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SUBJECT : Joint Mission Report on the Insurgency and CI Programs in Thailand, July-September 1971

REF : A) Bangkok A-313 (Quarterly for April-June 1971)
B) Bangkok 11731 (July Report)
C) Bangkok 12979 (August Report)
D) Bangkok 14884 (Summary for July-September 1971

SUMMARY

Thai and U. S. observers, watching the insurgency closely for signs of reduced Chinese support, have found no evidence of abatement - in support or activity. The Prime Minister's recent public statement expressing this conclusion also expressed concern at the resumption of southward road building by China in Laos, toward the insurgent "liberated areas" in Thailand only 25 miles away. Increasing border area security arrangements and a three-fold increase in company-sized military operations in the North against insurgent base areas are part of the RTG response under the 1972 Suppression Plan which became effective October 1.

The insurgency, of course, preserves its primarily indigenous character. A new Mission estimate of armed insurgent strength (full text to follow by separate airgram) puts total armed insurgent strength in Thailand at 6210-6570; this represents median increase of about 1000 in a year.

Insurgent armed action during the rainy season consisted largely of a few effective ambushes and

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By: Alan Lipton
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scattered harassment of RTG outposts. Organizational activity was high in all areas. Khao Wong and Na Kae districts in the Northeast continued to be foci for expansion of village military units, mass demonstrations, improvedCommunist Party organization for political control of insurgent dominated villages and intensified activity of the Patriotic Farmers Association. In the North, insurgent efforts to expand control into lowland Thai areas were reported, with an unascertained degree of success. In the Mid-South CT propaganda activity was reported in two new districts of Nakhon Si Thammarat. Also a CPT incident in a southern district of Songkhla in the Far South indicated southward extension of the CPT operational area.

Military counterinsurgency operations in the rainy season represented some increase in volume and improvement in tactics over the same slow period last year. In the Northeast, emphasis on small unit patrolling had some success in disrupting the CT. In the North, Operation Nam Waen (also a vehicle for the evaluation of CI aircraft) was only partially successful. In the Mid-South two major CI operations resulted in the destruction of five major CT camps. The Far South saw the implementation of joint Thai-Malaysian naval patrols, but only one significant Thai ground action against the CTO.

The 1972 RTG Suppression Policy (see Bangkok A-371, Overview of the Insurgency) emphasizes sustained small unit operations against the insurgents, and greater civil/police responsibilities in populated areas. However, effective civil-police-military cooperation remains to be achieved.

The seriousness with which the RTG is now viewing problems of CI coordination is indicated by the high level CSOC village security and development seminar and the recent Thai coordination measures in the North, taken in response to surfacing of this problem at the regional CI meeting. The CSOC seminar stressed definition of functional roles by the various security services in meeting the insurgent effort to expand village level control. Most governors in insurgency affected provinces were changed in August, generally portending improvements in CI leadership.

The RTG also is endeavoring to improve its performance in minorit areas. In the North significant new development initiatives in the hill areas are envisaged, with a clear definition of roles among interested RTG agencies. The government also appears to be making systematic efforts to improve its relationship with the Thai Muslim minority in the South.

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An RTG analysis of Voice of the People of Thailand (VOPT) propaganda broadcasting states that through August, programs emphasize Thai government "mistreatment of the people" and the farmers' plight caused by the "selfish interests of government officials and foreign capitalists." CT military successes were listed each month and much coverage also focused on Thai involvement in Indochina and other RTG policies in "subservience" to U. S. interests.

I. Insurgent Situation

A. North

From July to September, the insurgents worked to consolidate their control over those mountainous Thai/Lao border areas where their influence is predominant, and undertook limited expansion into the surrounding lowland areas. Generally avoiding direct contact with RTG suppression forces, the insurgents concentrated on helping villagers harvest the rice crop in the uplands and recruitment and training of hilltribe guerrillas, mobilization and indoctrination of hilltribe populace, and resupply and organizational activities among some lowland village populace. Government forces continued to mount company-sized operations in this rainy season interlude, but with little effect.

There is a larger number of full time jungle soldiers in the North than in any other region of the country. An estimated 2,30 main and rural force (up 400 from last year) insurgents, now operati in company-sized units, are presently within the Thai borders and there are frequently reported large insurgent units occupying bases Laos, immediately adjacent to Thailand. A new TPLAF main force "bat lion" (estimated at 200 men) was identified in the tri-province area on the Thai/Lao border. Of increasing concern to the RTG, is the th that strongly controlled mountain bases pose to the adjacent lowland Growing numbers of well trained cadre, enable the insurgents to mane ver in larger groups.

