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## GEOGRAPHIC SUPPORT STUDY

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### SELECTED FACTORS AFFECTING RELOCATION

#### OF THE VIETNAMESE REFUGEES OF

#### NORTHEAST THAILAND



CIA/RR GS 63-14

August 1963

**CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY**

**Office of Research and Reports**

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(under separate cover)

Topographic Map Sheet Coverage of Proposed Relocation Areas A and B

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SELECTED FACTORS AFFECTING RELOCATION  
OF THE VIETNAMESE REFUGEES OF  
NORTHEAST THAILAND

I. Introduction and Background

The 40,000 or more Vietnamese refugees in Northeast Thailand constitute an exploitable cadre for subversion and insurgency in a strategic region of Thailand. This report briefly treats certain geographic and economic factors bearing on a possible relocation operation whereby the refugees would be resettled in less sensitive areas of the country. The report is based on sources available in Washington. Additional sources, such as very large-scale maps with contours at 5-foot and 10-foot intervals, are needed but lacking. The conclusions contained in the report are tentative and approximate. A field check for reliability of the details presented is therefore strongly recommended.

The movement of sizable groups of Vietnamese into Thailand began nearly 150 years ago with the arrival of a group of Buddhist settlers. They were absorbed into the local community, and their descendants today are concentrated in the Bangkok area. About 120 years ago, groups of Catholic Vietnamese who were oppressed by their rulers migrated to Thailand under the leadership of French missionaries. Their descendants also are found in the Bangkok area as well as in Chanthaburi Province. Although these

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Vietnamese are accepted as Thai nationals, they identify themselves as Annamese because of their religion. In the 1920's, another large group of Vietnamese emigrated to Thailand after an unsuccessful revolt against French rule. They settled in Nakhon Phanom and Sakon Nakhon Provinces and were given Thai nationality.

The Vietnamese who constitute a threat to Thailand's internal security, however, are more recent arrivals. In 1945-46, during the hostilities that ensued when the French attempted to reinstate their influence in Indochina after World War II, some 50,000 pro-nationalist Vietnamese refugees fled from northern Laos into Northeast Thailand. The overwhelming majority came from the Lao provinces of Phong Saly or Houa Phan (Sam Neua) and had relatives in North Vietnam. They spoke the northern dialect of Vietnamese and, although many are Catholics, they proved to be responsive to Communist Viet Minh appeals that were made under the guise of Vietnamese nationalism.

With a growing awareness and apprehensiveness of the political activities of this refugee group, the Thai Government in 1949 ordered the Vietnamese refugees restricted to 13 border provinces (changwats): Chiangrai, Nan, Uttaradit, Loei, Buriram, Muang Ubon, Nong Khai, Nakhon Phanom, Sisaket, Surin, Prachin Buri, Chanthaburi, and Trad. The refugees were free to live anywhere within these provinces. A further concentration

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of the refugees was ordered in 1950 when the five provinces of Nong Khai, Sakon Nakhon, Nakhon Phanom, Udon Thani, and Prachin Buri were set aside as restricted areas for their settlements, but the implementation of the 1950 order has not been complete, and the refugees apparently are still scattered throughout a much broader area of Northeast Thailand.

In 1953, when the Viet Minh forces penetrated deep into Laos, the Thai Government was again deeply concerned and ordered the evacuation of 705 Vietnamese from the border areas adjacent to Laos to the southern province of Patthalung.

In June 1959, the Thai and North Vietnamese Red Cross Societies signed the Rangoon Agreement under which some 35,000 refugees in Thailand were repatriated to North Vietnam. A new agreement to similarly repatriate all of the remaining refugees was signed on 17 December 1962. The number of refugees who still await repatriation is debatable -- estimates range from 35,000 to 60,000. Figures by province, showing the numbers of Vietnamese registered for repatriation, already repatriated, and remaining to be repatriated as of August 1962 are shown in Table 1. The number remaining for repatriation, by province, is also shown on Map 1.

