

COVER FEATURE

THAILAND: THE LAND OF SMILES 1983 A CHANGED SECURITY ASSISTANCE ENVIRONMENT

By

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BACKGROUND

Korat, Udorn, and Pattaya are foreign names that have a familiar ring. They should. For many of us, these names bring back fond memories of a tour or an R&R spent in the pleasant surroundings of the "Land of Smiles." At the height of American participation in the Vietnam war effort, more than 50,000 soldiers, sailors and airmen were stationed at the seven major air bases and many smaller posts scattered throughout the Kingdom of Thailand. Aside from support forces for the Vietnam effort, American military presence in Thailand was also bolstered by the operation of a very large Joint US Military Advisory Group Thailand -- JUSMAG-THAI -- which implemented US security assistance objectives.



Today the picture has changed dramatically. The air bases are now fully manned by Royal Thai Air Force (RTAF) units. F-5s and A-37s now race down runways where once there were bomb-laden F-105s and F-4s bound for targets in Indo-China. Most of the uniformed Americans are gone. US military presence now numbers just over one hundred personnel, including the Embassy Marine Guards, the Defense Attache Office, the Armed Forces Research Institute of Medical Science (the old SEATO labs) and JUSMAGTHAI.

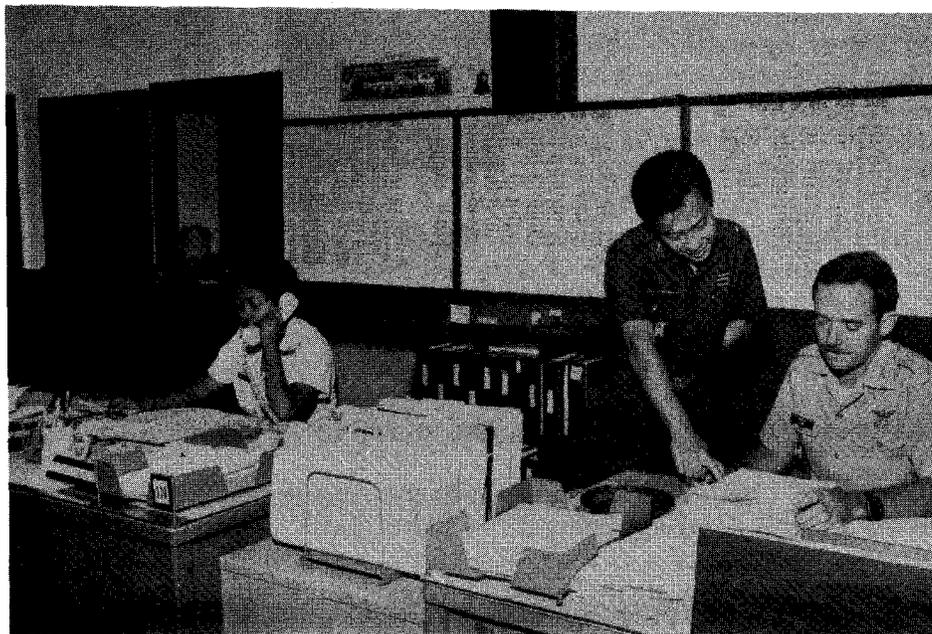
The threat to Thailand has also vastly changed. During the 60's and most of the 70's the Kingdom faced a small but active and growing rural-based communist insurgency. However, during December, 1978, and January, 1979, the picture changed significantly when Vietnam invaded and occupied neighboring Kampuchea. This in turn placed a heavily-armed, well-trained and well-equipped enemy (the Vietnamese) at a point that is less than a four-hour drive from Bangkok, the Thai capital. The threat now to Thailand is the first serious external threat faced since the Japanese invasion in 1941.

In response to this new threat and in recognition of the strategic importance of Thailand, US foreign policy regarding this region has changed the

thrust of our security assistance efforts. Mindful of the lessons of Vietnam and the increased scrutiny Congress has applied to all of the Security Assistance Programs worldwide, I think it would be good to restate the basic philosophy of security assistance before proceeding with a detailed description of ongoing programs in Thailand.

The philosophy rests on the precept that security assistance serves US interests by assisting allies and friends to acquire and maintain a capability for self-defense. Security assistance complements the United States' defense posture and her alliances. As long as there are challenges to US national interests, security assistance will remain an essential instrument of US foreign policy. By providing security assistance to nations faced with potential threats, the US demonstrates a concern for the legitimate security problems of friends and allies, helps to deter aggression, and contributes to world and regional stability.

