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HANDLING INDICATOR AB

TO : AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

INFO : Department of State
AmEmbassy Vientiane
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FROM : American Consulate Chiang Mai

DATE: February 3, 1971

SUBJECT : Events in North Thailand: November - December 1970

REF :

RECEIVED DEPARTMENT OF STATE Feb 17 8 27 AM 1971 RS/AN ANALYSIS BRANCH
1971 FEB 23 PM 2 28 DEPARTMENT OF STATE

A. Political Events in North Thailand

1. Insurgency in the North
2. Personnel Changes at Chiang Mai University

B. Economic Activities

1. Tourist Industry Expands

C. Other

1. Provincial Police, Region V, Activities
2. Provincial Police, Region VI, Activities

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Drafted by: John T. McCarthy/Walter Gim:jmh

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A. Political Events in North Thailand

1. Insurgency in the North

In contrast to the expectations of most Thai local officials, the level of insurgent-initiated incidents during the months of November and December showed little increase over previous periods. The time was marked, however, by two new developments of potentially major significance for the future of the insurgency in the North and Royal Thai Government efforts to combat it.

The first of these is that continued communist emphasis on recruitment among ethnic Thai villagers in the North is apparently beginning to bear fruit. Indications that this is so have been reported from most of the principal insurgent areas, notably Chiang Rai and Phitsanuloke. Details of one incident which took place in southern Chiang Rai province on October 17-18 became available during the reporting period and offer confirmation of this development.

According to this information, a group of insurgents variously estimated at between 50 and 100 persons sealed off a complex of villages which composes the newly-created sub-district town of Chiang Muan (PA3888). In the early afternoon of October 17, the insurgents gathered several different groups of villagers together, telling them that they were friends of the people and that they would fight for the people against the Thanom-Praphat Government. The insurgents also asked the villagers for information about the strength of security forces in the area, purchased food and supplies and, at all times, treated the villagers kindly and courteously. During the time the insurgents remained in the area, they made no attempt to apprehend the more than twenty Thai police and civilian officials stationed in the town who had all changed into peasant dress and either hid or attempted to mingle with the rest of the population. Several of these officials later reported that they had definitely identified some of the insurgents as being ethnic Thais from nearby villages.

The second major development was the introduction, in early December, of Chinese irregular forces (KMT) into the insurgent-infested Doi Luang and Doi Yao areas of Chiang Rai province. The KMT forces, under the control of Generals Li Wen-huan and Tuan Hsi-wen, were transported into these areas with the assistance of the Royal Thai Government and have been supplied with RTG Border Patrol Police guides and RTAF air support. During the early days of the operation, until about December 20, the KMT forces moved quickly, capturing several insurgent base camps. The size of one of these camps, near Ban Phiya Phipak (PB4097), and the large

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quantity of equipment and medical supplies found in it surprised a number of Thai officials and has raised questions in their minds concerning the magnitude and significance of the insurgency in Northern Thailand.

During the last part of the reporting period and on into January, KMT forces were largely stationary, holding on to the insurgent areas they had captured but failing to make further gains. Insurgent forces, particularly in the Doi Yao area, had begun to harass the KMT camps. The situation is not expected to change greatly until reinforcements for the KMT troops, who number approximately 700, can be brought into position. Total casualties as of the end of December stood at 14 KIA and 42 WIA for the KMT's. KMT leaders estimated total insurgent losses as over 100, with a high percentage of this figure being KIA's.

2. Personnel Changes at Chiang Mai University

In the best traditions of academe the world over, the brief history of Chiang Mai University has been scarred with numerous personal rivalries among its leading faculty members and administrators. A recent series of personnel changes seems to have done little to resolve old problems and probably has set the stage for more intense in-fighting upon the retirement of the present Rector, Dr. Buares Kamthong, at the close of the academic year.

The first changes involved the selection of replacements for Dr. Buares in his position as Dean of Science which he relinquished upon his sixtieth birthday, and for the Dean of Humanities, who had also reached 60. Dr. Kanda Sitachit, a highly energetic woman who heads the English Department was considered to have convinced the University Council in Bangkok that she was the best candidate for the job. In an end-run, however, her opponents arranged that both new Deans would be elected by their peers in the respective faculties and that the University Council would subsequently be asked to confirm the election results. When the votes were counted, the abrasive (and female) Kanda ran a poor second to a popular historian, Major Arcom Pattiya. The new Science Dean, Sompong Chuentrakul, was elected with little controversy. Although some observers predicted that the University Council might still rule in favor of Kanda, the election results have now been confirmed.