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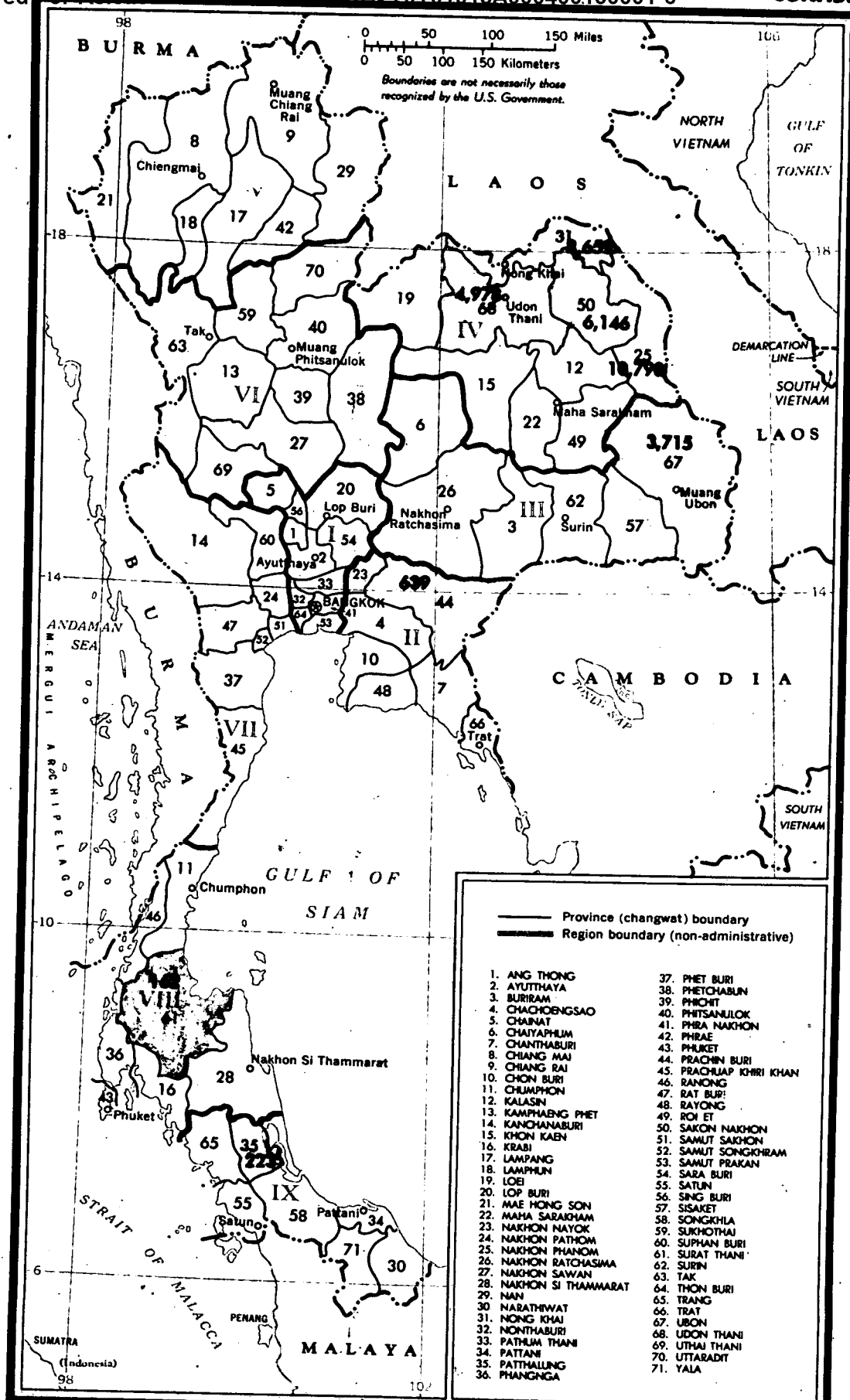
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# LOCATION AND NUMBER OF VIETNAMESE REGISTERED FOR REPATRIATION,

Approved

THAILAND: Administrative Divisions, 1961  
 Approved For Release 2000/05/12 : CIA-RDP79T01018A000400130001-6

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Table 1

Repatriation of Vietnamese  
June 1960-August 1962

Province	Total Number Registered for Repatriation 4 June 1960	Number Repatriated by August 1962	Number Remaining to be Repatriated August 1962
Nong Khai	16,155	7,496	8,659
Nakhon Phanom	22,198	11,400	10,798
Sakon Nakhon	12,533	6,387	6,146
Surat Thani	213	51	162
Ubon	8,779	5,064	3,715
Prachin Buri	1,395	756	639
Patthalung	273	50	223
Udon Thani	8,541	3,563	4,978
(deported)	<u>34</u>	<u>34</u>	<u>      </u>
Total	<u>70,121</u>	<u>34,801</u>	<u>35,320</u>

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## II. Proposed Relocation Areas

### A. Basis for Selection of Areas

The proposed relocation Areas A and B are located in western Thailand and occupy parts of four provinces -- Tak, Kamphaeng Phet, Nakhon Sawan, and Uthai Thani (see Map 2 for a schematic delineation of the areas and the Annex, comprised of topographic maps, which shows the component parts of the relocation areas). They lie east of the major mountain ranges of western Thailand, which would serve as a security buffer zone between the relocation site and the Thai-Burmese border. The selection of the areas was based on the following considerations:

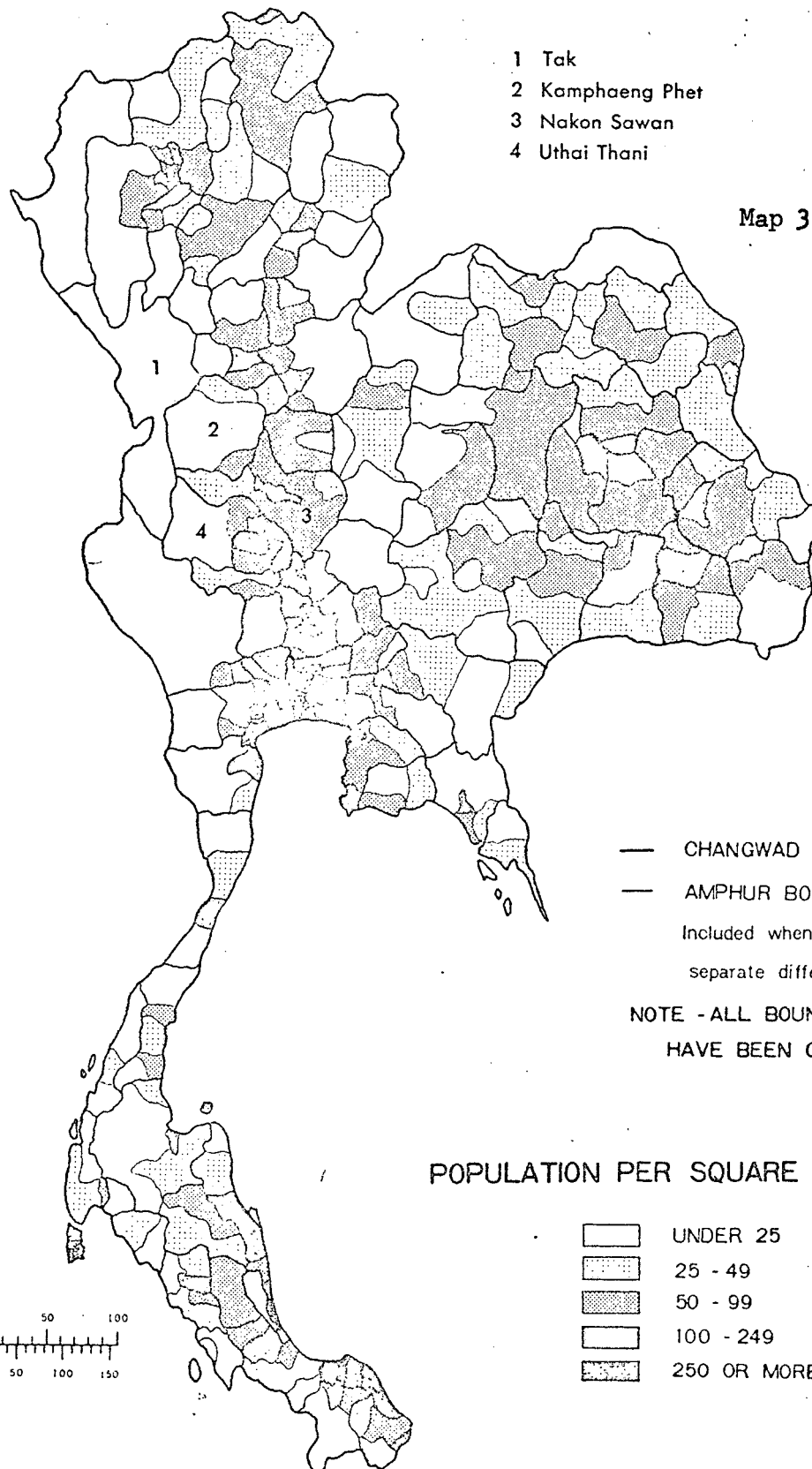
#### 1. Sparse Population

The population density of this part of Thailand is among the sparsest in the country (see Map 3). Map 4 shows the distribution of population as of 1956, when there were about 119,000 inhabitants in the more than 3,000 square miles of the relocation areas, making a density of only some 40 persons per square mile. It is believed that movement of the refugees to these areas would produce a minimal amount of economic friction between the present population and the Vietnamese. It also is believed that the religion of

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# DENSITY OF POPULATION BY AMPHURS