In determining our priorities regarding the Thailand security assistance program, we have concentrated on those factors that bear directly on US foreign policy and national security interests in the region. Our focus, therefore, has been on the critical strategic and political importance of assisting the Thais to maintain their national sovereignty and recognizing Thailand as a partner and a strategic location in the arena of an East-West power balance. All of these factors are critical elements in determining key US foreign policy and security initiatives. Within the framework of these broad priorities, the Thailand security assistance program is functionally oriented into four management areas: logistics, transportation, fiscal, and training.



US and Thai military managers work together in these four areas to contribute significantly to the continued independence, territorial integrity, and stability of Thailand. Our activities in these four areas, in turn, help to insure Thailand's freedom as the frontline state in Southeast Asia. These

objectives are central to the stability of Southeast Asia and to the unity of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), as well as US national security and foreign policy interests.

In examining the development of security assistance to Thailand, we must first address a major change in the concept of advising the Royal Thai Armed Forces (RTARF). Our formal military assistance/advisory relationship with the Kingdom began on October 17, 1950, with the signing of the US Military Aid Agreement with Thailand. From then until the mid 1970's, we advised the Thai Armed Forces while actively monitoring the Military Assistance Program (MAP). However, as MAP diminished and the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) program grew, our role in JUSMAGTHAI shifted from advisors to that of logistics program managers. Concurrent with this change in role, Congress placed a number of restrictions upon the Security Assistance Program and SAOs. The result was a dramatic reduction in the authorized size of most SAOs worldwide. The impact was most apparent in Thailand where the total military authorization was cut from over 500 military people to 32 officers and NCOs.

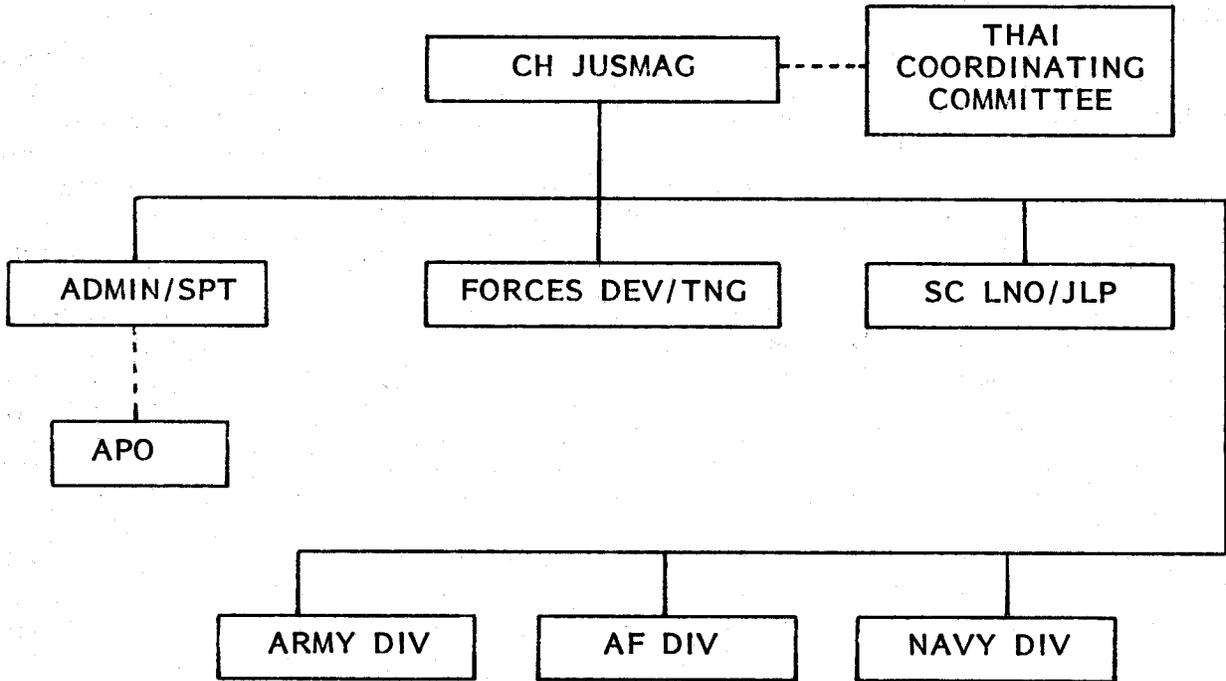
JUSMAGTHAI TODAY

The smaller size of JUSMAGTHAI has therefore necessitated many changes in operating style. Even though smaller in size, the mission of JUSMAGTHAI has increased, not decreased. With the advent of the current Kampuchean threat, the Thai Armed Forces began a force modernization and force expansion program that has more than doubled JUSMAGTHAI's mission. The key to operational success with the 32 military people now authorized is a two-fold approach of productivity and innovation.