A second problem occurred with the resignation of Dr. Sukhum Asawes from his positions as Dean of Agriculture and Vice Rector of the University. Sukhum, who is only 42 years old, had a reputation as one of the most active and intelligent members of the faculty and was rumored to have had a number of confrontations with Dr. Buares.

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According to several sources several disputes arose out of Sukhum's uncharacteristic willingness to maintain close, informal relations with his students and to champion them in their disputes with the Administration. While the immediate cause of his resignation is supposedly his vocal opposition to the expulsion of an engineering student involved in a minor scrape in a Chiang Mai brothel, Sukhum apparently became isolated from the rest of the faculty leadership following the student strike in July, which many professors accused him of having helped to foment.

Sukhum has now been replaced as Vice Rector by Dr. Yongyudth Sachananitch, a highly able member of the medical faculty. The other Vice-Rectorship is also held by a medical man, leading one newspaper to speculate that Yongyudth's selection may have been designed to prevent the advancement of a third medical man, Boonsom Martin, ~~the~~ to the rectorship as Buares' replacement.

COMMENT: While the details are confusing, the basic outline should be clear. At a time when university students are beginning to question the traditional values of the Thai educational system and to agitate for a greater role in the nation's life, many professors here are expending a greater part of their energies on less ~~lofty~~ lofty pursuits.

B. Economic Activities

1. Tourist Industry Expands

In mid-November, the Tourist Industry of Thailand (TOT) released figures showing that 8,768 foreigners visited Chiang Mai during July, August and September 1970. By far the largest number of visitors - 5,922 - came from the United States. Other countries with a sizeable number of tourists arriving in Chiang Mai were:

Japan	708
France	589
Australia	475
Great Britain	291

(The Consulate estimates that not more than 1000 of the 5,922 figure for Americans would have resulted from the officially-run Environmental Leave Program (R&R) for servicemen stationed elsewhere in Thailand).

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According to the TOT office in Chiang Mai, these figures represent a large increase over previous periods. TOT also attributes a large portion of the increase to promotional work done in the aftermath of a highly successful workshop held by the Pacific Area Tourist Association (PATA) in January, 1969. Another element contributing to tourist growth in Chiang Mai has been the diversion, since fighting began on Cambodia, of numerous tour groups from Angkor Wat to Chiang Mai.

To meet increased tourism in the North, Chiang Mai's facilities continue to expand. One first-class hotel and two additions to already existing ones are presently under construction. One expansive Disneyland-type entertainment and cultural center opened in 1970 and ground has been broken for another. Stores specializing in local handicrafts continue to proliferate around the city.

As another indicator, Thai Airways (TAC) has expanded its service from Bangkok to Chiang Mai from two flights per week as recently as 1967 to, beginning on January 1, 1971, six flights per day. While some of this increase has been to accommodate expanded business activity in the North, much of the increased capacity is based directly on the growth of tourism. Although the final designation of Chiang Mai as an international airport continues to run into budgetary obstacles at the national level, the terminal building is currently being expanded and it seems only a matter of time before international flights are booked into the city.

C. Other

1. Police Activities, Region V

On December 1, Police Special Colonel Chavaruay Pariyanon assumed command of Police Region V, replacing Major General Pongsak Pranutnoraphan who has been transferred to Region IX. Col. Chavaruay is 58 years old and served previously as Deputy Commander of Region IX. A number of other personnel changes, involving several Deputy Regional Commanders and provincial police commanders, were announced to become effective January 1, 1971.

2. Provincial Police, Region VI, Activities

Police in Region VI drew up plans for police operations against insurgent bands in the Mae Sot - Umphang area of Tak province and submitted them to the National Police Dept. (TNPD) and the Communist Supression Operations Directorate (CSOD). The Border Patrol Police school in the insurgent-troubled Karen village of Mae Klong Khi was re-opened during the month and classes are being held daily.

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