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FILE DESIGNATION

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A-243

NO. R/SR 9/7

HANDLING INDICATOR

TO : Department of State

INFO : AmEmbassy MANILA, CINCPAC (FOR POLAD and Admiral YATES)

DEPARTMENT PLEASE PASS CIA, DIA, OSD/ISA, AID/W

FROM : American Embassy Bangkok

DATE: August 15, 1973

E.O. 11652: GDS

~~SUBJECT~~ : TAGS: PFOR

~~REF~~ :

SUBJECT: The Thai Insurgency: Where We Go From Here

~~REF~~ : A-216

Enclosed is the second part of the statement by Counselor Stokes, conveying his personal views, at the end of a six-year tour in Bangkok, on the nature and the future of the Thai insurgency and his proposals for future directions of U.S. assistance.

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Enclosure: The Thai Insurgency: Where We Go From Here

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...tion Office Symbol EA/TB

...Officer VLT

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FORM 10-64 DS-323

Drafting Date:	Phone No.:	Contents and Classification Approved by:
8/15/73	221	DCM:EEMasters

☆ U. S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE : 1966 O - 202-219 (258)

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THE THAI INSURGENCY: WHERE WE GO FROM HERE

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To evaluate the relevance of Thai and U.S. programs to the insurgency, and to plan next steps, we need a very precise conception of what the insurgency is. Many bitter arguments that have divided official opinion are traceable to conflicting premises on this fundamental point. Given contradictory premises, no wonder that ensuing arguments and interpretations often failed to meet on common ground.

Understandably, each institutional observer is most eloquent about the aspect of insurgency that he is qualified professionally to address. But in a period of multiplying security problems and declining aid resources we are compelled to distinguish the accidental from the truly essential about insurgent objectives and strategy.

There are three major schools of thought with rival views about the basic nature of the insurgency.

I. It is essentially irregular warfare---a job for military expertise and the RTA. The TPLAF is the core: the growth of the insurgency is measured by the number of armed jungle soldiers, the sophistication of their weaponry, the frequency of clashes and the respective body counts. "Fix, fight, and finish" is the alleged remedy.

Counter-Indications - The insurgency has never aimed at land warfare, in the sense of threatening the Thai armed forces or seizing Thai held territory. The TPLAF "secures" base areas only beyond the effective reach of Thai forces, moving along ridge lines where little opposition is feasible. It has never sought to displace the RTA, and during the past six months the number of harassments of the RTA (and vice versa) is way down.

The real function of the TPLAF is to be a symbol of insurgent power, part of the claim to be a "state within a state". Its function is to exist: if possible, to win dramatic but inconsequential local actions that will add to the insurgent prestige. It will for a long time be able to withdraw safely from combat when conditions are disadvantageous. The greatest glory of the TPLAF has been accorded by unsuccessful RTA initiatives into difficult terrain strongly held by Communists. (Roger Darling describes this well.)

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Conclusion - The TPLAF is a derivative aspect of the insurgency, largely impervious to direct military destruction. It seems somewhat vulnerable to operations against its support and resource structure in populated areas, but hope for eventual extinction of the insurgent main forces rest upon their eventual loss of motivation, arising from frustration of the insurgents' main political goals. Thailand has always had and will probably always have armed dissident bands roaming its mountains and jungles. The country can live with them. Indeed, the effective borders of Thailand (like those of Laos and Burma) are well inside their nominal frontiers: The insurgency thrives in the differential areas.

The Thai are therefore in no hurry to occupy or dominate militarily their jungles and hills; instead, they prefer to do so gradually, by the outward swell of the expanding Thai population. In the high mountains of the North, where Thai will not go, they are organizing tribal folk over the long term into a symbiotic relationship with the lowland majority. (This is a crucial point where our aid, and that of SEATO, should concentrate.) Meanwhile, the RTA seems to be adopting the insurgent tactic of fighting only where it has the advantage, which may explain why the incidence of clashes is way down. If premise III below is correct, this Thai approach is an adequate way to cope with the insurgency.

