

NEASTICINEAL INFELLICERNCE FURNAVE

NUMBER SPACE

Community Insurgerey in Theilenel

*# Grant & 100 (1997)

Approved for Release Date 2 3 DEC 1991

sile 52:08 (1.3(a)(4)

1.3(a)(4)

-

Sall and the state

1.3(a)(4)

1.3(a)(4)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Pa	ıge
THE PROBLEM	<u> </u>
CONCLUSIONS	1
DISCUSSION	2
I. BACKGROUND	2
II. THE INSURGENCY	5
III. COUNTERINSURGENCY	7
IV. PROSPECTS	9
TABLES:	
Thai Military Forces	12
Major Thai Police and Paramilitary Forces	12
US Forces in Thailand	12
MAPS:	
Thailand: Communist Activity and Major US Military Bases Facing	; 1
Thailand: Major Ethnic Groups	. 4



COMMUNIST INSURGENCY

THE PROBLEM

To assess the threat of Communist insurgency in Thailand over the next year or two.

CONCLUSIONS

A. Communist-supported insurgency in Thailand does not constitute a present danger to the stability of the Thai government or a near-term threat to its control over any large section of the country. The guerrilla forces are small and their operations are generally confined to remote and relatively sparsely-populated areas.

B. Nevertheless, the insurgency will probably expand further in geographic scope and intensity over the next year or two. Its growth will be due primarily to continuing direction, guidance, and support by the Chinese Communists, and to the political and economic vulnerabilities which exist in certain parts of the country, especially the Northeast.

C. In coping with insurgency the Thai government has the advantage of a generally loyal and contented population. Dissidence is not a serious problem in the most populous areas of the country. The government now recognizes the growing dimensions of the threat in the Northeast and the potential threat in the North and the Malay South, and has undertaken major political, economic, and security measures to deal with the situation.

D. Much remains to be done in terms of organization of security forces and in the field of political action before government programs become fully effective. However, barring a collapse of non-Communist forces in Laos and South Vietnam, we believe that the problem will remain manageable and that over time the Thai government with US assistance will be able to maintain reasonable levels of security in the Northeast and other possible trouble spots. But a long and costly effort will probably be necessary.



DISCUSSION

2

I. BACKGROUND

1. General. Compared to its neighbors in Southeast Asia, Thailand is a model of stability and well-being. The military oligarchy, which has ruled with few interruptions since 1932, has shown reasonable restraint and an increasing sensitivity to public opinion. The large and relatively competent civil service provides jobs and status for graduates of the higher educational system; there is no sizable, chronically unemployed and frustrated educated class. The rural population—about 85 percent of Thailand's 30 million inhabitants—is politically passive, but there is a widespread sense of national unity stemming from loyalty to the Crown, a common language and set of religious values, and a centuries-old tradition of national independence. This heritage and peasant conservatism greatly limit the appeal of alien and radical philosophies.

2. Rural life in most of Thailand is generally secure as well as stable. There is abundant land and no serious land tenure problem. The typical farmer is a small freeholder with enough to eat, a market for surpluses, and no overly burdensome government interference. Peasant society is also free of oppressive class barriers; there is generally free movement upward for those willing and able to pursue a religious or secular education. Thai society in general is characterized by freedom of expression and action for the individual. Social responsibilities are carried lightly; the keynote is contentment and enjoyment. Tolerance and placidity are other Thai characteristics that serve to reduce tensions which might be exploited by disruptive political forces.

3. Although most Thai seem content with their existence, there are significant vulnerabilities in the situation. Most important, the authoritarian political system has not developed an effective means of sensing popular grievances. There are no elected officials in the government above the level of village headmen, and their main responsibility is to represent higher authority, not to transmit petitions from below. Visits from national and provincial officials are relatively rare; and the villagers are scarcely conscious of the government. As a result, their political passivity is often closer to outright apathy. This indifference to the government is not a major problem in the rich alluvial lowlands of Central Thailand, the most populous part of the country. It becomes serious, however, in the more remote and less favored regions—the Northeast, the North, and, to a lesser extent, the Malay South.

