned to their parent village. Because of their village background, they will not only have local knowledge of each family within the village, but more importantly, they will be privy to gossip, a favorite pastime of the Thai villager. These forces should thus be in an excellent position to gain a good intelligence picture of the village membership in the Communist infrastructure and of those individuals who are supporting the jungle soldiers. This brand of intelligence is not available to the external agencies, including the tambon police, who are considered "outsiders."

(S) The gradual expansion of police forces is extending their presence to the more critical tambons in the Northeast. The police are a source of some intelligence through interrogation of arrested persons and patrols. At the district level, paramilitary forces of the Volunteer Defense Corps (VDC) provide information picked up on patrols, or from captured jungle soldiers, as do units of the Second Army Forward. The six intelligence teams assigned to Second Army with target area orientation are another important source of information. Civil administrators who visit the villages occasionally contribute some information, too.

SECRET

(S) The Second Army Forward intelligence organization consists of an undermanned G-2 division of about seven officers, together with six "D" teams of 12 men each, reinforced by interrogation, photo, and lie detector elements. These field intelligence units are assigned to specific geographical areas. The operating units of the Second Army Forward also relay intelligence derived from prisoners, defectors, and captured documents.

4. Evaluation of the Intelligence Effort

(S) The Thai intelligence system has been in operation for about one year. During this period, Special Branch operations targeted against the infrastructure of the Communist Party of Thailand have produced intelligence leading to the arrest of about 30 cadres, most of whom, including members of the Politburo of the Communist Party of Thailand, the Central Committee, a labor organizer, and the head of a Communist-controlled front, were apprehended in one coordinated operation in August 1967. Since it is known that the infrastructure of the CPT lacks membership to flesh out its organization, particularly at the district and provincial levels, the loss of these cadres constitutes a significant setback. It would appear that the Special Branch shows promise. It should improve its performance with the planned accretion of trained personnel, as well as refresher training for those already assigned.

(S) On the other hand, the acquisition of timely military intelligence so vital to effective counterinsurgency operations has not been adequate. This does not mean that progress has not been made. During the past year a rather extensive order of battle has been compiled. A large number of the guerrilla leaders have been identified by name and linked with considerable background information. Areas of operations of some jungle bands have also been pinpointed. This is a good start. However, this intelligence is not sufficient for effective military operations; what is required is detailed and timely information on the basis of which military operations can be mounted with a reasonable chance of contact under favorable tactical conditions. This level of sophistication has not been achieved.

SECRET

(S) Nevertheless, at least the organizational structure is now in place. In this connection, it is worth noting that RTG reforms of its intelligence structure have been achieved at a faster pace than have those of most governments faced with similar insurgent conditions. Even the British in Malaya, with all the inherent advantages of a superb Special Branch and vested with absolute direction of the counterinsurgency, needed four years to evolve an intelligence structure and system which were adequate to the task. The experience in the Philippines was similar.

(S) Improvements are needed, nevertheless, in each component of the structure and in the coordination among components. A recent study by US officials in Thailand concludes the following:

While RTG intelligence resources have shown progress in the past two years, all available intelligence is not now retrievable by RTG counterinsurgency planners and commanders. To enable these officials to make the best possible use of counterinsurgency forces and assets, sources of intelligence need upgrading; better coordination among intelligence producers is required; intelligence processing must be improved and better integrated into planning and command functions; and a streamlined system of prisoners and defector interrogation and of document exploitation is needed.⁹

(S) The study goes on to recommend three remedial steps: an improvement in intelligence sources including training and retraining; a reevaluation of priorities for intelligence acquisition, and the assignment of additional personnel; improved functioning to ensure that intelligence is more adequately indexed, collated, and disseminated so as to reach those involved in planning and implementing counterinsurgency operations in a more suitable form and in a more timely fashion; and, finally, improved procedures for exploitation of interrogation and documents.

(S) The most serious specific constraint relates to the production of operational intelligence for the Second Army Forward units.

9. Improving Intelligence Posture, Concept Paper, US Embassy, Bangkok, Thailand, 28 Feb 1968. SECRET NOFORN

~~SECRET~~
NOFORN

The main source of this intelligence is JSC 4, which derives inputs from the Provincial CPMs, interrogation of prisoners and defectors, and exploitation of captured documents. But JSC 4 is handicapped both qualitatively and quantitatively: it needs more qualified personnel as well as on-job retraining.

