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DATE: July 15, 1968

TO: Principals of the Tuesday Group
American Consul Chiang Mai
American Consul Udorn

FROM: SA/CI - George K. Tanham

SUBJECT: Policy Guidance for Counterinsurgency - North Thailand

A. GENERAL

1. The positions set forth in this paper represent Mission Policy on these matters. The Embassy is willing to re-examine these policies and will periodically do so. Agency Principals and Consuls should feel free to propose changes, additions or deletions as may become appropriate. However, the policies stated herein remain in effect until the document is amended or rescinded, and the Ambassador expects all concerned to work within these policy guidelines.

2. The purpose of this definition of U. S. Policy is to guide American discussions with the Thai on matters concerning the insurgency in the North so as to ensure that the U. S. Mission at all echelons and in every official or social contact with the Thai, speaks with a single voice and articulates clearly a consistent American point of view. There should be no situation--official, semi-official or private--that would justify the expression by members of this Mission to any Thai, of personal opinions at variance with the official policy presented in this document.

3. It is not intended that these policies should be presented to the Thai as American positions or as a package of U. S. recommendations. Individual members of the Mission may find opportunities to raise these issues with the Thai but they should not press these as U. S. solutions to Thai problems but rather seek to present points on their merits for consideration by the Thai. Preferably discussions should arise naturally, on Thai initiative and U. S. officials should carry on their part of the discussion in conformity with the positions set forth below. It is also

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important that discussions with the Thais be used to learn their ideas on what they believe to be the feasible solutions to the problems they face. We should at all times keep in mind that the RTG must address and solve these problems--we are advisors.

B. MISSION POLICY STATEMENT

1. Reorientation of Security Forces

1. The U. S. Mission conceives the threat to North Thailand as arising from an insurgency inspired and directed by the Communist Party of Thailand, with the direct support and assistance of communist organizations in Laos, North Vietnam and China. Basically, the insurgent organization utilizes indigenous personnel (Thai, Thai-born Chinese, Sino-Thai, and hill tribesmen) with some foreign cadre. It is currently expanding through recruitment of indigenous tribesmen but its effort is not directed exclusively at these ethnic minorities, and its ultimate objective is to isolate the central government of Thailand from its citizens by denying it access to large geographic regions--in this instance North Thailand.

2. The U. S. Mission recognizes that, while currently the insurgent effort in the North is focused primarily upon tribal elements in the population, it has begun to recruit ethnic Thais as well. It is to be expected that wherever the armed insurgency achieves local successes, the morale of both military and civilian groups will correspondingly suffer and ethnic Thais will become more vulnerable to intimidation and coercion by CT recruiters. The Mission believes recent CT propaganda efforts designed to induce North Thai farmers to unite with the tribesmen in opposition to the RTG is evidence that CPT has begun to direct its effort towards a wider audience.

3. The U. S. Mission supports the concept of a coordinated program of counterinsurgency because it believes that decisions must be made against the totality of the problem. Problems facing the police, the army and Thai civil government agencies are most often common problems that do not lend themselves to ad hoc independent solutions by the several agencies. Decisions on such matters taken by any individual organization have consequences for all the others. For this reason the U. S. Mission supports the concept of a regional headquarters for counterinsurgency planning and coordination with adequate representation from each RTG

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agency that is charged with functions relating to counterinsurgency. U. S. military advisors should advise their Thai military counterparts on the need for other agency participation in decision making, policy and operations. Civilian advisors should do the same with their respective counterparts so that civilian elements will be responsive to military requests or may even take the initiative in effecting coordination measures.

5. Within the active areas of operations in Nan, Chiang Rai, Uttaradit and Tak the U. S. Mission conceives the most urgent need to be the reconstitution, augmentation and support of the Border Patrol Police of Area V to permit reassumption of its primary role in the remote border regions. The primary role of the BPP is characterized by the RTG as: "To constitute the first line of defense against infiltration of hostile forces from abroad by establishing border security of all the inland borders of the Kingdom and to assist customs and immigration authorities in controlling border crossing activities in remote border regions. In time of national emergency the BPP will become the screening and delaying forces of the RTA and if overrun should constitute guerrilla bands behind the hostile forces."

