

# Lansdale Memo for Taylor. On Unconventional Warfare

Excerpts from memorandum from Brig. Gen. Edward G. Lansdale, Pentagon expert on guerrilla warfare, to Gen. Maxwell D. Taylor, President Kennedy's military adviser, on "Resources for Unconventional Warfare, S E Asia," undated but apparently from July, 1961. Copies were sent to Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara, Deputy Secretary of Defense Roswell L. Gilpatric, Secretary of State Dean Rusk, Allen W. Dulles, Director of Central Intelligence, and Gen. C. P. Cabell, Deputy Director of Central Intelligence.

This memo is in response to your desire for early information on unconventional-warfare resources in South-east Asia. The information was compiled within Defense and CIA.

## A. SOUTH VIETNAM

### 1. Vietnamese

#### a. First Observation Group

This is a Special Forces type of unit, with the mission of operating in denied (enemy) areas. It currently has some limited operations in North Vietnam and some shallow penetrations into Laos. Most of the unit has been committed to operations against Viet Cong guerrillas in South Vietnam.

Strength, as of 6 July, was 340. The First Observation Group had an authorized strength of 305 and now is being increased by 500, for a total of 805, under the 20,000-man force increase. Personnel are volunteers who have been carefully screened by security organizations. Many are from North Vietnam. They have been trained for guerrilla operations, at the Group's training center at Nha Trang. The unit is MAP-supported, as a TO&E unit of the RVNAF (Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces). It receives special equipment and training from CIA and U.S. control is by CIA/MAAG.

The Group and its activities are highly classified by the Government of Vietnam. Only a select few senior RVNAF officers have access to it. Operations require the approval of President Diem, on much the same approval basis as certain U.S. special operations. The unit is separate from normal RVNAF command channels.

The Group was organized in February, 1956, with the initial mission of preparing stay-behind organizations in South Vietnam just below the 17th Parallel, for guerrilla warfare in the event of an overt invasion by North Vietnamese forces. It was given combat missions against Viet Cong guerrillas in South Vietnam last year, when these Communist guerrillas increased their activities. The plan is to relieve the Group from these combat assignments, to ready its full strength for denied area missions, as RVNAF force increases permit relief. It is currently being organized into twenty teams of 15 men each, with two RS-1 radios per team, for future operations.

#### b. Other RVNAF

MAAG-Vietnam has reported the formation of additional volunteer groups, apart from the First Observation Group, for similar operations to augment the missions of the Group. As of 6 July, the additional volunteers were reported as:

1). 60 Mois (Montagnard tribesmen) recruited, being security screened, to receive Special Forces training.

2). 400 military (RVNAF), to receive Special Forces training. 80 will be formed into small teams, to augment operations of the First Operations Group. 320 will be formed into two Ranger (Airborne) companies.

3). 70 civilians, being organized and trained for stay-behind operations, penetration teams, and communicators.

Other special units of the RVNAF, now committed to operations against the Viet Cong and with Special Forces/Ranger training, are:

9,096 Rangers, in 65 companies.

2,772 more Rangers being activated, part of 20,000-man increase

4,786 Paratroopers

2,300 Marines

673 men in Psychological Warfare Bn.

In addition, cadres from all other combat elements of the RVNAF have received Special Forces/Ranger training.

### 2. U.S.

#### a. Defense

1). There are approximately 6 officers and 6 enlisted men from the 1st Special Group on Okinawa currently attached to the MAAG to assist with Ranger-type training.

2). There are three 4-man intelligence training teams present—Combat Intelligence, Counter-Intelligence, Photo-Intelligence and Foreign Operations Intelligence (clandestine collection) in addition to eight officers and two enlisted intelligence advisors on the MAAG staff.

3). There are two Psychological Warfare staff officers on the MAAG staff and a 4-man Civil Affairs mobile training team (3 officers—1 enlisted man) advising the G-5 staff of the Vietnamese Army in the psy/ops-civic action fields.

#### b. CIA

1). There are 9 CIA officers working with the First Observation Group in addition to one MAAG advisor.

2). CIA also has five officers working with the Vietnamese Military Intelligence Service and one officer working with the covert [one word illegible] of the Army Psychological Warfare Directorate.