(S) Lack of effective coordination between JSC 4 and the Second Army is another serious constraint. Available intelligence is not delivered promptly to the military. Part of the problem is that the G-2 division of Second Army Forward is handicapped in exploiting available intelligence by its own deficiencies: the division is staffed with only eight officers and a few enlisted men, and those officers who are assigned are not technically qualified. Two immediate remedies are indicated: first, an exchange of liaison officers between JSC 4 and the Second Army could improve coordination and ensure timely delivery of information; and, second, the G-2 division should be augmented and upgraded. A qualified US Army officer with practical experience in the field of intelligence for insurgent operations should be assigned as an adviser to the G-2 division of the Second Army as a matter of priority.

(S) Yet another major barrier lies in the operational field: the RTG has not targeted an effective psychological warfare and defector program against the weak infrastructure and the guerrilla arm. Thus, a major source of operational intelligence--surrendered personnel--which proved so important to the British in Malaya, is denied to the RTG. Such a program should be established at the earliest possible time. It is understood that US officials are strongly supporting such a program.

(S) Finally, the RTG, including the military, continue to disregard the demanding requirements of counterintelligence--of denying information to the insurgents. On at least one occasion, for example, the Second Army commander found it necessary to mount a military operation without, for the sake of security, informing the provincial governor.

~~SECRET~~
NOFORN

~~SECRET~~

5. Organization

(C) Lessons of past insurgencies indicate that the basic infantry battalion is an adequate structure for counterinsurgency operations. Operations in Thailand confirm this. In the event that the level of insurgency increases so that additional forces are required, consideration should be given to the addition of a fourth rifle company to the infantry battalion as an alternative to the formation of additional infantry battalions.

6. Equipment

(S) a. Infantry Weapons. While the basic structure of the infantry battalion meets the requirements for counterinsurgency operations, some modifications and additions to the equipment of the infantry are indicated. The current US Military Assistance Program for the modernization of small arms in the infantry units appears to respond to requirements. The replacement of the M-1 rifle by the M-16, together with the provision of the M-79 grenade launcher and the M-60 machine gun, should provide the Thai soldier with adequate weapons.

(S) b. Communications. The US Military Assistance Program for modernization of communication equipment is not fully responsive to the requirements of counterinsurgency operations in Thailand. For the most part, these operations consist of small-unit patrols and ambushes conducted by squads, platoons, and companies operating in dispersed formations. Communications modernization appears to reflect the requirements of more conventional operations in which dispersal of units is not a significant factor. Specifically, the modernization program provides PRC-6s in the infantry squads with a range of one mile to operate in the infantry platoon command net, and PRC-25s with a range of five miles to operate in the company and battalion command nets. While the program represents a significant improvement over previous communication capabilities in the infantry battalion, it may be necessary to furnish additional PRC-25s to squads

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

operating as independent units. Additional requirements for light-weight equipment with ranges in excess of five miles may be generated by the pattern of counterinsurgency operations, in which case consideration should be given to the provision of this improved equipment from the US inventory, if available.

(S) c. Mobility. The vital role of the helicopter in counterinsurgency operations has been demonstrated in Malaya, Algeria, and, in particular, South Vietnam. The enhancement of the mobility of ground forces through the employment of helicopters results in a dramatic improvement in offensive capabilities in counterinsurgency operations. Flexibility, surprise, and fire support are improved by an order of magnitude, while the enhanced logistics support capability gives a commander a freedom of action which would be impossible when logistics support is dependent on a surface line of communication.

(S) The Second Army Forward is currently assigned 10 H-34s of the Royal Thai Air Force. This helicopter lift capability is employed primarily in logistic support. The Second Army Forward is forced to utilize motor vehicles for tactical deployment of strike forces to operational areas. As a result, surprise is lost, and the guerrillas are able to evade contact by moving out of the target areas before strike forces are deployed. In operating areas in the North, the lack of roads makes the employment of motor vehicles for tactical and logistics support impractical, yet only eight helicopters are available.

