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(C) IR contains a basic situation, description and amplifying information IR concerning confrontations between Lao and Thai nationals and/or the Armed Forces of Laos and Thailand on the Mekong River.				25X1	
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1. (U) The River. The Mekong River constitutes approximately 879 Kilometers (KM) of the border between the Kingdoms of Thailand and Laos. The Mekong River boundary between Laos and Thailand was the consequence of the Franco-Siamese (1907) treaty which the Thais regard as "forced upon them by the French". In accordance with this treaty, the boundary between the two countries is the midpoint of the deep water channel and, of the 600 or 700 islands in the river, all but seven are considered to be the territory of Laos. This means that commercial and military riverine traffic must frequently transit along the deep water channel between Lao islands and the Lao bank of the river. The current government in Laos increasingly considers any such transit as an illegal incursion of Thai river craft into Laotian territory. This causes a particularly restrictive riverine transit situation during the "dry season" when the river is normally extremely shallow and				603140 } TH-LA 603150 } 603200 } 604210 }	
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COMIPAC (Code:522)(w encls) AMB (w encls)		CLASSIFIED BY DATT BANGKOK Subject to General Declassification Schedule of Executive Order 11652 Automatically Downgraded at two year intervals Declassified on December 31, 1981		4 ENCLS: 1. (O) Map depicting Location of Mekong River Operation Units, 1 cy. (1 p. g.e.) 2. (U) Extracted article from the Bangkok Post, entitled "Lao Gunboat Sunk In Mekong Battle" dtd 10 Oct 75, 1 cy. 3. (U) Extracted article from the Nation, entitled "Thai Navy Gunboats Exchange Fire With Laotians", dtd 10 Oct 75, 1 cy. 4. (U) Extracted article from the World, entitled "Mekong River Patrol In (cont'd)"	
DD FORM 1396 1 SEP 62		CONFIDENTIAL NO FOREIGN DISSEM (Classification and Control Markings)		REPLACES DA FORM 1045, 1 AUG 60, OPNAV FORM 3820 (Rev 10-61), AF FORM 112, JUL 61, WHICH MAY BE USED UNTIL 1 JAN 63.	

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE INTELLIGENCE INFORMATION REPORT

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CONTINUATION SHEET

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REPORT NO.
PAGE 2 OF 4 PAGES
ORIGINATOR USDAO Bangkok

the only navigable water is in (or near) mid-channel. This unbridged undamed river border seasonally varies in water levels up to 30 meters above the confluence of the Nam Pak Kading (Nam Co Dinh) River and from 13 to 15 meters below that point while the width of the river varies annually in the upper reaches between 40 meters and 700 meters and in the lower reaches between 100 meters and 1600 meters - normally low water is in April and high water in August/September. Both sides of the river have heavy vegetation and are sparsely populated with people of the same ethnic characteristics, language, (which is distinctly different than the "Bangkok" Thai language), historical trading (smuggling)/visiting life style that ignores the border, and a mutual propensity to resist any authority. The rapids below Chiang Khan (10KM) are hazardous and at low water navigable only by craft with a draft of $1\frac{1}{2}$ meters or less and with a capability for speeds in excess of 30 KPH to overcome the current. The Khemmarat Rapids are even more difficult and at low water navigable by craft with a draft of $\frac{1}{2}$ meter or less and a speed in excess of 32 KPH to overcome the current. Navigation markers in the river are largely limited to a pre-World War II French installed system of concrete pilings which is outmoded by erosion and collision damage and the ever changing characteristics of the river; additionally at high water many of these markers are submerged and thereby constitute a dangerous hazard to navigation. Bamboo channel markers have been annually implaced during January in the river by the Lao government in the vicinity of Vientiane and perhaps elsewhere by local Thai or Lao interests.

