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AmConsul UDORN
~~PEKOM~~ : CINCPAC

DATE: 22 April 1970

FROM: AmConsul SONGKHLA
SUBJECT: Quarterly Counterinsurgency Report on Peninsular Thailand: January, February, and March 1970

~~REF~~ :

Action Assigned to
Action Taken
Date of Action
Action Office Symbol
Name of Officer

SUMMARY: Marked deterioration in the Mid-South was the feature of the quarter as in an alltime high number of incidents the CPT inflicted 29 friendly casualties while suffering only two. Phatthalung led in the number of incidents and officials there are demoralized. In the Mid-South the RTG apparatus made no meaningful effort to improve the situation.

In the Far South the CTO and CPT were generally quiet although intelligence indicates growing links between the CTO and separatists/bandits. The new CSOR 4/1 is off to a slow start pending a change in funding from NSC to CSOC. END SUMMARY.

PART I: The Mid-South (CSOR 4/2: the insurgent affected provinces of Trang, Phatthalung, Nakhon Sri Thammarat, and Surat Thani, plus Krabi, Phangnga, Phuket, Ranong, and Chumphon)

1. CPT Activities

Violent incidents in the Mid-South reached a new high during the quarter with 29 incidents reported to date which resulted in 29 friendly casualties as opposed to 2 CT casualties. Coupled with this discouraging ratio is the fact that a minimum of 24 of the 29 violent incidents were CT initiated and 4 of the remainder may have been.

Of the 29 violent incidents 6 were reported in January and 8 in February. 15 separate incidents of violence in the Mid-South in March marked the highest

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By: Alan Lipton Date: 10-15-2008

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incident count yet reached since the beginning of the insurgency. The average monthly count for the Mid-South is 5 or 6 with the previous all time high registered at 10 incidents.

Geographic distribution of the incidents reveals 15 reported in Phatthalung, 6 in Nakhon Sri Thammarat, 6 in Surat Thani, and 2 in Trang.

Phattalung is certainly the most troubled province of the peninsula. Night travel over highway 4 between Trang and Phatthalung has almost completely stopped. Shops at the Highway 4 junction (scene of the March 1 attack on a police box) just on the edge of the city now close at 1800 hours in contrast to the previous closing time of midnight. Truckers no longer stop for the night at the junction. The city itself is extremely quiet during the hours of darkness as people remain indoors. There is widespread belief that the insurgents can strike at will within the city limits. Police are reluctant to wear uniforms. Village travel by provincial and district officials is reported to be at a standstill. Officials in general appear helpless and uncertain in the face of insurgent terrorism.

Some reports of CPT expansion were received during the quarter but details are still sketchy. Reports indicated possible expansion into new tambons of Chawang district of Nakhon Sri Thammarat and Ban Na San district of Surat Thani. In February there were unconfirmed indicators of an armed group and a suspected camp location in Ron Phibun district of Nakhon Sri Thammarat and two sightings of armed groups in Huai Yot district of Trang. Two armed encounters in Huai Yot during March tended to confirm those sightings.

CPT intentions in the Mid-South are still considered to be the destruction of RTG installations, the capture of arms and equipment, and the demoralization of security forces.

2. RTG Activities

Reaction by the RTG or CSOR 4/2 to the worsening situation in the Mid-South has been virtually nil. The Phatthalung security operation, begun in November, petered out during the first quarter. In the operation Border Patrol Police (BPP) platoons from BPP Area 8, BPP PARU units, Provincial Police (PP) Special Action Forces (SAF), and Royal Thai Army (RTA) strike platoons were deployed with a mission to calm the level of violence in Phatthalung.

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A contrary result has emerged with the level of violence increasing. This is not attributable to increased RTG presence and patroling as most of the incidents have been CT initiated attacks on static RTG positions. These static positions predate the operation.