(S) The US Military Assistance Program will furnish 25 UH-1 helicopters to the RTA and 25 to the RTAF during 1968 and 1969, with two additional increments of 25 by 1972. An acceleration of this program appears to be indicated.

7. Logistics

(S) In February 1968, a Joint US Military Assistance Group (JUSMAG) study concluded that the RTA logistics organization was incapable of supporting its forces in conventional combat. The deficiencies cited in the report included, among others, the lack of

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

forward depots, quantitative and qualitative deficiencies in maintenance and supply personnel, an unresponsive supply system incapable of furnishing replacement parts in a timely fashion, a tendency to hoard supplies, and a lack of command interest in logistics.

(S) The JUSMAG report also questions the capability of the logistics support organization to sustain additional forces for counterinsurgency operations in the Northeast. While we are not in a position to question this appraisal, it appears that some improvisation might bridge the gap. However, the level of logistics support requirements in the Northeast is relatively low, due to the pattern of operations. Only limited amounts of small arms ammunition and mortar rounds are expended; fuel requirements for motor vehicles appear to be relatively modest; food should be available locally; maintenance and supply should be correspondingly low. It would appear that additional forces in the Northeast might be sustained by exploiting commercial rail and truck capabilities, supplemented by organic motor transport and the modest transport airlift available in the RTAF inventory. Specifically, delivery of resupply to the Northeast from depots in the Bangkok area might make use of rail transport to Udorn and commercial truck from Udorn to base camps in the Northeast. It is understood that the commercial trucking capability in Northeast Thailand is highly developed for support of US air bases in the area. Distribution from base camp to operating areas could be accomplished by a combination of organic motor vehicles and helicopters assigned to support Second Army Forward. The modest airlift capability of the RTAF might also be employed for emergency resupply of spare parts and critical supply items to airfields in the vicinity of base camps.

8. Conclusions

(S) a. Missions and Tasks. A study of counterinsurgency operations shows that the mission of regular military forces should be to seize the initiative by offensive operations against the guerrilla forces, rather than to defend population centers and installations.

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

(Police and paramilitary forces should perform static defense.) The tasks to be executed in the offensive are (a) the fragmentation of the guerrilla forces into diminishing bands in order to deprive them of the initiative and to reduce their capability for offensive operations against the population and the regular armed forces, and (b) the attrition of the guerrilla forces to reduce their strength to the point where they lose all significant military capability. The Second Army Forward in the Northeast is now conducting its operations in consonance with the above mission and tasks.

(S) Tactical experience shows that these tasks can be accomplished better through small-unit patrol and ambush operations than through large-unit operations such as sweeps and encirclements. The Second Army Forward in the Northeast has evolved effective tactics, employing the bulk of its limited forces in small-unit patrol and ambush operations. The Second Army Forward units in the Northeast are clearly superior to the guerrilla bands in tactics as well as in organization, training, equipment, and logistics. On the other hand, the Third Army Forward in the North has not evolved effective tactics. It is also hampered by lack of combat experience, difficult terrain, and marginal logistic support. Most importantly, it faces a more aggressive adversary, the Meo.

(S) b. Disposition of Forces. The Royal Thai Army has sufficient combat troops in the inventory to deal effectively with the present level of armed insurgency, but the troops are not deployed to maximum advantage. The six companies permanently available to Second Army Forward for offensive operations in the Northeast are not enough to accomplish the mission and tasks described above, much less provide needed support to currently inadequate village security forces. The US Military Assistance Command in Thailand has estimated that 13 infantry battalions will be required to carry out widespread offensive operations against the 1,500 to 2,000 jungle soldiers and to back up village security. In the North, Third Army Forward has enough combat troops to suppress

the armed insurgency in its area. Its difficulties are not a function of the numbers of men available.

(S) c. Quantitative and Qualitative Deficiencies of the RTA. While the RTA has sufficient infantry battalions in the inventory to meet current requirements of the Second Army Forward in the Northeast, these units are handicapped by quantitative and qualitative deficiencies. The most serious quantitative shortcoming is the dearth of company-grade officers and noncommissioned officers. Not more than two company-grade officers are available per rifle company, and many platoons are commanded by master sergeants. There is an overall personnel shortage of about 50 percent of Table of Organization strength. The RTA plans for augmentation of officer and enlisted strength will reduce but not eliminate these shortages.