4. It should be noted at the outset that the Communist movement as such has had little appeal in Thailand. The indigenous Thai Communist Party, outlawed during most of its existence, probably has fewer than 500 members. Its relatively unknown leaders are either in jail or live as exiles in Communist China, North Vietnam, or Laos. Much of the failure of the party to attract

popular support is attributable to its essentially Chinese complexion. There are an estimated 4,000,000 ethnic Chinese in the country, and although the vast majority are well integrated into the society, the few among them who are Communists have always dominated the Thai Communist Party. Moreover, the Communist problem in Thailand has always been much less one of indigenous communism than of Communist movements of neighboring countries operating in Thai border regions.

5. The Northeast. The chronically depressed Northeast, which comprises about one-third of Thailand's area and population, is the best target for Communist subversion. It is largely cut off from Central Thailand by rough terrain and poor communications, while movement from Laos across the Mekong border is relatively easy. The Northeast is the poorest part of Thailand; its deficiencies include infertile soils, inadequate water control, and a history of government neglect. Vulnerabilities are intensified by ethnic and linguistic differences between the Central Thai and the Northeasterners; in these respects, the latter are closer to the people in neighboring areas of Laos whose dialect and customs they share.¹ In past years, the Pathet Lao has sought to exploit this relationship by sponsoring Laotian-based separatist movements which, however, had no significant impact. The Northeast also has 30,000-35,000 Vietnamese refugees from the 1946-1954 Indochina war, most of whom are oriented toward Hanoi and under the close control of Communist cadres.

6. The North. Another area for possible Communist subversion is the mountainous and heavily-forested North, which borders on Burma and northern Laos and lies close to China. The inhabitants of the North include some 200,000 hill tribesmen who are by nature independent, nomadic, and have little loyalty toward the central government. Many of the hill tribes have been hostile to the government over curbs on their opium growing and their slash-and-burn agriculture. Chinese Communist agents have been attempting to exploit this sentiment for years.

7. The Meo are the largest tribal group in the North. They number about 50,000 and most of them live near the Laotian border. The Meo of Thailand, like those of Laos, have considerable paramilitary potential. In recent years, the Thai government with US assistance has been carrying out civic action programs to gain their confidence. The approximately 15,000 Lahu comprise another large group and dwell mainly near the Burmese border. The Lahu are capable and experienced guerrillas, and are the most hostile to government authority among the northern peoples.

8. The security situation in the North is further complicated by the presence of Shans and Karenas who are in rebellion against the Government of Burma; many

¹ The present Thai-Lao boundary was established in the late 19th century at which time the French successfully demanded that Thai sovereignty stop at the Mekong River. As a result the Lao people of the Mekong watershed were split, the larger number remaining under Bangkok's administration.







of these move back and forth across the border. Some Shan dissidents and other hill people have thrown in their lot with bands of Chinese Nationalist (KMT) irregulars who live and trade in the Burma/Laos/Thailand trijunction area and occasionally skirmish with the Burmese. The presence of these irregulars and the fact that they occasionally cross into China could be used by Peking as a pretext for involvement in northern Thailand. On the other hand, the presence of anti-Communist Chinese in this remote and sparsely-populated area has some favorable security aspects.

9. The South. In the four southernmost provinces of Thailand, an estimated 700,000 Malay-Muslims are the predominant population group. Their close affinity to Malaya, reinforced by prolonged neglect by the Thai government, has stimulated considerable separatist sentiment. Both the Thai and Malaysian governments have tried to minimize frictions, but Communists and other extremists from Malaysia have capitalized on anti-Thai and pan-Malay sentiment to increase their own followings in the area. For the most part, this effort has been conducted by the Communist Party of Malaya (CPM), which is predominantly ethnic Chinese, and its Malay irredentist front, the National Party of South Thailand. The paramilitary arm of the Communist effort is a 500-man CPM force driven from Malaya in the late 1950s; it is tightly disciplined and wellequipped, and finances itself by extorting funds from wealthy rubber estate operators and Chinese merchants. It claims to be preparing only to return to Malaya and has not initiated active insurgency against the Thai government. Nor has it as yet had much success in recruiting large numbers of local Muslim youth into its paramilitary formations.

10. In the Mid-South provinces adjacent to the Malay South, relatively wellorganized ethnic Thai Communists have been active in propaganda, recruitment, and training, but have avoided terrorism. There is no substantial evidence of contact between these Thai subversives and the Communist Chinese paramilitary force in the Malay South.