To accomplish their primary mission and as preparation for their secondary mission under the RTA, line platoons of the BPP patrol the inland borders between fixed posts or police stations located in close proximity to the boundaries. Mobile Reserve platoons are available to the Area Commander to reinforce any given sector of the border as required. Para are available to conduct long range patrols for the purpose of gathering intelligence on specific targets and of locating, assessing and destroying small hostile forces. As an integral part of both primary and secondary missions, the BPP initiate extensive programs to induce a personal commitment by tribesmen to the RTG and operate a mass intelligence net among the local population in the border regions. The restitution of this capability in the BPP of Area V is so urgent that it should take precedence over all others. The U. S. Mission supports and encourages all Thai efforts to augment and upgrade the BPP in Area V.

6. The U. S. Mission supports the recent RTA decision to regroup elements of the 3rd Army into more concentrated organizational groupings so as to protect the population. The U. S. Mission supports a reorientation effort by the RTA which will reduce the number of vulnerable targets

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offered to the GVN provides an opportunity to reassess the situation, to retrain and plan carefully for future offensive operations based upon sound intelligence and directed at highly selective targets.

7. The U. S. Mission supports the positioning of the regrouped elements of the 3rd Army in critical areas from which they can: protect larger population centers; conduct intensive patrolling and retain the capability to react quickly in strength to support police or para-military forces, exploit intelligence and destroy known insurgent bands. It is essential that military operations be directed at specific rather than area targets and that stringent efforts be made to make such military operations selective, not general.

8. The U. S. Mission encourages intensive efforts by the RTA to retrain all elements of the 3rd Army in CI techniques and anti-guerrilla operations and conceives this as much an urgent matter as to warrant precedence over all but the most pressing military suppression operations. The Mission is confident that the RTA possesses the talents and capabilities to conduct this training with only minimal advice and training assistance from U. S. military forces.

9. The RTA should be encouraged to develop a high level of patrol activity in all combat units and to use saturation patrols in clearly defined target areas. This technique should produce intelligence, identify targets for larger units, keep the insurgent groups moving and unsettled and deny him free use of roads and trails.

10. The U. S. Mission opposes the use of unobserved artillery fire and airstrikes because it is convinced that these weapons are not effective against the present enemy, do not intimidate the insurgents but instead, tend to create resentment and spread disaffection.

11. The U. S. Mission believes that loyal tribal villages can and should contribute to their own defense. It favors the creation of tribal village defense units under BPP auspices in those areas where there are police or military forces in position to support them. It would also encourage the formation within the RTA of regular military units of tribal scouts.

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12. On balance the Mission believes that the counterinsurgency potential of the KMT has probably been exaggerated. Their presence as an independent force in North Thailand, while a stabilizing influence in some areas, also undermines RTG authority and sovereignty. Nevertheless, the Mission believes the RTG should be encouraged to reach an accommodation with the KMT, to maintain continuous liaison with them for intelligence and operational purposes and, to the extent possible, to use them as an anti-communist presence in remote areas.

II. Improvement of Intelligence

1. The U. S. Mission is convinced that a high priority should be assigned by all RTG officials to improving and increasing its sources of information. In this regard it should not overlook the possibility of combining information collection with other positive programs and services. Every government employee who in the course of his work comes into personal contact with the public should be made aware of the importance of his personal conduct in making people willing to give him useful information. Existing intelligence collection mechanisms should be encouraged to carry out systematic debriefings of such officials, to share information with each other and to pass its reports laterally and to JSC-5 as well as upwards within its own agency. Documents and other materials which come into their possession should be shared immediately with JSC-5.

III. Measures to Achieve Improved Rapport with Tribal Minorities

1. The Mission, at this time, sees the tribesmen as the key to the insurgency in the North and conceives the long term objective of the RTG to be integration of this minority group into the Thai society. This policy should be implemented gradually in stages. An important step in this direction would be the legalization of tribesman's status within the Kingdom and initiation of other measures to bring the tribesmen into a more cooperative relationship to the government.

2. The U. S. Mission is convinced that natural leadership exists among tribal groups and that the RTG should exert special efforts to discover, recognize, encourage and develop tribal leaders by:

a. Official appointment of elected tribal puyaiban in each village.