(S) The RTA also suffers from qualitative deficiencies, the most important of which is the lack of initiative which pervades the ranks. This lack of initiative can be overcome only through strong leadership at top echelons of command. Leadership at intermediate and lower levels of command cannot compensate for ineffective senior leadership in the Thai system, as it often can in Western armed forces. Fortunately, there are strong leaders among the top command echelon. General Dongcherm has demonstrated qualities of dynamic leadership and, in the opinion of knowledgeable US officials in close contact with the RTA, other general officers offer equal potential.

(S) d. Training. Training within the RTA does not measure up to requirements. Basic training is incomplete and lacks competent supervision; rifle marksmanship standards do not measure up to those required for effective counterinsurgency operations. Field training at all levels is severely hampered by the lack of per diem funds, although this deficiency will be alleviated to some extent by increased funding during 1969.

(S) The United States has assigned a Special Forces company to assist the Army in achieving a high standard of counterinsurgency training. Unfortunately, the impact of this training has been

~~SECRET~~

blunted by the low standard of basic training in the Royal Thai Army. As a consequence, the Special Forces have been unable to concentrate on the high payoff areas of immediate reaction drills and combat marksmanship. If this training is to achieve its desired goals, it appears that the United States should insist on a higher standard of basic training prior to counterinsurgency training or should concentrate on the high payoff areas without attempting to rectify basic training deficiencies.

(S) e. Intelligence. A sound national intelligence organization has gradually evolved and is now in place in Thailand. The Special Branch of the Police bears primary responsibility for targeting the CPT infrastructure and has achieved some success, highlighted by the arrest of about 50 Party members in August 1967.

(S) However, military intelligence production and dissemination have not measured up to requirements. There is a need for timely, detailed intelligence which will enable the RTA to mount operations with reasonable assurance of contact under favorable tactical conditions. All components of the present intelligence structure require upgrading if this end is to be achieved.

(S) The most acute need for more effective acquisition and dissemination of operational intelligence is in the Northeast. JSC 4, a principal source of intelligence for Second Army Forward, suffers from shortages of qualified personnel. There is a lack of coordination between JSC 4 and Second Army. The G-2 division of the Second Army also is handicapped by insufficient size and competence. Two immediate remedies are indicated: the exchange of liaison officers between JSC 4 and Second Army, and the assignment of a qualified US Army intelligence specialist as adviser to the G-2 division of the Second Army.

(S) Second Army Forward has not exploited the intelligence potential of direct observation from low-performance aircraft. Another significant weakness is that the RTG has not yet evolved an effective psychological warfare and defector program. The creation of a politically acute and thoroughly integrated program

~~SECRET~~

designed to encourage, exploit, and rehabilitate defectors would materially support the military effort and should be pursued as a matter of high priority. Finally, the RTG and the RTA show a disturbing disregard for the basic requirements of counterintelligence--the need to deny information to the Communist infrastructure and the guerrilla bands.

(S) f. Organization. As in other low-level insurgencies, the basic organization of the infantry battalion has proved adequate for the task. If the insurgency should increase to the point requiring additional forces, a fourth rifle company should be added to the infantry battalion in preference to the creation of additional infantry battalions.

(S) g. Equipment. The current US Military Assistance Program for modernization of the RTA appears sound. Consideration should be given to accelerating the delivery of helicopters and to providing additional PRC-25 radio equipment to meet the operational requirements of small-unit patrols operating in dispersed formations.

(S) h. Logistics. The logistics organization of the RTA suffers from a variety of ills including an inadequate supply system which fails to furnish replacement parts in a timely fashion, shortages of trained supply and maintenance personnel, a lack of command interest, and a tendency to hoard supplies and equipment. The Joint US Military Assistance Group, Thailand reports these deficiencies as being so severe that it is doubtful that the RTA could support an increased level of force deployment in the North-east. It would appear, however, that the relatively low-level logistic requirements of the current operations might be met in part by improvisations such as utilizing commercial transportation and the airlifting of priority items.