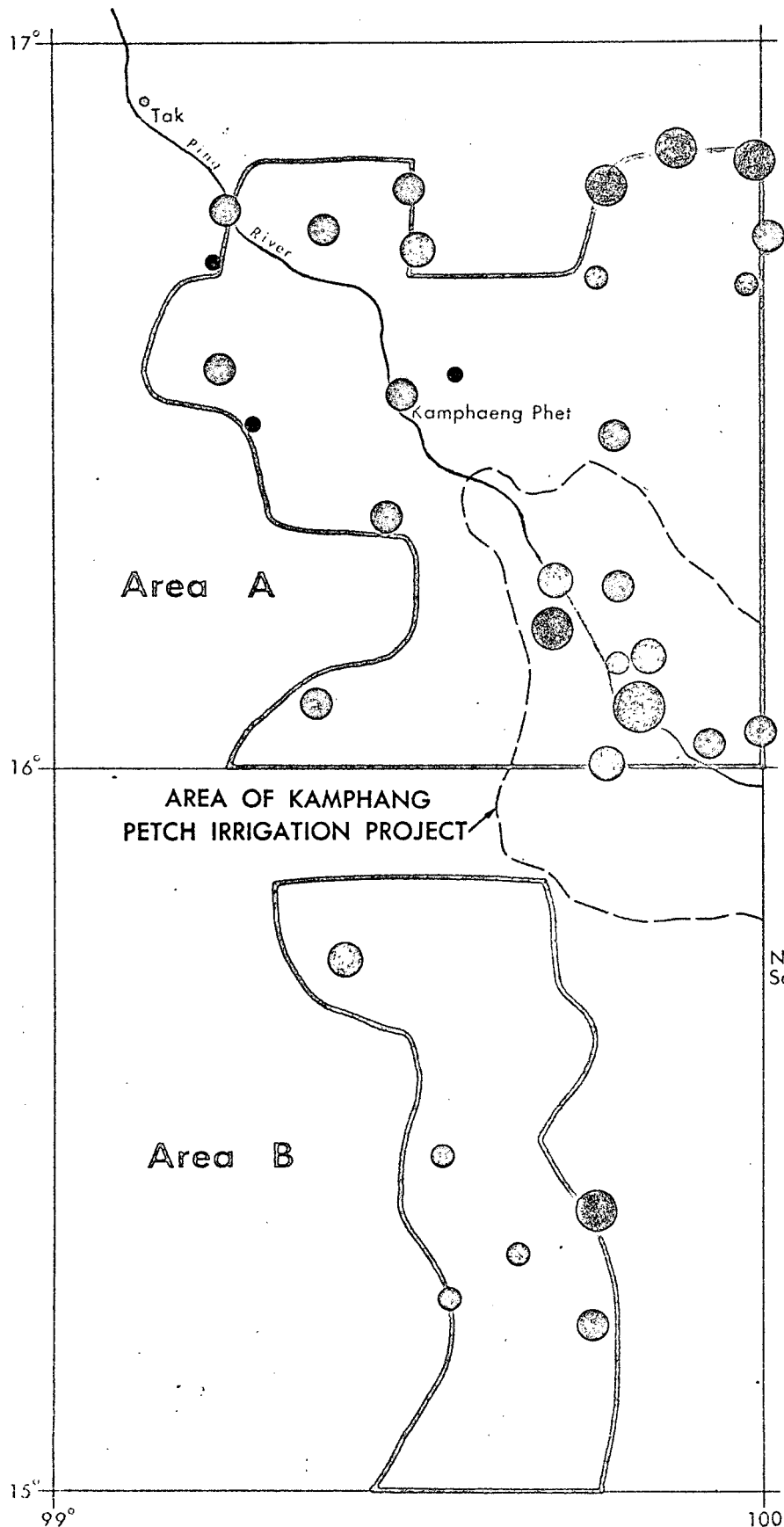


OFFICE OF THE NATIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BOARD

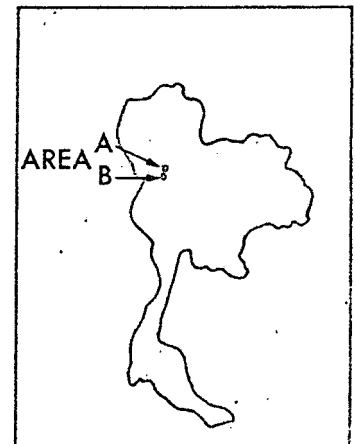
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Map 4

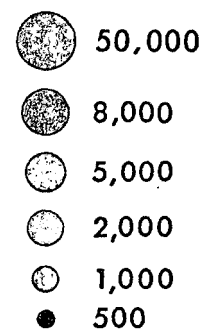


# POPULATION DOT MAP OF AREAS A AND B

(BASED ON 1956 CENSUS)

Scale 1:1,000,000

## PERSONS



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the majority of the Vietnamese refugees, Catholicism, would not necessarily be cause for hostility on the part of the residents of the areas since they are aware that both Thai and tribal people in northern Thailand have benefitted from Christian missionary activities. Presumably, the local residents would be responsive to an advance public relations explanation of the relocation project.

2. Availability of Unused Land

Much of the land in the proposed relocation areas is still forested (see the Annex B). Most important, however, is the fact that the areas are on or near the Mae Nam Ping downstream from the Bhumipol Dam, the huge multipurpose Yanhee Project dam that is in the final stages of completion (see Map 2). The Thai Royal Irrigation Department estimates that by using the irrigation potential of this dam well over 1,000,000 rai (2-1/2 rai equal 1 acre) in Tak and Kamphaeng Phet Provinces can be irrigated. With irrigation, two crops of rice per year would be possible on much of the land. In addition, the construction of small reservoirs by

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damming the mountain streams would permit the agricultural use of many of the relatively broad, forest-covered slopes that are transitional between the riverine lowlands and the highlands that rise toward the Thai-Burmese border.

### 3. Transportation Facilities

The Tak area (Area A) is served by a main east-west road, which connects the area with the Bangkok-Chiangmai railroad at the town of Phitsanulok, and also a main road that extends southeastward to Bangkok. A number of tracks and trails branch off from the main roads. The Tak Airfield has two runways, 4,100 feet long by 90 feet wide and 3,600 feet long by 130 feet wide, which as of December 1962 had oiled-gravel surfaces. Both runways are capable of handling planes such as the C-47. The Mae Nam Ping, which traverses Area A and joins the Menam Chao Phraya just above Muang Nakhon Sawan, is navigable as far as the town of Tak for vessels of 3-foot draft during high water and for vessels of 2-foot draft during low water.

Unlike Area A, Area B lacks good access roads. If a network of tracks were bulldozed into Area B, however, future movement into it could be staged from Area A.

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4. Economic Aspects

The Vietnamese in Northeast Thailand are engaged in a wide variety of economic pursuits, including farming, fishing, lumbering, construction and mechanical trades, tailoring, and shopkeeping. In addition, there are a limited number of professional people, such as doctors and engineers. Because the refugees are adept as carpenters and mechanics, they reportedly monopolize the skilled labor force in some areas. Their initiative and industriousness is attested to by many reports such as the following 1958 State Department despatch which stated that in comparison to the Thai settlements "a startling contrast was provided by the settlements of the Vietnamese refugees who are very profitably raising a wide variety of fruits and vegetables for sale in Udorn (Udon Thani). Each small farm has its own well, constructed by the Vietnamese farmers themselves, along with a neat irrigation system".

Because of their skills and their contribution to the economy of Northeast Thailand, there has been some apprehension that their removal would cause serious

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economic consequences in that area. There is little doubt that there would be some deleterious effect, but it would appear that, in view of the small proportion of Vietnamese to the total provincial populations (see Table 2), most of the inhabitants must presently receive only minimal economic benefits from the presence of the Vietnamese. Therefore, it is believed that the generally depressed economy of Northeast Thailand would probably feel little lasting impact from the removal of the Vietnamese refugees.

Table 2

Total Population In Five Critical Provinces  
and  
Number of Vietnamese Remaining to be Repatriated

<u>Province</u>	<u>Population 1960</u>	<u>Number of Vietnamese Remaining to be Repatriated August 1962</u>
Nong Khai	256,530	8,659
Nakhon Phanom	436,482	10,798
Sakon Nakhon	426,755	6,146
Ubon	1,130,712	3,715
Udon Thani	744,174	4,978

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B. Economic Suitability of the Relocation Areas

The soils of much of the area along the Mae Nam Ping are classified as Khorat fine sandy loams, one of the soils found most extensively in Thailand but also one of the most infertile. When the Bhumipol Dam was proposed, the American soil expert, Robert Pendleton, advocated the irrigation of these soils, pointing out that when they had been irrigated these soils produced at least modest crops of rice and that they could produce two crops annually. Much of the area of the Kamphang Petch Irrigation Project (see Map 2) is comprised of these same soils, and they also cover a large part of Area A to the north and west of the Kamphang Petch as well as most of Area B. These areas appear irrigable either from the Mae Nam Ping itself or from its tributaries. Until the construction of permanent facilities for additional irrigation along the Mae Nam Ping is completed, river barges with pumps might be used, as was done temporarily on the Mun River in Northeast Thailand. With adequate help in the beginning, the Vietnamese probably would be as competent in the building of small reservoirs and secondary irrigation systems, using water from the tributaries of the Mae Nam Ping, as they were in Northeast Thailand.

