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DATE Nov. 16, 1955

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OPERATIONS COORDINATING BOARD

Washington, D.C.

ANALYSIS OF INTERNAL SECURITY SITUATION
IN BURMA AND RECOMMENDED ACTION

OCB 091 Burma (12-6-55)

REFERENCE: NSC Action No. 1290-d, 12/22/54

OCB FILE NO. 76

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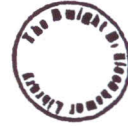
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OPERATIONS COORDINATING BOARD
Washington 25, D. C.

December 6, 1955

ANALYSIS OF INTERNAL SECURITY SITUATION IN BURMA
(PURSUANT TO NSC ACTION 1290-d) AND RECOMMENDED ACTION



A. ACTION TAKEN BY THE OCB:

1. July 13, 1955 Board Meeting

NOTED the paper pending final action when complete list of country reports on the project and the over-all report for the NSC* have been completed.

(In general, statistical and financial data in Sections I through V represents information as of July 8, 1955. Data included in the Recommendations (Section VI) are current as of November 10, 1955.)

2. November 16, 1955 Board Meeting

CONCURRED in the analysis and recommendations; and NOTED that specific amounts of funds required will be subject to the normal programming and budgetary procedures.

AGREED that implementation of recommendations should be carried out in the same manner as the implementation of courses of action in Outline Plans of Operations.

NOTED that while agency responsibilities for implementing specific recommendations are specified in the paper, the International Cooperation Administration will assume over-all leadership in the implementation of the program inasmuch as it has coordinating responsibility for the Mutual Security Program, and will make reports and recommendations to the Board from time to time as appropriate.

B. DESTRUCTION AUTHORIZED FOR:

Previous draft of this paper dated July 8, 1955.

* "Report to the National Security Council Pursuant to NSC Action 1290-d" revised and concurred in by the Board on Nov. 23, 1955 for transmittal to the NSC (approved version dated 11/23/55).

OCB Secretariat Staff

Attachment:
Subject Paper dated 11/16/55.

OCB File No. 76

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OPERATIONS COORDINATING BOARD
Washington 25, D. C.

November 16, 1955

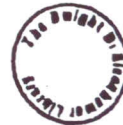
ANALYSIS OF INTERNAL SECURITY SITUATION IN BURMA
(PURSUANT TO NSC ACTION 129Cd) AND RECOMMENDED ACTION

I. Nature of the Security Threat

1. The present regime in Burma, a loose coalition of Socialists and independents headed by Premier U Nu, is endeavoring to follow a neutral course in the East-West struggle. This government, which has been in power since independence was achieved in January 1948, is considered to be stable despite various threats to its security. Chief sources of these threats are two underground Communist parties, remnants of a World War II resistance army, the above-ground Burma Workers and Peasants Party, active elements of four dissident minority groups, and pro-Communists of the Chinese minority. Also contributing to the climate of dissidence is the continuing presence in Northeast Burma of an estimated 2,000 to 3,000 Chinese Nationalist guerrillas. The inability of Communist and minority groups to form effective combinations has enabled the government to survive and gradually increase its strength.

2. Communist insurgency is centered in the Burma Communist Party (BCP), headed by Thakin Than Tun and with an estimated strength of 4,000, and the Communist Party (Burma) (CP(B)), headed by Thakin Soe and having a strength of about 500. The Peoples Volunteer Organization (PVO) White Band, also known as the Peoples Comrade Party (PCP), with an estimated strength of 500, consists of former members of a wartime resistance force. At one time the PCP formed a coalition, the Tripartite Alliance, with the Communist insurgents. Though still in existence on paper, the Alliance is ineffective due to personal jealousies and the separation of operational areas. These illegal groups have been active in Burma since 1948.

3. The Burma Workers and Peasants Party (BWPP), with representation in the Burmese Parliament, is the above-ground Communist Party. Through front organizations it operates in the fields of organized labor, and peasants, youth, and women's groups. BWPP propaganda is directed to maintain constant political pressure on the Government of Burma in favor of Communist policies. Leaders of the BWPP are in active contact with the Soviet and Chinese Communist Embassies.

