

CHAPTER XI

RESURGENCE OF VIOLENCE

11.1 Thaksin and Centralization

Upon being elected Prime Minister in 2001, Thaksin's aim was to establish a much more centralized form of political control.¹ As the head of the recently formed Thai Rak Thai (TRT) party, one of Thaksin's first priorities was to assert his authority in the south and impose greater central control over the region which had been historically dominated by the Democrats.² Thaksin, a former policeman, interpreted the conflict as being wholly composed of state-criminalized networks fighting a turf war, and was skeptical that the violence was politically separatist in nature.³ His strategy was to send in some of his own representatives to investigate and report on the situation, identify key members the existing power group, transfer them out of the region, then quickly move to dismantle the existing power structures, emplace new officials loyal to himself, and empower the police with an enhanced role in a new power structure.⁴

11.2 Dismantling of the Prem Security Apparatus

In 2001-2002, Thaksin began to replace key officials in the south with his associates and loyalists. Significant to this move was the decision to reverse the institutional changes begun by Prem and Linanon in the 1980s, by abolishing CPM 43

¹ Duncan McCargo, Rethinking Thailand's Southern Violence. (Singapore: National University of Singapore, 2007), p.38.

² "Conflict in Southern Thailand: Islamism, Violence and the State in the Patani Insurgency". Stockholm International Peace Research Institute Policy Paper No. 20. September 2007: p.29.

³ M.K. Connors, "War on Error and the Southern Fire: How Terrorism Analysts Get it Wrong", Critical Asian Studies, vol. 38, no 1. (Mar. 2006), p.157-158.

⁴ Duncan McCargo, Rethinking Thailand's Southern Violence. (Singapore: National University of Singapore, 2007), p.43.

and the SBPAC on 1 May 2002. The police then took primary responsibility for addressing the violence in the south and the army was sidelined.⁵

Although not directly responsible for fighting terrorism, the SBPAC became invaluable in the overall COIN effort, in that it provided intelligence to authorities. The SPBAC's close ties and trust building within the Muslim community necessarily turned it into an effective intelligence gathering apparatus within the overall framework of the civil-police-military counterinsurgency effort. By dissolving these two agencies, Thaksin in effect removed the only venue where soldiers, police, Muslim leaders and religious teachers and officials could to exchange views and compare notes.⁶ This dissolution sparked fears among the Malay Muslims that the government had removed a vital safeguard that for many years had ensured their protection from being abused and exploited by local Thai officials.⁷

Contributing to the fears of the locals was the nationwide crackdown on narcotics as well; the war on drugs. Despite its successes, it is viewed as having created a climate of fear in the country and undermining many of the human rights advances of the previous decade.⁸ The government gave governors and police chiefs in each province targets for the number of arrests of suspected drug traffickers and the seizure of narcotics. In this environment the police were suspected of involvement in many extrajudicial killings and disappearances.⁹ In the south, the campaign helped to further destabilize the

⁵ "Conflict in Southern Thailand: Islamism, Violence and the State in the Patani Insurgency". Stockholm International Peace Research Institute Policy Paper No. 20. September 2007: p.30.

⁶ Duncan McCargo, Rethinking Thailand's Southern Violence. (Singapore: National University of Singapore, 2007), p.47.

⁷ "No One Is Safe: Insurgent Attacks on Civilians in Thailand's Southern Border Provinces" Human Rights Watch (HRW) vol. 19, no. 12(C) New York, N.Y., Aug. 2007: p.29.

⁸ "Conflict in Southern Thailand: Islamism, Violence and the State in the Patani Insurgency". Stockholm International Peace Research Institute Policy Paper No. 20. September 2007: p.30.