II. THE INSURGENCY

11. The Communist subversive campaign in Thailand is a longstanding one but first became significant in 1961 when Pathet Lao territorial gains in Laos opened the way for the Communists to establish guerrilla bases in the Northeast. Small Communist groups entered the country, concentrating on organizing party cells and indoctrinating villagers. They played on local grievances, particularly government neglect in the fields of health and education, and promised remedial action. Thai youth were recruited, sent to Laos or Communist China for indocrination and paramilitary training, and returned to the Northeast. There were also a few politically-motivated assassinations—one in 1962, four in 1963, seven in 1964, and five in the first half of 1965. During this three or four year period, however, there were no guerrilla raids and contact with Thai security forces was avoided.

12. In late 1964 and early 1965, two organizations based in Peking were established: the Thailand Independence Movement (TIM) and the Thailand Patriotic





Front (TPF). In November 1965, the TIM announced its subordination to the TPF, which Peking described as "the nucleus of the united front" against the Thai government. The TPF is probably intended to be the political arm of the insurgency, much as the National Liberation Front is for the Viet Cong; the TIM may become the action arm. Both groups are led by relatively unkown Thai political exiles in China.²

13. The shift in tactics to an active insurgency in Northeast Thailand in mid-1965 probably reflects in part Peking's response to Thailand's growing involvement in US military operations in Vietnam and Laos. The Chinese sought to underline their threats with respect to the consequences of such involvement for the Thai and to compel the US to divert military resources to the defense of Thailand. At the same time, Chinese propaganda attempted to persuade the Thai people that their government, acting as an American puppet, had unnecessarily endangered their tranquility.

14. In the summer of 1965, the guerrillas began to meet government security patrols with armed resistance. Later in the year, government patrols also uncovered several guerrilla camps, and there were 13 clashes between Thai police and small bands of insurgents. The number of terrorist attacks on government officials, village leaders, and police informers also increased sharply; there were 25 in the last half of 1965. In late November, the Communists further intensified the campaign, carrying out the first of several attacks on government personnel and minor outposts. The pace was stepped up again during the first half of 1966 and Communist attacks included well-planned ambushes of regular army personnel. Other regions of the country also reported some degree of insurgent activity during this period, but about 90 percent of all types of incidents occurred in the Northeast.

15. Peking's role in Thailand is now almost certainly more important than that of either North Vietnam or the Laotian Communists. The Chinese provide a headquarters for the TPF and the TIM. They provide the principal propaganda support for these organizations and arrange their appearances at international leftist conclaves. The provision of military equipment does not yet appear to be a major element in Peking's support, though large Chinese purchases of Thai currency in Hong Kong in 1965 suggest the possibility of heavy financial aid. There is evidence, however, that many insurgents have received training and indoctrination, if not weapons, from the Chinese. North Vietnamese and Pathet Lao roles in the insurgency are probably important mainly in terms of providing paramilitary training and small arms.

16. Although acts of violence and terrorism are increasing sharply in the Northeast, the guerrillas are still concerned to secure and develop their operational base and they continue to emphasize indoctrination, organization, recruit-

^a Pridi Panomyong, a leading leftist politician who was Prime Minister of Thailand in 1946-1947, has lived as an exile in China for over a decade. However, his name has not been linked with any of the Chinese-sponsored revolutionary organizations and there are reports that he has rejected Communist efforts to use him in this connection.



ing, and training. Estimates of the size of the guerrilla force in the Northeast range between a few hundred and a thousand, primarily Thai nationals; the largest bands operate in the Phu Phan Mountain area northwest of Savannakhet. There is no evidence that organized Pathet Lao, North Vietnamese, or Chinese units have joined the guerrillas, though some foreign advisors are probably present. Some guerrillas reportedly carry only homemade weapons, but most appear to be supplied with light infantry weapons generally available in the area.

III. COUNTERINSURGENCY

17. The Thai government has moved to reduce existing vulnerabilities, particularly in the Northeast. Greatest emphasis is on programs of short-term impact designed to combine positive political, economic, and social improvements with measures to protect the villagers against terrorism. At the same time, the government continues to improve its security forces to cope with the budding guerrilla warfare.