In addition to rice, major crops of the area are corn, fiber plants (kenaf and jute), and cotton. The Thai Government, in an attempt to

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increase diversification of agriculture, has encouraged the growing of crops other than rice, and as a result, Thailand's production of corn, for example, increased from 22,000 tons in 1950 to more than 550,000 tons in 1960. The government might be persuaded to encourage the Vietnamese to concentrate on growing crops such as corn for the first year or two at least. Much of the corn in Thailand is grown on newly cleared forest land, and thus the Vietnamese could have a cash crop and, at the same time, would be clearing the land for future irrigation and rice cultivation. Pa Pae, the thin dwarfish open forest of deciduous hard woods that is characteristically found on the Khorat soils, would apparently be easy to clear by the traditional slash-and-burn method.

Based on a judgment made by the Director General of the Thai Department of Public Welfare in 1958 concerning the amount of land given each family at the pioneer resettlement project at Saraburi, it is thought that each Vietnamese refugee family should be given at least 25 rai (10 acres). Normally, 7-1/2 acres on a Thai farm would be in rice and the remaining 2-1/2 acres in fruit trees or other crops. Assuming that two crops of rice might be raised annually on irrigated land and that the industriousness of the Vietnamese and their use of night soil might increase the average production, it is possible that this estimate of the amount of land required could be reduced somewhat. Assuming, however,

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that the 40,000 refugees represented 10,000 families and that the entire number would engage in farming, the required land would represent an aggregate of 100,000 acres or 156 square miles.

Excluding the moderately well-populated southern half of the part of the Kamphang Petch Irrigation Project that lies within Area A, the present population density in the remaining 7/8 of Area A is only 17 people per square mile. If all the 40,000 refugees were located in this part of Area A, the density would still be only 33 persons per square mile. If only half of the refugees were placed in this part of Area A the density in Area A would be about 25 persons per square mile; if the other 20,000 refugees were relocated to Area B, the density there would be about 38 persons per square mile.

As noted earlier, a substantial number of Vietnamese are engaged in the lumber industry in Northeast Thailand. This capability might be put to good use along the Mae Nam Ping, which traditionally has been a main artery for the movement of teak from northern Thailand to Bangkok. It is entirely possible that a significant number of the refugees could find employment in the teak industry. The expansion of the irrigation and power facilities of the Bhumipol Dam and the consequent growth of the area promise to create a need for the skills of many of the refugees.

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C. Comments on Other Potential Relocation Areas (see Map 2)

1. Pulao Terutao

It has been reported that the island of Terutao, in the Strait of Malacca just north of the Malayan boundary, has been considered by various Thai officials as a possible relocation area for the Vietnamese refugees. Terutao is about 16 miles long, has a maximum width of 6-1/2 miles, and is sparsely populated. Its major disadvantages are its dense rain forest, which would be expensive to clear, and more important, its proximity to the dissident area along the Thai-Malay border. Conceivably, if the Communist-influenced Vietnamese refugees were settled here, the island could become a Communist stronghold and present to Thailand many of the same problems that the island of Phu Quoc presents to the Government of South Vietnam.

2. Ko Samui and Ko Phangan

Ko Samui, with a population of 31,000 in 1960, is apparently already overpopulated. In 1957 the inhabitants of the island petitioned the Thai Government for permission to settle their surplus population on the surrounding smaller islands. These small islands, including Ko Phangan, however, represent sources of significant revenue to the Thai Government because Chinese businessmen have concessions to gather swallow nests from which a Chinese delicacy is made. Encroachment of more population on the

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islands would eliminate the swallows and thus eliminate the revenue that is now collected by the Thai Government.

3. Southeastern Thailand

Although some Vietnamese refugees are now settled in southeastern Thailand and additional numbers might be physically accommodated there, the troubled relationships between Thailand and Cambodia and the consequent security considerations rule out this area for the present as a feasible relocation zone.

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III. Estimated Costs of Relocation

A. General Considerations

For costing purposes, only Area A of the two areas delineated on Map 2 as possible relocation areas has been considered in this report. However, estimated cost figures of resettlement for Area A, which is served by a fairly good road, also would be applicable to Area B with the addition of the costs of bulldozing tracks into it. Both areas can be served from the railroad station at Muang Nakhon Sawan. The entire relocation program should be carried out in dry weather to eliminate the possibility of flooded roads and disrupted train service, as well as the need for extensive staging areas that would require the construction of covered overnight accommodations.

The total cost of resettling the 40,000 refugees\* has been estimated at about US \$700,000\*\* -- excluding all administrative and supervisory expenses, new road construction costs (if any), costs of irrigation projects at the new locations, and costs to the Thai economy of

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\* For costing purposes, the number of Vietnamese to be relocated was estimated at 40,000 (rather than the 35,320 reported remaining for repatriation as of August 1962), geographically distributed in about the same ratio as the latter figure.

\*\* Conversion was made at 21 baht to the US dollar.

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possible disruption in regularly scheduled rail service resulting from the move. Estimated costs were computed as follows:

Initial transport from home to rail station	66,000
Rail fare	136,000
Meals and lodging	78,000
Transport by truck from rail station to Area A	77,000
Relief fund	<u>332,000</u>
TOTAL	US \$689,000

Unless housing construction is completed in Area A prior to the arrival of the refugees, considerable additional sums will have to be expended on the construction of temporary staging facilities in Area A to accommodate the Vietnamese until the permanent quarters are completed.