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b. Appointment of carefully selected tribal Kamnan in appropriate areas.

c. Selection of outstanding tribal leaders of Village Defense groups for recognition and new opportunities for advancement.

d. Convocation of frequent tribal assemblies in appropriate changwats at which RTG officials should explain government policies and listen to expressions of tribal views and aspirations.

3. The Mission believes that the RTG can and should ameliorate the adverse effects of resettlement by devising a comprehensive program of (1) refugee relief in resettlement areas to include food supplements throughout the next planting and harvesting seasons and (2) reconstruction assistance to those tribesmen whose homes have been destroyed by military operations.

4. The U. S. Mission is convinced that resettlement of tribal populations is not an effective means of separating the insurgent from his support among the population, that it creates demands for unproductive use of scarce assets, that it interrupts intelligence collection by displacement of sources, and that it causes unnecessary resentment among the tribal population. For all these reasons the Mission opposes resettlement in principle.

5. As a corollary of the policy stated above, the U. S. Mission favors the voluntary return of tribesmen now in resettlement centers to their original villages as soon as the security situation in the respective localities permits.

6. Where modest inputs of U. S. assistance will encourage and support RTG actions in these directions, they should be provided.

IV. Extension of RTG Presence

1. The U. S. Mission believes that the Thai Government should extend its administrative control and increase its visible presence in those areas inhabited principally by tribesmen. Some methods of doing so are:

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a. The creation of Tribal Affairs Officers at amphur and changwat level to deal exclusively with matters affecting tribesmen or some arrangement whereby the tribal interests are protected.

b. The placement of proposed Tambol Police Stations in critical tribal areas.

c. The issuance of identity cards to tribesmen and registration of tribal firearms as elements of a population identification and control system.

d. BPP tribal development efforts including schools, trading posts, small handicraft and cottage industry projects.

V. Economic Development

1. The long range goals of the RTG should and do include plans for the economic development of the North. The five-year plan for North Thailand is, admittedly, modest and the level of RTG investment forecast in the plan is not in proportion to the percentage of the population residing in the Region. It does, however, reflect conscious decisions on resource allocation based on Kingdom-wide priority considerations and probably represents the approximate level of investment the RTG is likely to make during the five-year term of the plan unless security considerations force reevaluation of national priorities. The U. S. Mission concludes that it would be unwise and unrealistic to encourage the RTG to commence a new comprehensive program of economic development for North Thailand at this time. While long range programs to tie the tribesman closer to the RTG and give him a stake in its defense and preservation should be encouraged to the extent there are Thai resources available to support them, the Mission considers that only those measures which relate directly to an expanded government presence in critical areas and to the solution of immediate security problems should be emphasized now. The most urgent of these efforts are: expansion of the existing road and trail system; low-level, high impact programs among tribesmen; additional medical and education facilities in rural areas, and support to an improved population identification program.

VI. Information and Psychological

1. The Mission believes that to regain the confidence and support of tribal residents of North Thailand as well as to reassure ethnic Thai

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in the region, the Thai government must demonstrate it has the capability, the resources and the will to protect the population and to improve the range of opportunities available to them. Consequently, from a psychological point of view, actions are more important than words. The recommendations made elsewhere in this paper, if carried out, could do much to improve the RTG acceptability to Thai and tribesmen alike. Tribal Minority Groups are difficult psychological targets due to their remoteness from media sources, level of education and linguistic differences. Every effort by the Thai to reach the tribesmen by radio programs in tribal dialects, mobile information teams, frequent visits by local officials and practical person-to-person communications should be encouraged and supported. Particularly they should be encouraged to make maximum use of existing radio and other information media to reach tribesmen. Information--positive and helpful or negative and destructive--does pass quite rapidly between tribal villages and favorable activity by the RTG will not long remain unknown in the mountains.

Recapitulation:

In summary, U.S. policy springs from the fundamental conviction that the Thai themselves--and only they--can solve these problems. American assistance can be useful to the extent that it is unobtrusive and indirect. The more obvious and overt the U.S. effort becomes the more it tends to confirm and validate CT propaganda themes. The ever present temptation for U.S. representatives to become operators or directors or to "do it for them" must be resisted because it causes resentment among the Thai, because it tends to negate Thai efforts and dispose them to try less and, finally, because it will not work.

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