The RTG has begun amalgamating Village Protection Units (VPU) into larger forces of 30 men each. The RTG claims that this will improve morale and defensive capabilities which is probably true. However, it deviates from the VPU concept by achieving a net reduction in government presence in the villages. It also gives the CPT a good propaganda claim that they are driving the VPUs out. The RTG plans to train villagers at Yala who will form Village Security Development Units (VSDU) which will contain about twelve men. These VSDU will protect their home village s, and the 30-man units composed of VDC with police leadership will act as reaction forces.

In February the Provincial Police drafted a new operation plan for the four troubled Mid-South provinces. The plan has been under consideration by CSOC since that time. Essentially the plan calls for a redistribution of available police and RTA security units but does not envision any assaults on CT redoubts.

[redacted] extremely poor RTG reporting on the insurgency in the Mid-South with the quantity of reporting actually decreasing. Much of the reporting which does come in describes violent encounters which are common knowledge anyway. The low level of Thai reporting does not mean a decline in insurgent strength or a reduction in influence. The decline in reporting may be attributable to efficient CPT assassinations of informants which have not gone unnoticed by other government agents.

In February a report was received of a voluntary and lengthy insurgent propaganda meeting in Tambon Ban Na, Muang District, Phatthalung. These meetings are more commonly reported in Chawang and Ban Na San. It is probable that the same technique is being used in Phatthalung although the meetings are not being reported to the RTG. Lines into Muang district of Phatthalung suggest that the insurgents are in far better control of the people than can be proven.

During the quarter an order was issued transferring the provinces of Trang and Phatthalung from BPP Area 8 (Hq in Thung Song, Nakhon Sri Thammarat) to BPP Area 9 (Hq in Songkhla). Area 9 is to receive 120 men to form into four

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platoons and deploy to the two provinces, which already fall under PP Region 9 in Songkhla. This should improve command lines somewhat. However, Trang and Phatthalung remain under CSOR 4/2 in Nakhon Sri Thammarat, commanded by the relatively inactive MG Cherm Prueksayajiva.

PP Region 8 commander MG Lek Kamnoedgam, an older and less active officer, was replaced by Special Colonel Ruangnarong Thawipak, a younger and more energetic officer.

The BPP Area 8 Remote Area Security Development (RASD) program supported by USOM continues. A list of village development projects planned by the two Thai specialists has been completed and steps are being taken to obtain funding and implementation.

Part II: The Far South (CSOR 4/1: the provinces of Songkhla, Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat, and Satun)

1. CTO Activities

On the whole the Communist Terrorist Organization (CTO), the armed branch of the Communist Party of Malaya (CPM), was relatively quiet during the quarter.

In January there were the normal sighting reports of CTO elements in Thailand, but little violent activity on their part. There were few reports of sightings on or over the Malaysian border, but Malaysian security elements attributed this to heavy rains which reduced activity by villagers and jungle workers, the normal sources of such reporting.

Security services did indicate that on several occasions CTO cadres have stated in mass meetings their intentions to establish a "United Revolutionary League" in Thailand to cooperate with the CPT. This alledgedly stems from a new decision of the Central Committee of the CPM. If this is not a propaganda ploy aimed at encouraging supporters in South Thailand, it would indicate a radical change of policy for the CPM/CTO who have heretofore concentrated on avoiding overt activity against the RTG.

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Unconfirmed reports, including the interrogation statement of a CTO 10th Regiment cadre who claims to have spent the last 8 years establishing contact with Muslim Separatist and bandit elements, tend to indicate that the CTO may well have been involved with separatist or bandit leaders.

According to another report, in December during a CTO meeting with Muslims an ex-Muslim religious school teacher and separatist leader who apparently has now joined the CTO called for Thai Muslims to support the CTO. The man also stated his intention to rally bandits in Pattani and Narathiwat to join the CTO.

Another report states that in November a ranking CTO leader in Waeng district of Narathiwat told supporters in a meeting that the CTO had changed policy and would now seek to attract bandit elements. If this is true, the CTO are in position to increase their strength with armed (albeit ideologically impure) recruits from the bandit gangs.