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2. (C) INCIDENTS/CONFRONTATIONS:

a. During the 18-24 month period which preceeded April of 1975 (and perhaps longer) border incidents on the Mekong between the Lao and Thai occurred about every other month without any discernable regularity or patterned characteristics. Since April 1975 there have been approximately 37 such incidents, 15 of which have occurred in the last 15 days and 4 in the last five days. Until the incident of 9 October resulted in the reported death of five Laotians, none of these incidents have resulted in confirmed KIAs for either of the involved Lao or Thai riverine forces.

b. On the night of 13 September 1975, the current Commanding Officer of the MROU, Captain Praphat Vrisanachand, was wounded by gunfire in an incident which was reported as the attempted apprehension of weapons smugglers. The wound was reported as a superficial wound on the right side of the torso just below the rib cage. Captain Praphat was hospitalized for treatment in the RTN Pra Pin Klao Hospital, Thonburi, until the second week of October 1975. The incident which resulted in the casualty occurred .5 KM inland in RTG territory; the MROU jurisdiction includes the RTG territory inland one KM from the Mekong River.

c. For many years there have been numerous occasions in which the Border Patrol Police (BPP), the Volunteer Defense Corps (VDC), the Royal Thai Army (RTA), and other units have had casualties related to smuggling and insurgency operations across the Mekong River, but these actions have not been considered as Mekong River Border incidents.

3. (C) RTA Organization for Surveillance and Security on the Mekong River Border.

a. In April 1974, the RTG established three Border Surveillance Stations (BSS) under the command of the RTA Commander of the Second Army. These stations were designated as BSS 101, BSS 202, and BSS 303. BSS 101 is located at Sangkhom, about half way between Chiang Khan and Srichiang Mai, below the rapids located 19 KM down river from Chiang Khan. BSS 202 is located at Ban Phaeng, which is along the "dangerous 100 kilometers" (refers to firing incidents, smuggling, and insurgent activities) between the confluences of the Pak Kading and Hin Boon rivers with the Mekong. BSS 303 is located at Khemmarat, which is down river from Savannakhet and above the Khemmarat rapids. Each BSS is commanded by a RTA Colonel and his deputy commander is believed to be a Major of the Border Patrol Police (BPP). BSS 101 is assigned responsibility for surveillance and security on the river above Nong Khai (opposite Vientiane); BSS 202 is responsible between Nong Khai and Ubon and BSS 303 is responsible for the river downstream from Ubon to the Cambodian border. Each BSS is supposed to have operational control over

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CONTINUATION SHEET

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(Classification and Control Markings)

REPORT NO.

PAGE 3 OF 4 PAGES

ORIGINATOR USDAO Bangkok

three assigned companies of land forces (1 company of RTA, 1 company of BPP, and 1 company of VDC), the on-call commitment of five PBR's (each of which are normally escorted with two assault boats) from the MROU, and an air support commitment from the Royal Thai Air Force (RTAF). RO was unable to obtain any information that defined the RTAF commitment.

4. (C) RTN Mekong River Operations Unit (MROU):

a. (C) Headquarters Located At Nakhon Phanom (NKP): Commanded by Captain Praphat Krisanachan RTN since December of 1974. Former Commander was Rear Admiral Damrong Sekanand; a handsome, articulate, popular naval officer, who RO believes was "Kicked upstairs" as the Bangkok based Commander of a newly established Riverine Squadron (formerly the RTN operational forces were comprised only of the ASW, Patrol, Mine Warfare and Service Squadrons). The Riverine Squadron's only assets are those of the MROU although there are supposed to be plans for forces, responsibility, and operations on the other rivers in Thailand. Captain Praphat has an RTN reputation as a tough task master who gets things done. Obviously he participates in MROU operations to the extent that he recently was wounded during investigation or pursuit of a suspected arms smuggling operation.

b. (C) Disposition: The MROU has ten bases and/or boat stations along the Mekong River from Chiang Khan in Loei Province to Khemmarat in the Southeast. As indicated on enclosure 1, these bases/boat stations are located at Chiang Khan, Sri Chiang Mai, Nong Khai, Phon Phisai, Bong Khan, Ban Nakae, Nakhon Phanom, That Phanom, Muk Dahan, and Khemmarat. There is an additional boat station at Khong Chiem, but this is manned by the Marine Police (MP).

(1) (C) Equipment: Patrol Boat, River (PBR):

(a) (C) The MROU is equipped with 30 PBRs; 5 PBRs are under construction by UNI-FLITE in Bellingham, Washington, for delivery to the RTN and assignment to the MROU, and 5 additional boats have been programmed (but not funded) for construction and delivery.