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4. The minority group activists include elements of the Karens, Mons, Kachins, and Arakanese. The only effective insurgent groups among these are the Karen National Defense Organization (KNDO), headed by Hunter Tha Nwe and General Min Maung and with an estimated effective strength of 3,500 armed men, and the Kachin group, estimated at 800 - 1,000, led by New Seng who with some of his followers is in China. Through their disruptive activities these elements create a climate favorable to the Communists. Subversive activities of Communist China among the border peoples constitute one of the most dangerous threats to Burma's internal security

5. There is a large and growing pro-Communist element among the 300,000 Chinese in Burma. Within this community, the Chinese Communist Embassy has been very active. At the present time from one-half to two-thirds of the Chinese schools, over 25% of the fraternal societies, and one-fifth of Chinese labor unions and trade guilds are Communist directed.

6. Armed insurgency in Burma, while no longer a serious menace, disrupts communications, hampers economic development, and is a drain on financial resources. While little material aid to Communist rebels has been provided from China, the long, rugged, undemarcated border between Burma and China makes the smuggling of personnel and material relatively easy. It is presumed that since 1949 the Chinese Communists have been in close contact with the insurgent illegal BCP, have directed its military and political strategy, and have provided, via the Chinese Communist Embassy, its external communications. The diplomatic representation in Burma of several Communist countries facilitates the entry of propaganda materials, money, and other aids to the Communist cause.

II. Existing Internal Security Forces and National Military Forces

A. Primary Internal Security Forces

7. Burmese police forces numbering about 20,600 under the direction of the Home Minister are composed of the Burma police and the Rangoon city police. The former includes the Civil Police and the Union Military Police. The Civil Police are divided into three sections:

1. The District Police who are responsible for law and order in various districts and towns other than Rangoon;
2. The Criminal Investigation Division whose functions are similar to those of the FBI; and
3. The Special Branch which is concerned with intelligence matters, including censorship and surveillance.

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There is also a 100-man Bureau of Special Investigation responsible to the Prime Minister and concerned with countering internal corruption and graft.

8. The Union Military Police (UMP), has a strength of about 14,000 formed into 22 battalions. The number of companies per battalion varies from four to eight, with approximately 110 men per company. The UMP, with headquarters in major population centers, function primarily as security forces throughout Burma. Their chief weapon is the .303 caliber rifle. Small numbers of Sten guns, Bren guns and other light arms are available. The War Office controls the issue of arms and ammunition to UMP units but they procure clothing, food and other supplies from the Home Ministry. Individual UMP training is conducted at the training battalion located in Rangoon which can handle 1,200 recruits with a possible expansion to 2,000.

B. Military Forces

9. Army: 50,000. Organized into 45 infantry battalions, forming 11 infantry brigades with a T/O strength of 2,900 each; 4 commando battalions; 2 field artillery regiments; 1 tank regiment; and 1 armored car regiment (each regiment equivalent to U.S. battalion). Weapons and vehicles: 538 field artillery and heavy infantry weapons, 22 tanks. The Army units are mainly disposed throughout the central valley between Rangoon and Mandalay and are engaged in operations against insurgents. Army battalion-size units are effective in combatting insurgents within Burma, but are inadequately trained and equipped to engage an organized foreign invading force.

10. The Burma Territorial Force, an irregular force under the direct control of the Army, is estimated at 5,000 men organized into 47 companies, located in principal towns and cities throughout Burma. The strength of each company varies from 100 to 150 men. Weekly drills are the only training. Members are subject to call at any time and may be summoned in cases of insurgent raids or other activities. The War Office furnishes limited supplies of arms, ammunition, clothing and equipment. Members provide additional arms.

11. Navy: 2,180. Has relatively heavy operational requirements to support ground forces against the insurgents. Except for river operations, combat effectiveness and capabilities of the Burmese Navy are negligible. Ships: 1 patrol frigate, 2 amphibious and 10 river patrol craft, 1 mine sweeper, and 1 amphibious vessel in reserve.

12. Air Force: 1,298 (including 35 pilots). Aircraft: 35 propeller driven fighter type, 9 light transports, 17 miscellaneous.

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Tactical support of the ground forces is limited by the comparatively short range of aircraft, the few airfields suitable for this type of operations, and inadequate maintenance.

III. Evaluation of the Internal Security Situation

13. Although Burma has adopted a neutralist foreign policy it has over the past five years shown an increasing awareness of the Communist threat to Burma and a determination to resist it. Its attempts at peaceful co-existence with Communist China have been counterbalanced internally by programs aimed at reducing the Communist subversive threat and by suspicion and fear of Communist China.

14. Although they still have a long way to go, a marked improvement in discipline and esprit de corps, in material, training, and staffing of the military services, and in their anti-Communist orientation has taken place from 1950 to 1955. While the armed forces and the police will continue to have difficulty in wearing down the present dissident groups, they are currently capable of containing these groups and of preventing the overthrow by force of the Burmese Government.