~~SECRET~~

(This page is blank)

~~SECRET~~

SECRET

IV

PROSPECTS AND IMPLICATIONS

A. THE GROWTH POTENTIAL OF THE INSURGENCY

(U) This section contains a region-by-region discussion of the growth potential of the insurgency, followed by general conclusions on the subject. The capability of the Royal Thai Government to cope with the potential threat and the implications for US support are discussed in subsequent sections.

1. The Northeast

(S) The key advantage commanded by the Communist movement in the Northeast has derived from the relative lack of government presence in the area. At least initially, the insurgents enjoyed a fairly free hand in their attempts to persuade and coerce the villagers; this freedom has been constricted to the extent that the RTG program for village security and suppression of the armed bands have made themselves felt. The major weaknesses of the insurgency have been identified as the absence of a classic revolutionary situation among the villagers and the intrinsic barriers within the Thai culture to Communist goals and methods.

(S) Notwithstanding its weaknesses, the insurgency has imposed considerable pressures on the government's political, economic, and military institutions and programs. The Royal Thai Government, despite some deficiencies and constraints, has withstood those pressures and has exhibited the political stability required to plan, coordinate, lead, and sustain the counterinsurgency effort. The RTG has developed an effective concept for countering the insurgency in the Northeast, including environmental improvement to negate the Communist propaganda of government neglect, an expanding program of village security to isolate the Communists from the villagers, and

SECRET

~~SECRET~~

offensive operations to fragment and attrite the armed bands. The economy is capable of supporting the national strategy.

(S) Environmental improvement, village security, and suppression programs have prevented the Communists from establishing a strong infrastructure among the villagers and from organizing a guerrilla force capable of seizing the initiative through offensive operations. As a result, the Communists have been unable to control a sizable, reliable, and durable base area in the Northeast--an essential for successful insurgency on the Maoist model.

(S) As long as the level of external support of the insurgency is not increased by an order of magnitude, the commitment of additional military forces for suppression operations in the Northeast, combined with a continuation of the environmental improvement and village security programs, will result in further fragmentation and attrition of the guerrilla bands and degradation of insurgent strength. Vigorous offensive action not only can check the expansion of the insurgency in the Northeast, but can debilitate the insurgency movement in general and thus reduce the overall threat to Thailand.

(S) The creation and implementation of a thoroughly integrated program to attract, exploit, and rehabilitate defectors from the insurgent ranks would considerably facilitate the process of fragmentation and attrition and should receive a high priority in RTG planning.

2. The Central Plain

(S) The potential of insurgency in the fertile Bangkok Plain and the Chao Phraya River Valley is even lower than in the Northeast. Incomes and living conditions are superior to those in the Northeast, communications are more highly developed, and the government presence is more extensive. As a result, the insurgents lack leverage. These obstacles notwithstanding, the Communists probably will attempt to extend the insurgency to this vital area, if only to put maximum pressure on the Bangkok government. It is doubtful, however, that they will enjoy appreciable success.

~~SECRET~~

3. The North

(S) The rugged mountainous regions of northern and western Thailand are inhabited by about 250,000 hill tribesmen, including the Meo (about 50,000) and the Yao (about 12,000). The majority of the tribes exist by "slash-and-burn" agriculture; quite a few grow opium poppies and hunt with firearms. The Royal Thai Government opposes all these practices: slash-and-burn agriculture because it depletes the soil and causes erosion, poppy growing because Thailand adheres to international narcotics control agreements, and hunting with firearms because the Royal Thai Government fears armed tribesmen. The most significant cleavages between the RTG and the hill tribes, however, are cultural and attitudinal. The Royal Thai Government, reflecting the attitudes of the majority of the ethnic Thai, regards the tribesmen as savages, and the hill tribes reciprocate with suspicion and animosity.

(S) Communist organizers have capitalized on the grievances of the Meo and have made inroads among them. The government has responded with harsh suppression, including forced resettlement. Suppression operations have been ineffective, counterproductive, and costly in manpower and money.

(S) It is likely that Communist organizers will attempt to subvert other hill tribes. There is some evidence that they have already succeeded in penetrating some tribes along the northern and northwestern border with Burma.¹ Given the estrangement of the hill tribes from the RTG and more generally from Thai national life, it is likely that insurgency will spread in time to other tribes in the North.