CT control over the hilltribe population is increasing. Over 700 armed village militia personnel have been recruited, traine and armed for local defense of CT villages in the North. Despite th defection of some 100 Meo tribesmen, all self proclaimed insurgent supporters, the Communists made progress in expanding their control

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Tak province. Significantly the CT appear to be making another effort to recruit villagers in Kamphaeng Phet province where Meo tribesmen have reportedly been infiltrated by insurgent cadre elements. RTA intelligence reports indicate a growing relationship between the insurgency organizations in Tak and the tri-province area. Farther North there is evidence that the insurgents are attempting to recruit the support of segments of the ethnic Thai population in Pong district, Chiang Rai; results are unknown.

Selective harassments and ambushes demonstrated insurgent ability to strike at small RTG military and security elements at will. Twice in September, insurgents attacked manned police stations in the tri-province area, destroying one. On the second occasion, on 22 September, the insurgents then ambushed the RTA reaction force, using an RPG-2 grenade to destroy an armored personnel carrier.

To strengthen their upland redoubts, the CT have begun to build fortified villages. At least three such village complexes have been formed by village militia under the tutelage of the Thai Peoples Liberation Army (TPLA) in the Doi Yao area of Thoeng district, Chiang Rai province. These complexes organized by the TPLA were patterned after the resettlement areas established by the RTG for the hilltribes

B. Northeast

During the rainy season, RTG forces had some successes agai the CT in parts of Sakon Nakhon and Kalasin provinces, but the major CPT base area in the Phuphan Mountains remained unaffected and the CT continued to dominate a number of villages in Na Kae district and Kha Wong sub-district. Other CT elements were active in Nong Bua Lam Phu district of Udorn province and Det Udom district of Ubon province.

Throughout the period there were a number of clashes betwe Volunteer Defense Corps (VDC) units and the CT, with casualties on bo sides. In most instances the attacks were CT initiated, reflecting the elimination of the VDC as a priority objective of the insurgents.

Under Second Army Forward's rainy season plan, the emphas was on small unit operations by Royal Thai Army (RTA) elements togeth with police and VDC forces. [redacted] these operations had succee in disrupting their activities. The RTG patrols forced them to spli

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up and move frequently and made it difficult for them to maintain contact with the villagers and obtain food from them which caused food shortages and brought about some lowering of CT morale. According to some reports, the villagers in that local area were favorably impressed by the RTG operation which showed that the CT were not as powerful as they had claimed.

In nearby Na Kae district of Nakhon Phanom, on the other hand, the CT blew up an RTA truck on 1 September and killed its seven occupants. Attacks against the RTA have been unusual in the Northeas in the past. Meanwhile assassinations of village leaders and suspect informants among the villagers continued.

There was also considerable organizational activity by th CT during the period. There were reports of advanced political and military training in schools in Na Kae and Khao Wong and of revived emphasis on the Patriotic Farmers Association to collect rice. The insurgents also organized a number of demonstrations by villagers in Na Kae and Khao Wong who protested against RTG operations in general and particularly against the alleged killing of villagers by RTG forces and the restrictions imposed on the villagers designed to lim their contacts with the CT. The CT have also promised to kill three of the top RTG civilian and police officials assigned responsibility for Khao Wong and apparently wrote the posters which threatened to kill villagers who work on the Union Oil drilling project scheduled to start there in November. The RTG Cabinet, however, has reported promised to provide security for the drilling, and instructions to do this have been sent to local officials.

The Communist hold over the population in Khao Wong is s quite fragile. After two insurgents turned themselves in with thei weapons on September 29, several more followed, along with some vil organizers. Over the next two weeks about 130 CT supporters also turned themselves in, apparently because they feared the original d fectors would name them to the RTG forces. Most of the villagers w allowed to return to their homes, but the organizers and insurgents who had been armed were held for interrogation.

C. Mid-South

Available intelligence indicated that the CT continued emphasize food collection and organizational activity. Of specia

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significance is a report that in July, 30 - 40 armed and uniformed CT regularly dispersed into small groups to propagandize in villages of Hua Sai and Chian Yai districts of Nakhon Si Thammarat province. Initial reports of CT activity in this area were received in late 1970; the insurgents appear to be continuing their efforts to upgrade village influence and control in these districts.

