

MEMORANDUM

TO : Mr. John W. MacQueen, AD/RA May 5, 1971  
(Interview Date)

FROM : William Dean, ORA/Vte 

SUBJECT: Ban Mak Nao (TE-8493) Refugee Status Report

Note on the interview: The information given here was given by the Nai Tasseng of Tasseng Thai, Chan Phet, his two Naibans, Xieng Outha and Xieng OuanSi, the village's school teacher, Phon Savanh, and a number of villagers. The meeting was also attended by Mr. Outhama, CDA/Thadeus, and Mr. Onchan, RLG/SW Thadeua, and lasted for three and a half hours.

1.) ORIGIN: Tasseng Thai, Muong Pek, Khoueng Xieng Khouang, north and east of RN-71, 10-15 kilometers northeast of L-109 (Muong Kheung, UG-0272), and bordering on the Tasseng Seng area to the east.

Background: Chan Phet the present Tasseng Thai, was appointed in 1969 (after his people were evacuated to Khang Si) by the Chao Muong, Dua Kham. Before this he had been a Naiban. The villagers remember the names of their Nai Tasseng as far back as Xieng Phuang, who served until his death in 1955 when Xieng Boun ~~Than~~ became Nai Tasseng. When Xieng Boun Than died of old age in 1966, the Pathet Lao appointed Thao Kham to fill the post. As far as the villagers know, Thao Kham is still with the P. L. and serving as their Nai Tasseng Thai.

Up until 1960, Tasseng Thai was nominally controlled by the Royal Lao Government. In 1960, according to the villagers, the area came under the control and protection of the Kong Le Neutralists. At this time Chan Phet said the Tasseng was comprised of 32 villages. (In 1958, the village of Ban Choel divided into two: Ban Choel and Ban Buk. It was too long to manage -- running along the length of the Houei Nam Choel for 5 or more kilometers.) In 1964, the Pathet Lao forced Kong Le out and took control of the area. Since this time Chan Phet was unsure if the number of villages in the Tasseng had changed or not. The villages in the Tasseng lost touch with each other somewhat because the P. L. restricted travel among them. The Ban Choel and Buk families, now at Ban Mak Nao, are only a handful (44 families) of the total Tasseng Thai population. The Nai Tasseng and the villagers agreed on an estimate of "over 300" families still remaining in their native villages in Tasseng Thai. Some of these villages, located by the refugees on a 1:500,000 map (Sheet 5648 III) are:

<u>Village</u>	<u>Map Coordinates</u>
Ban Thoat	UG-076784
Ban Nam Hang	UG-075827
Ban Kho	UG-103818
Ban Yal	UG-119830

The Evacuation: There were never any P. L. soldiers stationed at Ban Choei or Buk. The nearest troops were in a camp some distance away. During the retaking of the PDJ area the RLG forces reached the villagers on October 14, 1969. On that same day they collected their belongings and walked to Ban Le (UG-140790) in Tasseng Seng. On the fourth day of their stay here they were evacuated by FAR chopper to Khang Si (Muong Phan, L-106, TG-9950). They stayed at the refugee collection center there until February 7, 1970 when they were flown to Vientiane and brought from there by trucks to Ban Mak Nao. Twelve of the 44 families did not come with this main group. Because one or more member of each family had been taken to the Sam Thong hospital for treatment, the entire family had gone along and established a household there. They did not move to Ban Mak Nao until December, 1970.

The character of the Nai Tasseng Thai: Chan Phet is a friendly person and appears to be well liked by his villagers. He showed an understanding of the needs and problems of his people.

2) ETHNIC GROUP: Lao Puan.

3) LEADERS: (Chan Phet)

4) CENSUS:

<u>Village</u>	<u>Map</u>	<u>Natban</u>	<u>Fam.</u>	<u>Pop.</u>
Ban Choei	(UG-110743)	Xieng Outha	20	84
Ban Buk	(UG-125746)	Xieng Ouan Si	24	119
		Total	44	203

Note: This does not include the family of Tit Kham Phan, 4 persons, which arrived from Phu Vieng on April 30 (by way of LS-272) "to visit his mother and father".