18. The political development aspect of Thai plans stresses government contact with the people. Programs are underway to increase local participation in government and make fundamental improvements in provincial and local administration. Socio-economic programs focus on community development projects in the fields of health and sanitation, education, and roadbuilding. Longer range projects include many in these fields plus ambitious plans for the development of local resources. However, it will be some time before most of these programs have any appreciable impact on the populace.

19. Thai programs also aim at more effective police and intelligence operations, improved border surveillance, and the creation of special paramilitary units and mobile strike forces. At present, primary responsibility for internal security in Thailand lies with the National Police. As presently organized, however, the National Police cannot efficiently combat the growing subversive problem. Its main weaknesses are the generally low quality of its leadership and personnel, its inadequate size, and the fact that the responsibilities of its several components are poorly delineated, resulting in poor coordination and excessive duplication.

20. Among the components of the National Police, those most directly concerned with counterinsurgency are the Provincial Police, the Border Patrol Police, and the Special Branch. The primary function of the 30,000-man Provincial Police force is the maintenance of public order in rural areas, but it is badly understaffed as well as inadequately trained and equipped for counterinsurgency operations. Units at the village level are often too small and sparsely distributed to be of any value against armed subversives. Perhaps its most serious disability is its widespread and deserved reputation for high-handedness and corruption.

21. The 6,800-man Border Patrol Police force (BPP) is organized, trained, and equipped as a paramilitary force. It is also experienced in civic action programs, particularly in the North. The BPP is fragmented into small, widelydispersed platoons and thus is vulnerable to guerrilla attack. Subordinate to





the BPP is the 500-man Police Aerial Reinforcement Unit, a highly-skilled airborne group designed as a quick-reaction strike force. Special Branch, the police intelligence arm, is the most competent and professional of all the components of the National Police. Its Division VII, with about 200 men, is responsible for countersubversive intelligence operations in the border areas.

22. Thai Army involvement in countersubversive operations is not new, but its role increased markedly in 1963 with the beginning of implementation of regional security programs. Mobile Development Units (MDU) commanded by army personnel were assigned to civic action projects. The Army's Special Operations Centers began to provide regular patrols in sensitive border areas. The military establishment also includes a local militia-type organization with a current strength of about 9,000 men, the Volunteer Defense Corps (VDC), which has a supporting role in counterinsurgency operations. Since late 1965, when military help became essential to the police, the Army has become increasingly important in anti-guerrilla operations, particularly those involving attacks on insurgent base areas. Most Thai officers and non-coms involved in the counterinsurgency program have received specialized training conducted in Thailand by the US and, in general, the Army has performed creditably.

23. The sudden upsurge of an aggressive guerrilla movement in late 1965 led to other important changes in Thai counterinsurgency operations. To help remedy the serious deficiencies in coordination between the many civil, police, and military units working against the Communists, a Counter Subversion Operations Center (CSOC) was established in Bangkok in December. CSOC has exceedingly broad powers and is designed to act as both intelligence and operations center of the countersubversion effort. It relies on information provided by regional Joint Security Centers and the individual intelligence services. Deputy Prime Minister Praphat, Thailand's strong man, who is concurrently Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Minister of Interior, commands the CSOC. His deputies include top level leaders of the military and police establishments.

24. To carry out its responsibilities in the Northeast, the CSOC has established a highly mobile field command, designated CPM-1 (Combined Police and Military Force), at Mukdahan on the Mekong border opposite Savannakhet. The total complement of CPM-1 is approximately 1,600 men including airborne, special forces, and support elements; the commander may also draw upon other military and police forces in the area. CPM-1 appears to have the principal responsibility for finding and destroying the insurgents in the Phu Phan Mountains and surrounding districts. Similar commands will probably be established in the Northeast and elsewhere in the country. The CSOC apparatus has improved coordination among the Thai security services.

25. Many other modifications of the existing Thai counterinsurgency structure are underway. The BPP, for example, is to be augmented, in part by elite units from other forces, and reorganized to permit the formation of Mobile Reserve Platoons, small highly mobile strike forces. The Provincial Police force is also





being restructured, but mainly to increase its traditional law enforcement capabilities. There are also proposals for the establishment of locally-recruited police forces at town and village levels. Census/Grievance Teams and Peoples Action Teams, on the South Vietnamese pattern, are also being considered for the Northeast.