II. Alternative basic view---widely held by liberal Thai intellectuals and Palace elements---is that the insurgency is primarily a political/social mass movement, feeding on political, social, and economic inequities. Disparities of income between Bangkok and remote districts, the abusiveness of officials, and the fact of unrepresentative military government in Bangkok are said to be the prime causes of insurgency.

Counter-indications - The insurgency has avoided opportunistic, mass-recruitment tactics: it has advanced no attractive reform programs susceptible of mass appeal. Collectivized agriculture for example has been "protected", (i.e., enforced) by the TPLAF in insurgent-held areas of the North, where defections have been common. Forceful opposition by the insurgents to new government schools, dam and resettlement projects has been coated thinly if at all with rationale based on peasant self-interest. The insurgency has shunned the "common front," demanded boycott of elections, and has kept its leadership faceless in a countryside where personal leadership appeal is effective. Officialdom today is less abusive than before, and the insurgent leadership is hardly more representative than the government. The basic appeal in the Northeast - - "We are locals and the government is a carpet-bagging

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crowd"---is being eroded with time and localization of the petty bureaucracy.

A serious problem with the disparity of incomes theory is that the more development proceeds---normally first in the productive lowlands of each district--the more there are visible local disparities unfavorable to those in the nearby insurgent-threatened areas. Moreover, absolute poverty does not seem to polarize insurgency: Nakae and Dong Luang districts are relatively well-to-do; Kuchinerai and Kam-cha-i above the average.

Conclusion - The government has been improving in those areas of political liability that are most vulnerable to the insurgency, which (as pointed out in A-216) is rather irrelevant to the main political turbulence of the country---among students, workers and slumdwellers. Nor has the insurgency sought to compete as a political/social movement on any general scale. The liberal critics of the RTG are rejected by the insurgency, which does not even claim to seek liberal reforms; in fact, it insists they are useless. The insurgency is not, therefore, a general mass movement with social and economic appeals and goals.

III. In fact, the insurgency is fundamentally a conspiracy between the Chinese and Thai Communist Parties to establish a "state within a state," located initially in frontier areas that the Thai nation has never governed effectively. The insurgency is essentially a race between two political systems to dominate and organize various territories and resident peoples previously outside any real governmental controls.

Indications - The insurgency is localized, after eight years, precisely as this hypothesis would indicate. Moreover, the insurgency tells its own leaders to "Build Peoples' State Power," in a context which hardly seems like self-deception or propaganda. The Party proceeds, indeed, by accretions of controlling power from village to village, developing in the Phuphan area a cluster of three or four hundred villages which is governed by a Party hierarchy organized as a regional administration or shadow government, backed by the TPLAF. In early 1971 it challenged the local organs of the RTG---Army, District, and Police ---by popular demonstrations, organized counter-government appeals, professional ambushes of regular forces, handbill posting simultaneously in various district capitals, bridge burning, assassinations, and effective harassment of development projects. Today it continues in a similar sense, but in a less

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ostentatious and bold manner. (Bangkok A-216, "The Thai Insurgency and the Chinese Connection" discussed why this may be a significant trend.)

Conclusion - The insurgency, at its point of longest and highest development, Nakae District, has sought to establish an alternative government among a segment of the Thai populace, complete with a distinct way of life, organs of control, ideology, and linkage through the Party with other regional and foreign movements. The government, on this premise, does not have to destroy the insurgents body by body if it can demonstrate--nose to nose in the affected villages--- that no "liberated area" exists; that the populace has options; that Party membership is dangerous and cooperation with it is uncertain of reward. Even at the present slow rate of government image--- improvement, the RTG compares reasonably today with the insurgency in most objective categories of preference and calculation of self-interest. While the insurgency is beginning in an area it need only exploit the government's painfully obvious faults; once established, however, it must show alternative solutions---which are blatantly repulsive to most Thai and hill people.

