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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

AIRGRAM

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HANDLING INDICATOR

TO: Department of State
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Action Assigned to

DEPARTMENT PASS SECDEF WASHDC, JCS, DIA, AFOSI WASHDC

Action Taken

HQS/IGS
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FROM : Amembassy BANGKOK
E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, TH

DATE: September 7, 1973

Date of Action

SUBJECT : Joint Mission Report on the Insurgency in Thailand - June 1973

Action Office Symbol

REF :

Name of Officer

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SUMMARY: The month of June witnessed a continued low level of CT and RTG military activity. The CT in all areas concentrated on masses development and tending to their logistic needs. There was also evidence of attempted political expansion into new areas. CT activities were largely unopposed by RTG CI forces who confined their operations to minor patrol actions around insurgent threatened villages and securing friendly base areas while conducting political PsyOps of their own. Defection to the RTG of a district level CT cadre in Ubon, and continued heavy harassment of road construction work in the North highlighted regional events during the period.

REGIONAL ANALYSIS

North

There was no significant insurgent or RTG generated military activity in the North during June, apart from the CT's continued successes in obstructing road construction operations in Nan, Chiang Rai and Tak. The major incident occurred in Tak. After non-compliance by Sakhon Sataphat Company workers with repeated warnings to halt construction on the Mae Sod-Umphang road, the CT ambushed twelve Sakhon Sataphat employees and highway department officials on June 10, killing nine and wounding three. Highway police sent to the scene the same day also came under attack, but suffered no casualties. [redacted] CT in Chiang Rai have orders to avoid contacts with government forces which could lead to interruption of farming operations. Insurgent base areas are apparently feeling the effects of the general area food shortage. Road construction in Chiang Rai employing heavy equipment has been stopped, following CT demands that local labor be used. Few of these CT actions were opposed or otherwise countered

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by RTG CI forces who confined themselves to small-scale patrolling around friendly base areas. A similar pattern was noted in Nan. There were few aggressive CT actions with agricultural activities apparently having first priority. In two separate incidents (June 11, June 22) heavy construction vehicles of the Highway Department and ItalThai Company were destroyed by mines. Once again, no government operation was launched in retaliation for this latest CT harassment. [redacted] the use by CT in Nan of propaganda themes blaming RTG officials for the current rice crisis (shortages, rising prices), which they claim, has caused severe hardship and death among the poor. In the Tri-Province area the CT continued to direct political activity against hilltribe volunteer units in Nakhon Thai district of Phitsanulok and Chon Daen and Wang Tong districts of Phetchabun. On the RTG side, [redacted] the RTA failed to react to intelligence received June 18 regarding a seventy-man CT base engaged in communal farming located near Ban Khok Khai in the same general area. The RTG also made no attempt to counter CT political activity in Chon Daen with an aggressive, counter-psychological program, nor did local officials appear to recognize that the area was a primary target for renewed CT political efforts. Defections increased slightly over May (87), with eleven guerrillas, (carrying no weapons) and their families (90 total) rallying to the government side, giving some evidence of successful BPP Area IV PsyOps efforts.

Northeast

With continuation of the rainy season, military incidents in Northeast Thailand during June dropped to their lowest total in five months. The RTG had fewer forces in the field while the CT stressed political work in the villages. In Udorn, two successful CT assaults were carried out against local defense units which contributed to an increase in RTG casualties for the region. In the first incident, a Volunteer Defense Corps (VDC) unit in NaKlang district was ambushed while returning from a patrol. Six VDC were killed and one wounded in the attack. In a separate incident, CT attacked an under-manned Tambon Protection Team (TPT) from Nam Som sub-district, leaving 8 dead and 5 wounded of the 14 defenders. The unit's weapons and radios were also confiscated. Twenty-six of the 40 personnel assigned to the unit were absent at the time of the attack -- reportedly on leave. In neither instance did available government forces deploy to assist the beleaguered militia units. RTA Second Army headquarters at Sakon Nakhon ordered nearby RTG forces to "render help to the villagers" but an RTA Company in Nam Som at the time dispatched no troops. BPP and Provincial Police Special Action Force (SAF) units in Western Udorn also deployed no forces.