⁹ "No One Is Safe: Insurgent Attacks on Civilians in Thailand's Southern Border Provinces" Human Rights Watch (HRW) vol. 19, no. 12(C) New York, N.Y., Aug. 2007: p.30.

situation at a time of change and when the police were growing increasingly aggressive in their policies toward the Malay Muslim community.¹⁰

11.3 Changes in the Character of Violence.

Since 2001, the violence in the south has not only escalated but changed in character. Soft and civilian targets have been hit more frequently, and in addition, the police have been killed regularly since 2002. Schools and other state institutions have been targeted as well. Yet it was the purposeful killing of Buddhist monks while alms begging which demonstrated the deterioration of interpersonal relationships in the region. As Chaiwat Satha-Anand points out, historically the various separatist groups waged war against the state, and the people to people relations were by and large unaffected. Yet the newly emerging violence against wats, mosques, monks, and laypersons of Buddhist and Muslim faith shows that the “ties which bind people together has been cut.”¹¹ After 2004, there was a radical change to both person to person and person to state relationships.¹² Three particular incidents did much to give the impression that the south was a hotbed of not only separatist but Islamist insurgency. The state then responded with coercive and oppressive measures which further alienated Malay Muslims caught in the middle.

11.3.1 Narathiwat Arms Raid

On January 4 2004, around between 30 and 100 militants conducted a violent raid on the 4th Development Battalion’s camp in Narathiwat.¹³ Reportedly, the militants

¹⁰ “Conflict in Southern Thailand: Islamism, Violence and the State in the Patani Insurgency”. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute Policy Paper No. 20. September 2007: p.30.

¹¹ Chaiwat Satha Anand, “Myth of Thai Society”, Southeast Asian Studies class lecture, Bangkok, Thailand, 9 Jan 2008.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Marc Askew. “Conspiracy, Politics, and a Disorderly Border: The Struggle to Comprehend Insurgency in Thailand’s Deep South” Policy Studies 29 (Southeast Asia). Washington D.C: East-West Center Washington, 2007: p.5.

forced the soldiers in the camp to line up and proclaim their religions. Those who were Buddhist were either shot or had their throats slashed.¹⁴ In addition to the theft of 300 weapons, simultaneous attacks took place throughout the southern provinces as well. Military, police, and civilian officials were killed, and 20 schools were burned to the ground.¹⁵

11.3.2 Kru Tze Mosque Incident

On April 28 2004 security forces shot and killed 108 insurgents in Yala, Pattani, and Songkhla provinces when they attempted to attack security establishments in various locations. They had launched simultaneous pre dawn raids on 10 police outposts and a police station in military style operations.¹⁶ The militants were lightly armed, yet organized nonetheless and believed to be guided by a splinter of the BRN-C.

During the attack on a police checkpoint in Pattani, a number of militants had gathered at the nearby historic Kru Tze Mosque. The fight accelerated and ended with GEN Panlop Pinmanee's order to attack the mosque, killing 32 militants inside.¹⁷

11.3.3 Tak Bai Incident

On October 25, 2004 about 2000 protestors gathered outside the Tak Bai district police station in Narathiwat, demanding that authorities release defense volunteers taken

¹⁴ Rohan Gunaratna. Conflict and Terrorism in Southern Thailand. (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish Academic, 2005), p.22.

¹⁵ Chandra-naj Mahakanjana. "Decentralization, Local Government, and Socio-political Conflict in Southern Thailand" Working Papers No 5. Washington D.C: East-West Center Washington, 2006: p.11.

¹⁶ Rohan Gunaratna. Conflict and Terrorism in Southern Thailand. (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish Academic, 2005), p.24.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* p.12.

into custody.¹⁸ Over 1000 protestors were arrested and piled into trucks, of which 78 died enroute to nearby army bases.¹⁹

According to McCargo, these three incidents were designed to humiliate and discredit the Thai state. The Narathiwat arms raid demonstrated the complacency and incompetence of the Thai military; the Kru Tze incident showed the excessive eagerness of Thai authorities to violate the ancient mosque; and the Tak Bai incident illustrated the cruelty and thirst for vengeance of the security forces.²⁰ After these events, violence in southern Thailand reached a new high. Attacks on innocent civilians increased, and the Thai government struggled to find an appropriate response outside of military repression. All the while a divide grew between Buddhists and Muslims caused by separatist violence and state response.

11.4 The State Responds

Since the resurgence of violence in 2004, the Thai government has been without a coherent, unified strategy, military, political, or otherwise for ending the southern conflict. Thaksin pursued a dual track approach, increasing the security posture while also introducing conciliatory measures in an attempt to find a workable solution to the problem.

