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BY RUEHC RUEHPAC RUEHGV RUMJDE RUMJL RUMJTS  
BY ROUTE #1122/01 245 \*\*

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK  
TO RUEHPC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0385  
INFO RUEHPAC/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 3263  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 3182  
RUMJDE/AMCONSUL HONG KONG 3353  
RUMJL/AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR 2362  
RUMJTS/AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE 1259  
ZEN/AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI POUCH  
ZEN/AMCONSUL UDORN POUCH

BT  
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TO 11352: A4  
TAGS: SREF  
SUBJ: HMONG REFUGEES ESCAPE DESCRIPTION

RAF BANGKOK 24340

1. SUMMARY: HMONG REFUGEES FROM LAOS AT THE NONGKHAI REFUGEE CAMP STATE THAT HEAVY LPDR/SRV MILITARY PRESSURE CONTINUES AND THAT INTERDICTION OF HMONG ATTEMPTING TO ESCAPE TO THAILAND IS INTENSIVE. THREE HMONG REFUGEES INTERVIEWED CLAIM TO HAVE WITNESSED HMONG FATALITIES DUE TO WHAT THEY SAID WAS POISON GAS DELIVERED BY SMALL AIR-CRAFT. THERE HAVE BEEN AT LEAST TWO RECENT INSTANCES IN WHICH GROUPS OF HMONG AT THE MEKONG RIVER WERE FIRED ON FROM THE LAO SIDE WHILE BOARDING THEIR MAKE-SHIFT CRAFTS WITH RESULTING HEAVY CASUALTIES. THE RAINY SEASON WHICH SWELLS UPLAND RIVERS AND STREAMS ALSO ACCOUNTS FOR THE PRESENT REDUCTION IN FLOW OF HMONG REFUGEES INTO THAILAND. THE INFORMATION CONTAINED HEREIN IS BASED ON REFUGEE INTERVIEWS AND SHOULD THEREFORE BE REGARDED AS RAW INFORMATION RATHER THAN CONFIRMED FACT. THE INFORMATION DOES SHED SOME USEFUL LIGHT ON WHY THE HMONG ARE FLEEING LAOS. END SUMMARY.

2. EMBOFFS ON AUGUST 26 AND 27 INTERVIEWED ABOUT 13 HMONG REFUGEES WHO HAVE ARRIVED RECENTLY IN THAILAND. IN BOTH THE PHU BIA (UP 1085) AND PHOU MA THAO (VF 0155) AREAS WHERE APPROXIMATELY 20,000 AND 6300 HMONG RESPECTIVELY ARE SAID TO BE HIDING, THE HMONG REFUGEES REPORT SIGNIFICANT INCREASES IN MILITARY PRESSURE AGAINST THEM SINCE THE BEGINNING OF 1978. IN A RECENT ATTACK ON A GROUP OF HMONG LIVING NEAR PHU MAO THAO, ABOUT 40 VILLAGERS WERE KILLED. REFUGEES GATHER THEIR PERSON BELONGINGS EACH MORNING IN CASE THEY ARE REQUIRED TO EVADE PATROLS DURING THE DAY. THE REFUGEES INDICATE THAT THE ATTITUDE OF THE NEW LAO GOVERNMENT SEEMS TO BE ONE OF BOTH TO WORK WITH THE HMONG WHO WERE FOLLOWERS OF GENERAL WANG PAO. YOU CAN SEND THEM TO SEMINAR, BUT THEY WILL JUST TAKE TO THE HILLS WHEN THEY RETURN. THEY REPORT THAT A POLICY OF THE LPDR IS THAT THE PEOPLE SHOULD RETURN TO THEIR OLD, ORIGINAL VILLAGES. GENERALLY

3. THE HONGS IN XIANG KHOUANG PROVINCE, OR AS FAR AWAY AS  
LONG PHIPANG AND HOUA PHA PROVINCES, RATHER THAN SETTLE  
IN THE AREA SOUTH OF LONG PHINE (TG 8114). THOSE PEOPLE  
WHO FEAR RELOCATION AT THE DISCRETION OF THE LPDR ARE  
FORCED TO FLEE TO THE BUSH AND THEN ARE HARASSED FOR  
BEING NON-COOPERATIVE.