In late March an underground CTO party cadre was reported captured in Narathiwat by PP units. The man, a native of Kedah State, Malaysia, allegedly joined the CTO in 1957. He has reportedly been working in the open with false Thai documentation in Narathiwat, Yala, and Pattani. He stated that his mission was to recruit separatist leaders to work directly for the CTO. He further claims to have successfully recruited (or contacted) most known bandit or separatist leaders. The case is receiving further study.

In summary CTO overt activities and violent incidents were few. However, increasing reports of involvement with separatist and/or bandit leaders give reason for concern.

2. CPT Activities

The two CPT colonies in the Far South (in Haadyai and Satun) were relatively quiet. Security forces continued to be deployed against the CPT in Haadyai (Operation WANG PHA) but no deployments have yet been made against the group in Satun. There was one significant clash with the CPT group in Haadyai. On February 13 a small BPP unit exchanged fire with an estimated 14 CT. The scene was only 400 meters from the major new Haadyai airport. During the firefight which lasted one hour, 2 CTs were reported killed and arms and ammunition were captured.

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3. RTG Activities

Communist Suppression Operations Region (CSOR) 4/1 was formally opened on January 26 in Songkhla. It is commanded by RTA MG San Chitpatima, with a combined staff of RTA, Police, and yet unassigned civilians. CSOR 4/1 has sponsored numerous seminars and planning sessions for provincial and regional officials but does not yet have its own budget for operations as NSC will continue funding until the end of the Thai fiscal year, October 1.

During the quarter the Thai and Malaysian Governments signed a revised border agreement which provides for hot pursuit and changes RTG representation on the Regional Border Committee to include CSOC personnel. The revision also established a combined task force (CTF) headquarters to be directed by the CO of the 5th RCT in Haadyai. The CTF will reportedly direct combined operations. However it has thus far taken no actions.

Ongoing combined police operations continue in the border area but the largest action of the quarter was a unilateral Thai BPP operation culminating in the capture of a major CTO 8th Regiment camp in Sadao district of Songkhla. No CTO casualties were confirmed but the BPP suffered 2 KIA, 1 MIA, and 11 WIA. The BPP deployed insufficient strength to envelop the camp. In the action the Royal Thai Air Force (RTAF) launched the first air strikes employed on the peninsula. Reportedly eight bombs were dropped of which four hit the camp.

The major anti-bandit operation RAMKHAMHAENG carried over from last quarter. In January BPP elements were withdrawn and PP subsequently wound the operation down.

The BPP continue to be the only RTG security force actively deployed against the CTO. Some additional officers were received during the quarter but personnel shortages are still critical. An 8 week assistant instructor course for BPP was concluded in late January. US Special Forces personnel assisted with the instruction, which also included speakers from USIS, the RBCO, and the Southern Coordination Center in Yala. The 2 specialists of the USOM supported RASD program conducted village surveys. BPP held Boy Scout and Children's Day activities as part of the program to reach rural youth. Training of mobile public relations teams in conjunction with USIS was begun during the quarter.

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Provincial Police (PP) conducted several training courses in Intelligence and Drivers Training. PP also utilized USIS assets in training and in discussion of possible pysops work. PP are constructing a major station and housing in Haadyai valued at Baht 18 million.

PART III: Activities Encompassing Both Regions

1. The Royal Thai Army

During the reporting period the most significant developments in the counter-insurgency effort were the establishment of Communist Suppression Operations Regions 4/1 and 4/2 and a month long field training exercise conducted by the 4th Battalion, 5th RCT, in Pattani and Narathiwat provinces. The FTX included a show of force in the city of Pattani on 16 January (Teachers'Day) utilizing the 2nd Rifle Company, the Artillery Battery, and the Armored Car Troop. On 17 January (Childrens' Day) the same show of force was conducted in the city of Yala. There was no contact with terrorists during the FTX.