Hence, the sweep last summer of the Phuphan base areas--- even though there were no casualties--dramatized to the populace a key weakness of the insurgency and failure of its claim to have a secure base area---the goal it had set for itself. Government presence, in ostentatious strength and considerable quality in Nakae District--- the first goal of the insurgents for takeover--dramatized another. The Land Department has successfully issued land tenure certificates in five of the eight tambols in Nakae, using much local assistance: no insurgent challenge ensued.

In my judgment, time is no longer working for the insurgency in its present form and strategy. Today an eerie interlude has settled upon most theaters of the insurgency, not so much by direct consequence of CI programs as by insurgent reassessment of their own prospects. The insurgency remains undiminished in total strength, and is even increasing somewhat in numbers, but it is running out of free room to grow. Some cadre are asking themselves serious questions about the road to take from here.

To clarify our own perspective about U. S./aid we might go back in history to examine the processes at work before the insurgency began, and which it has sought to exploit or control.

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Thailand until recent times has been a virtual City-State, comprising Bangkok and the hinterland of the Central Plains: beyond lay exploitable colonies (the South), rather useless buffer zones (the Northeast and the Mekong valley), and dependent fraternal kingdoms to the North (Chiangmai and Luang Prabang). Like Rome, Bangkok's interest in these areas depended upon how developments there affected life in the capital; if they didn't, never mind them.

When the French bit off some of the buffer areas (Sayaboury, Champassak, Sithandone, Battambang and Sisophon provinces of Laos and Cambodia), the Monarchy began to act on the necessity of expanding the City-State into a Nation-State, and incorporated formally some of the outlying satrapies, such as the Kingdom of Chiangmai. Effective administration, economic linkage, and defensive capacity---the hallmarks of government---were easier claimed than accomplished. During World War II the Northeast afforded wide scope for clandestine Free Thai base areas which even the Japanese---at the height of their dynamism and military might---were unable to frustrate. The Northeastern block of radical deputies in the 1950's, challenging this colonial system and flirting with separatist notions, was decimated by police executions.

The first visit of a King of Thailand to Ubol occurred in 1957. For some time thereafter a drive to Udorn was a hazardous three day affair. Until 1966 university education was afforded only in Bangkok: a Thai from outside the Central Plains who hoped to rise would have to come to the Center to be naturalized, either in the Army, business, or civil functions. Minorities---So and Phuthai in the Northeast, Meo, Yao and Karen in the North---were treated as despised nuisances. Officials sent to the Northeast had neither means to reach nor interest in exercising true control over---much less addressing the problems of---the great majority of villages under their nominal jurisdiction.

The point here is that nation-building as an urgent program preceeded the insurgency, is independently necessary, and has its own set of priorities: to call it counterinsurgency is to make the tail wag the dog.

The countryside's greatest political need, once the central government's representatives improved, was a better quality of locally chosen village and tambol headmen, and some type of training to relate their functioning to the operation of central government. Remarkable progress is being made in this regard,

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through the splitting of oversize tambols, filling these new jobs by promotion of qualified young assistants to traditional, older kamnans, and by the operation of the training center at Prachuab for village headmen and deputies. We have suggested for the SEATO Village Defense and Development Seminar discussion of how such local leadership can best relate to centrally-appointed officials---soon, the amphur may be staffed by an attractive mixture of central and local officials, leading to upward mobility for the latter. This process promises to fill much of the vacuum left in the countryside by overthrow of the 1969 representative system.

When the insurgency first became overt in 1965, and our civil assistance resumed in face of the insurgent threat, the priority tasks for the government were:

a) To expand the Thai administration rapidly, and improve drastically its quality and effectiveness, into the great vacuum areas of the Northeast, and

b) To strengthen the basic institutions of government (or develop new ones) to enable them to undertake this task.

