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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT CHIEF OF STAFF, G-2, INTELLIGENCE

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TAB "A"

ARMY Declass/Release Instructions On File

G-2 CONTRIBUTION TO NIE-96: "THAILAND'S ABILITY TO WITHSTAND
COMMUNIST PRESSURES AND ATTACKS"

- I. Oral contribution on military factors given 12 May 1953
- II. THAILAND'S CAPABILITIES TO WITHSTAND COMMUNIST PRESSURES OR ATTACKS

- A. No contribution.
- B. Communist Attacks

1. What capabilities would Thailand have to counter an invasion
in the immediate future by Indochinese Communist Units?

The Thai Army (approximately 49,000) has the equivalent of 5 regimental combat teams deployed throughout northern and eastern Thailand. In the event of an open Viet Minh aggression in divisional strength, the Thai Army could counter initially with one of the 5 regimental combat teams presently deployed in the border region. Reinforcements could be accomplished with 3 regimental combat teams and supporting armor and cavalry units from the Bangkok area and would provide sufficient strength to force the Viet Minh to withdraw or to disperse into guerrilla groups.

It is not believed, however, that Viet Minh operations in Laos pose the threat of an overt invasion of Thailand in the immediate future. It is considered unlikely that the Viet Minh, even if successful in an attempt to gain control over major portions of Laos, would attempt direct military action against Thailand. A Viet Minh invasion of Thailand would weaken and divide the strength required for the accomplishment of local objectives, consolidation of gains, and for containment and elimination of French forces in the area. It should be recognized that the primary objective of the Viet Minh is undoubtedly the complete elimination of the French forces in Indochina and the establishment of a Communist state. It is, therefore, improbable that they would consider a diversion of their forces from the accomplishment of this objective for an invasion of Thailand. However unlikely such a course might be, the Viet Minh could release a force of up to division strength (10,000) for action against Thailand without unduly weakening their position in Indochina.

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2. An invasion by Indochinese (Viet Minh) Units at any time following the 1953 rainy season, and after Indochinese Communist units had consolidated recent gains made within Indochina?

The considerations which are believed to govern the Viet Minh decision for attack against Thailand in the immediate future will probably continue to be the controlling factors after the rainy season. Even assuming a consolidation of Viet Minh gains, (an accomplishment that is not indicated by the present situation) it is unlikely that the Viet Minh would be able to divert a force of greater than division strength for operations against Thailand. Under these circumstances it is likely that initial Viet Minh successes would be somewhat greater and the capability for continuing operations over a longer period of time would be increased, but it is doubtful that the outcome could be materially altered from that discussed in par 1 preceding.

3. An invasion by major Chinese Communist units, supported or not supported by Indochinese and Burmese Communist units, at any time?

The Thai Armed Forces would be incapable of withstanding an attack by a numerically superior Chinese Communist force. While the extent of their resistance would be determined largely by political considerations, militarily the Thai forces could only delay for a short time a Chinese Communist advance to the southern peninsula.

4. What capabilities would Thailand have to control the border and prevent infiltration or guerrilla activity by Indochinese or Chinese Communist directed forces?

The Thai-Indochina border extends for over 1,300 miles, some 600 of which are adjacent to the area of recent Viet Minh operations in northern Laos, roughly from Paksane to the Burma border. It is manifestly impossible for the Thai to control effectively this border and prevent the infiltration of small guerrilla forces or Communist agents, couriers, etc.

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The Thai Government has, however, taken a number of precautionary measures to strengthen its border security in the present circumstances. Although the Thai Police are responsible for border security, 2d Army headquarters and Police headquarters at Korat are coordinating security measures in the border region. Some 2,000 border Police are being moved to the Laos border (with the heaviest concentration between Chiang Khan and Paksane), regular patrols are being instituted, and air patrols reportedly are to be established. In view of these additional security measures, it is believed likely that the Thai Government forces, although not able to prevent the infiltration of Communist guerrilla units, would be capable of undertaking military operations to harass the guerrilla bands and prevent the establishment of firm base areas in Thailand. These Thai forces, however, would be unable to prevent the development of terroristic guerrilla activity.

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5. What capabilities would Thailand have to counter Communist-inspired armed insurrection within Thailand at any time in the foreseeable future?