(S) An insurgency in the North could have access to external support and direction from Vietnam and China through Laos and Burma. However, the potential of the insurgency would be limited by the narrow population base in the North and by geography. The population of the hill tribes is estimated at only 250,000, and the ethnic

1. See, Richard L. Weaver, "Thailand--Northern Insurgency and the Military Response," (U) (Bangkok: Military Assistance Command, Office of Historical Advisor, undated), p. 33. CONFIDENTIAL

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

Thai in and adjacent to the area are not likely to support a Communist movement in which the mountain "barbarians" play a leading role. The location of the hill tribes gives them access to the population centers in the narrow river valleys of the North and the upper reaches of the Chao Phraya River Valley. However, the main population centers and economic resources of the "heartland" of the Central Plain could be threatened only if the insurgency spread southward through the mountains flanking the Chao Phraya River--a contingency which is possible but not likely.

4. The South

(S) The Malays and the Chinese are the principal ethnic minorities in the South. Their cultures differ radically from that of the ethnic Thais. About one million Thai-Malays reside in the four provinces bordering Malaysia, constituting 80 percent of the local population. Sporadic attempts by the Thai government to assimilate the Malays culturally have created resentments; however, the government recently has pursued a more conciliatory approach, permitting the Thai-Malays to teach their traditional language and religion. Nevertheless, grievances persist.

(S) The Chinese minority in the South is located in two pockets, one bordering the Malaysian border and the other in the central section of the Peninsula. The southern Chinese pocket provides the principal support for the Communist Terrorist Organization (CTO). The CTO, composed of the remnants of the leadership of the Malayan Communist Party which fled to Thailand after the failure of the insurgency in Malaya in 1960, is the best organized Communist movement in Thailand. It commands a strong village infrastructure and an effective guerrilla arm composed of Chinese and some Malays. While the announced political objective of the CTO remains the overthrow of the government of Malaysia, the Party is under the direction of Peking. On order, its potential for insurgency could be directed against the Royal Thai Government.

~~SECRET~~

(S) The Chinese community in the central section of the Peninsula, the so-called Mid-South, apparently is a source of support for the low-level insurgency there, notwithstanding the fact that the leadership of the insurgency is suspected of being ethnic Thai. Suppression operations executed by small Royal Thai Army forces have apparently arrested its growth.

(S) Military insurgency in the South would tend to be choked by lack of land access to external support. Malaysian police authorities in the border area would be likely to continue cooperating with the Royal Thai Government even if the CTO were to shift its target from Malaysia to Thailand. Some support for the insurgents could probably be introduced by sea, but Royal Thai Navy and Marine Police patrols could inhibit the flow. The insurgents in this area also face a meager population base for expansion. Since the CTO is completely dominated by the Chinese, the Chinese population in the Peninsula would probably be the principal target of recruiting. The Malays are not likely to be drawn to the movement if the pattern of the recent insurgency in Malaya is any indicator.

(S) Finally, most of the South is geographically remote from the "heartland" of Thailand. Given the narrowness of the Peninsula (only about 35 miles wide at one point), military blocking forces could confine the insurgency to the southern portion of the region.

(S) Despite these handicaps, there is a potential for insurgency in the South which could put additional pressures on the political, economic, and military institutions and programs of the government.

5. The West Central Border Area

(S) The growth potential of the insurgency in the West Central border area is difficult to assess. The leadership of the movement appears to be ethnic Thai. While the insurgency is weak, with only a reported membership of 200, an expansion of the movement could pose a serious threat to the population and economic resources of the nearby Central Plain. There is also the danger of the insurgency linking with a hill tribe insurgent movement, working its way south along the mountainous border with Burma.