5) EDUCATION: Ban Mak Nao has a 2-room temporary school constructed of bamboo and thatch with plastic sheeting. This building is now unusable in a rain because termite damage has caused the roof to sag, producing numerous leaks. A permanent school, "with a galvanized sheet roof" will be constructed

by the villagers sometime after they move into their permanent village site -- possibly next month, "after we finish planting our upland rice".

The single teacher at the refugees' school, Mr. Phou Savanh, is Vientiane Lao -- hired and paid by the RLG Ministry of Education.

The school is attended by 30 students as follows:

P. 1	15
P. 2	9
P. 3	<u>6</u>
Total	30

Mr. Phou Savanh and the Nai Tasseng estimated 14-18 children who could attend were not in school, but said these were mostly children who had just reached school age but preferred to wait another year.

Teaching Aids Requested:

1. Blackboards -- have 2 and want 2 more
2. Notebooks -- received 2 distributions (1 and 3 months ago) but need more.
3. Textbooks -- teacher has complete set but students have never received books.

6) HEALTH: When the refugees first arrived at Mak Nao they were serviced by a "Christian" team of medics -- possibly ACS. Now, however, a Dooley Foundation truck brings a medical team every other Friday. This visit usually coincides with the arrival of the Dooley Hospital Boat. The villagers reported they were always given enough medicine and they found the x-ray unit on the boat interesting and impressive. Their most common ailment was colds, sore throats, and coughs from the dry season dust. This affected children much more than other parts of the population. The seriously ill are taken to the hospital in Vientiane on the Dooley boat.

7) LIVESTOCK AND AGRICULTURE:

Rice: The Ban Mak Nao refugees planted a crop of upland rice soon after they arrived (February 7, 1970). The 32 families worked together to clear and burn a single 12 rai large area. The villagers received rice seed from the government which was a mix of several upland varieties. They found it acceptable. The harvest was estimated at 7-8 full bags of unmilled rice. This rice has been kept for seed. The 12 families who arrived from the Sam Thong area in December, 1970 had no seed. The government has

already given them 3-1/2 bags of unmilled rice, but the Nai Tasseng, Chan Phet, says they will need 8 more bags -- enough for each family to have 50 kilos of seed. This year the Ban Mak Nao families estimate they have cleared from 3-5 rai apiece for planting. Some families have already started planting.

Pest Damage: Villagers reported an "ordinary" infestation of rats last year but had serious problems with grasshoppers and a narrow-bodied beetle about 1/2" long. They did not receive any Hudson sprayers or SEVIN insecticide last year. This year they requested 4 sprayers and insecticide.

Vegetables: Villagers received 2 distributions of seeds, all of which they planted. The soil at Mak Nao is good and the gardens grew well, but because the villagers had no sprayers or insecticide the major part of their vegetables was destroyed. (This varied somewhat with the different varieties planted.)

More vegetable seeds were requested. As in almost every other village interviewed, the Mak Nao people said the best single vegetable was phak phakat kiaw. The reasons given for this were:

1. Versatile in use: soups, fried, pickled (raw).
2. Easy to plant and care for.
3. Comes up quickly and grows a long time without "bolting" in hot weather.

(The villagers pick the outer leaves off the plants and allow them to continue growing rather than harvesting and eating the entire plant.)

All of the different varieties of seed received were considered good, although the villagers had been unfamiliar with some varieties before coming to Mak Nao. As in other villages, they named green onions and garlic as important vegetables although these varieties are not distributed.

Livestock: The most usual animals purchased for raising were chickens although a large percentage -- some said a majority -- died within several months from purchase of disease. The village also has "6 ducks and 1 pig".

Silk: Historically, the Tasseng Thai families now at Mak Nao were -- like other Lao Puan on the PDJ -- silk raisers and weavers. They still have some silk dresses and silk-decorated cotton sashes produced

in their old homes sometime prior to 1952-53. At this time fighting broke out between the French colonial forces and the Lao resistance fighters (Lao Issara) which made life difficult enough for the villagers that they ceased tending their mulberry trees ("kohk moan") and raising silkworms ("maeng moan"). Now Ban Mak Nao has been chosen as one of seven refugee villages in a pilot project conceived by USAID/AGR to reinstate silk production as a cash crop, taking advantage of the demand of the expanding Thai silk industry for raw silk.