B. Costs of Resettlement

1. Transport from Homes to Railroad Stations

One of the major problems will be in arranging for transport from the refugees' homes to the province center, the recommended central meeting point. A previous Thai study indicates that an average of about 10 baht per person will cover this initial transport cost. The total cost for this initial move -- from the home to the province center -- is estimated at about US \$20,000.

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Truck transport from the province centers to the nearest railroad stations will be necessary only for the refugees who are located in Nakhon Phanom and Sakon Nakhon Provinces, where there are no railroads. The other province centers are served by railroads. The road to be used is from Muang Nakhon Phanom via Muang Sakon Nakhon to Udon Thani, a distance of 134 miles. If truck transport costs average 8 baht per mile round trip and each truck hauls 20 people per trip, the total cost for truck transport may be estimated as follows:

Number of Refugees	Transported		Distance (in miles)	Total Cost (in US dollars)
	From Province Center	To Railroad Station		
7,160	Muang Sakon Nakhon	Udon Thani	80	12,000
12,600	Muang Nakhon Phanom	Udon Thani	134	<u>32,000</u>
			TOTAL	US \$44,000

All these refugees from Muang Sakon Nakhon and Muang Nakhon Phanom probably could be hauled to the railroad station at Udon Thani in 30 days by using 42 trucks. Because of the distances involved and the poor condition of the roads, each truck probably would need 2 days to make a round trip.

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If trucks were necessary to move the 4,320 refugees in Ubon Province from their homes to the railroad station in Muang Ubon, the estimated average transport cost of 10 baht per person would just about double. Instead of costing an estimated US \$2,000, the initial transport cost for trucking the 4,320 refugees into Muang Ubon would rise to US \$4,000. These costs are based on an average haulage distance of 40 miles, a load per truck of 20 people, and a round trip cost of 8 baht per mile.

2. Rail Transport from Provincial Railheads to Muang Nakhon Sawan

Although separate railroads serve Muang Ubon in the east and Nong Khai and Udon Thani in the north, both railroads meet at Nakhon Ratchasima. Conducting relocation operations in these two areas simultaneously would be troublesome. Costs and possibilities of misunderstandings probably would greatly increase because special trains would have to be added at Nakhon Ratchasima to handle the increased loads. This would necessitate rescheduling of trains and could cause setbacks in other sectors of the economy. Thailand does not have enough efficient locomotives or passenger cars to handle the increased loads without some rescheduling. Simultaneous relocation operations also would require the construction of extensive staging facilities at Nakhon Ratchasima in order to handle both housing and feeding for a period of several days to permit orderly departures by rail.

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Although current train schedules should be adhered to as closely as possible, not all of the scheduled trains are suitable. Trains that are scheduled for long layovers should be avoided. Four trains depart from Nong Khai and Udon Thani daily, only two of which are through trains; the others require long layovers at various places along the route. Two trains depart from Muang Ubon daily, but only one is a through train. It will be necessary to add additional passenger cars to the scheduled trains, but such additions should be kept to a minimum. It would require 30 days -- the same amount of time as allowed for trucking the refugees into the area -- to transport the approximate 36,000 refugees from Nong Khai and Udon Thani on the two recommended through trains on a basis of 10 passenger cars per train loaded with 60 refugees per car transporting 1,200 refugees per day. Reportedly each car has a capacity for transporting 72 people. By allowing only 60 refugees per car there will be sufficient space for excess baggage.

Transporting the refugees by train from Muang Ubon on the one recommended daily through train, within the 11-day period required to truck them into the station, means transporting about 400 refugees per day by rail. This would require 7 passenger cars.

Table 3, following page 21, summarizes available scheduled trains for transporting the Vietnamese refugees to Muang Nakhon Sawan, in the vicinity of Area A, and provides estimates of the amounts needed for train fares.

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Table 3 Estimated Rail Transport Costs and Travel Time  
for Transferring 40,000 Vietnamese from Northeast Thailand to Resettlement Area A

Depart	From	To	Arrive	Type of Train	Estimated Travel Time	Third Class		
						Fare Per Person a/ (in US \$)	Estimated Number of People b/	Estimated Train Fare (in US \$)
0615	Nong Khai	Ban Phachi Junction	1940	Passenger	13-1/2 hours	2.36	5,060	11,942
1745	Nong Khai	Ban Phachi Junction	0659	Express c/	13 hours	3.31	5,060	16,752
1845	Muang Ubon	Ban Phachi Junction	0659	Express c/	12 hours	3.10	4,320	13,392
0730	Udon Thani	Ban Phachi Junction	1940	Passenger	12 hours	2.12	12,780	27,094
1850	Udon Thani	Ban Phachi Junction	0659	Express c/	12 hours	3.07	12,780	39,235
0913	Ban Phachi Junction	Muang Nakhon Sawan	1300	Passenger	6 hours d/	0.67	20,000	13,400
2117	Ban Phachi Junction	Muang Nakhon Sawan	0058	Passenger	5-1/2 hours d/	0.67	20,000	13,400

a. All passengers have been charged as adults in order to make allowances for extra baggage charges. Although children actually pay half fare, they receive only one-half the luggage allowance -- 66 pounds for third class.

b. The number of Vietnamese in the various provinces was estimated to be 40,000, distributed in about the same ratio as those Vietnamese reported as registered in 1962.

c. Express trains charge \$10.95 per person extra fare.

d. Includes about 2 hours layover time at Ban Phachi Junction.

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A feeding allowance of 5 baht per person per day is considered adequate. At this rate the total feeding allowance has been estimated at US \$58,000. In addition to providing feeding facilities at the starting points of Muang Nakhon Phanom, Muang Sakon Nakhon, Udon Thani, Nong Khai, and Muang Ubon, and the terminus at Muang Nakhon Sawan, feeding facilities should also be provided at Ban Phachi where, according to train schedules, the refugees will have a layover of approximately 2 hours.