## B. THAILAND

### 1. Thai

#### a. Royal Thai Army Ranger Battalion (Airborne)

A Special Forces type unit, its stated mission is to organize and conduct guerrilla warfare in areas of Thailand overrun by the enemy in case of an open invasion of Thailand. It currently has the mission of supplying the Palace Guard for the Prime Minister.

Based at Lopburi, the Ranger Battalion has a MAP authorized strength of 580. It is organized into a Headquarters and Headquarters company, a Service company, and four Ranger companies. The Battalion has 4 command detachments and 26 operations detachments, trained and organized along the lines of U.S. Special Forces in strength, equipment, and rank structure.

The Ranger Battalion is locally at-

tached to the 1st Division. In reality, it is an independent unit of the Royal Thai Army, under the direct control of Field Marshal Sarit, the Commander in Chief, and receives preferential treatment.

Each ranger company has been assigned a region of Thailand, in which it is to be prepared to undertake guerrilla warfare in case of enemy occupation. Field training is conducted in these assigned regions, to acquaint the detachments with the people, facilities and terrain.

#### b. Police Aerial Resupply Unit (PARU)

The PARU has a mission of undertaking clandestine operations in denied areas. 99 PARU personnel have been introduced covertly to assist the Meos in operations in Laos, where their combat performance has been outstanding.

This is a special police unit, supported by CIA (CIA control in the Meo operations has been reported as excellent), with a current strength of 300 being increased to 550 as rapidly as possible. All personnel are specially selected and screened, and have been rated as of high quality. Officers are selected from the ranks.

Training consists of 10 weeks' basic training, 3 weeks' jumping, 3 weeks' jungle operations, 4 weeks' police law and 3 months of refresher training yearly. Forty individuals have been trained as W/T communicators.

All personnel have adequate personal gear to be self-sustaining in the jungle. Weapons are M-1 rifles, M-3 submachine guns and BAR. In addition, personnel are trained to use other automatic weapons, 2.34 rocket launchers, and 60-mm. mortars.

There are presently 13 PARU teams, totaling 99 men, operating with the Meo guerrillas in Laos. Combat reports of these operations have included exceptionally heroic and meritorious actions by PARU personnel. The PARU teams have provided timely intelligence and have worked effectively with local tribes.

### c. Thai Border Patrol Police (BPP)

The mission of the BPP is to counter infiltration and subversion during peacetime, in addition to normal police duties, in the event of an armed invasion of Thailand, the BPP will operate as guerrilla forces in enemy-held areas, in support of regular Thai armed forces.

The BPP has a current strength of 4,500. It was organized in 1955 as a gendarmerie patrol force (name changed to BPP in 1959), composed of 71 active and 23 reserve platoons, from existing police units. It is an element of the Thai National Police, subordinate to the Ministry of the Interior.

Although technically a police organization, the BPP is armed with infantry weapons, including light machine guns, rocket launchers and light mortars. It is trained in small-unit infantry tactics and counter-guerrilla operations. Training is currently being conducted by a 10-man U.S. Army Special Forces team from Okinawa, under ICA auspices.

This unusual police unit was created initially to cope with problems posed by foreign guerrilla elements using Thailand as a safehaven: the Vietminh in eastern Thailand and the Chinese Communists along the Malayan border in the south. There has been some tactical liaison with Burmese Army units.

## 2. U.S.

### a. Defense

1). A Special Forces qualified officer is assigned to advise the RTA Ranger Battalion.

2). A ten-man Special Forces team from the 1st Special Forces Group in Okinawa is currently conducting training for the Thai Border Patrol Police under ICA auspices.

3). There are 5 officers and 1 enlisted man attached to MAAG as advisers to J-2 and the Thai Armed Forces Security Center.

### b. CIA

1). 2 advisers with PARU.

2). 3 officers who work with the Border Patrol Police providing advice, guidance and limited training in the collection and processing of intelligence in addition to management of their communications system.

## C. LAOS

### 1. Lao

#### a. Commandos

According to CINCPAC, there are two special commando companies in the Lao Armed Forces (FAL), with a total strength of 256. These commandos have received Special Forces training.