The purpose was pre-emptive, to reduce to a minimum the productive areas and populations untouched by the government and therefore subject to unopposed insurgent recruitment. That this was an accurate decision was demonstrated by the initial adoption by the insurgents of mass armed propaganda techniques, endeavoring to expand rapidly their population controls and support. This insurgent program generally failed; after the first two years, the number of such initiatives fell off rapidly and the insurgents confined themselves largely to face-to-face individual recruitment in the villages close to their mountain bases.

In this context, U.S. assistance until 1972 was almost entirely nation-building in nature, important in its own right, but better appreciated and measured as a success in nation-building terms than as a specific CI remedy. There was very little concentration on actual points of contact or direct competition with the insurgency. The civil programs did not arrive at decisive social impact on potential recruits for the insurgency, and the Thai Army had not yet created a counter-guerrilla force capable of destroying the enemy despite important progress in institutional development.

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However, these programs helped the RTG do something more important: They gave the government a presence in remote areas, provided options for rural folk willing to join the insurgents, and deprived the insurgency of freedom to operate in broad populated areas where otherwise Communist authority would have been the only outside influence on village life.

The government has also gone a long way, in a brief span of years, to reduce the negative impact of its presence on the more remote populace. The quality, probity and energy of officialdom is substantially better (though still spotty), and it has become a definite handicap for officials seeking promotion to be disliked by constituents. (Officials still have recourse to unofficial income, but find it wiser to exact this from wealthier merchants than from peasants, who in any case have little to give.) Delegations from annoyed villages have camped at Government House, and received some satisfaction---in fact, BIFGO the ombudsman was created to solve problems short of the Prime Minister, whereas suppression of complaints was the rule up to a decade ago. Community Development also sees its role now as an identifier and resolver of village problems vis-a-vis the government, rather than its earlier conception as a "developer" at the lowest level. CD is also helping to identify potential government supporters in the village, so that the RTG can build a significant infrastructure in the village, where it has never been represented, other than by normal links to traditional village headmen who knew little of the government. In this sense, the struggle against the village infrastructure near insurgent base areas is just beginning.

An RTG village infrastructure cannot of course survive in the vicinity of the armed insurgency without being part of a total government structure in the immediate area. Accordingly, CSOC Plans 14/15, 15/16, and 17/18 during the past two years provided for a mobilization of inter-agency effort at the village clusters surrounding the insurgent base areas, at our suggestion, as the key element of the Thai National CI Program. This process represents the specific counterinsurgency effort, mobilizing the limited, local resources necessary at the points of actual or immediate threatened contact with the insurgent movement---clearly distinguishable from the general nation-building process. In the light of instability in Cambodia and Laos, "specific CI" should no longer be the prime criterion by which we judge RTG use of our assistance, now that we expect more from the Thai in regional terms and now that the insurgency clearly is a circumscribed threat.

I submit that, as we re-examine our aid policies and programs in the light of resources, experience with the insurgency, and apparent regional settlements, what we need today is a modest triad of programs:

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a) Military assistance in training and logistics, as recommended by General Mellen, aimed at making the existing military establishment function. A transition from the SGU program, in conjunction with VDC improvement, to create a working relationship between the military and paramilitary arms. To accelerate progress, prime attention to institution-building, not short-term CI objectives.

b) Economic assistance directed at nation-building and overall resource aggrandizement; and

c) A small joint MACTHAI/USOM/SA program of support thru CSOC to important elements of the Thai National CI Program, clearly supplementary to and distinct from the foregoing programs--- though naturally harmonious with them. (Washington's reply to BKK 4707, while favorable in principle, did not provide the program structure or funding to do the task properly.) Very little money, used flexibly, in this way, could go a long way toward helping the RTG "bring home" their CI effort in the final phase. Our limited aim now can afford to be helping the Thai, over the next two years or so, to complete the valid CI programs to which they have already committed themselves.

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