Thaksin's hard line tactics focused on tightening central control of the provinces through security crackdowns, which included declaring martial law, enforcing curfews, and deploying thousands more troops to support the 4th Army region, giving them the

¹⁸ Chandra-naj Mahakanjana. "Decentralization, Local Government, and Socio-political Conflict in Southern Thailand" *Working Papers No 5*. Washington D.C: East-West Center Washington, 2006: 12

¹⁹ Duncan McCargo, *Rethinking Thailand's Southern Violence*. (Singapore: National University of Singapore, 2007) 4.

²⁰ Duncan McCargo. *What's Really Happening in Southern Thailand. Occasional Paper*. Institute of Southeast Asian Studies Regional Forum. Singapore, 2008: 7.

authority to arrest suspect without a court warrant.²¹ To make matters worse, the majority of security personnel posted to the region were poorly trained in COIN, not to mention the “ethno- religious complexity of the situation”.²² With the loss of the intelligence and the breakdown of community relations following the dissolution of SBPAC and CPM 43, a new agency was created to coordinate COIN and introduce conciliatory solutions.²³ The Southern Border Provinces Peace Building Command (SBPPC) itself was an integrated civilian-police-military command which assumed some of the functions of the SBPAC, yet it had a much lower profile and status. It lacked direct contacts with Muslim leaders, who in fact wished to see it abolished.²⁴ Adding to its ineffectiveness was the tensions between the army and the police as well.²⁵ In 2005 the Executive Decree of Government Administration in Emergency Situations was enacted, in effect granting the security forces blanket immunity for criminal misconduct and human rights violations.²⁶ Seen as an obstruction to justice as well as an obstacle to any form of trust building, this decree further alienated the Malay Muslim population and created more distrust of security forces.²⁷ Increasingly, it began to appear that the government was only interested in providing security to the Buddhists of the region.

While implementing a hard line approach, Thaksin simultaneously pursue more moderate, conciliatory tactics as well. Soon after the Kru Tze incident in April 2004, Deputy PM Chaturong Chaiseng had arranged a series of consultations with government officials, security personnel, local residents from Buddhist and Malay communities,

²¹ Chandra-naj Mahakanjana. “Decentralization, Local Government, and Socio-political Conflict in Southern Thailand” Working Papers No 5. Washington D.C: East-West Center Washington, 2006: p.12

²² “No One Is Safe: Insurgent Attacks on Civilians in Thailand’s Southern Border Provinces” Human Rights Watch (HRW) vol. 19, no. 12(C) New York, N.Y., Aug. 2007: p.37.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Duncan McCargo, Rethinking Thailand’s Southern Violence. (Singapore: National University of Singapore, 2007) p.48.

²⁵ Chandra-naj Mahakanjana. “Decentralization, Local Government, and Socio-political Conflict in Southern Thailand” Working Papers No 5. Washington D.C: East-West Center Washington, 2006: p.13

²⁶ “Conflict in Southern Thailand: Islamism, Violence and the State in the Patani Insurgency”. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute Policy Paper No. 20. September 2007: p.30;

“No One Is Safe: Insurgent Attacks on Civilians in Thailand’s Southern Border Provinces” Human Rights Watch (HRW) vol. 19, no. 12(C) New York, N.Y., Aug. 2007: p.5.

²⁷ Ibid.

religious leaders, politicians, businessmen and civil society groups. The resulting proposal was never implemented although the government agreed with it in principle. Elements of the plan called for the lifting of martial law, slowing down the deployment of security forces into the region, and investigation and transfer of government officials and security personnel found responsible for abuses.²⁸ One of the most bizarre ideas was a mass air drop of millions of paper birds in December 2004, as a gesture of peace. The plans aim was to persuade people suspected of being part of the insurgency to work within the law rather than go into hiding.²⁹ Yet perhaps one of the most potentially far reaching concepts for building peace, reconciling Malay and Buddhist communities, addressing grievances and “winning the hearts and minds” of the Malay Muslims was the creation of the National Reconciliation Commission.

11.5 The National Reconciliation Commission

The National Reconciliation Commission was created by Thaksin in March 2005. He asked former PM Anand Panyarachun to chair the 48 person committee, and tasked it to come up with a workable solution to the longstanding problems in the south.³⁰ The NRC itself was composed of a wide range of members of society, including academics, religious leaders, and the 4th Army Region Commander as well.³¹ It was to recommend policy guidelines and measures to create unity and peace, looking into the causes and extent of the violence. In both its draft of October 2005 and the final report of June 2006, the NRC justified its stress on addressing generalized violence and structural factors rather than isolating separatist groups as the sole perpetrators.