During the quarter the 5th RCT and subordinate units have enjoyed a higher priority within the RTA for receipt of personnel and MAP equipment. The result has been to improve the combat capabilities of the 5th RCT. The temporary assignment of officers and NCOs to relieve the low personnel strength reported last quarter continued into the new quarter. NCOs were returned to their parent units during February but commissioned officers will continue to assist until the end of April.

2. USIS Activities

A. Program cut-back

Although both field program and training activity increased over the previous quarter, the event that dominated the USIS program in South Thailand during the past three months was the headquarters decision to close two of the three branch posts in the area, and to end USIS's direct support of RTG MITs. A decision was made to close USIS Nakhon Si Thammarat in April and USIS Yala sometime near the end of the calendar year, and to cease providing vehicle and personnel support to Thai Government information programs by the end of the Thai fiscal year. The BPAOs and IAs spent considerable time in the early part of the quarter explaining the implications of this severe cut-back to RTG officials in the area. Reaction was varied, but, generally the highest level

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officials tended to be less concerned (two Governors, Phongnga and Trang, quickly associated the cut-back with Vietnam, one man referring to it as "Thai-ization") than the lower level officials who actually plan and participate in village level programs. There were exceptions to this pattern, of course--the Governor of Yala was especially distressed to hear of the proposed closing of the post there.

B. Field Travel

The three posts continued to accept routine requests for assistance during the period under review, despite the impending changes, but an even greater emphasis than before was placed on supporting RTG programs that seemed to have potential for self-sufficiency in the future (e.g. Police and BPP programs, Changwat MIT programs). Due to improved travel conditions as a result of the end of the rainy season, all three posts were heavily occupied with MIT-support activity during the quarter.

C. Training programs

Altogether, the three posts were involved in five separate training programs during the quarter, summarized briefly below:

1) BPP assistant instructor training in Amphoe Nathawi, Changwat Songkhla. USIS participation in this training course was mentioned briefly in the last review. One additional lecture, a psyops game, took place in January, and therefore bears mentioning in this report.

2) "Reaching the People" seminar, Changwat Phongnga, January 18.

USIS Songkhla assisted the Governor of Phongnga with this one-day seminar, providing organizational support, recommending and contacting outside speakers, and providing a film and lecturer from USIS Bangkok.

3) Training for BPP Region 9 psyops teams, February 23 - 25.

USIS Songkhla conducted a three-day motivational and "how-to-do-it" training course for three men from each of the 6 BPP companies in Region 9. These

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men will become the nucleus of a BPP region-wide "public relations" program, to be supported in its initial stages by USIS Songkhla and USIS Yala vehicles and personnel and eventually carried out entirely by the BPP.

4) "Reaching the people" seminar, Changwat Pattani, February 28, March 1.

USIS Yala supported this seminar for changwat level officials and Nai Amphoe, which was organized largely by the Deputy Governor, who had previously participated in other USIS organized training courses of this type. USIS provided a lecturer and organizational assistance.

5) Provincial Police Region 9 Headquarters Intelligence course.

USIS Songkhla has provided a lecturer for two time slots per group in this ongoing training program. The two lectures concern "Communist propaganda and how to counter it," and "The Role of Psychological Operations in Intelligence Gathering."

D. Media Production

USIS Songkhla and USIS Yala cooperated during the quarter to produce a treatment and a script for an hour-long, anti-CT story film to be shot in the Malay language with a southern Thailand setting. The film will be shot using the TAC film technique in a studio, with actors from a Manohra troop.

USIS Songkhla, produced a training document, "CPT Propaganda Themes and Techniques in the Mid-South," which is currently being translated into Thai at USIS Bangkok, and Yala and Songkhla cooperated to put together a "Psyops Handbook" for BPP Region 9 based on lectures delivered at BPP training courses mentioned previously. This document is presently being printed at USIS Bangkok.

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