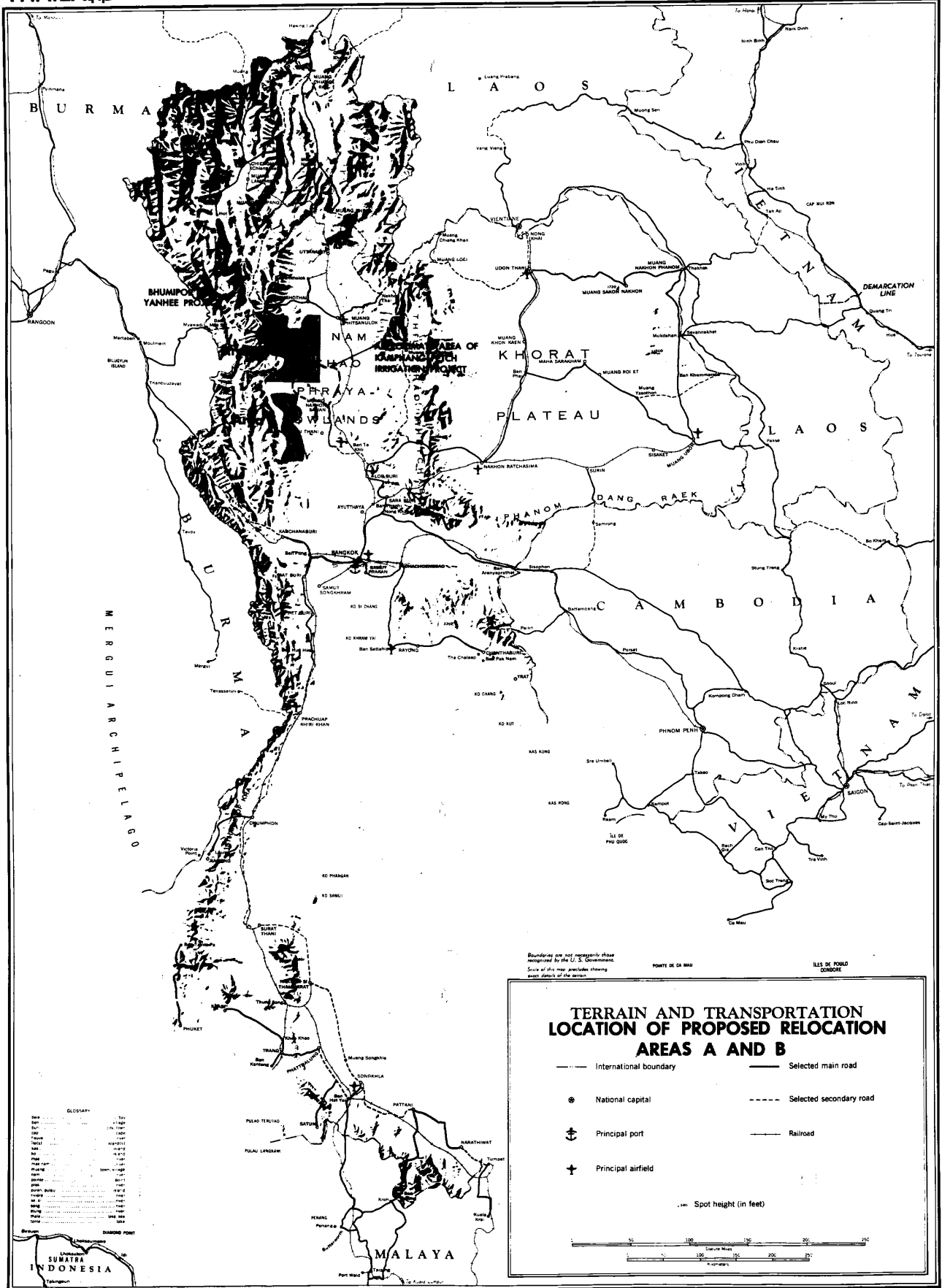
Reportedly, temporary quarters can be constructed at 2 baht per person. Since one night is spent aboard the train, accommodations for only 5 nights need to be accounted for. At the above rate the estimated cost of constructing overnight lodging facilities is about US \$20,000.

5. Cost of Relief Fund

For costing purposes, each Vietnamese family is estimated to consist of an average of 4.6 people. On this basis, there are roughly 8,700 families to be resettled. A relief fund of 800 baht per family for building materials, tools, and other needs is deemed sufficient. At this rate an estimated US \$332,000 will be needed for relief.

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
Geography Division, ORR

**SENSITIVE**

Project Initiation Memorandum

Project No.: 61.2171

25 June 1963

1. Subject of Proposed Project: Relocation of Vietnamese Refugees in Northeast Thailand.
2. Statement of Problem: To prepare a study of problems that would be encountered in the possible relocation of Vietnamese refugees now resident in Northeast Thailand to less sensitive areas of the country. (See attached memorandum of request, which includes guideline terms of reference.)
3. Requester: Chief, FE/DD/P
4. Analyst, Branch: [REDACTED] GC/F 25X1A
5. Cooperation Desired From:
  - a. Other Divisions of GRA: Supporting maps to be prepared by D/GC.
  - b. Other Parts of CIA: Reference services from OCR. Coordination with ERA/ORR and OCI. Possible photo interpretation support from PID/NPIC.
6. Estimated Manhours in D/GC: 150
7. Due Date: 21 July 1963.
8. Form of Final Publication: CIA/RR GS
9. Recommendations for Distribution of Finished Report: Requester only, plus necessary record copies.  
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10. Comments:
  - a. Preliminary discussions were held with [REDACTED] FE Division, concerning the guideline terms of reference, on 21 June 63.
  - b. O/DDI has been advised of estimated completion date.