²⁸ *Ibid.* p.38.

²⁹ <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/asia-pacific/4775623.stm>>

³⁰ Kamol Hengkietisak, “Thailand: Press Leads the Cheers for National Reconciliation Commission”, *Bangkok Post*, 3 April 2005.

³¹ Chaiwat Satha Anand, “Myth of Thai Society”, Southeast Asian Studies class lecture, Bangkok, Thailand, 9 Jan 2008.

In its summary of causal diagnosis The NRC argued that economic factors such as poverty and injustice are related to the violence because they increase sympathy and support both within and outside the area, and also serve as conditions conducive to violent struggle. Religion is not the cause of violence, but is related to violence as a justification. Also used as justification is the history of Pattani and Malay cultural identity with respect to Thai governance. Additionally, the NRC linked world events, such as the 9/11 attack on the United States, or the US response of invading Afghanistan and Iraq, to the violence because they can be cited in claiming that the Muslim world is under attack by American imperialism in an unjust war.

The NRC arranged its points into layers of explanation, and explained the phenomenon of violence as resulting from three conditions:

1. The agency condition. These are the perpetrators of unrest and some state authorities who respond in kind.
2. The structural conditions. These are injustices arising from the existing justice process and administrative system; economic and natural resource problems faced by most people; education which fails to empower the people to overcome various forms of social challenges, both secular and religious; general condition of the population; and geopolitical factors that sharply contrast the quality of life between Muslim Malays on opposite sides of the border - in the southern border provinces of Thailand and in Malaysia.
3. The cultural conditions. The religious and ethnic distinctiveness of the area Islam, the Malay language and the history of Pattani—are crucial in any attempt to persuade people to accept or agree with the perpetrators of violence. All of this allows militants in the southern border provinces to use ethnic and religious justifications to legitimize the

use of violence in the pursuit of their own objectives in the name of Malay Muslim identity.³²

In summary, the NRC argued that numerous groups are perpetrating violence, and separatists are only one of many groups. The NRC's overall diagnosis was that multidirectional violence is the problem to be addressed, and the Malay Muslims are victims of numerous injustices. The long term solutions lay in rectifying inequities, imbalances, and injustices (cultural, environmental, economic, and legal).³³ Though the NRC was allowed to operate freely in the southern border provinces the lack of consultation between it and the Thaksin government created public doubt about the actual commitment to a reconciliation approach. The NRC issued its findings in June 2006, and despite its accurate prognosis, diagnosis, and pragmatic recommendations, the plan was never implemented and the commission became defunct.³⁴

Some of the recommendations of the NRC were actually met with opposition as well. GEN Prem, the original architect of the COIN strategies which brought relative peace a decade earlier was completely opposed to the use of Malay as a working language in the south. When the NRC had found that using Malay as a working language could help to reconcile people-state relations, Prem held to the view that “we have to be proud to be Thai and have the Thai language as the sole national language”³⁵ Prem’s view illustrates the centralist nature of the Thai state, which is the inability of Thai society to acknowledge ethnic differences...once you are in Thailand you have to be completely Thai.”³⁶

³² National Reconciliation Commission, Overcoming Violence through the Power of Reconciliation, Unofficial Translation, June 2006. Available from: <http://thailand.ahrck.net/docs/nrc_report_en.pdf> p.37-38. [15 March 2008].

³³ Marc Askew. “Conspiracy, Politics, and a Disorderly Border. The Struggle to Comprehend Insurgency in Thailand’s Deep South” Policy Studies 29 (Southeast Asia). Washington D.C: East-West Center Washington, 2007: p.32.

³⁴ Amara Ponsapanich, personal interview, Bangkok, Thailand, 8 Jan 2008.

³⁵ Unknown Author. Southern solution: Prem not happy with NRC’s idea. Available from: <<http://www.nationmultimedia.com>> [26 June 2006].

³⁶ Sunai Pasuk, personal interview, Bangkok, Thailand, 4 Feb 2008.