While the Thai Government measures to strengthen border security are believed adequate to cope with Communist activities on the scale which can be expected to develop in the immediate future, less attention has been given to measures designed to cope with possible Communist efforts to cause disaffection among the local population. The presence of Communist forces along Thailand's northeastern border will increase considerably the Communist's capabilities for subversion and the development of a dissident movement either among the estimated 50,000 Vietnamese or among the local mixed population. The northeastern provinces have long been economically depressed relative to the rest of Thailand. This condition has fostered a degree of dissatisfaction among the local population which could be exploited by the Communists. The Government, however, appears to be aware of this problem and is considering the screening and removal to southern Thailand of some 400-500 leaders and subversives among the Vietnamese population. Despite this action to increase internal security and the measures to strengthen border security, the Thai Army and police forces would not at present be capable of preventing a Communist-directed and -supported insurrection within Thailand. The Army and Police forces, however, would probably be able to limit such an insurrection to guerrilla activity.

C. Contingencies affecting Thai capabilities.

In what manner would the above Thai capabilities to withstand external and internal Communist pressures or attacks be affected by:

1. Events in Indochina?

a. A major gain in Communist strength, and the consolidation of Communist strength on Thailand's northern and eastern borders?

Such a gain would enhance Communist capabilities vis-à-vis the Thai Army and Police capabilities. It is impossible however, to estimate

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all of the consequences of a major gain in Communist strength, but it is believed that the factors which militate against a Viet Minh decision to begin an open invasion of Thailand (discussed in par B. 1 proceeding) would not be materially changed. A course of open aggression against Thailand would be probable only in the event that the Soviet and Chinese Communist leaders had determined to risk general war, in which case any invasion of Thailand would probably be undertaken by the Chinese Communist forces.

b. A major decline in Communist strength, and a removal of Communist strength from Thailand's borders?

A major decline in Communist strength and the removal of Communist strength from Thailand's borders would increase Thai capabilities relative to the Viet Minh forces, but would have no material effect upon Thai capabilities with respect to the Chinese Communists. Such a decline probably would not significantly reduce the Communist capability to create Communist-inspired disorders in the northeastern provinces, but might lessen the prospects of their utilizing this capability.

c. A continuation of the indecisive warfare in Indochina with little or no consolidation of Communist strength on Thailand's borders?

A continuation of the indecisive warfare in Indochina with little or no consolidation of Communist strength on Thailand's borders would have no significant effect upon Communist capabilities to exploit existing dissatisfaction, to create Communist-inspired strikes, and to organize armed terrorist groups.

2. Western assistance to Thailand?

a. A major increase in Western aid, including guarantees of Thailand's security?

A substantial increase in Thai military capabilities, over the short run, can be expected from a step-up in the development of the present U.S. aid program, by a shortening of the present period of reorganization and by the adoption of a more effective tactical organization.

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Thai military capabilities can be increased materially in the long run, through two means: (1) increased Western military assistance; and (2) a concerted effort by the Thai people to correct the general deficiencies which exist in their military establishment. Improvement in the present system of transportation and communications and in logistical support capacity of the Thai economy will also greatly enhance, in the long term, Thai Army capabilities.

A security guarantee by the West would have considerable effect upon any decision by the Government to exercise fully its present military capabilities against the Communists. It would have only a minor effect upon Thai military capabilities per se.

b. A major decrease in Western aid and commitments?

A major decrease in Western aid and commitments would not materially reduce present military capabilities but would slow the present expected rate of improvement.

c. A continuation of the present level of Western aid and commitments?

A continuation of the present level of Western aid and commitments will result in the continued, but slow, improvement in the Thai forces and a corresponding modest, but effective, increase in capabilities.

3. Events in Korea?

a. An Armistice?

An armistice would temporarily increase Thai capabilities if the Thai battalion presently in Korea is returned promptly. This unit would provide additional combat veterans for assignment throughout the Army.

b. A major intensification or expansion of the Korean War?

A major intensification of the Korean war would have no significant effect upon Thai capabilities.

c. A continuation of indecisive warfare in Korea?

A continuation of indecisive warfare in Korea would have no material effect on Thai military capabilities. Some slight improvement can be expected however, by continued rotation and training of troops under combat conditions.

4. Possible events elsewhere in Southeast Asia?

Other foreseeable events elsewhere in Southeast Asia would have no significant effect upon Thai military capabilities.

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