

The Thai Insurgency: *A Mixed Bag*

Bangkok has struck hard at the insurgency in the north. In one of the most successful counter-insurgency operations ever waged by government forces, a 450-man Thai Army task force conducted a series of raids in late August against the principal insurgent stronghold area in northern Nan Province along the Thai-Lao border. The well-coordinated and executed operation, which involved night movement with helicopter support, as well as assistance from intelligence teams on the Lao side of the border, took the insurgents completely by surprise. Fourteen enemy cadre were captured and several others killed without significant loss to government forces.

The operation should help boost Thai morale in an area where the insurgents had enjoyed consistent tactical success—which they had begun to exploit politically—and where the government has been at a loss to develop a coherent strategy. The insurgency in the north continues to spread, however. Small enemy units have recently been spotted farther from the Lao border than heretofore, and it will take a good deal more than one success to rectify the situation.

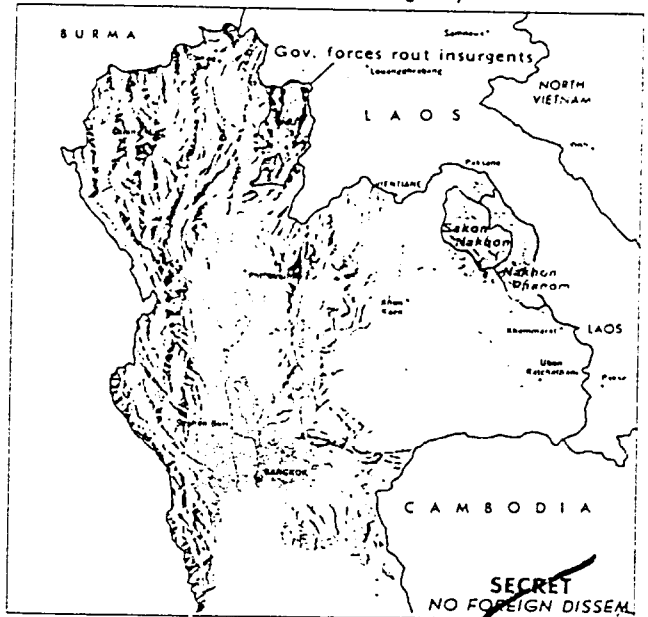
In the northeast, on the other hand, the insurgent movement is continuing to rebound from the setbacks it suffered during 1967-68. The Communists there have maintained a level of activity markedly higher this rainy season than last. Most of this increased activity has been organizational rather than military, with the Communists seeking to strengthen their support base and extend their writ into new areas of the interior. In contrast to their focus this spring on Nakhon Phanom and Sakhon Nakhon provinces, insurgent activity now affects portions of at least eight northeastern provinces.

Bangkok's growing preoccupation with developments in Cambodia may be contributing to rising insurgent fortunes in the northeast. In an effort to counter the potential threat to its border posed by recent Communist advances in northern and western Cambodia, the government has reas-

signed seven of the 15 Thai Army companies normally committed to counterinsurgency tasks in the northeast to security missions along the Cambodian frontier. This evidently has contributed to a winding down of government pressure against the insurgents in the northeast.

The fundamental problem, however, is the top Thai leaders' continued discounting of the insurgent threat in the northeast. Based on the experience of 1967-68—when the overextended insurgents were forced to retrench in the face of government pressure—and the continuing weakness of insurgent leadership and appeal, the Thai are convinced that they can keep the insurgency in the northeast within manageable proportions. For their part, the insurgents can profitably use an extended period free from serious harassment, which is likely if they choose to avoid the kind of flamboyant actions that force the government to take countermeasures. (~~SECRET~~)

Northern Thailand: Areas of Insurgency



Cambodia: *Phnom Penh Launches an Offensive*

The government's most ambitious military operation of the war attained initial success when a government amphibious relief convoy reached Kompong Thom this week. Advance elements of a second Cambodian Army task force headed north from Skoun on Route 6 in a parallel effort to reinforce and resupply the embattled defenders of Kompong Thom city. This task force is spearheaded by six infantry battalions recently returned from retraining in South Vietnam. Five other battalions are moving westward from Kompong Cham to provide route security behind the advance elements. The government's advance has been slowed by destroyed bridges along Route 6 and the numerous obstacles placed across it by the enemy. The Communists have so far offered only token resistance.

The major area of Communist military activity shifted during the last week from east of Phnom Penh to areas south of the capital. Government forces recaptured Srang, 25 miles southwest of Phnom Penh, when the enemy withdrew after holding the town for five days. The Cambodian Army, however, continues to report sizable enemy troop concentrations nearby and in areas around the nearby towns of Tram Khnar and Saang to the east, both of which came under repeated enemy harassing attacks.

Elsewhere, the Communists launched light harassing attacks near several provincial capitals in the south and southeast. In the northwest, the enemy increased its harassment of government defensive positions at isolated Siem Reap city. Cambodian troops clashed with Communist units north and west of the city, and in one encounter

13 Cambodian soldiers were killed by Communists wearing uniforms similar to those of Cambodian paratroop units.

Status of Communist Supply Routes

Recent aerial photography and reports from controlled sources provide no evidence of major logistic activity in enemy-controlled provinces in northern and northeastern Cambodia. Several of the major routes are impassable for trucks because of destroyed bridges and deteriorated roads, with few signs of repair activity in evidence. Route 19, the main road from northeastern Cambodia into South Vietnam, is in good condition but little traffic or other logistics activity was observed by sources operating there in mid-August. Little or no significant enemy activity was observed on the major rivers in the area during late August.

Vacancy at Lusaka

The Nonaligned Conference formally opened on 8 September, and as anticipated neither the Lon Nol nor the Sihanouk delegation was seated. According to a reliable clandestine source, more delegations supported Sihanouk than Lon Nol at the preparatory foreign ministers' conference on 6 and 7 September. The majority, however, favored seating neither, and believed that Cambodia should remain a member of the conference without official representation in attendance. This ministerial compromise was apparently accepted by the full conference. (~~SECRET NO FOREIGN DISSEM~~)