~~SECRET~~

6. External Support

(S) An evaluation of the growth potential of the insurgency must consider the impact of possible increases in external support of the insurgency from the North Vietnamese, Chinese, or Pathet Lao. A moderate increase in the supply of cadres and arms is within the current capabilities of Thailand's Communist neighbors. Such an increase could stiffen the resistance of the insurgency in the Northeast to RTG programs and aggravate the situation in the North, but it would not enable the insurgents to control those regions, let alone to extend the insurgency to the point of seriously threatening the central government. The situation, however, could change drastically if the outcome of the war in South Vietnam were to leave North Vietnam in de facto control of the line of the Mekong between Thailand and Laos. With secure routes for infiltrating personnel and equipment into Northeast Thailand, the North Vietnamese would be in a position to fuel the insurgency more assiduously and to provide sanctuaries for Thai insurgents. Most importantly, they could then effectively mobilize the North Vietnamese refugee community living in the Northeast, a highly organized body of perhaps 50,000 individuals distributed in villages and towns along most if not all of the main lines of communications in that region, as well as in proximity to key Royal Thai Government (and US) military installations. Infiltration of numerous Communist cadre or organized "volunteer" forces and the active, widespread, externally supported opposition of the North Vietnamese refugees would create for the RTG security problems that it could not effectively solve without support from friendly combat forces.

(S) Depending on the outcome of the war in South Vietnam and other developments then, the North Vietnamese or the Chinese may at some time in the future have a capability to furnish massive external support, including units of regulars or "volunteers," to the Thai insurgents. Were they to render support of that magnitude, however, the scenario would be changed from one of insurgency to one of outright invasion, and it would lie beyond the scope of this analysis.

7. Conclusions

(S) The growth potential of the insurgency in the Northeast and in the Central Plain and among the ethnic Thai in general is low. Intensification of suppression operations in the Northeast, together with a continuation of improvements in living conditions and village security, not only can arrest the insurgency but can critically weaken it. In the Central Plain, the Communists' prospects for creating a strong insurgent movement are even less promising than in Northeast Thailand. Since the bulk of the ethnic Thai population resides in the Central Plain, and since the Thai economy depends heavily on the agricultural production of the area, this region is of critical importance to the Royal Thai Government.

(S) The ethnic minorities of Thailand, unlike the ethnic Thai, constitute significant sources of insurgency. They comprise about 4 million of the 33 million population. All have grievances of varying degrees against the Royal Thai Government and its policies. Most of them lack the intrinsic cultural barriers to Communist methods and techniques which characterize the ethnic Thai.

(S) The growth potential is high among the hill tribes in the North. It is likely that the Communists will capitalize on both the revolutionary situation in this area and the lack of government presence to spread the insurgency to tribes other than the Meo. Geographical considerations and a narrow population base limit the threat to Thailand as a whole.

(S) The growth potential of the insurgency along the Malaysian frontier is high. The CTO has a viable infrastructure and a trained guerrilla arm. Peking directives could release this potential against the Royal Thai Government. However, considerations of geography and population limit the threat. The growth potential of the insurgency in the Mid-South appears to be medium.

(S) The potential in the West Central border area is uncertain. However, the proximity of this area to the Central Plain and the possibility of a linkup with a hill tribe insurgency extending southward lend significance to the threat in this region.

B. CAPABILITY OF THE RTG TO COPE WITH THE POTENTIAL THREAT

(S) Continuing insurgency in the Northeast and North, coincident with an expansion of the hill tribe insurgency in the North, a re-direction of the CTO against Thailand rather than Malaysia, and an intensification of the insurgent activities in the Mid-South and the West Central border area, would put severe pressures on the Royal Thai Government. The pressures would sharpen even more if the insurgency should spread to the mountainous areas bordering the Central Plain, thus gaining a base for disruptive raids against the population centers and economy of that vital region.

(S) An appraisal of the capability of the Royal Thai Government and its institutions to stand up under such pressures must be speculative at best. Nevertheless, the conclusion is that the RTG could probably muster the men, money, and materials to support the required expansion of police, paramilitary, and military forces. It has been noted that the Royal Thai Government could probably increase its annual budget by about 5 percent without incurring serious inflation. If the total increase in the budget were devoted to military expansion, active forces could be increased by about one-third across the board. If the increases were confined to the ground forces, an even larger expansion would be economically feasible. The precondition is, however, that the United States would continue to supply military equipment through a military assistance program.

(S) It is also probable that the political stability of the Royal Thai Government would not be threatened by the growth of the insurgencies in the North and South to their full potential. Indeed, there is the possibility that the stability of the government would in fact be enhanced by a greater threat from the ethnic minorities--that in such a circumstance the ethnic Thai would support the government even more actively. Some men now in power might lose their positions if the elite became dissatisfied with the conduct and progress of counterinsurgency efforts. But changes in individual fortunes would not necessarily disturb the basic stability of the government and its overall ability to pursue a vigorous counterinsurgency strategy.