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[REDACTED]  
Acting Chief, Geography Division

Approved:

[REDACTED]  
Chief, Geographic Research

[REDACTED]  
Assistant Director, ORR

26 June 63  
Date

26 June 63  
Date

GROUP 1

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grading and declassification

**SECRET**

**MEMORANDUM FOR:** DEPUTY DIRECTOR (INTELLIGENCE)  
**VIA** : DEPUTY DIRECTOR (PLANS)  
**SUBJECT** : Relocation of Vietnamese Refugees  
in Northeast Thailand

1. The assistance of DD/I is requested in conducting research on the attendant problems involved in the possible relocation of approximately 40,000 Vietnamese refugees currently residing in Northeast Thailand to less sensitive areas of the country.

2. **BACKGROUND:**

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[REDACTED] and the Far East Division are concerned over the security threat posed to Thailand through the continued presence in the critical area of Northeast Thailand of over 40,000 Vietnamese refugees. These refugees reportedly hold allegiance to North Vietnam and are well controlled and indoctrinated by the DRV. They therefore constitute an exploitable cadre for subversion and insurgency in the Northeast. The Thai Government for a number of years attempted to solve this problem, including token resettlement of several Vietnamese villages in Southern Thailand and appeals to SVN to accept the repatriation of these refugees. In 1959, the Thai Government entered into a repatriation agreement with the DRV, under the auspices of the Red Cross, through which approximately 35,000 of these refugees were repatriated to North Vietnam. A second Thai/DRV repatriation agreement went into effect in March 1963 under which 600 refugees a month until March 1968 are to be repatriated. In view of the situation in neighboring Laos and signs of increasing subversion in the Northeast, it is apparent that this prolonged repatriation program permits the threat to continue in being in this critical area for some time to come.

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3. **PROBLEM:**

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In seeking possible solutions to this problem, consideration is being given to developing a plan [REDACTED] whereby these refugees would be resettled in [REDACTED]

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less sensitive areas of Thailand. To prepare a realistic and effective plan, a feasibility survey is required touching on the various political, economic and social problems involved in resettlement. DD/I's assistance is therefore requested in preparing this feasibility study. To assist DD/I, the following specific questions, which among others that may occur to DD/I, should be considered in this study:

a. What areas of Thailand would accommodate and support approximately 40,000 Vietnamese refugees? Since internal security is one of the prime considerations in resettlement, it has been suggested that the Kanchanaburi and Tak areas of western Thailand or one of the islands in the Gulf of Siam (Kho Samui or Kho Phangan) offer secure resettlement areas. These areas are removed from sensitive border areas and the islands particularly simplify the security control problem.

✓ (1) Would the area support the refugees economically? What is the availability of arable land? What crops can be produced? What natural resources are exploitable? What is the availability of water? What is the present population density of the area? Would this present population have to be resettled also? Are the communications facilities of the area (roads, railroads, waterways) adequate for an addition to the population of the size envisaged.

✓ (2) What would be the economic impact on the area if the refugees were resettled in the area? Given the intelligence and industriousness of the Vietnamese, what effect would their presence have on the local economy vis-a-vis local inhabitants?

✓ (3) What would be the political impact on the area if the refugees were resettled in the area? Besides ethnic and cultural differences the refugees would impose on the area, religion (the preponderance of the Vietnamese are Roman Catholics) would also create areas of possible social friction with the local populace.

✓ (4) What other considerations should be explored in selecting a suitable relocation area?

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b. What extrapolations can be made as to the population growth of these 40,000 refugees based on current birth rate estimates? What would be the population of this group in March 1968, if 600 are repatriated per month starting in March 1963?

c. What would be the political, economic and social impact on those areas of the Northeast where the Vietnamese are presently located, if these refugees were to be subtracted en masse and resettled to other areas?

(1) What would be the political impact of resettlement on the local Thai population? Has intermarriage, economic dependence, etc. caused such bonds between the refugees and the local Thai/Laos population as to result in unfavorable local reaction to the resettlement?

(2) What effect would the removal of the refugees have on the economic structure and balance in these areas? Since the refugees represent the bulk of the economic vitality in these areas (farming, shopkeepers, mechanics, tailors, dressmakers, etc.), would their removal create an economic vacuum?

d. What are some of the attendant problems involved in relocating and resettling a population of this size in Thailand? What phasing should be considered in such a plan? What staging facilities would be required to move the population from the Northeast to other areas? What are some of the provisions that should be made for the feeding, housing and care of the refugees before, during and after relocation? Is it possible to arrive at an approximation as to what such a relocation would cost directly?

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4. Inquiries regarding this request should be directed to [REDACTED] Extension 6129.

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[REDACTED]  
Chief, Far East Division

CONCUR:

Richard Helms  
DDP

Date

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SELECTED FACTORS AFFECTING RELOCATION OF THE  
VIETNAMESE REFUGEES OF NORTHEAST THAILAND

Aug63

CIA/RR GS 63-14 61.2171

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NO FOREIGN DISSEM

Chief, FE/DD/P

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SENSITIVE

- \* 1 - 2 Requester 25X1A 6August63
- \* 3 Ch/G
- 4 ~~GG/F~~ [redacted] 2 Aug 65
- 5 ~~Ch/G~~ 20 GD/F 2 Aug 65
- 6 [redacted] per request to PR/P/C 17 Sep 63
- 7 [redacted] 24 Dec 63
- 8 D/GG 25X1A

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\* Only two copies of Annex (under separate cover) -- 1 to requester;

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