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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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FROM : American Consulate, Chiang Mai

DATE: October 30, 1970

SUBJECT : Events in North Thailand: September - October 1970

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Action assigned to HB

Action Taken noted

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Official Remarks

Name of Officer

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BUREAU of EAST ASIAN and PACIFIC AFFAIRS

A. Political Events in North Thailand

1. Insurgency in the North
2. Student Disorders Provoke

B. Other

1. ARD Activities
2. Provincial Police Activities
3. Border Patrol Police, Area V, Activities

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Contents and Classification Approved by: Wever Gim, American Consul

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A. Political Events in North Thailand

1. Insurgency in the North

During the reporting period, the latter part of which coincided with the ending of the rainy season, insurgent activities continued to stress primarily organizational efforts, food gathering and consolidation of base areas in mountainous border regions already under their influence. This applied to both the Chiang Rai-Nan area and to the tri-province area of Pitsanuloke, Petchabun and Loei provinces. RTG officials widely believe these activities are preparatory to or connected with insurgent intentions to launch intensified terrorist operations against the RTG in the upcoming dry season months. Meanwhile, sporadic insurgent harassment of government security facilities and personnel continued.

On September 20, an incident that caused shock throughout the country occurred when the Governor of Chiang Rai, Prayad Samanmit, along with the Chiang Rai Provincial police chief, and the Assistant G-2 of the Third Army, were murdered by insurgents. The three unarmed officials were ambushed and killed in a forested area in Chiang Saen district, Chiang Rai province while on their way to a rendezvous point to receive the supposed defection of two Thai insurgent cadre leaders who had said they wanted to surrender. It has not yet been determined whether the rendezvous was a deliberate ruse from the beginning or that ranking insurgent chiefs may have learned of the defection effort and converted it into an ambush trap. In any event, the death of the three officials - all competent, highly motivated and important figures in Northern counter-insurgency programs - was a heavy loss to the Government. They were the highest ranking RTG officials to have been killed in the history of the insurgency. Although the Government reacted quickly in naming replacements, in making security sweeps of the area, and in pledging a continuation of the policy of encouraging defections and ralliers, there was no doubt that the morale of officials in Chiang Rai and neighboring provinces was adversely affected by the incident.

In the tri-province area, sniping and attempted ambushes of government vehicles along the major Pitsanuloke-Lomsak highway occurred in late September, resulting in several wounded. The most serious incident was a well executed ambush on September 18 of a Royal Thai Army truck carrying a woodcutting detail on the road between Lom Kao, Petchabun and Dansai, Loei in which five soldiers were killed, six wounded and three M-16s lost.

RTG counter-insurgency operations, mainly in the form of small and medium sized hunter-capture and ambush teams and specially trained patrols, were particularly active in late September and October.

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These reflected implementation in part of Third Army Commander Gen. Samran Pattayakul's intended strategy to use more small units, quicker reaction forces, more hilltribe volunteers in aggressive operations against the insurgents. Battalion level commanders are being given much wider local tactical responsibility and authority within defined tactical operational areas of responsibility. At the same time priority is also being given to steps to unify and centralize overall command and control of the various RTG units now engaged in counter-insurgency efforts as well as to their intelligence and psyops activities. Encouraging measures have already been undertaken and if effective RTG aggressive operations can continue to exert pressures upon the insurgents, there are good prospects of disrupting the expected dry season upswing in insurgent activities.

2. Student Disorders Provoke Official Remarks

During September and October, a series of apparently unconnected disorders involving students from several university-and secondary-level Chiang Mai schools received wide press play and provoked loud reaction from various official sources.

The incidents included:

1. a fight in a brothel and subsequent shooting involving students from Chiang Mai University and Mae Jo Agricultural College on September 9, 1970.

2. an argument in the street between three Chiang Mai University students and local police which eventuated in the fining of one of the students in Court and his expulsion from the University.

3. a disagreement between a Chiang Mai University student and a restaurant owner, who ultimately called the police to remove the student from his shop.

4. the shooting by a Mae Jo student of a young man sitting with some friends in a public park on October 17. The student has been arrested and will be tried in Court.

5. two incidents between students at two of the city's best secondary schools, Montfort and Yupparat. In the first, several Montfort students were slightly injured when the bus in which they were riding was hit by stones thrown by students from the rival school; in the second, a Yupparat student was hurt when a bottle full of gasoline exploded near him at the Sports Stadium during a football match.

The incidents, coming in rapid succession, and attracting considerable attention in the local press as well as in the Bangkok Thai and English language papers, appear to have upset local officials considerably. In

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rapid succession, the Rector of the University, the Provincial Education Officer and the Police general in charge of the Northern Region issued statements deploring the students' actions and warning that they would not receive preferrential treatment at the hands of the police, as had sometimes been the case in the past. A member of the University staff who works closely with the Rector told a Consulate employee that one of the main causes of student frictions is that the University's recreational and social facilities have not kept pace with the rapidly increasing enrollment and students are forced to depend on the town for their recreation.

COMMENT: Since the recent student disorders in Bangkok and the student strike at Chiang Mai University in July, local officials have demonstrated a heightened awareness of the potential for serious trouble in Chiang Mai. This recent spate of minor problems has only served to accentuate this tendency.

B. Other

1. ARD Activities

Heavy rains throughout the North prevented road construction activity of any consequence during the reporting period. An American adviser has begun working in the two new Northern Accelerated Rural Development (ARD) provinces of Lampang and Tak, where road projects are being drawn up and construction priorities established.

2. Provincial Police, Region V, Activities

A Provincial Police strike force, consisting of one officer and 35 men, from Theung district in Chiang Rai province began in early September a counter-insurgency training course at the Royal Thai Army training center north of Lampang.

3. Border Patrol Police, Area V, Activities

On October 5, 215 new recruits to the Border Patrol Police began an eighteen-week course of study at the Mae Taeng Counter-Insurgency Training Center. Upon completion of this training, the men will be used to form three additional line platoons and as replacements in already existing units.

During the same period, two hilltribe Border Security Volunteer Teams completed a nine-week training course at the Mae Taeng Center and two other teams received on-site training.