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CHRONOLOGICAL SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT

EVENTS CONCERNING THE LAOTIAN CRISIS

SIXTH INSTALLMENT:

1 MAY 1962 TO 31 JULY 1962

Historical Division
Joint Secretariat
Joint Chiefs of Staff

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(Note: Parenthetical references in text refer to items by date only, not by item number. Thus a reference to item 29, 31 May indicates an item of date 29, 31 May.)

MAY

Summary of Major Subjects

1. During May, and particularly after the Communist attack on Nam Tha in the early part of the month, the US intensified its diplomatic efforts to achieve a free, neutral, and independent Laos by exerting pressures on the three Princes to negotiate for the formation of a coalition government. The US brought further pressures to bear on Lao political figures through British, French, and Thai diplomats.

a. US diplomatic actions.

Nos. 1, 2, 4, 5, 9, 12, 14, 17, 18, 26-28, 30, 31, 33-35, 39, 44, 46-50, 52-55, 61, 63, 67, 68, 71-73, 78-80, 95, 96.

b. British and French diplomatic actions.

Nos. 2, 7, 35, 52, 63, 67, 68, 77, 96, 97.

c. Thai diplomatic actions.

Nos. 2, 5, 27, 30, 47, 64, 80.

2. In the first week of May PL/Viet Minh forces attacked FAR forces at Nam Tha, and inflicted a decisive defeat on the FAR. American and Allied efforts to re-establish the cease-fire proved fruitless, as did the attempts to secure Soviet intervention to bring about PL withdrawal from the Nam Tha area.

a. Nam Tha attack.

Nos. 13, 16, 19, 20, 23, 25, 26, 30-33, 36, 39, 46, 50, 64, 69, 75, 79, 82, 94.

b. US and Allied efforts to re-establish the cease-fire.

Nos. 14, 20, 27, 30, 33, 34, 38, 47, 49, 54, 55, 61, 69, 75, 77, 92, 94, 97.

c. Negotiations with the Soviets to achieve PL withdrawal.

Nos. 14, 17, 30, 61, 92, 97.

3. The debacle

3. The debacle of Nam Tha raised the question of a partitioned Laos and the possibility of additional wide scale PL/Viet Minh attacks in Laos. Even more serious, however, was the danger that Thailand and other Southeast Asia countries might also fall under Communist control. This threat led the US to deploy troops to Thailand and the Seventh Fleet to the Gulf of Siam. At the same time the US reviewed SEATO Plan 5 and found it adequate to cope with the situation; the US also asked the SEATO nations to join it in deploying military contingents to Thailand, and several did.

a. Partition of Laos and further PL/Viet Minh attacks.

Nos. 3, 24, 26, 30, 36, 40, 46, 47, 51, 52, 60, 64, 75, 76, 78, 82, 91, 92, 94, 96, 97, 99.

b. US military actions concerning Laos.

Nos. 7, 11, 21, 28-30, 36, 37, 39, 42, 46, 48, 51, 57, 58, 66, 75, 80-82, 85-88, 91, 94.

c. US actions in Thailand.

Nos. 15, 21, 29, 45-49, 52, 55, 59, 61, 64, 65, 70, 74, 77-79, 83-87, 90.

d. Defense of Thailand.

Nos. 23, 30, 45, 47, 55, 56, 59, 84, 87, 94.

e. SEATO.

Nos. 30, 34, 37, 47, 49, 52, 55, 59.

4. After the fall of Nam Tha, the US made every effort to keep the Nam Tha issue out of the UN, and to arrange for ICC investigation of the incident. At the same time the US prodded the RLG to regain as much of the territory lost as possible, but to no avail. Also, the US considered military and economic sanctions against the RLG, and planned a reorganization of the RLG and the removal of Phoumi from the political scene.

a. Nam Tha incident (UN and ICC).

Nos. 14, 18, 30, 31, 34, 54, 69, 95, 98.

b. Recovery

b. Recovery of lost territory.

Nos. 42, 46, 51, 69, 75, 82, 91, 94, 95.

c. US military and economic sanctions.

Nos. 2, 5, 10, 12, 27, 28, 30, 31, 44, 48, 53, 57, 58, 80.

d. Reorganization of the RLG and removal of Phoumi from political scene.

Nos. 22, 28, 30, 39, 44, 48, 52, 53, 63, 64, 67, 68, 78, 80, 96.