CT military activity in the Mid-South was generally in response to RTG operations in Phattalung and Surat Thani provinces described in Part II. The Phattalung operation, however, was a reaction to the CT ambush of an RTA truck on 7 July which killed 7 soldiers and wounded five. The operation concluded on August 7 after only one contact. The Surat Thani operation resulted in the destruction of five CT camps. The CT withdrew before the RTG forces arrived, leaving only rear guard elements to provide harassing fire and activate command detonated mines. One RTA helicopter was damaged and another crashed, probably accidentally, although the CT are taking full credit for this in their propaganda.

The CT demonstrated their ability to strike back after the Surat Thani operation by attacking a Provincial Police Station in Phrasaeng district on 21 September, wounding four policemen and burning the station.

In other military activity, an unknown number of CT, on 6 August, ambushed an RTA patrol in Khao Chai Son district of Phattalu causing one RTG KIA and one WIA. In Nakhon Si Thammarat province as estimated 30 insurgents overran a village security force outpost killing 2, wounding six and capturing 7 small arms and an FM-5 radio.

The insurgents demonstrated improved anti-helicopter tactic against the increased RTA use of helicopters during the quarter. In the Surat Thani operation the CT employed electrically detonated mine These mines are manufactured in the jungle and will probably be used with greater frequency in the future throughout the Mid-South.

During the quarter the poor security prevailing in some sections of the Mid-South received increased press coverage in Bangko English newspapers. The insurgent threat in Phattalung was frequentl reported in one context or another. Several articles have described the CT threat against rural teachers which forced temporary closure

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of some rural schools.

D. Far South

In the Far South, during the quarter, recorded CT military activity was light. In August several harassing incidents occurred in Narathiwat province - one involving 25 CTO attackers. On 27 August, 25 CTO attacked a joint Thai-Malaysian police force. On 16 September the CTO 12th Regiment ambushed a Malaysian Army truck on the Betong-Kroh road one kilometer from the border. Three Malaysians were wounded but they quickly responded by calling in artillery and mortar support, forcing CTO withdrawal.

[redacted] the CTO are now estimated as between 1,800 - 1,900 strong, divided as follows: 8th Regiment 414, 10th Regiment 638, and 12th Regiment 784.

An indication of a slide south in the CPT area of operations was manifested in the assassination of a villager in Saba Yoi district, the southernmost in Songkhla. The note left near the victim's body was signed: "The People's Liberation Armed Forces of Thailand." This is the first solid indication of an expansion in Songkhla of CPT operations from Hat Yai and Rhattaphum districts in the northern half of the province.

II. Counterinsurgency Related Activities

A. Security Programs

1. Counterinsurgency Operations

The 1972 Suppression Plan (beginning Oct 1) redefines military, police and local defense roles. The RTA plans to consolidate its forces and use them mainly to attack CT base areas. Police and civilian paramilitary units will contend with the CT infrastructure and supporters in the villages and provide local security, with the RTA in reserve if needed. It remains to be seen how successfully this plan will be implemented.

a. North

RTG CI activities continued at approximately the same level as last quarter, aside from the Nam Waen Operation and the

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provincial police operation in Pong district of Chiang Rai, action was limited to patrolling which achieved few tangible results. The Nam Waen Operation held from 30 June to 18 July, was not fully effective because operational forces were used to protect a downed helicopter. However when CT massed to attack the RTA security for the helicopter, air and artillery resulted in heavy CT casualties. The use of helicopters indicated shortcomings in RTA training. Also inadequate landing zone security and poor pilot briefings caused heavier than necessary battle damage. On two other occasions, during the quarter, RTA units reacted to insurgency initiatives and were ambushed. On a third occasion, when the RTA reacted by helicopter, the insurgents fled.

CSOR III continued planning for an ambitious 1972 CI program which has been funded to permit a threefold increase in offensive RTA operations against insurgent stronghold areas. Additional elements of the Cavalry Division (Bangkok) began moving into Nan during September, to replace elements already deployed there. Plans call for a significant 600 man increase in deployed RTA forces, which, while yet insufficient, should help relieve present shortages. Successful implementation of the 1972 suppression plans relies heavily on the coordinated planning and activities of civil and police elements There remains much to be done in improving this working coordination.

b. Northeast

The small unit operations emphasized by Second Army Forward's rainy season plan enjoyed some success in keeping the CT on the move, cutting their lines of communications, and making it difficult for them in some areas to obtain food from the villagers.

In Udorn province, the governor directed two larger scale operations, one in August involving over 400 soldiers, police, and VDC, and another in September with 200 policemen. The first operation was launched in an effort to round up an estimated 50 CT who had conducted a propaganda meeting and taken equipment at a road construction company office in Nong Bua Lam Phu district. The RTG forces started the operation five days after the incident took place and failed to contact any CT, but police arrested 41 villagers who had previously been known to be CT sympathizers. The second operation began September 23, three days after the CT had assassinated a village headman and villager in separate villages in Kumphawapi district. Th

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time the police rounded up 15 suspects.