The recommendations of the NRC were focused on issues of justice, cultural and religious recognition and ending the violence. By failing to acknowledge the strength of the militant movement, the NRC failed to acknowledge the political nature of the struggle, namely the political legitimacy of the Thai state and its governance of the southern provinces.³⁷ As such the NRC completely ruled out the idea of any sort of administrative restructuring as it could be a slippery slope towards autonomy.³⁸ The type of reconciliation hoped for by the Thai government was one in which the Malays would accept accommodation and co-opting while placing “Thainess” over their own ethnic and religious identity. Meanwhile Thaksin’s heavy handed security operations continued to rule the day.

11.6 After the Coup

When Thaksin was overthrown by a military coup on September 19, 2006, there was hope that the interim government would “restore virtuous rule and lay the foundations for peace.”³⁹ The junta appointed government at first struck a more conciliatory note, apologizing to the local population for the previous government’s excesses.⁴⁰ The appointed Prime Minister, Surayud Chulanont vowed a softer approach, reestablishing the SBPAC to help investigate and take action against complaints from the ethnic Malay Muslim population concerning corrupt, abusive, or inept government officials. His initiative was also followed by promises to drop the charges against many of the Tak Bai protestors; a renewed commitment to solve the “disappearance” of

³⁷ Duncan McCargo. What’s Really Happening in Southern Thailand. Occasional Paper. Institute of Southeast Asian Studies Regional Forum. Singapore, 2008: p.9.

³⁸ Unknown Author. Lessons on south from Okinawa. Available from: <http://www.nationmultimedia.com>> [4 September 2007].

³⁹ Duncan McCargo. What’s Really Happening in Southern Thailand. Occasional Paper. Institute of Southeast Asian Studies Regional Forum. Singapore, 2008: p.9.

⁴⁰ Marwaan Macan-Markar. Insurgent headache for new Thai government. Available from: http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Southeast_Asia/JA17Ae01.html> [17 January 2008].

attorney Somchai Neelapjit; the abolition of blacklists; and a willingness to implement some aspects of Sharia law.⁴¹ The government also announced that it had entered into negotiations with the insurgents, yet these negotiations were with the exiled leaders of the previous separatist movements and they had no influence over the new generation of insurgents.⁴² Again the government talked of amnesty and other concessions which were used to neutralize the previous Communist and separatist insurgencies, but this time, there was no one to negotiate with, and concessions were no longer appropriate.⁴³

The year following the coup demonstrated the overall inability to grasp the nature of the problem, and the means to solve it. Surayud's conciliatory posture was by and large ineffective due to the Thai government's inability to determine who the insurgents were. It took the Thai government almost two years to identify the BRN C as the organization behind the recent insurgency. And identification was all the more difficult due to the apparent cooperation and solidarity among various groups, and no one group claims credit for attacks nor denounces other groups.⁴⁴ BRN C is a secretive organization with a policy of not revealing themselves and has established an 11 point platform which includes no participation in parliamentary process.⁴⁵

11.7 Increase in Violence

The inability to negotiate and identify the insurgent group or groups in effect made conciliatory gestures ineffective. The increasing violence throughout 2007 made Surayud's reconciliation policy appear weak as growing numbers of officials and civilians were being injured and killed. Former 4th Army Commander Harn Linanon

⁴¹ "No One Is Safe: Insurgent Attacks on Civilians in Thailand's Southern Border Provinces" Human Rights Watch (HRW) vol. 19, no. 12(C) New York, N.Y., Aug. 2007: p.41.

⁴² Zachary Abuza, "Heading South" The Wall Street Journal, 19 June 2007.

⁴³ Duncan McCargo. What's Really Happening in Southern Thailand. Occasional Paper. Institute of Southeast Asian Studies Regional Forum. Singapore, 2008: p.9.

⁴⁴ Zachary Abuza, personal interview, Bangkok, Thailand, 19 Jan 2008.

⁴⁵ Sunai Pasuk, personal interview, Bangkok, Thailand, 4 Feb 2008.

himself said that the government's policy had left security personnel incapable of containing the violence, as forces had been instructed to use non violent tactics as much as possible.⁴⁶ June 2007 was the most violent month since the insurgency rekindled in 2004, prompting fears of potential civil wars and increasing communal violence.⁴⁷ The head of the recently reformed SBPAC announced that peace in the region could take as long as twenty years despite the fact that it was seeing measurable success in its own efforts in terms of community outreach programs.⁴⁸ The brutal violence of summer 2007 prompted the military to go on the offensive and reevaluate their COIN strategy. The RTA again resorting back to the all too familiar tactics of suppression and coercion, once again alienating the local Malay Muslim populace.