### b. Meo Guerillas

About 9,000 Meo tribesmen have been equipped for guerrilla operations, which they are now conducting with considerable effectiveness in Communist-dominated territory in Laos. They have been organized into Auto-Defense Choc units of the FAL, of varying sizes. Estimates on how many more of these splendid fighting men could be recruited vary, but a realistic figure would be around 4,000 more, although the total manpower pool is larger.

Political leadership of the Meos is in the hands of Touby Lyfoung, who now operates mostly out of Vientiane. The military leader is Lt-Col Vang Pao, who is the field commander. Command control of Meo operations is exercised by the Chief CIA Vientiane with the advice of Chief MAAG Laos. The same CIA paramilitary and U.S. military teamwork is in existence for advisory activities (9 CIA operations officers, 9 LTAG/Army Special Forces personnel, in addition to the 99 Thai PARU under CIA control) and aerial resupply.

As Meo villages are over-run by

Communist forces and as men leave food-raising duties to serve as guerrillas, a problem is growing over the care and feeding of non-combat Meos. CIA has given some rice and clothing to relieve this problem. Consideration needs to be given to organized relief, a mission of an ICA nature, to the handling of Meo refugees and their rehabilitation.

### c. National Directorate of Coordination

This is the Intelligence arm of the RLG. Its operations are mainly in the Vientiane area at present. It has an armed unit consisting of two battalions and is under the command of Lt-Col Siho, a FAL officer. In addition to intelligence operations this force has a capability for sabotage, kidnapping, commando-type raids, etc.

d. There is also a local veteran's organization and a grass-roots political organization in Laos, both of which are subject to CIA direction and control and are capable of carrying out propaganda, sabotage and harassment operations. Both are located (in varying degrees of strength and reliability) throughout Laos.

## 2. U.S.

### a. Defense

1). There are 154 Special Forces personnel (12 teams) from the 7th Special Forces Group at Fort Bragg, N. C., attached to the MAAG and providing tactical advice to FAL commanders and conducting basic training when the situation permits.

2). A 10-man intelligence training team is assisting the FAL in establishing a military intelligence system.

3). An 8-man psychological warfare team is assisting the FAL with psy war operations and operation of its radio transmitters.

### b. CIA

1). Nine CIA officers are working in the field with the Meo guerrillas, backstopped by two additional officers in Vientiane.

2). Three CIA officers plus 2-3 Vietnamese are working with the National Directorate of Coordination.

## D. OTHERS

### 1. Asian

#### a. Eastern Construction Company [Filipinos]

This is a private, Filipino-run public service organization, similar to an employment agency, with an almost untapped potential for unconventional warfare (which was its original mission). It now furnishes about 500 trained, experienced Filipino technicians to the Governments of Vietnam and Laos, under the auspices of MAAGs (MAP) and USOMs (ICA activities). Most of these Filipinos are currently augmenting U.S. military logistics programs with the Vietnamese Army and Lao Army. They instruct local military personnel in ordnance, quartermaster, etc. maintenance, storage, and supply procedures. MAAG Chiefs in both Vietnam and Laos have rated this service as highly effective. CIA has influence and some continuing interest with individuals.

The head of Eastern Construction is "Frisco" Johnny San Juan, former National Commander, Philippines Veterans Legion, and former close staff assistant to President Magsaysay of the Philippines (serving as Presidential Complaints and Action Commissioner directly under the President). Its cadre are mostly either former guerrillas against the Japanese in WW II or former Philippine Army personnel. Most of the cadre had extensive combat experience against the Communist Huk guerrillas in the Philippines. This cadre can be expanded into a wide range of counter-Communist activities, having sufficient stature in the Philippines to be able to draw on a very large segment of its trained, experienced, and well-motivated manpower pool.

Eastern Construction was started in 1954 as Freedom Company of the Philippines, a non-profit organization, with President Magsaysay as its honorary president. Its charter stated plainly that it was "to serve the cause of freedom." It actually was a mechanism to permit the deployment of Filipino personnel in other Asian countries, for unconventional operations, under cover of a public service organization having a contract with the host government. Philippine Armed Forces and government personnel were "sheep-dipped" and served abroad. Its personnel helped write the Constitution of the Republic of Vietnam, trained Vietnam's Presidential Guard Battalion, and were instrumental in founding and organizing the Vietnamese Veterans Legion.