The RTA 1972 plan calls for the Second Army Forward Headquarters at Sakon Nakhon to be reduced to a divisional headquarters. This impending move results to some extent from a lessening of RTA command emphasis on CI in the Northeast, compared to the North where the military threat is greater. Less than satisfactory CI coordination among military, police and civil elements and uneven leadership continued to be problems.

While the RTA plans to move out of the villages, the police have been preparing to set up a Tactical Operations Center (TOC) in Na Kae, grouping together into companies, several Provincial Police Special Action Force platoons. Village Security and Development Unit (VSDU) village recruits from a few Northeastern provinces also received training during the quarter at the VSDU Center at Prachuab Khiri Khan, and some of the graduates after returning to their home provinces have been used to bolster the VDC in Villager Protectic Teams or to form new teams. However the problem still remains to fill the vacuum which will be created by the RTA's withdrawal from the village security role.

c. Mid-South

Two major CI operations were conducted in Phattalu and Surat Thani provinces. The Phattalung Operation was a reaction t the CT ambush on 7 July of an RTA truck which killed 7 soldiers and wounded five and also netted the CT several M-16 rifles and considera ammunition. The operation - a joint BPP, Police, RTA and provincial CSOR exercise - began on July 23. Many CT suspects were arrested but most were released and the operation concluded on August 7 after only one contact. The second operation was a well-planned operation agai CT camps conducted by CSOR 4/2 in Wiang Sa sub-district of Ban Na Sa district in Surat Thani province, from 10 August to 8 September. Fi well-used CT camps were destroyed - including the biggest thus far located in Peninsular Thailand. The camps were all well-fortified b as the RTA approached, the CT withdrew leaving only rear guard eleme to provide harassing fire and activate command detonated mines. The RTA used extensive helicopter support in this operation - for the fi time - including helicopter gunships. One UH-1H was damaged seriou by ground fire and an RTAF CH-34 crashed and burned during a MEDEVA Operation with no casualties. In the next operation the focus shif to Betong district of Yala province in the Far South. These major

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c. Mid-South

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operations are usually financed with training funds due to lack of operating expenditures.

Some operations (like the Phattalung instance cited above) are in fact really no more than training exercises and a show of force. On the other hand operations like the Surat Thani Campaign do considerably disrupt the CT. However destruction of insurgent forces is light, due to the slow-moving pace which gives ample opportunity for CT escape. Major General San, the RTA commander in the South, appears satisfied with this kind of disrupting role and does not emphasize a high "body count." The RTG operations reflect this policy and are designed by CSOR 4 to destroy the camps and disrupt the CT but not necessarily to destroy the CT themselves. This kind of distinction may not be workable in the future, if the CT should choose to stand and fight a large government force entering a camp. However, as of now, each side appears to be gaining a limited objective - the government destroys CT camps and disrupts logistics, while the CT units remain viably intact.

The CT demonstrated their ability to strike back after the Surat Thani Operation by attacking a Provincial Police Station in Prasaeng district on 21 September, wounding four policemen and burning the station.

d. Far South

A combined Thai-Malaysian Operation against a 12th Regiment CTO camp in Betong district of Yala province is slated to go into effect in early October. (It did.) This coincides with the meeting of the General Border Committee in Kuala Lumpur and is probably designed in part as a gesture by the Thai to placate growing Malaysian irritation with the lack of RTG initiative. On the positive side of the Thai-Malaysian ledger the new Combined Task Force (CTF) Headquarters has opened in Hat Yai and the combined naval patrol agreement went into effect. It is expected these measures will be implemented cautiously.

It remains to be seen if the recent General Border Committee meeting will improve Thai-Malaysian CI cooperation in ground operations against the CTO. Future RTA planning points toward Phattalung and Surat Thani in the Mid-South (the CPT threat), more than the CTO in the Far South. This may reflect growing Thai concern with the CPT - and thus a lessening of emphasis on the CTO and the Far South.

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A Cabinet decision to improve administration and initiate development projects in Thai Muslim areas of the Far South, is reported to be proceeding. Medical and lecture teams are operating in Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat. Educational improvements are being made and selected Muslim students sent to universities. Also a policy of recruiting Muslims into the civil service has been adopted. Public works projects are also being undertaken.