Xieng Khouang: In their old homes the Nai Tasseng said there was no insect problem and consequently no need for insecticide. All crops grew easily and it was always simple to support a family. Here in Mak Nao there are more mosquitoes and grasshoppers than they have ever seen before.

Peppers: Villagers said the pepper seeds they were given were for a different variety than they had grown in Xieng Khouang. It grows very large and luxuriantly but produces very few peppers. Their native variety grew very low to the ground and was covered with fruit.

8) COMMODITY DISTRIBUTION: (44 families approved)

Rice: Previously 33 100 kilo bags per month -- now 21 bags with 16 bags of noodles.

PL-480: Noodles: The refugees said they prepare the new noodles just like "khao bun" (the white spaghetti-like noodles made from rice by the Lao and traditionally eaten with a meat sauce and leaves). Most people of the 203 found the noodles acceptable, but a few got sick after eating them. The symptoms were not all identical. Some people got slight indigestion; others found the noodles "violated the spirit (phra) of their stomach". The villagers interviewed claimed 3 people had experienced more severe symptoms after eating noodles. A 10-year old boy, a 41-year old woman, developed edema from the waist down, particularly in the lower legs, as well as in the face and reportedly experienced "eye trouble" as well. These persons were all unrelated and did not eat from the same pot. The Tasseng said his people were not sure the food would be enough because the noodles were not substituted on a direct weight exchange but rather by computed food value. He said they would eat the noodles and rice and "see how they last", but that they might need more rice at the end of the month.

and a 72-year old woman

Other PL-480 Foods: Of the PL-480 foods in general, the Tasseng said, "we like them well enough". They receive 4 cases of salad oil, 9 bags of bulgur - although they have gotten none for 2 months now, 9 each of "white" and yellow cornmeal, etc.

Home Ec. Demonstrations: About 2 months ago 2 women and 1 man came from the RLG/AGR-Thadeua office and demonstrated preparation of PL-480 foods. The villagers agreed they had done a good job of instruction. They showed:

1. Mixing CSM, water, and milk powder to make a batter for fried bananas.
2. Making "khaw biak" from bulgur with meat scraps and vegetables.
3. Mixing powdered milk to drink.

The villagers use the first recipe most often.

Salt: 2 bags/month.

Household Items: The Tasseng said that mosquito nets were a necessity here "especially for the children". He said all the previously distributed nets "lasted for 3 months if we were careful" but now are disintegrating. He asked for a new distribution of nets -- if possible more durable ones than before.

Garden Tools: The USAID-supplied "Lamp brand" mattocks ("chok") were of such poor quality as to be unusable. They are too thin and soft. He gave 3 old, broken ones as samples. No Lao axes (kwan) or Lao hoes (siem) have been received.

Blacksmith Tools: (No "master-smiths" in the village.) Ban Mak Nao has received 2 sets of blacksmith tools, except for the heavy hammer of which they only got one & a Tru-temper 4-pound sledge.

Railroad Rail Anvils: As in a number of other villages interviewed, these villagers said the railroad rail anvils supplied by USAID are difficult to use. They said this is because they are impossible to anchor like the 155 mm. howitzer bullets. The bullets (with the shell and powder charge removed) are driven point-first into a log; when village smiths pound iron on them they do not bounce and jump, wasting the force of the hammer and hurting the arm of the smith.

9) ADDITIONAL REQUESTS: DDT or other insecticide suitable for spraying their houses to keep down ants, bed-bugs, crabs, lice, ticks, and mosquitoes.

ORA:WDean:rviv:5/13/71

DIST: OD, DD, PHD, AGR(Mr. Rasmussen), ORA(Mr. Williamson),  
FFP(Mr. Sprowls, ORA(file), C&R, EDU(Mr. Woodson)