(b) (U) These MK2 PBRs have the following characteristics:

Length - 32 feet (9.7m)
 Beam - 11.7" (3.53m)
 Displacement - 18,000 lbs (8165 kg)
 Fuel Capacity - 160 gal (606 lb)
 Construction - Glass-reinforced plastic, Vee hull
 Crew - 4
 Propulsion - Two JACU221 waterjet pumps
 - Two General Motors diesel engines, 215HP @ 2800 RPM
 Speed - 24 Kts (45 KPH)
 Draft - 2 feet (.6m)
 Range (max speed) - 150 KM (280 KM)
 Armament - 1, twin mount .50 cal machine gun, tub mounted
 - 1, .50 cal machine gun, stand mounted

(2) (C) Assault Boats:

(a) (C) Sixty assault boats are assigned, normally two assault boats operate with a PBR on routine river patrol operations.

(b) (U) The assault boats are 16 foot runabouts made of fiber glass with a cathedral hull and powered by 55 HP Mercury outboard motors. They are crewed by 3 men. The armament is one M-60 mounted on a centerpost.

(3) (C) Manning: The MROU is apparently adequately manned and trained to maintain and operate their assigned equipment. The equipment is not sufficient to accomplish even limited effectiveness in controlling smuggling and insurgency operations across the Mekong River. The morale of the crews is good and their motivation is reasonably aggressive. Nonetheless, they are acutely aware of the

