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DOMESTIC COLLECTION SERVICE

Foreign Intelligence Information Report

DIRECTORATE OF
OPERATIONS

REPORT NO.

19 FEB 1980

COUNTRY Laos/Thailand

DATE DISTR.

SUBJECT 1. Poisoning of Hmong Refugees
with Contaminated Pork
2. Secondhand Account of Poison
Gas Attacks
(DOI: May 1977 - April 1979)

1. Poisoned or contaminated pork was fed to Hmong refugees at a displaced persons camp located near Nonggal (phonetic) in north central Thailand on 4 and 5 April 1979. The pork was given the Hmong refugees by Thai camp officials and Laotian refugees who worked in the camp. The hogs were slaughtered and the meat distributed from a central abattoir at the camp, but only the Hmong refugees were poisoned. There were large numbers of Laotians at the camp who ate from the same source, but the Laotians were not affected. Of the 3,000 Hmong refugees who ate the poisoned pork, approximately 500 were hospitalized suffering from vomiting, severe diarrhea, impairment of vision and persistent drowsiness. Eight children and five adults died from after-effects of the poisoning.

2. The hogs were slaughtered at night, and the contaminated pork was eaten early the following morning. The first victims ate the pork at about 0900, and the symptoms of poisoning noted above began to appear about two hours later. Everyone who ate the pork was affected. A portion equivalent to about two tablespoonful in volume was consumed by one victim, who felt about two hours afterwards that his head was very heavy, his muscles were very tense, as were his eyes which felt as though they would pop out of his head. He had a severe headache and felt very dizzy, and his vision was blurred. Persons who consumed the

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poisoned pork in the form of broth containing small pieces of the meat were less seriously affected than those who ate the meat after it had been chopped and stir-fried. Those Hmongs who ate preparations which included blood from the contaminated hogs were the most severely affected of all.

3. There were two other incidents of suspected poisoning or intentional contaminations of food in the Hmong camp at about the same time as the poisoned pork episode. In one instance, camp authorities attempted to feed the Hmongs a poisoned vegetable. The vegetable, a form of Chinese cabbage, tasted bitter. When the Hmongs complained to the camp manager (a Thai) they were told not to eat the vegetable. In another incident, the Hmongs were given vegetables which had been coated with a flour-like powder, which also tasted bitter. By this time very cautious, the Hmongs refused to eat the vegetables.

4. Hmong refugees at the camp told of attacks against them in Laos which involved poison gas. The reported attacks took place southeast of Long Xhien, beginning in May 1977. Two agents were used in the gas attacks, one colored green and the other red. The green agent was less dangerous than the red, in that the symptoms induced by it were less intense and of shorter duration. The symptoms induced by both agents were similar in nature if not intensity. The agents were delivered from a single-engine propeller-driven aircraft of the type used for reconnaissance by the forces of former General V A N G Pao. The agents were contained in a box-like object which was dropped from the plane. The box exploded about 100 to 150 meters above the ground, releasing a cloud of colored gas which settled slowly to the ground. The agent was effective for about one week after it settled on the ground. Once on the ground it was invisible. The box-like container for the agent measured approximately 15 by 50 centimeters, and was made from stiff, tightly rolled paper. The chemical agents were the weapons most feared by the Hmongs. If hit directly by a mixture of the green and red gas, victims could die within two or three hours. The green gas alone did not cause death. There were no instances described of attacks involving the use of only red gas; whenever the red agent was present, the green agent was also employed.

5. Symptoms exhibited by victims of the green and red gas attacks included great tension throughout the body, and the eyes felt hard. There was drowsiness, and when the red agent was used, severe dysentery resulted.

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