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There were no major incidents in Nakhon Phanom, however, numerous minor CT clashes with BPP and VDC, particularly in NaKae district, gave evidence that security remains tenuous despite the seasonal lull. On separate occasions two RTA helicopters flying over NaKae drew ground fire wounding two crew members. Three minor RTG suppression operations were carried out in Nakhon Phanom. Provincial officials indicated that major sweep operations would be played down and future emphasis placed on small unit patrolling. In Mukdahan (Nakhon Phanom) police inspected a truck stopped for repairs and found 124,000 rounds of carbine ammunition and thirty-four 3.5 inch rockets, probably smuggled into Thailand from Laos.

Elsewhere, in Sakhon Nakhon, armed activity over the previous month showed a decline with CT groups principally occupied with food collection and political work in the villages. As in the North, local CT propaganda themes criticized the RTG for rising rice prices. In the Korat-Buriram-Prachinburi (KBP) area the CT continued successful recruitment into the local jungle force of youths from villages where RTA troops were located. Reports also continued to be received of Cambodian Communist support for KBP insurgents. In addition to supplying weapons to Thai insurgents, Khmer Rouge leaders reportedly visited the KBP area recently.

The most significant development in the Northeast was the defection to Ubon police of Buntoem Phromphinit, District Committee Secretary of the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT) in Nam Yeun Sub-District of Ubon and Kantharalak district of Sisaket [redacted] Buntoem is the first high level defector from Ubon. He has stated he rallied because of harsh criticism from his superiors, general discouragement that he would not see "victory" during his lifetime, and a desire to be with his family. Results of debriefings thus far have given RTG authorities evidence of a link between CT operations in the KBP area and Ubon, and the first significant indication of CT political work being conducted in Surin. The CT Area Headquarters, previously believed to be in Laos was reported by Buntoem to be located in Cambodia, south of Ubon. He has also furnished considerable background on relationships among CT, Khmer Rouge, Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese Communist groups in the area [redacted]

Overall, RTG operations in Ubon continued to be hampered by a lack of coordination and cooperation between civilian, police and military units in the Province.

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South - CPT

During June both the CT and government forces throughout the South generally avoided armed encounters while focusing on the village-level political struggle. The CT also used this period of quietude to resolve supply problems. The RTG conducted some aggressive, small unit patrolling around insurgent threatened villages which resulted in several minor clashes. In one incident the CT ambushed a BPP unit in Chawang district of Nakhon Si Thammarat killing one policeman and wounding another. Assassination of three villagers elsewhere in Nakhon Si Thammarat is believed to be the prelude to stepped-up CT masses development in that region. The CT have also been successful in spreading out from areas of previous concentration, with evidence of some recent activity in Ranong Province. There was a notable rise in CT defections since April. The majority were low level supporters but several were regular jungle soldiers, some of whom came in with their weapons. One rallier led RTA forces to an arms cache which included several weapons and a quantity of ammunition. Other CT reportedly are prepared to defect but were being prevented because of close surveillance by local CT leaders. General San Chitpatima, Commander of CSOR 4, informed the local JUSMAG advisor that RTG forces in the south would no longer attack or engage in "hot" pursuit of CT's into known jungle strongholds. Instead major attention will be given to a PsyOps campaign aimed at winning villagers to the government's side. Police and military units will, however, maintain small scale patrolling around CT threatened villages.

South - Communist Party of Malaysia

There was no evidence of any change in tactics or programs by the CTO in the far South. The BPP continued to concentrate on village development and the Village Boy Scout Program in addition to carrying out regular patrolling. On June 19, a BPP platoon clashed with eight to ten CTO in Waeng district, Narathiwat Province, killing three and capturing two carbines and an M-3 automatic rifle.

South - Muslim Separatists

With the decline in armed encounters between RTG and CT forces elsewhere in the South the Separatist issue emerged as the major insurgent problem, both in terms of size of forces engaged and resultant casualties. In one encounter 100 provincial police clashed with an approximate number of separatist. In the most serious incident a group of Separatists ambushed a provincial police unit on June 22, killing three including two junior officers. The use of new guerilla tactics by the Separatists was noted in this engagement as punji pits were emplaced near the ambush "killing zone", suggesting possible direct assistance or training from CTO.

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