Under the banner of productivity, there are no under-employed personnel in JUSMAGTHAI. Each officer, NCO, DoD civilian, and local employee carries an equal share of the burden. On certain occasions this may require personnel trained in one field to assume the additional duties of another field to assist in the accomplishment of JUSMAGTHAI's mission. I do not intend to infer that we labor seven days a week with no days off, but I want to dispel the prevalent notion that life in the SAO is nothing more than a series of infrequently submitted reports. This is simply not true. Duty in JUSMAGTHAI is a rewarding experience compounded by the knowledge that a strengthened, well-trained, and well-equipped Royal Thai Armed Forces is in the best interest of the United States.

In the area of innovation, we employ several techniques designed to improve the effectiveness of our small staff. The first has been to emphasize the service division approach. Each of the Thai Armed Services -- Army, Navy (with the Marines), and Air Force has a counterpart division located within the JUSMAGTHAI organization. This builds upon specialized service missions and helps to increase JUSMAGTHAI effectiveness. Besides the service divisions, there are several functionally organized branches within JUSMAGTHAI (see chart). Among these are the Training, Joint Logistics Planning, and Admin/Support Branches. The responsibilities of these three branches cut across service boundaries and also help to increase the effectiveness of the limited manpower on hand.

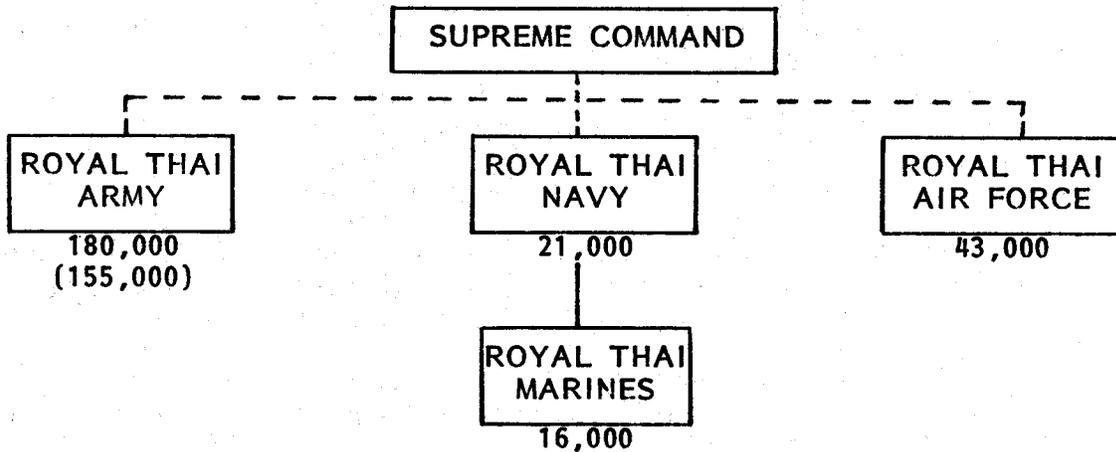
JUSMAGTHAI ORGANIZATION



MANNING:

Officers	-	26	(Only 24 currently assigned, 2 additional positions approved for FY84)
EM	-	8	
CS	-	4	
FSN	-	19	
		<u>57</u>	

THAI ARMED FORCES



Additionally, we use the JUSMAGTHAI aircraft -- the C-12 -- productively and innovatively. Rather than consuming several days in often dangerous surface transportation when visiting remote locations, JUSMAGTHAI personnel can visit several widely separated units in one day with one well-planned mission in the C-12. Another technique that we have found valuable is to schedule simultaneous trips by at least two of the service divisions. This not only allows for a fully loaded aircraft on most trips, but also presents an image to the Royal Thai Armed Forces that JUSMAGTHAI is deeply committed to their success and to joint forces management.