26. In the Malay South too, Thai security forces are moving to check Communist activities. For years, the Thai dragged their feet on Malaysian requests for joint and sustained operations against the well-entrenched Communist Chinese in the border provinces. The Thai were suspicious of Malay motives and inclined to view the problem as primarily one for Kuala Lumpur so long as the insurgents remained relatively passive. However, Indonesia's previous exploitation of pan-Malay sentiment in the region and the recent upsurge of insurgency in the Northeast have changed the Thai attitude. In May 1966, Thailand and Malaysia commenced combined operations against suspected insurgent bases in the South. Results thus far have been meager, but operations continue.

27. The many recent Thai moves to bolster their counterinsurgency potential reflect deep and genuine concern over internal security problems on the part of top government leaders. Nevertheless, Thai politics are such that competing groups are not likely to be completely objective in evaluating each new element in the counterinsurgency package. For example, the Army, which dominates the government, is traditionally suspicious of any move that tends to strengthen the relative power of the police. The frequently corrupt police bureaucracy resents the close scrutiny of its financial operations which often accompanies large-scale US assistance programs. Civilian ministries sometimes resist socio-economic and political programs that threaten to diminish their particular spheres of activity. Another problem is the understandable tendency of a military-dominated regime faced with a security threat to focus on tasks of suppression and to neglect positive efforts to gain popular support.

IV. PROSPECTS

28. Communist-supported insurgency in Thailand does not constitute a present danger to the stability of the Thai government or a near-term threat to its control over any large section of the country. The guerrilla forces are small and their operations are generally confined to remote and relatively sparsely-populated areas. Moreover, the government is receiving counterinsurgency assistance from the US and cooperation from experienced Malaysian forces in the South.

29. Nevertheless, the insurgency will probably expand further in geographic scope and intensity over the next year or two. Its growth will be due primarily to the continuing direction, guidance, and support of the Chinese Communists who themselves have many assets in the struggle. In the North and Northeast, China has relatively easy access—via Burma and Laos—to the scene of guerrilla operations. In these regions, and in the Malay South as well, there are po-





litical and economic vulnerabilities susceptible to exploitation but not to quick governmental remedies. For several years, without major hindrance, Communists from China, North Vietnam, and Laos have propagandized and recruited in the Northeast; and there may be several hundred, a thousand, or more dissidents currently being trained and equipped in Communist territory. The Chinese may also seek to utilize some of the hundreds of thousands of ethnic Thai, speaking various dialects, who live in southern China, and the 30,000-35,000 Vietnamese refugees in Northeast Thailand.

30. In the Malay South, it will be difficult completely to dislodge the ethnic Chinese insurgents. In the North, the insurgency potential among the tribesmen has scarcely been tapped. Another Communist advantage in the near-term is that it will probably be some time before Thai security forces master the techniques of counterinsurgency and civic action and remedy their existing organizational weaknesses.

31. The presence of a large and growing US base structure in the Northeast can also be exploited by the Communists to gain adherents. There are almost 25,000 US servicemen, primarily air force personnel, stationed in Thailand, most of them in small towns of the Northeast. Several hundred are in Bangkok daily on brief R and R visits from South Vietnam. While there has been a remarkable absence of incidents between US troops and the Thai population, some friction is probably inevitable. As the US military presence grows, so will the possibilities for a potentially troublesome anti-foreign sentiment. The Chinese Communists lay great stress on the theme that Thailand is "occupied" by the US and its government a mere puppet. The villagers of the Northeast will be less receptive to these charges than the educated and semi-educated youth in Bangkok where nationalism has greater meaning.

32. Over the next year or two, we do not believe that the insurgents will be able to threaten the tenure of the government in Bangkok or its hold on any large and well-populated region of the country. Government counteraction, coupled with the generally unfavorable attitude of the bulk of the Thai populace toward anti-national movements and radical change, is likely to prevent it. In the Northeast, expansion of the insurgency will be handicapped by the lack of cover and concealment in the relatively flat and open terrain which characterizes much of the region. The Southern insurgents are essentially a Chinese movement in a Malay-Muslim setting and lack access to any Communist-controlled territory. In the Mid-South, insurgency on any appreciable scale is not likely to develop. In the North, the Communists are probably not yet prepared for any large-scale insurgency.