5. Throughout the month Souvanna attempted to achieve a peaceful solution to the Laotian crisis based primarily on RLG acceptance of his Troika proposals. In this same period the RLG's "goodwill" missions failed to achieve any substantial support for Phoumi, and this failure helped make the RLG more amenable to the Troika proposals.

a. Souvanna's Troika proposals.

Nos. 4, 5, 18, 27, 31, 35, 60, 89, 93.

b. Good-will missions.

Nos. 1, 2, 9, 31, 43, 62, 93.

The US

1 May 62 The US Embassy at Seoul advised the Government of South Korea, in connection with the Phoumi-

No. 1 Boun Oum visit, that the US had the right to expect its Asian allies, including the ROK, to support American policy toward Laos. The Government of the ROK replied that it would not take any action which might be "embarassing" to the US.

In a later discussion the Korean Foreign Minister told the US Ambassador that the Korean Government would publicly adopt a noncommittal position in handling the Laotian good will mission, but that privately Korean officials would urge Phoumi and his group to accept the US policy of a negotiated settlement.

(Following Phoumi's departure, the Korean Foreign Minister told the US Ambassador that the Republic of Korea had rejected Phoumi's request for technical assistance and military goods.)

(S) Msg, Seoul to SecState, 1139, 2 May 62.
(C) Msg, Seoul to SecState, 1153, 5 May 62.

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1 May 62 Ambassador Brown recommended that the US not initiate military sanctions against Phoumi

No. 2 on 7 May (see item 19 April 1962), since he believed chances of sincere negotiations would be improved if the US followed Thai advice and exercised patience, postponing sanctions at least until the end of the month. He based his recommendation on the following reasoning:

reasoning: the US 7 May deadline for the imposition of military sanctions was contingent upon Phoumi's implementation of his King's government scheme by 11 May. Phoumi, however, had categorically assured Brown that no such action would be taken prior to the end of May. Since Thai leaders had reported definite progress in their attempts to persuade Phoumi to negotiate, imposition of sanctions on 7 May might undo all their efforts. Ambassador Brown was also convinced that the element of "saving face" was an important one in dealing with Phoumi and must constantly be borne in mind, along with the RLG's legitimate concern over receiving appropriate assurance from Souvanna concerning the latter's policies and intentions in the new government.

Ambassador Brown also reported that the suspension of US financial aid was beginning to make itself increasingly felt. Sisouk admitted that it was becoming more apparent to Phoumi that the RLG could not survive without US financial assistance. Moreover, US moral and political pressures were driving home to Phoumi a sense of isolation. This feeling should increase as the Lao goodwill missions continued to be unproductive. Of less importance but still worth noting, the Ambassador believed, was the disposition on the part of certain deputies in the National Assembly to take some kind of initiative in the coming session to redress the situation and restore good relations with the US.

Brown

Brown warned that the French and British Ambassadors would undoubtedly present contrary recommendations to their governments. They saw Phoumi's overtures to Souvanna as tactical measures designed to avoid the imposition of military sanctions by 7 May and, perhaps, as an attempt to place responsibility for any further delays on Souvanna. Neither Ambassador believed that further pressure on Phoumi was likely to stiffen his position and stop any incipient cooperation on his part. The British Ambassador continued to believe that the military respite granted by Souphanouvong was contingent upon the imposition of military sanctions by the US and that the Soviet acquiescence in delay was based on the same premise. Ambassador Brown was not sure that such a thesis could be supported. There was no evidence that the Communists were interested in the US sanctions against Phoumi, let alone that they were preparing for a large-scale offensive. In fact, it was possible that Phoumi, upon realizing his situation, might be willing to work toward a Souvanna solution if he could get adequate safeguards, and sufficiently "save face" at the same time.

(The President decided on 2 May that in view of Ambassador Brown's recommendations, military sanctions would not be imposed on Phoumi.)

Ambassador

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1470, 1 May 62, JCS to CINCPAC, 4338, 3 May 62.

1 May 62

No. 3

Ambassador Brown reported to the Secretary of State that, contrary to US military advice, Phoumi had reinforced Nam Tha (see item 30 April 1962). Phoumi, who had insisted that politically he could not afford to lose the area, apparently believed that his troops there were faced with superior enemy force totaling about 11 battalions. The US mission admitted that a substantial number of well-trained North Vietnamese troops threatened Nam Tha but discounted Phoumi's estimates.