2. Police

a. Police Personnel Strength

As of 18 June 1971 TNPD personnel totalled 76,708 which included 6,405 officers.

b. Police Budget

The budget amendment committee is reported to have approved the proposed TNPD allocation of 1,695 million baht (U.S. $84,750,000) for 1972, an increase of 100 million bhat (U.S. $5,000,000) from 1971.

c. Police Aviation Division

Flight time and aircraft availability remained good during the quarter despite maintenance problems. The 6 Kawasaki light observation helicopters were grounded during the first two months of the quarter for mandatory replacement of the tail rotor shaft. Seven new Kawasakis will be delivered in October. During September one police pilot returned from safety officer training in the U. S. and another departed for a 6-month rotary instrument training course. Thirty six police constables departed for Taiwan in October for aircraft maintenance training.

d. BPP Tactical Operations Centers (TOCs)

The BPP identified 10 priority locations for establishing TOCs. Three each in the Northeast and the Mid-South, two in the North and one each in the Central area and the Southeast.

3. Village Defense

From 30 August to 3 September CSOC held a seminar on village defense and development. Attendees were the governors and their military advisors and police chiefs from sensitive provinces,

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s well as RTA area commanders and senior representatives of RTA, NPD, DOLA and ARD at the Bangkok level. The seminar was opened by he Prime Minister. The seminar was rated by some participants as good means of emphasizing village security and development and a seful forum for new ideas. The holding of the seminar indicates igh level RTG interest in focussing cross-the-board Thai attention n the problems of village security and development.

The British here presented to the Communist Suppression Operations Command 130 radios, valued at U.S. $144,000, to be used in counterinsurgency in Northern Thailand. The radios will be used to link village defense units, strike platoons, and a cavalry company headquarters in Chiang Rai and Nan provinces where terrorist elements are located. They are compatible with U. S. equipment previously furnished to RTG elements in the area, following prior U.S. - U.K. coordination.

The training of village security personnel is continuing. The RTA continues to provide the bulk of the training. In the North mobile advisory teams composed of RTA and police personnel, began training of local security units in the tri-province area.

The RTG took a notable step in improving village security training with the official inauguration of the permanent Village Security and Development Unit (VSDU) training center on July 30. Training has been conducted sporadically there since late 1968 using temporary facilities. The Center has now been completed and will be a part of the RTG Administrative Academy.

The seventh class of Village Security and Development Units (VSDU) graduated from the training center in Prachuab in early October.

Despite all the training, the performance of villager defense units nationally has not shown great improvement. Leadership, communications and armament are all problem areas, and the future of the program is still uncertain.

B. Political Development

1. Recent RTG Appointments

In August most governorships of security threatened provinces were changed. In the Northeast and the North these changes appear to have been intended to strengthen CI activities. This is

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especially true in Chiang Rai where both the new governor and his deputy are individuals with excellent backgrounds and CI records. Nan also gets an able, new governor. In Loei a lackluster governor has been replaced. The new governor of Sakon Nakhon is also reported to be a good administrator.

A well-qualified new man has been assigned to head the training program at Prachuab VSDU training center.

2. Defector Operations

There were no coordinated RTG efforts to induce defectors reported during the quarter. However in the Mid-South 10 CT voluntarily defected and were effectively exploited by the RTA with good psyops. In Mae Sot district of Tak province, 109 hilltribers, all self-proclaimed CT supporters, defected to the RTG - the first such instance this year of a large hilltribe defection. In Khao Wong sub-district of Kalasin province in the Northeast about 130 CT supporters turned themselves in following two CT defections.

C. Socio-Economic Programs

1. Accelerated Rural Development (ARD)

A comparison of program accomplishments for last fiscal year and the first 9 months of this Thai fiscal year (i.e. October 1970 - June 1971) shows general improvement except in the water resources program. Nevertheless little has been done to improve village development impact in insurgency sensitive areas.

In the budgetary and support areas several events are noteworthy. A new arrangement permits ARD to contract for spare parts with local dealers, permitting rapid and inexpensive replacements. In spite of $3 million of obligations for ARD in FY 1971, the ARD commodity pipeline has dropped by $1.6 million in the past six months. At the end of August ARD had allocated to the provinces 166 million baht out of a total of 179 million baht - a better flow of funds to the field than in past years. The Cabinet has proposed an FY 72 budget increase for ARD from 278 million baht to 354 million baht.

2. Community Development (CD)

The new Director-General, Governor Phat Bunyaratapha, former governor of Ubon and Phitsanuloke, is a strong administrator and emphasizes improvements for the common man. The CD staff

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reportedly is pleased with the positive thrust he has shown during his brief tenure there. Much work is required to better coordinate CD with ARD, DOLA and other agencies.

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