When U.S. personnel instrumental in the organization and operational use of Freedom Company departed from the Asian area, direct U.S. support of the organization (on a clandestine basis) was largely terminated. The Filipino leaders in it then decided to carry on its mission privately, as a commercial undertaking. They changed the name to Eastern Construction Company. The organization survived some months of very hard times financially. Its leaders re-

main as a highly-motivated, experienced, anti-Communist "hard core."

#### b. Operation Brotherhood (Filipino)

There is another private Filipino public-service organization, capable of considerable expansion in socio-economic-medical operations to support counter-guerrilla actions. It is now operating teams in Laos, under ICA auspices. It has a measure of CIA control.

Operation Brotherhood (OB) was started in 1954 by the International Jaycees, under the inspiration and guidance of Oscar Arellano, a Filipino architect who was Vice President for Asia of the International Jaycees. The concept was to provide medical service to refugees and provincial farmers in South Vietnam, as part of the 1955 pacification and refugee program. Initially Filipino teams, later other Asian and European teams, served in OB in Vietnam. Their work was closely coordinated with Vietnamese Army operations which cleaned up Vietminh stay-behinds and started stabilizing rural areas. . . .

#### c. The Security Training Center (STC)

This is a counter-subversion, counter-guerrilla and psychological warfare school overtly operated by the Philippine Government and covertly sponsored by the U.S. Government through CIA as the instrument of the Country Team. It is located at Fort McKinley on the

outskirts of Manila. Its stated mission is: "To counter the forces of subversion in Southeast Asia through more adequate training of security personnel, greater cooperation, better understanding and maximum initiative among the countries of the area." . . .

The training capability of the STC includes a staff of approximately 12 instructors in the subjects of unconventional and counter-guerrilla warfare. . . .

#### d. CAT. Civil Air Transport (Chinese Nationalist)

CAT is a commercial air line engaged in scheduled and non-scheduled air operations throughout the Far East, with headquarters and large maintenance facilities located in Taiwan. CAT, a CIA proprietary, provides air logistical support under commercial cover to most CIA and other U.S. Government agencies' requirements. CAT supports covert and clandestine air operations by providing trained and experienced personnel, procurement of supplies and equipment through overt commercial channels, and the maintenance of a fairly large inventory of transport and other type aircraft under both Chinat and U.S. registry.

CAT has demonstrated its capability on numerous occasions to meet all types of contingency or long-term covert air requirements in support of U.S. objectives. During the past ten years, it has had some notable achievements, including support of the Chinese Nationalist withdrawal from the mainland, air drop support to the French at Dien Bien Phu, complete logistical and tactical air support for the Indonesian operation, air lifts of refugees from North Vietnam, more than 200 overflights of Mainland China and Tibet, and extensive air support in Laos during the current crisis. . . .

## 2. U.S.

### b. CIA

#### 1) Okinawa—Support Base

Okinawa Station is in itself a paramilitary support asset and, in critical situations calling for extensive support of UW activity in the Far East, could be devoted in its entirety to this mission. Located at Camp Chinen, it comprises a self-contained base under Army cover with facilities of all types necessary to the storage, testing, packaging, procurement and delivery of supplies—ranging from weapons and explosives to medical and clothing. Because of its being a controlled area, it can accommodate admirably the holding of black bodies in singletons or small groups, as well as small groups of trainees. . . .

#### 4). Saipan Training Station.

CIA maintains a field training station on the island of Saipan located approximately 160 miles northeast of Guam in the Marianas Islands. The installation is under Navy cover and is known as the Naval Technical Training Unit. The primary mission of the Saipan Training Station is to provide physical facilities and competent instructor personnel to fulfill a variety of training requirements including intelligence tradecraft, communications, counter-intelligence and psychological warfare techniques. Training is performed in support of CIA activities conducted throughout the Far East area.

In addition to the facilities described above, CIA maintains a small ship of approximately 500 tons' displacement and 140 feet in length. This vessel is used presently to provide surface transportation between Guam and Saipan. It has an American Captain and First Mate and a Philippine crew, and is operated under the cover of a commercial corporation with home offices in Baltimore, Maryland. Both the ship and the corporation have a potentially wider paramilitary application both in the Far East area and elsewhere.