15. Programs aimed at the Communists have included improvement of the Burmese Armed Forces, establishment of control and check points along the Chinese border, registration of the inhabitants of border areas, anti-Communist propaganda programs among the tribal groups, and welfare state economic measures designed to turn the Burmese electorate away from Communists. In addition, legislation based on the Smith Act outlawing certain Communist parties has been enacted, as well as measures to control the influence of Communists in the Chinese overseas schools.

16. The implementation of these programs falls far short of their purpose owing to deficiencies in the public services through which the leaders must work. Their anti-subversive and anti-insurrectionary capabilities could be greatly improved through the provision of technical advice and instruction and of specialized equipment. Moreover, the Government has been handicapped in the employment of its military forces against the Communist insurgents owing to the hostile presence of Chinese Nationalist irregular forces and the Karen insurrectionists.

17. There is also a question as to the effectiveness of the present Government's policy of attempting to contain the Communist insurgent groups and win over their indigenous followers rather than make a forceful effort to suppress these groups.

18. For their part, the Chinese Communists appear to have a peculiarly difficult problem in determining what balance to strike

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between soft and hard tactics, since obvious support of the insurgents within Burma would probably move Burma closer to the West and arouse Indian apprehension of Communist China's intentions. Further there is a possibility that present Burmese Communist leadership is not considered wholly reliable by Moscow and Peiping. It is therefore believed that the Chinese Communists will attempt to pursue a middle course toward Burma, continuing a "peace policy" while fostering subversive activities particularly in the border areas.

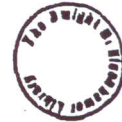
IV. Inventory of Existing U.S. Assistance Programs Bearing on Internal Security

19. Economic and Technical Assistance: U.S. economic and technical assistance to Burma was terminated June 30, 1953 at the request of the Government of the Union of Burma. It is not anticipated that Burma will request the renewal of a grant aid program of the type formerly in operation. However, there have been informal indications that Burma may be interested in obtaining long-term loans from the United States, particularly if repayment could be made in local currency.

20. Military Assistance: In 1950-52 Burma on a one-time basis received grant aid of two million dollars. Since that time there has been no military assistance extended to Burma. By an exchange of notes in July 1953 Burma became eligible for reimbursable military aid and the United States has indicated its willingness to consider any such request from Burma. However, British objections to the sale of specific items of equipment, coupled with the high cost of U.S. materiel, have resulted in no purchases being made by the Burmese. In March 1955 the U.S. informally offered Burma grant military aid for which up to \$20 million had been authorized but the Burmese have indicated that they would be reluctant to sign the requisite military aid agreement because of the anticipated adverse publicity. Instead they have proposed that the U.S. sell them arms at reduced prices without requiring the Burmese to acknowledge openly the receipt of U.S. grant military aid. The U.S. has not as yet offered to make aid available without an aid agreement. Under a courtesy program, a small number of Army officers receive training in U.S. military schools.

21. Information Programs: The USIS program places emphasis on persuading the Burmese that their national interests are best served through cooperation with the U.S. and the free world, and to foster the will to resist Communist pressures. USIS has furnished posters and pamphlets for distribution in the Burmese Government's anti-Communist drive among tribal groups and has furnished materials for the publications of Buddhist organizations in addition to publishing three periodicals. Libraries are maintained at Rangoon and Mandalay and a new center will be established at Moulmein. Message films are

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shown to selected leaders and, through mobile units, to group audiences. The Burma-America Institute conducts the only English teaching program in Burma, teaching about 600 students, including government and military personnel, Buddhist monks and overseas Chinese youth. VOA broadcasts 30 minutes daily in Burmese and VOA local productions and package programs are also placed on Burmese stations. The FY 1955 program is estimated at \$375,600 for expenditures within Burma, plus about \$229,000 for media services and administrative expenses. An expansion of the program to an estimated total of \$604,600 is planned for FY 1956.

V. Political Factors Bearing on Internal Security Programs and Feasibility of U.S. Assistance

22. The Burmese are afraid to take any action which Communist China might interpret as an unfriendly act or use as a pretext for intervention. Suspicious of both East and West and fearful of war the Burmese leaders view efforts to organize security collectively as attempts by one or the other of the power blocs to gain as many military allies as possible. In this they see a danger of world war. They fear that their independence and economic and social progress will be jeopardized if they allow themselves to be drawn into any collective security arrangement, and maintain that they are too weak to make any contribution to collective defense. Despite the foregoing, it should be noted that Burma has consistently supported international cooperation within the framework of the United Nations.