Innovation also applies to the training field. We often employ Mobile Training Teams (MTTs) and Technical Assistance Teams (TATs) as an extension of the JUSMAGTHAI security assistance mission. This is especially true when a weapon system is being deployed to the country for the first time and a large number of personnel must be trained. In terms of money alone, it makes better sense to bring into Thailand a small US team who can train 20-30 Thais rather than fund two or three Thai military people to travel back to CONUS for similar training. Another noteworthy development in the MTT area has been that we have developed a technique of closely monitoring and supervising the formation, deployment and on-the-ground operations of the various MTTs that come into country in order to insure their effectiveness. This has resulted in significant cost savings to the host country when we found that expensive technicians were already available in country and were not needed as part of the MTT. Additionally, close supervision of each MTT in country results in a better training product and a more effectively trained host country crewman to man and maintain the system once the MTT has returned home.



Innovation also applies to several other recent changes in the training area. One is the use of small computers to program and track training requirements as part of our efforts to maintain better control of the Thai share of the annual International Military Education Training (IMET) program.

Another innovation is a continuing effort by our Training Branch to insure that only adequately qualified Thai students are sent to offshore training programs. This requires close coordination with our Thai Liaison Officers and a detailed screening process to insure that only the best are approved for training abroad. An adjunct of this process is an intensive English language comprehension level testing program. Each of the Thai military departments has an English Language Training Program (ELTP) which seeks to raise the general English language proficiency level throughout the Thai Armed Forces. Particular emphasis is given to the critical areas of flight training and logistics.

One final innovation is the assignment, training and utilization of Thai Liaison Officers in positions in virtually all service divisions and branches throughout JUSMAGTHAI. We have published a series of standard duty descriptions, established stable tours of assignment, and developed training programs for these able and dedicated officers who have made a profound difference in the way we do business.

QUALITY OF LIFE

For our people, we have a strong concern here for their quality of life. Bangkok is a very large city of over 5.5 million people where high costs for housing and imported consumer goods are a daily reality. Since September, 1983, JUSMAGTHAI personnel enjoy the benefits of the Embassy leased housing pool. Now, our newcomers can move directly into newly-constructed and fully-furnished apartments or homes rather than wait in a hotel until they can find housing. For consumer goods and all the comforts of home in an American sense, there is the American Community Support Association, a cooperative managed by the US Embassy for mission personnel. This facility provides most of the support for the official American community in lieu of a PX or commissary. Also, a CINCPAC supported study is currently underway to introduce an AAFES shopette facility and a commissary in the summer of 1984. We are now on the circuit for Armed Forces Radio and Television Service (AFRTS) video tapes. Other areas so important to maintenance of a quality family lifestyle are also present here with a fully accredited International School (grades 1-12), churches of all denominations and various youth organizations including Boy Scouts of America and numerous athletic leagues. All of this adds up to a very healthy environment in which family-oriented activities take precedence. Is it any wonder that of 32 people assigned to JUSMAGTHAI, 22 are now on tour extensions or on second tours?

CONCLUSION

Duty in JUSMAGTHAI can be a professionally rewarding and satisfying assignment. Aside from the knowledge that they are assisting Thailand in helping to stop the expansion of Soviet and Vietnamese imperialism in the region, the people assigned to JUSMAGTHAI have personal opportunities to learn a foreign language, sample the local culture, and travel which are virtually unmatched anywhere else in Asia. If you're interested, call your service MILPERCEN, MPC or NAVPERS. You may be able to become one of the chosen 32.

Colonel William P. Holmes, III, USA, has been Chief of the Joint U.S. Military Advisory Group, Thailand since September 1982. He has had two previous advisory assignments with the Thai military: first as the Senior Advisor to the 11th Infantry Regiment (King's Guard) in 1963-64 and again as Senior Advisor to the 1st Brigade, Royal Thai Volunteer Force, Vietnam in 1969-70. Other assignments related to military assistance include: Senior Advisor, 47th ARVN Regiment, RVN, 1966; Chief, Operations and Plans, Joint U.S. Military Advisory Group, Ethiopia in 1971- 72 and more recently while serving as Military Attache to Australia, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea. COL Holmes holds a M.A. degree in Diplomatic History from Kansas State University and is a 1978 graduate of the Army War College.



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