(S) In the North, expanded police, paramilitary, and military forces could probably confine the insurgency among the hill tribes to the border provinces and could protect the ethnic Thai population centers in the river valleys from raids and sorties. However, if recent operations in the North are any indication, insurgency among the hill tribes is not likely to yield to a purely military solution. In the words of a recent report, "the most critical factor in this area continues to be the residual psychological problem which has plagued the northern community for years. The ability of the Thai Government to successfully promote the understanding and full acceptance of tribal peoples is, in the final analysis, the hinge upon which the ultimate success of these operations depend."²

(S) In the light of our own national experience with attitudes toward ethnic minorities, such a prescription is more easily stated than implemented. Nevertheless, if the RTG can bring itself to the hard decision of deemphasizing suppression and adopting a conciliatory policy toward the hill tribes, combining this form with the substance of a renewed and intensified program of local development, the serious spread of insurgency may be averted. There is no evidence that the Communist influence is particularly widespread among the Meo; indeed some ten years' of Communist organizational efforts have reaped a meager harvest. The case might even be made that if the RTG were to permit the hill tribes to continue their traditional practices of slash-and-burn agriculture, the growing of poppies, and the use of guns for hunting, the Communists might well find themselves without many openings for exploitation. This prospect might well be worth the price of lifting the restrictions which plague the hill tribes.

(S) The agency most familiar with the hill tribes and their problems is the Border Patrol Police. An expansion of this force would seem to be in order. It would also seem highly desirable to encourage the creation of hill tribe paramilitary units recruited

2. Ibid., p. 55.

and trained by the Border Patrol Police. Such a force, thoroughly trained in unconventional tactics, could be far more effective against hard-core insurgents than regular military units.

(S) Insurgency in the South could be confined to the Peninsula, and military pressure, in concert with Malaysian forces, might be able to defeat the insurgency militarily in that region.

C. IMPLICATIONS FOR US SUPPORT

(S) The foregoing analyses indicate that the armed forces of Thailand are capable of coping with the current level of insurgency in Thailand without the participation of US military units. However, US military and economic assistance should be provided at approximately projected levels so that the Thais can continue to pursue their policies of economic development and environmental improvement. These policies are themselves key components of the overall counterinsurgency effort.

(S) If the insurgency should spread among the hill tribes in the North, and if there should be an intensification of insurgency in the Southern Peninsula and in the West Central area, the police, paramilitary, and armed forces of Thailand would probably be capable of coping with the contingencies without the help of US military units. Since the mainsprings of insurgency in the North are essentially political, psychological, and economic rather than military, the deployment of US forces to support the Thais in that region might even be counterproductive.

(S) An expansion of insurgency in the North and an intensification in the South and West Central area might compel the Royal Thai Government to increase its military, paramilitary, and police forces beyond presently contemplated levels. The degree of force expansion cannot be accurately forecast. However, if it becomes necessary to increase RTG forces, US military and economic assistance should also be increased commensurately to equip new units and to support the nonmilitary programs of an expanded counterinsurgency effort.

~~SECRET~~

(S) If Peking and Hanoi were to increase their external support of the insurgency in Thailand to invasion proportions, the RTG and its armed forces would be incapable of coping with the situation without direct military support from friendly countries. For example, if Hanoi were to infiltrate numerous North Vietnamese or Pathet Lao cadre or organized "volunteer" forces into the Northeast and mobilize the 50,000 highly disciplined North Vietnamese refugees in that region as active insurgents, the threat in the Northeast would take on grave new dimensions. Similarly, the infiltration of sizable forces of Pathet Lao cadre or North Vietnamese volunteers into the northern provinces through Laos could magnify the insurgency in that region into dangerous proportions.

(S) Large-scale intensification of external support to the insurgency would put severe pressures on the Royal Thai Government and seriously threaten its stability. It is certain that the RTG would require the support of US military forces to cope with such a contingency. The exact level of US involvement is difficult to predict, depending as this would on a potentially wide range of insurgency escalation.

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

(This page is blank)

~~SECRET~~