11.8 The Surge

Coinciding with the increase in violence in June, Thai Army Commander in Chief Sonthi Boonyaratglin publicly criticized security forces for their inefficiency, unprofessionalism and uncreative mindset that helped fan the flames in the south.⁴⁹ While this criticism may have been a call for a return to the winning of hearts and minds, in fact the army went on the offensive, increasing the number of troops in the region to 30, 000 and ramping up mass arrest and interrogations. By August of 2007, the RTA had deployed one infantry battalion per district and increased the number of Tahan Pran companies as well.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Nucharee Raekrun and Muhammad Ayub Pathan. Reconciliation not working, general says. Bangkok Post (7 July 2007): p.2 Main.

⁴⁷ Daniel Ten Kate. No solution apparent as round of attacks signal insurgent pressure. Available from: <<http://www.asiasentinal.com>> [17 January 2008]; Unknown Author. Insurgency in deep south could evolve into civil war. Bangkok Post (15 July 2007): p.1 Main.

⁴⁸ Wichayant Boonchote and Muhammad Ayub Pathan. SBPAC says its efforts are starting to pay off. Bangkok Post (25 July 2007): p.4 Main; Unknown Author. SBPAC chief admits that it could take 20 years more to solve southern insurgency. Available from: <<http://www.nationmultimedia.com>> [15 July 2007].

⁴⁹ Prasanth Parameswaran. "The Southern Insurgency: Rethinking Thailand's Military Strategy" RSIS Commentaries. 8 August 2007. Available from: <<http://www.rsis.edu.org>>.

⁵⁰ Panitan Wattanayagorn, personal interview, Bangkok, Thailand, 5 Jan 2008.

As the army again took the lead in the COIN effort in the south, the focus was strictly on military measures to quell violence and stabilize the region, with no creative thinking towards political solutions to win popular support. Professional military conferences hosted by the RTA invited western scholars and COIN experts to speak on historical vignettes such as Northern Ireland and Peru, the focus being strictly counterinsurgency tactics.⁵¹ Professional military exchange education seminars given by US instructors focused on lessons learned in Iraq and Afghanistan with respect to conventional battalion level military operations.⁵² Putting theory into practice however was a different story.

On the one hand, along with the increased military and paramilitary presence in August was the beginning of large scale sweep operations resulting in penetrating militant networks and providing better protection in urban areas.⁵³ Mass arrests proved somewhat successful at reducing killings, to the extent that GEN Sonthi announced that the Army was winning the fight. He claimed that work was progressing according to plans and that the struggle against the insurgency was being achieved thru community relations and military means.⁵⁴ As many as 500 suspected insurgents were arrested and detained in military camps. Those who were sympathetic to the insurgency were made to undergo 4 month training courses designed to deter them from joining the insurgency.⁵⁵ PM Surayud claimed the summer crackdown was a success in reducing the number of insurgents to 20000.⁵⁶ The National Police Chief even predicted that the unrest would end before the end of 2007.⁵⁷

⁵¹ Counterinsurgency conference, Bangkok, Thailand, 14-15 Aug 2007.

⁵² Subject Matter Expert Exchange Program, Bangkok, Thailand, May 2007.

⁵³ Marwaan Macan-Markar. Insurgent headache for new Thai government.

Available from: http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Southeast_Asia/JA17Ae01.html> [17 January 2008].

⁵⁴ Post Reporters. Sonthi: Army winning the fight. Bangkok Post (22 September 2007): p.3 Main.

⁵⁵ Unknown Author. Three militants die in gun battle. Available from: <http://www.nationmultimedia.com>> [27 August 2007].

⁵⁶ Yuwadee Tunyasiri and Assawin Pakkawan. PM: Crackdown on rebels has been a success. Bangkok Post (21 September 2007): p.3 Main.

⁵⁷ Post Reporters. Senators-designate form group. Bangkok Post (24 September 2007): p.3 Main.