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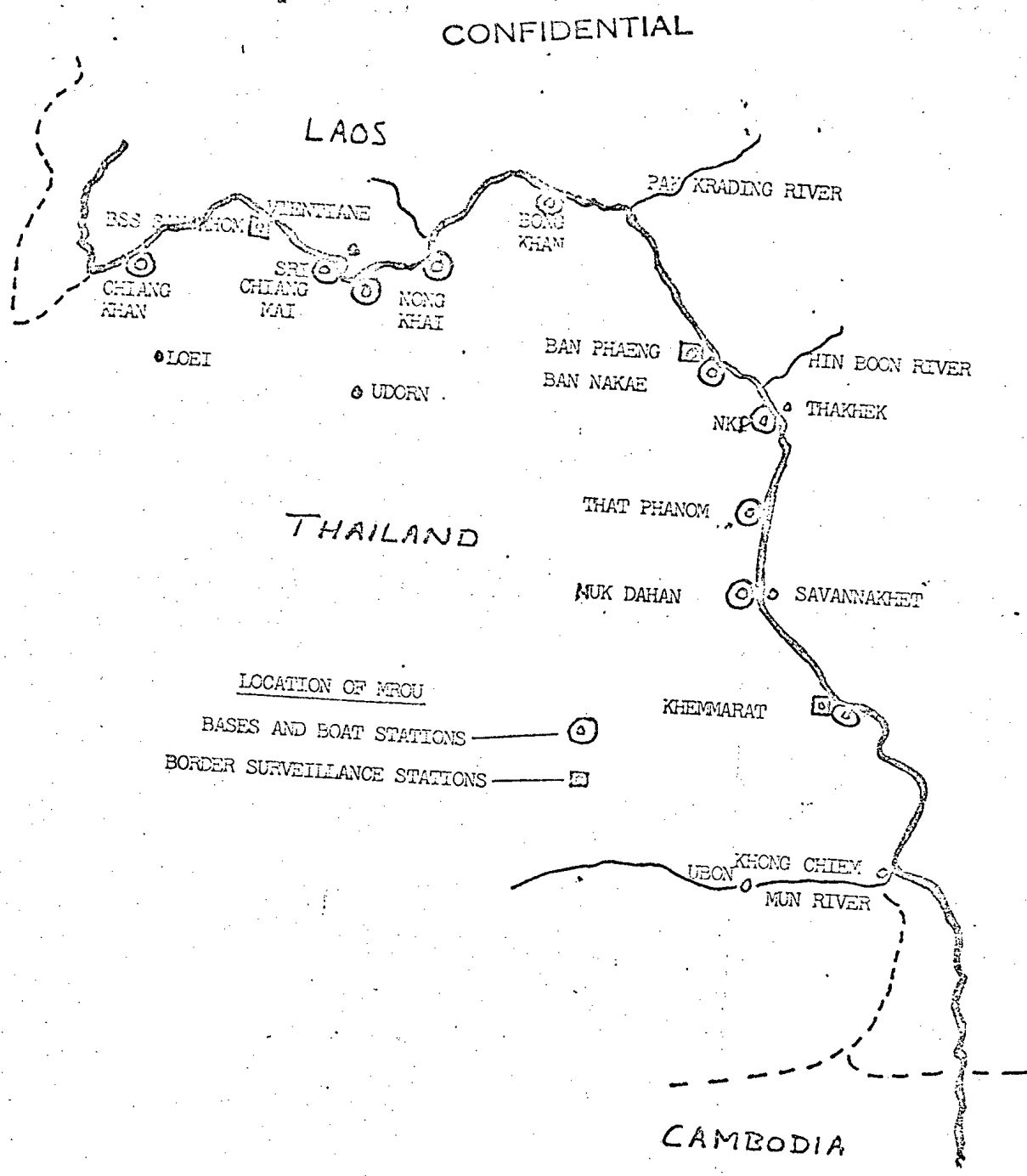
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<p>vulnerability of their equipment to shore-based gunfire and the overwhelming difficulty involved in accomplishing effective control or suppression of smuggling and insurgent operations under the existing conditions.</p> <p>(4) (C) <u>Rules of Engagement (ROE):</u></p> <p>(a) (C) Until early 1973 the Mekong River Operations Units (MROU) of the Royal Thai Navy (RTN) did not operate under any known ROE. However, in February of 1973, it was reported that the Communists Suppression Operations Command (CSOC) directed the following guidelines for MROU operations:</p> <p>(1) (C) The deep water channel boundry will be observed at all times. Royal Thai Government (RTG) authorities will not cross into Laotian waters to apprehend suspected violators.</p> <p>(2) (C) RTG units have the authority to return fire if fired upon by any vessel in the river or from the Lao mainland or from a Lao island.</p> <p>(3) (C) RTG units do not have the authority to land on Laotian territory, including islands, however, RTG units are authorized free transit in Lao waters of the Mekong river when the boundry water is too shallow for navigation of the river within the territorial river water of the RTG.</p> <p>(b) (C) From all indications, the above ROE seem to pertain to the RTG riverine units at this time.</p> <p>(c) (C) Subsequent to the incidents of 5 and 7 June 1974, in which MROU boats in mid-channel were fired upon from "Pathet Lao" forces on the Lao mainland because "the MROU boats were patrolling in Lao water with binoculars and guns trained toward Lao territory"; Rear Admiral Damrong Sekanand, then Commanding Officer of the MROU, complained to RO and others that the MROU was prohibited by RTG authority to visually search the Lao territory with binoculars or to train their weapons in the direction of Lao territory.</p> <p>5. (C) <u>Additional RTG Forces on the Mekong River.</u></p> <p>a. The Marine Police (MP) operate boats on the river and ostensibly these operations are under the operational control of the MROU. However, the effectiveness of this OPCON and coordination is ill-defined at best and the extent of the assets available, the areas of responsibility, and the rules of engagement are unknown.</p> <p>b. The RTG Customs and Immigration Authority also operates boats on the Mekong River with enforcement authority, but the OPCON and coordination, if any for Surveillance and Security under the BSS is unknown.</p> <p>Item 18 CONT'D): Clash With Gun-runners", dtd 17 Sep 75, 1 cy.</p> <p>DATT COMMENT: (C/NFD) The RTAF has been assigned the mission of supporting RTN and police units on the river on an on-call basis. T-28 aircraft of Wing II (222 Squadron and 223 Squadron) are permanently stationed at Ubon AB and Udorn AB and are deployed from time to time to forward operating locations. Some of these aircraft are on "strip alert" at all times and can be airborne in 5 minutes should the need arise. Preplanned missions can result in an "air cap" over a surface operation should it appear warranted. In addition, RT-33 aircraft of Wing I at Don Muang AB provide reconnaissance upon request. Occasionally these planes are staged closer to the scene of operations as well. With the exception of preplanned and coordinated operations however, the ultimate commitment of RTAF resources rests with the Cinc, RTAF in Bangkok. He and he alone can authorize an air strike or the violation of a border area by units of the RTAF which, in practice, makes air support a somewhat "iffy" thing.</p>		(Leave Blank)
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Reprisal raid feared after 5 die

