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FROM : Amconsul SONGKHLA

DATE: May 10 1973

E.O. 11652: GDS
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SUBJECT : Counterinsurgency in South Thailand - March 1973

REF : FOIA(b)1 State

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SUMMARY: [redacted] while RTG programs during the last two years have limited CT expansion in lowland villages, the actual number of jungle soldiers has probably increased. This is due in part to continued recruitment by CTs as they move into new areas. It is also the result of CT supporters located in villages targeted by RTG programs being forced to join jungle organizations to avoid capture or harassment by RTG officials. Intelligence sources also report that the Southern CT organization is receiving considerable additional financing from the Central Committee of the CPT.

In Region 8 the CTs generally avoided contacts with RTG forces, but in Region 9, the CT leadership continued to take a more militant stand. In Phatthalung on March 3, a large CT force attacked and attempted to overrun an RTA platoon.

Throughout the South the RTG continues to concentrate on small unit patrolling and programs aimed at keeping CT influence out of lowland villages. However, RTG resources are spreading thin and little is being done in areas of recent CT penetrations. The RTG does, however, continue to demonstrate greater aggressiveness against the jungle hard core. On March 8, a unit of RTA volunteer "Rangers" attacked a CT force and killed both the leader and his common law wife.

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The RTG increased its activity during the month against the CTO. Three CT camps in Betong were captured in two joint Thai/Malaysian operations. However, this increased activity was motivated more by bi-national political considerations than by any change in priorities on the part of the Thai Government in the South.

Communist Party of Thailand Insurgent Activities

[redacted] a clearer picture of what has happened to the CT organization during the last two years. Initial information suggests that while a variety of government programs have won large numbers of village populations away from the CT sphere of influence, the actual number of CT jungle soldiers has increased. In part, this growth is a direct result of government pressure on villages previously under CT control. In many instances CT supporters have been given a choice of defecting, suffering arrest or worse, or moving into the jungle organization. Additional growth has come about as CT groups, fleeing government operations, moved into new areas and began initial masses development programs and recruitment.

The fact that there are more jungle soldiers indicates that the CTs are finding some solutions to the serious supply problems they have encountered as a result of RTG CI actions. The CTs are, however, still spending a disproportionate amount of time obtaining supplies, and there is evidence that they have had to alter their major methods of building food stores. Rather than depending on whole villages as was done in the past, they are recruiting one or two people in a village to channel supplies into the jungle. In Chawang, [redacted] at least one CT camp has been established with [redacted] the sole purpose of picking up supplies and passing them on into CT jungle camps. In new areas of operation the CT are also reported to have planted crops in sparsely populated areas.

Both General San [redacted] report that the Southern CTs have been aided in these efforts to develop new supply channels by a large increase in the financing provided through the CPT Central Committee. These additional funds are allowing the CT to purchase supplies in place of collecting them from

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villages. This has also made it possible to purchase both arms and ammunition in greater quantities.

The growth in the numbers of jungle soldiers should not be taken to mean that the RTG efforts during the last months have failed. The RTG has succeeded remarkably well in South Thailand in getting the CTs out of major village populations and keeping them from returning. However, little attempt has been made to seriously damage the hard core jungle insurgent. Even so, while there are more insurgents, they are much less effective in their efforts to build a base within large village populations.

Region 8

In Region 8 the CTs continue to avoid contact with RTG forces, forcusing on supply problems and attempting to establish themselves in new operational areas.

Region 9

During recent months the CT leadership in Region 9 has shown a surprising degree of militancy and a willingness to attack platoon sized RTG units. One such attack occurred in Palian District in Trang in January when a BPP platoon was overrun. On March 3, a forty to sixty man CT unit attacked an RTA platoon position in Phatthalung in a daring attempt to overrun the position and capture the arms. The CT were forced to withdraw but did kill four RTA soldiers and wound another twelve. Reliable intelligence reports indicate that the CTs lost eight killed in the attack.

It is difficult to understand the reasons behind this aggressiveness on the part of the CTs in Phattalung. During recent months the CTs have sustained a level of casualties in these clashes with the RTG which in the long run can only damage CT capabilities for future expansion.

General San and other government officials in the South believe that the CTs have been pushed into a more aggressive role because of RTG successes in the villages in the last two years. San states the CT are trying to re-establish their credibility with villagers through militant attacks on RTG forces. Both San and the Commander of CSOR 4/1, Admiral Somboon, have told the Consul they are personally pleased with this development

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RTG Counterinsurgency Activities Against the CPT

RTG programs in South Thailand continue to prove successful in getting the insurgents out of major population concentrations and replacing CT influence with village organizations loyal to the Thai government. However, these efforts remain concentrated in the original target areas. RTG resources are spread thin and little is being done in areas of new CT activity.

A recognition of the fact that the CT leaders will not die on the vine if they are isolated from major populations has contributed to the decision for greater aggressiveness against the jungle bases. The volunteer RTA "ranger" teams described in last month's report won their first success on March 8 in a raid which San called a retaliation for the March 3 attack on the RTA platoon. On March 8, a thirty man force composed of elements from teams stationed in both Had Yai and Nakhorn Si Thammarat attacked a large CT force in Phatthalung. The RTA unit was specifically targeted on one CT leader, Chua Koettalot. Chua was believed to have planned the March 3 attack and may have also been involved in the January attack on a BPP platoon in Palian. The RTA volunteers succeeded in killing both Chua and his common law wife while suffering only one minor wound.

The Thai leadership in the South is pleased with the results of this action. San told the Consul he plans on focusing the efforts of these special teams on specific CT leaders.

It is still too early to determine what affect this raid and the threat of future similar raids will be on the CT leadership. It should be noted, however, that there have been no CT initiated incidents in the month since the RTA action took place.

Communist Terrorist Organization Activities

The Malaysian oriented Communist Terrorist Organization continued its usual level of activities along the Thai-Malaysian border.

RTG Actions Against the CTO

There was an increase in RTG activities in the CTO area during the month with two joint Thai-Malaysian operations in the Betong District of Yala Province. These operations resulted in the capture of three CTO camps (all vacant) with only minor casualties. Such spurts of activity against the CTO continue to be motivated by bi-national considerations and

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do not reflect any decision by the Thais to reorient their priorities in the South.

On the political side, the BPP has been concentrating on developing a Village Scout Program. This program seeks to enlist the entire population of targeted villages into Scout style activities. While Scouting is emphasized, there is an attempt at politically motivating the people into support of the government. The organization of these village scout programs is similar to some extent to that of the PRACs in areas further North. However, the Village Scouts play no self-defense role, nor are they used in any manner in support of military operations. Some initial successes do indicate that the program could develop into a useful counteraction against the Malaysian Communist Youth League so active in the same area.

Separatists

Separatist and bandit bands continued active in Yala and Pattani, but the problem remains under the immediate responsibility of the Provincial Police.

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