3. THE HONGS CLAIM THAT THE MOST SERIOUS THREATS ARE  
FROM SRV GROUND FORCES OPERATING IN FROM SQUAD UP TO,  
OCCASIONALLY, BATTALION SIZE UNITS. ARTILLERY USED  
AGAINST THEM IS SAID TO INCLUDE 60 TO 82 MM MORTARS, 130  
MM ROCKETS, AND 105 AND 155 HOWITZERS; BUT THE SHELLING  
REPORTED WAS INFREQUENT, PERHAPS THREE TO FOUR TIMES  
MONTHLY. AIR ATTACKS SEEM MORE FREQUENT WITH RAVENS (2-1)  
AND OTHER SMALL AIRCRAFT DELIVERING UP TO EIGHT ROCKETS IN  
EACH SORTIE AGAINST THE HONGS. SUCH SORTIES ARE SAID TO  
OCCUR, AT TIMES, ON A FREQUENCY OF SEVERAL A DAY. SMALL  
AIRCRAFT ARE ALSO SAID TO DROP STOMBS AND ROCKS ON HONGS  
POSITIONS. NOTE: REFUGEES DID NOT REPORT USE OF T-28 OR  
JET AIRCRAFT, ALTHOUGH THEY HAVE SEEN HELICOPTERS IN USE  
SIMILAR TO THE "JET RANGER."

4. FOR THE LAST SEVERAL MONTHS, WE HAVE HEARD REPORTS  
FROM REFUGEES WHO CLAIM THAT POISON GAS IS BEING USED  
AGAINST THE HONGS IN LAOS. REFUGEES ENCOUNTERED THREE  
REFUGEES WHO CLAIM TO HAVE SEEN GAS (WHICH SOME OF  
THE HONGS CALL "MEDICINE FROM THE SKY") CAUSE FATALITIES  
TO HONGS. THE FIRST ALLEGED USE OF TOXIC CHEMICALS WAS  
IN 1976 WITH INCREASED EFFQUENCY REPORTED DURING THE  
EARLY PART OF 1979. SMALL AIRCRAFT DISSEMINATE THESE  
SUBSTANCES BOTH IN A ROCKET-FIRED-SMOKE VARIETY AND IN  
A LESS PREVALENT BLUE/YELLOW SPRAY FORM. REFUGEES REPORT  
THE CHEMICALS DO NOT HARM PLANT LIFE BUT CAUSE CHOKING,  
VOMITING, DIARRHEA, AND SKIN BURNS WHICH CAN BE FATAL  
TO ANIMALS AND HUMANS. ONE REFUGEE SAID HE WITNESSED A  
CHEMICAL ATTACK IN 1976-1977 IN WHICH 40 HONGS DIED.  
THE SUBSTANCE IS REPORTEDLY USED AGAINST THE HONGS  
DURING ENGAGEMENTS WITH LPDR/SRV FORCES, BUT ALSO  
MAY BE EMPLOYED AGAINST HONGS VILLAGES IN THE MOUNTAINS.  
REFUGEES FROM THE PHU PIA AREA HAVE ALSO REPORTED  
POISONING OF WATER SOURCES IN AND NEAR HONGS POPULATIONS  
WHICH HAS CAUSED SOME FATALITIES. WE ARE UNABLE TO

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DETERMINING IF THIS IS SIMPLY A SUBSIDIARY EFFECT OF AIR-BOLETTED GAS, OR WHETHER THE WATER SOURCE POISONING REPRESENTS A SEPARATE HARASSING TECHNIQUE. A JVA CASE-REPORT FROM PHOU KHOU WITH A RECENTLY ARRIVED GROUP OF 17 HMONG FROM THE PHU BIA AREA AFTER THEIR ARRIVAL AT PHONG SAN, THAILAND IN 1978 MAY DESCRIBES A MALE, AGE APPROXIMATELY 40, WHO CLAIMED TO HAVE SUSTAINED A GAS ATTACK ABOUT 12 DAYS EARLIER. AT THE TIME OF THE INTERVIEW THE REFUGEE'S SKIN SHOWED RALLOR AND WAS PUFFY, ESPECIALLY AROUND THE EYES. EYES WERE BLOODSHOT AND YELLOWED, WEIGHT LOSS WAS EVIDENT, AND APPETITE HAD DIMINISHED. THE REFUGEE REPORTED THAT THE GAS BLINDED HIM FOR SEVERAL DAYS AND ENTERED DIFFICULT COORDINATION OF PHYSICAL MOVEMENTS.

