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24 January 1974

DCI BACKUP BRIEFING FOR
25 JANUARY WSAG MEETING

INSURGENCY IN THAILAND

- I. Twenty years ago the Thai Communist Party chose revolutionary warfare as a means of gaining power in Thailand. In 1965, armed insurgency broke out in the northeast. Despite continued growth, the insurgency is still small, vulnerable and for the most part limited to the periphery of the Thai nation and society. There are now three separate areas where there is active insurgency.
 - A. The most serious problem is in the northeast. There, some 2,500 insurgents have begun to erode Bangkok's political control at the village level in the remote areas of Nakhon Phanom, Sakon Nakhon and Udorn Provinces.
 1. This force represents only about one percent of the population in the northeast, but affects some 200,000 people in 400 villages.
 2. This political base is held together by

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terror rather than by strong anti-government feeling, and is vulnerable to government security and civic action programs.

B. The greatest Communist military threat is in the north.

1. There the insurgent leadership is ethnic Thai, but the rank and file come the hill tribe population.
2. These forces are the best armed in the country, primarily because of the short supply lines to north Laos. Nevertheless, they have not been able to influence the politically important lowland Thai.
3. In fact, during the past year serious disaffection with Communist political control has arisen among the hill tribes. As a result, the Communists have had to divert resources to shoring up their political hold in the mountains, further reducing their capabilities in the lowlands.

C. In the south, the Communists have never managed to make more than a nuisance out of themselves.

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1. The insurgency is confined to an area in the southern peninsula near the Malaysian border.
 2. The movement is on the defensive due to imaginative government counterinsurgency programs and dissension within the leadership.
- II. The Communist movement continues to grow largely due to government neglect. Both the present and past governments have been preoccupied with Bangkok political affairs. Thai officials, with few exceptions, do not consider the insurgency serious enough to warrant the economic sacrifice necessary for an all-out push. This attitude would appear to rule out a more aggressive counterinsurgency program in the near future.
- A. We do not believe the insurgency will grow very rapidly. In fact, there may be some fundamental limits to its expansion.
 - B. The Communist Party has never been able to attract a significant following among the ethnic Thai, who tend to look upon it as a Chinese creation. This image is strengthened

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by the party's largely Sino-Thai leadership, which is more Chinese than Thai.

C. China and North Vietnam still provide mainly training and logistical support. There is some recent, but unconfirmed, evidence that Hanoi has increased its support to the insurgents in the northeast.

1. This support, however, appears to be limited to amounts the insurgents can absorb. External assistance has not been the critical factor in determining the insurgency's progress, and we doubt that it will be in the future.

D. In effect then, an armed stalemate has evolved over the past year.

1. The government has largely been able to check insurgent political and military advances but has made no serious effort to eliminate Communist base areas.
2. The Communists, for their part, have not been able to break out of their established strongholds, and until they do will not threaten the government.

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III. At the same time, the overthrow of the Thanom Praphat regime could have a significant impact on the insurgency and future Thai Communist strategy.

A. Communist propaganda had been centered against the ruling military clique. The Communists will likely find it even more difficult to nurture a popular movement against a government that came into power as a result of spontaneous mass action.

B.

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the Communists may now begin to shift part of their effort to a "united front" strategy. Such an approach--at least in the short term--could potentially bring greater gains for the Communists than the present insurgency.

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