On the other hand however, despite individual sweep operations and mass arrests, the overall security grid in the south was lacking, and violence continued in the rural areas. While there was an increase in overall troop presence, they were primarily confined to barracks. Static checkpoints were confined to main roads, not back roads, and there was no real presence in villages.⁵⁸ The RTA did not conduct sufficient foot patrols and instead delegated those tasks to Tahan Pran and Village defense units.⁵⁹

The sweep operations, mass arrests and detentions, lack of physical presence in rural areas, over reliance on paramilitaries, and the perception that security forces were only interested in protecting Thai Buddhists gave the impression to the Muslims that the soldiers were not protectors, but abusers. Increasing lack of trust between the community and security forces yielded less and less intelligence on the ground. By October there was mass migration of Malays to neighboring Malaysia as well as Thai Buddhists leaving their own communities.⁶⁰ The military had failed to provide security, failed to end the killings, and on the political front had failed to secure the support of the people.

11.9 Change of Command

In October 2007, GEN Sonthi retired from the military as was replaced by GEN Anupong Paojinda. Paojinda immediately went to the south upon assuming command in order to make an assessment of the situation. Soon afterwards he wrote a 16 page report on his personal strategy for tackling the instability.⁶¹

⁵⁸ Zachary Abuza, personal interview, Bangkok, Thailand, 19 Jan 2008.

⁵⁹ Sunai Pasuk, personal interview, Bangkok, Thailand, 4 Feb 2008.

⁶⁰ Muhammad Ayub Pathan and Anucha Charoenpo. Southern villagers migrating. *Bangkok Post* (30 October 2007): p.1 Main.

⁶¹ Sarutdet Marukat. Army chief speaks out. *Bangkok Post* (10 December 2007): p.5 Main.

Paojinda did not trust the 4th Regional Army, and realized he needed to regain overall military control of the area. He sent the deputy commanders from the other army regions, along with their staffs to begin coordination and exchanges of ideas with the 4th Region units with the end state being the establishment of “provincial command”.⁶² Anupong intended to create better unity in the command line for soldiers, and the provincial command concept assigned each army region to one province.⁶³ This restructuring meant that each regional command would contribute to the COIN campaign, allowing for clear assignments, clear chain of command, and less rotation. In his report, Anupong wrote, “The changing deployment strategy gives each army region a specific area of responsibility and will lead to better control of the area, and deter those involved in creating instability.”⁶⁴

Recognizing the importance of the CPM concept and the value of intelligence in COIN, Anupong established an integrated “251 intelligence agency” designed to pool information and news on events in the south from police, military, and civilians.⁶⁵

The insurgents are establishing a parallel shadow government down south and are making inroads into local politics. They discourage the use of the government judicial system and pressure people to rely on village Sharia courts.⁶⁶ The BRN establish a clear structure within the villages, and there are BRN members in every branch of local administration as well. Sunai Pasuk of Human Rights Watch describes it as a bottom up

⁶² Sunai Pasuk, personal interview, Bangkok, Thailand, 4 Feb 2008.

⁶³ Post Reporters. Bombers strike SBPAC office complex in Yala. Bangkok Post (29 November 2007): p.6 Main.

⁶⁴ Sarutdet Marukat. Army chief speaks out. Bangkok Post (10 December 2007): p.5 Main.

⁶⁵ Post Reporters. Six soldiers hurt in patrol ambush. Bangkok Post (14 December 2007): p.5 Main.

⁶⁶ Zachary Abuza, personal interview, Bangkok, Thailand, 19 Jan 2008.

revolution.⁶⁷ GEN Anupong recognized that the lack of security in the villages has allowed this to occur, and ordered that soldiers and police visit villages more frequently, and even set up “kiosks” close by in order to boost the villagers confidence and encourage them to “turn their backs on the insurgents.”⁶⁸ Deployments are planned to increase from year long to two years, and with the additional numbers of RTA officers deploying to the region, more and more battalion level officers realize that “a military solution is not the answer...insurgents have a political agenda, and we need to have a political solution to win the loyalty of the people.”⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Sunai Pasuk, personal interview, Bangkok, Thailand, 4 Feb 2008.

⁶⁸ Sarutdet Marukat. Army chief speaks out. Bangkok Post (10 December 2007): p.5 Main.

⁶⁹ COL Ekarat Changkaew, personal interview, Bangkok, Thailand, 1 Feb 2008.