5. WHILE MUCH OF THE MILITARY PRESSURE AGAINST THE HMONG IS DIRECTED AGAINST HMONG COMMUNITIES WHO ARE STILL RESISTING INCURSION OF LPDR/SRV FORCES, IT ALSO APPEARS THAT THE MILITARY FORCES REGULARLY ATTEMPT TO INTERCEPT THE HMONG ALONG ESCAPE ROUTES TO THE MEKONG. ONE HMONG SOURCE REPORTED THAT A COMBINED NVA/LAO BATTALION WHICH THEY BELIEVE IS DESIGNATED AS THE 613 APPEARS TO BE TAKING UP A BLOCKING POSITION ALONG A MAIN ROUTE OF ESCAPE NORTH OF PAX KADIN (UF 9545). INTERCEPTION CONTINUES RIGHT UP TO THE EDGE OF THE MEKONG, WHERE ESCAPING HMONG ARE PARTICULARLY VULNERABLE TO FIRE FROM THE LAO SIDE. WE ENCOUNTERED HMONG WHO SAY THEY KNOW OF ONE GROUP OF 50 WHICH WAS KILLED OR CAPTURED BOARDING MAKHSHEFT RAFTS ALONG THE MEKONG LAST MONTH; ANOTHER INTERVIEWEE REPORTED THAT HIS ESCAPE GROUP TOOK 5 DEAD AS THEY WERE TRYING TO GET INTO THE RIVER NEAR PHOU PHISAI, THAILAND (IE 9693). OTHER HAZARDS OF ESCAPE DURING TREKS OF 10 TO 45 DAYS INCLUDE STARVATION, DISEASE, AND FATIGUE. OF ONE GROUP OF ABOUT 600 HMONG WHO STARTED ON A 15-DAY TREK TO THAILAND FROM THE PHU BIA AREA IN JULY, THE ATTRITION WAS REPORTED TO BE AS FOLLOWS: 100, MOSTLY THE OLD, GAVE UP THE TREK IN THE FIRST SEVERAL DAYS, 12 DIED OF HUNGER OR EXHAUSTION, 3 WERE KILLED DURING AMBUSHES, AND 50 WERE KILLED OR CAPTURED CROSSING THE RIVER. OTHERS WERE DISPERSED DURING MILITARY ACTIONS AND REMAIN UNACCOUNTED FOR; ABOUT 350 ARRIVED IN THAILAND.

6. IT IS CLEAR FROM TALKING WITH HMONG REFUGEES THAT FEAR OF THE SRV MILITARY FORCES (AND HAREWAFF) AND HMONG APPREHENSION ABOUT THEIR TREATMENT IF THEY ARE CAPTURED OR SURRENDER TO SRV/LAO FORCES CONSTITUTE MAJOR FACTORS INFLUENCING THE HMONG TO FLEE LAOS. WE SHOULD ALSO MENTION ANOTHER IMPORTANT FACTOR: REFUGEES REPORT THAT, DUE TO MILITARY PRESSURE, THE HMONG IN MANY AREAS WERE NOT ABLE TO PLANT ANY UPLAND RICE DURING THE SPRING OF 1978. THIS WILL AGGRAVATE THE ALREADY SPICIOUS FOOD SHORTAGE FACING THE HMONG IN LAOS. ABRAMOVITZ

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25 June 85

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of 2 Sept 1978. Unfortunately, didn't  
use the term "yellow rain," came close,  
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*11/22*  
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   O 11652:   

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SUBJ: HMONG REFUGEES ESCAPE DESCRIPTION

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1. SUMMARY: Hmong refugees from Laos at the Nongghai refugee camp state that heavy LPDR/SRV military pressure continues and that interdiction of Hmong attempting to escape to Thailand is intensive. Three Hmong refugees interviewed claim to have witnessed Hmong fatalities due to what they said was poison gas delivered by small aircraft. There have been at least two recent instances in which groups of Hmong at the Mekong River were fired on from the Lao side while boarding their makeshift crafts with resulting heavy casualties. The rainy season which swells upland rivers and streams also accounts for the present reduction in flow of Hmong refugees into Thailand. The information contained herein is based on refugee interviews and should therefore be regarded as raw information rather than confirmed fact. The information does shed some useful light on why the Hmong are fleeing Laos. END SUMMARY.