23. The Burmese Government is aware of the importance of strengthening its military forces and police and has been looking into foreign sources of arms and equipment, foreign training facilities, and foreign technical assistance for ordnance manufacture. To avoid too great dependence on any one nation and political commitments, Burma has sought to obtain arms and training services from governments other than the United Kingdom which has been its chief supplier. In this effort, Burma has investigated numerous foreign sources of arms, including Sweden, Czechoslovakia, and France and has bought from Italy, Israel and Yugoslavia. The Burmese Government has at intervals sought arms from the United States and to a limited degree has made use of U.S. police and military training facilities.

24. An obvious obstacle to achievement of greater internal strength in the light of the limitations which policies of neutrality impose is the inability of the economy to support large foreign expenditure for training and arms. The Burmese armed forces have been ready to buy arms from the United States and send men to the United States for training. But the cost has been too high. Our proposal to furnish on a grant basis subject to an aid agreement a portion of what Burma wants to buy from us, in order to reduce the overall cost, has encountered objection because of possible publicity.

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25. There is a real danger that a project for foreign assistance may aggravate rather than diminish causes of internal weakness and division. Not only is the ruling group split on policy respecting United States aid but opposition elements are only too ready to charge the government with subservience to the United States. Consequently, Burmese leaders are extremely nervous over the political capital that can be made by their opponents, the internal stresses which foreign aid issues produce and the fear of provoking Communist China. Elections to parliament now scheduled for April 1956 are not likely to change substantially the composition of the ruling group or produce significant changes in foreign policy. Thus we can expect continued Burmese reluctance to accept from the United States grant aid or technical assistance for Burma's internal security forces except under circumstances which would take into account Burma's sensitivities and special requirements.

VI. Recommendations

1. In view of Burma's sensitivity respecting U.S. aid, the availability of arms from other sources, and the relative degree of stability achieved by the Burmese Government, it is recommended that the U.S. not attempt to launch at this time an extensive program designed to aid Burma in combatting Communist subversion.

2. Despite Burma's efforts and progress to date, the internal security situation in Burma is not fully satisfactory and could deteriorate rapidly at any time that Communist China exercised her latent capabilities to subvert the Burmese Government and attempted to establish a Communist-dominated Burma. Accordingly, consistent with the limitations of responsible agencies, it is recommended that the U.S., using ostensibly commercial channels and civilian contract personnel, initiate a selective program designed to:

a. Assist in improving, through training and the provision of transportation and communications equipment, the effectiveness of the border patrol along the Sino-Burmese border.

b. Strengthen the counter-subversive capabilities of the Bureau of Special Investigation and Special Branch Police by training police officials and providing necessary special police equipment.

c. Enable the Burmese Government to maintain closer surveillance of the Chinese community and Chinese Communist diplomatic and special missions.

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Responsible Agency: State

Cost: Approximately \$1,000,000 (not presently programmed)
 Timing: As soon as feasible.

3. In addition to the above and pursuant thereto, the U. S. Government should:

a. Promptly screen and license for export arms and communications equipment which the Burmese Government may desire to buy from American manufacturers for the Army and Police.

b. Promptly supply available arms and material for the Army and police which the Burmese Government desires to purchase from the United States Government pursuant to the reimbursable aid agreement.

c. Foster, to the extent feasible, requests from the Burmese Government for training in the United States of police, immigration customs, and border patrol personnel, including training in use of equipment supplied by the United States and in methods of detecting subversion and controlling the border and coast line.

Responsible Agencies: State (para. a, b, c)
 ICA (para. c)
 Defense (para. b)

Cost: \$100,000 (not presently programmed)
 Timing: State to approach Burmese Government as soon as possible.

4. Expand the courtesy training program for officers of the Army with emphasis on training in techniques for detecting Communist infiltration of the Armed forces, in anti-guerrilla operations, and in small-unit operations:

Responsible Agencies: State and Defense
 Cost: Estimated Cost: \$50,000, not programmed.
 Timing: State and Defense to coordinate approach as soon as funds are available.

5. Expand the educational exchange program to provide for travel and training of additional Burmese in the United States.

Responsible Agencies: State and USIA
 Cost: Approximately \$100,000
 Timing: FY 1956