33. Even so, the increase in insurgent activity that can be anticipated, particularly in the more rugged districts of the Northeast and the North, may be costly to the government. Substantial resources will have to be allocated to the security forces, and programs designed to ameliorate the grievances of the people in the Northeast and elsewhere will be impeded. As the insurgents gain in strength and experience, they are likely to attempt to harass and sabotage Vietnam-connected military operations and this could force further allocations of Thai resources to internal security programs.

34. Some Contingencies. This estimate could be significantly affected by developments in Laos or Vietnam. If Thai and US combat forces became involved in ground warfare in Laos, the Communists would have much to gain from stepping up their terrorist and sabotage activities along Allied lines of communications in the Northeast and from infiltrating larger forces.

35. Cessation of hostilities in Vietnam on terms favorable to the US would probably not lead to a slackening of Chinese efforts to foster the Thai insurgency. But it would dishearten the insurgents, make local recruiting more difficult, and encourage the Thai in their campaign of suppression. Though a setback in Vietnam might cause the Chinese to expand their guerrilla activities in Thailand in an effort to recoup some prestige, they would be more likely to view the situation as requiring fundamental revisions in strategy and to turn to the longer term task of building a more substantial revolutionary base in Thailand.

36. If the Vietnam war were settled on terms favorable to the Communists, the morale of the insurgents and the receptivity of the villagers to their organizational efforts would improve. The Thai leadership would undoubtedly reconsider Thailand's international stance. The politico-military elite would remain opposed to Communist control over Thailand, whether imposed through insurgency or invasion. But whether Thai leaders would decide on even closer ties with the US or on military dissociation and movement toward a more neutral position would depend heavily on the circumstances surrounding the Communist success and the nature and extent of the support the US was prepared to undertake.

37. The Longer Term. So long as a regime in China is committed to Mao's revolutionary strategy, the Chinese Communists are likely to persist in their efforts to keep an insurgent movement alive and active in Thailand. From Peking's viewpoint, a Thai government which permits US military bases on its soil is an intolerable neighbor and must ultimately be displaced. Peking also sees Thailand as another point on its periphery where US power can be engaged at small risk to China through the device of a "national liberation struggle." It is possible that the Chinese will have some success over the years in turning the mountainous portions of the North and Northeast into havens for their guerrilla bands, and that terrorism and sabotage will become commonplace in such areas. There is a good chance, however, that Thailand can confine the active insurgents to such areas where they would not be a serious threat to Thailand's political integrity though they would, of course, constitute a costly nuisance and an ever-present ally for any anti-regime or anti-US political elements in Bangkok.



TABLES

A.	THAI MILITARY FORCES (23 June 1966)	
	Army Navy Marines Air Force	85,000 15,600 7,500 19,600 127,700
B.	MAJOR THAI POLICE AND PARAMILITARY FORCES (23 June	e 1966)
	Provincial Police Border Patrol Police Volunteer Defense Corps	6,800
C.	US FORCES IN THAILAND (23 June 1966)	
	Army Navy Marines Air Force	23 0 53

GENTRAL INTERLIGENCE AGENCY DISSEMINATION COTICE

reself:chimeitelsbyshes€minglsmidl/cons chicky:reskiftarceptenamickolsperior smer

In undermation and was of this recipients and of periods and of the prediction of the prediction of the periods. Additional assemble blacemine from the prediction of the periods. Some of the line of the periods. Some of the line of the periods of the periods. Some of the periods of the periods of the periods. Some of the periods of the periods of the periods of the periods. Some of the periods of the periods of the periods of the periods of the periods. Some of the periods of the per

Relative secondary was a second and a second second as the second second second second second second second second

e devia teri arceede e di milaristi anticue ere devenisti semitori indevi needen anderen anderen oordernation anderen de state de state de state de state anderen anderen anderen andere is the second state of the second states and

en der dem von Beschering währe eine sinneren fram der eine der sicher an eine The the that is the top the partition is a specific to

Contraction (Contraction)

LAL DEAL SHOULD SEE talam Theatra dan sanghing