2. EmbOffs on August 26 and 27 interviewed about 10 Hmong refugees who have arrived recently in Thailand. In both the PHU BIA (UF1085) and PHOU MA THAO (VF 0155) areas where approximately 20,000 and 6000 Hmong respectively are said to be in hiding, the Hmong refugees report significant increases in military pressure against them since the beginning of 1978. In a recent attack on a group of Hmong living near PHU MAO THAO, about 40 villagers were killed. Refugees gather their few belongings each morning in case they are required to evade patrols during the day. The refugees indicate that the attitude of the new Lao government seems to be: "Why bother to work with the Hmong who were followers of General VANG PAO. You can send them to seminar, but they will just take to the hills when they return." They report that a policy of the LPDR is that the people should return to their old, original villages, generally

are in <sup>A</sup>XI<sub>NG</sub> KHOUANG province, or as far away as LUA NG PRABANG and HOUA PHAN provinces, rather than settle in the area south of LONG TIENG (TG 8114). Those people who fear relocation at the direction of the LPDR are forced to flee to the bush and then are harassed for being non-cooperative.

3. The Hmong claim that the most serious threats are from SRV ground forces operating in from squad up to, occasionally, battalion size units. Artillery used against them is said to include 60 to 82 mm mortars, 130 mm rockets, and 105 and 155 howitzers; but the shelling reported was infrequent, perhaps three to four times monthly. Air attacks seem more frequent with Ravens (O-1) and other small aircraft delivering up to eight rockets in each sortie against the Hmong. Such sorties are said to occur, at times, on a frequency of several a day. Small aircraft are also said to drop stones and rocks on Hmong positions. NOTE: Refugees did not report use of T-29 or jet aircraft. Although they have seen helicopters in use similar to the "Jet Ranger."

4. For the last several months, we have heard reports from refugees who claim that poison gas is being used against the Hmong in Laos. EmbOffs encountered three refugees who claim to have seen gas (which some of the Hmong call "medicine from the sky") cause fatalities to Hmong. The first alleged use of toxic chemicals was in 1976 with increased frequency reported during the early part of 1978. Small aircraft disseminate these substances both in a rocket-fired smoke variety and in a less prevalent blue/yellow spray form. Refugees report the chemicals do not harm plant life but cause choking, vomiting, diarrhea, and skin burns which can be fatal to animals and humans. One refugee said he witnessed a chemical attack in 1976-77 in which 40 Hmong died. The substance is reportedly used against the Hmong during engagements with LPDR/SRV forces, but also may be employed against Hmong villages in the mountains. Refugees from the PHU BIA area have also reported poisoning of water sources in and near Hmong populations which has caused some fatalities. We are unable to

determine if this is simply a subsidiary effect of air-dropped gas, or whether the water source poisoning represents a separate harassing technique. A J\_\_ c\_\_se- \_\_\_\_\_ with a newly arrived group of 1\_\_ Hmong from the PHU BIA area after their arrival at UNG AN, Thailand in late May describes a male, age approximately \_\_, who claimed to have suffered a gas attack about 10 days earlier. At the time of the interview the refugee's skin showed pallor and was puffy, especially around the face. Eyes were bloodshot and yellowed, weight loss was evident, and appetite had diminished. The refugee reported that the gas blinded him for several days and rendered difficult coordination of physical movements.

5. While much of the military pressure against the Hmong is directed against Hmong communities who are still resisting incursion of LPDR/SRV forces, it also appears that the military forces regularly attempt to interdict the Hmong along escape routes to the Mekong. On e Hmong source reported that a combined NVA/Lao battalion which they believe is designated as the 618 appears to be taking up a blocking position along a main route of escape north of PAK KADIN (UF 9545). Interception continues right up to the edge of the Mekong, where escaping Hmong are particularly vulnerable to gunfire from the Lao side. We encountered Hmong who say they know of one group of 50 which was killed or captured boarding makeshift rafts along the Mekong last month; another interviewee reported that his escape group took 6 dead as they were trying to get into the river near PHON PHISAI, Thailand (TE 9893). Other hazards of escape during treks of 10 to 45 days include starvation, disease, and fatigue. Of one group of about 600 Hmong who started on a 15-day trek to Thailand from the PHU BIA area in July, the attrition was reported to be as follows: 100, mostly the old, gave up the trek in the first several days, 12 died of hunger or exhaustion, 3 were killed during ambushes, and 50 were killed or captured crossing the river. Others were dispersed during military actions and remain unaccounted for; about 350 arrived in Thailand.

6. It is clear from talking with Hmong refugees that fear of the SRV military forces (and hardware) and Hmong apprehension about their treatment if they are captured or surrender to SRV/Lao forces constitute major factors influencing the Hmong to flee Laos. We should also mention another important factor: refugees report that, due to military pressure, the Hmong in many areas were not able to plant any upland rice during the Spring of 1978. This will aggravate the already serious food shortage facing the Hmong in Laos. ABRAMOWITZ

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