Lao gunboat sunk in Mekong battle

LOEI

FIVE Lao crewmen aboard a gunboat were missing believed drowned after their vessel was sunk by a Thai Mekong River patrol boat in Chiengkan District on Wednesday. When the shooting died down village defence volunteer units went on alert after a Pathet Lao reprisal force was reported to have crossed the river.

The firefight erupted after a Thai patrol boat, commanded by Sub-lieutenant Boonsong Waewsri with 12 crewmen aboard was fired on by a Laotian gunboat while it was patrolling the Thai side of the river in Ban Kokngiew in Tambon Paktong.

The Laotian gunboat opened up with machinegunfire while it was a 100 metres away and Laotian troopers fired rockets at the Thai vessel.

The Thai gunboat blazed away with its machineguns and alerted Border Patrol police forces ashore.

Three rockets fell several metres short of the Thai gunboat which was steaming for shore. Then Thai and Laotian forces on both banks of the river fired machineguns at each other to help their boats. The gunbattle lasted only 15 minutes when the Thai gunboat made it to the shore and the Lao boat sank.

At least five Laotian troopers were believed drowned with their boat while three others swam ashore to safety.

Thai crewmen suffered no casualties. During the gunbattle across the river when the Laotian gunboat tried to chase

the Thai gunboat which was heading for shore, Chiengkan District Police Chief Lt Col Pinit Suwattana-decha who was at the scene ordered police to open fire on Pathet Lao troops on the opposite bank.

After the incident was reported to high ranking authorities in Bangkok, all government forces along the border with Laos at Loel were put on full alert.

A late unconfirmed report said that an unknown number of Laotian troopers had crossed the Thai border at Ban Thai Demi in Tambon Paktong and were manoeuvring to attack a village defence volunteer camp where about 200 government forces were stationed.

POST
10 OCT 75

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Thai navy
gunboats
exchange
fire with
Laotians

Thai navy patrol boats had two brief exchanges of gunfire with Pathet Lao troops on Wednesday. No casualties were reported.

Navy Chief-of-Staff, Adm Amorn Sirigaya, told The Nation last night that the first encounter took place at 11.00 am at Amphoe Chiang Khan of Loei Province when several Pathet Lao troops fired on two navy patrol boats in the Mekong River.

The Thai patrols returned fire and retreated without injuries after 10 minutes of gunfire exchange.

Adm Amorn said the second incident, which also lasted for about 10 minutes, occurred at Amphoe That Phanom of Nakhon Phanom Province where the Pathet Lao troops opened fire from ashore at Thai navy patrol boats which returned fire.

"Neither sides suffered any injuries," he said.

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10 OCT 74

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WORLD
17 SEP 75

Mekong River patrol in clash with gun-runners

NAKHON PHANOM
A MEKONG River patrol
unit in Nakhon Phanom has
been put on full alert fol-
lowing a weekend clash
with weapon smugglers
from Laos, resulting in
serious injury to the com-
mander of the unit, Naval

Capt Prapat Krisanachand,
a high ranking naval offi-
cer said this morning.

Capt Prapat was on
patrol duty Friday night
with 4 of his subordinates
at Ban Noi Ruang Mong in
Tambon Phonethong, Ban
Paeng District, about 80
kilometres north of the
Nakhon Phanom provincial
seat near the Thai border
when they found a group
of about 10 men smuggling
weapons.

When Capt Prapat or-
dered them to surrender
they replied with a hail of
bullets, hitting him in the
waist.

The patrol unit returned
fire but the smugglers ma-
naged to flee into the deep
jungle on the Thai side of
the border, leaving behind
one M16 sub-machinegun
and two AK rifles.

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