Later that day the Department of State expressed its concern to Ambassador Brown over Phoumi's repeated rejection of US military advice. Moreover, the Department was not convinced that Phoumi's motives were primarily directed toward holding Nam Tha but suspected that he hoped to provoke Communist action which in turn would provide another pretext for avoiding negotiations or involving the US. Ambassador Brown was requested to submit a list of cases in which Phoumi disregarded or acted contrary to US military advice since the cease-fire of May, 1961. The Department also wanted to know how many FAR battalions should be stationed at Nam Tha.

(On 4 May, Ambassador Brown reported that no record had been kept of Phoumi's rejections

rejections of US military advice but listed as the most notable examples Phoumi's refusal to accept the repeated US advice against committing additional forces to Nam Tha and his insistence on maintaining larger troop forces than the US deemed wise. Basically the problem was a "major difference of psychology" between Phoumi and MAAG Laos; Phoumi stressed the size of his forces as the key to combat effectiveness of the FAR, and the MAAG stressed training and leadership. Ambassador Brown also observed that an estimate of FAR force levels appropriate to the Nam Tha area depended on the concept of the mission, a source of disagreement between Phoumi and the US. In light of their understanding of the situation, however, the US military believed "three good battalions" were probably all that should be committed.)

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1467, 1 May 62, 1485, 4 May 62; SecState to Vientiane, 932, 1 May 62.

1-4 May 62

No. 4

The US Minister to France reported that Souvanna, in response to Phoumi's offer to resume tripartite negotiations, had refused to return to Laos until the Prince's colleagues in Khang Khay, among them Khamsouk, had reported that the RLG proposals were acceptable. The Department of State replied that since Phoumi was not likely to deal with Khamsouk, who was believed to be under

Pathet

Pathet Lao influence, the US Minister should impress upon Souvanna that the resumption of negotiations depended upon the Prince's personal response to Phoumi's offer. On 3 May, the Minister conveyed this message to Souvanna, who replied to the RLG proposal on the following day.

Souvanna's reply called for the formation of a coalition government in which the Ministries of Defense, Interior, and Foreign Affairs would be controlled by the neutrals. One technical and one political Ministry, however, would be given to both the Pathet Lao and to Phoumi's right-wing followers. Souvanna also said that if the RLG accepted this arrangement, he would renew his proposal that each of the key Ministries have three Secretaries of State so that the Left, the Right, and the Neutrals would have a voice in all major decisions. Finally, Souvanna pledged that he would do everything possible to prevent Laos from becoming a Communist state.

(S) Msgs, Paris to SecState, 5129, 1 May 62; 5138, 2 May 62; 5195, 4 May 62; 5179, 4 May 62; 5269, 9 May 62. (S) Msg, SecState to Paris, 5811, 1 May 62.

1-4 May 62

No. 5

Sarit informed Ambassador Young that he had reached an understanding with Boun Oum and Phoumi by which the RLG would accept Souvanna as Premier of a coalition in which the troika

troika principle was applied only to the Ministries of Defense and Interior. In return, Souvanna, who had not yet been consulted, was to agree to a cabinet composed of four members of the Pathet Lao, four of the RLG, and an eight-man center group, half of which would be chosen from among Souvanna's followers. Souvanna also would be called upon to give assurances that he would not allow the Communists to take control of Laos.

In the meantime, the US should assign a special representative to assist the RLG both in the preliminary diplomatic maneuvering and in the subsequent negotiations. The US, in addition, was to help persuade Souvanna to return from Paris and to resume cash grants as soon as Phoumi and Souvanna had reached a firm agreement. The Thai Prime Minister also believed that the US Government should offer Phoumi certain assurances against the possibility that Souvanna might fail to execute his part of the bargain.

On 2 May, Under Secretary Ball, having accepted Young's recommendations, authorized the Ambassador to express the President's appreciation for Sarit's efforts. Turning to the details of the agreement, Ball pointed out that any assurances by Souvanna should be obtained through negotiations and not be made a condition for the RLG's surrender of the Defense and Interior portfolios.

portfolios. The Under Secretary also asked for a clarification of the type of assurances advocated by Sarit. He added, however, that he could see no advantage in assigning, at this time, a representative to assist the RLG negotiators. Finally, the Under Secretary advised that the threat to invoke military sanctions after 7 May would be held in abeyance for the time being (see item 1 May 1962).

Ambassador Young on 3 May found Thanat in "one of his fractious moods," when the US diplomat asked for the additional information sought by Under Secretary Ball. The Thai Foreign Minister suggested that the US assure the RLG that it would "'step in'" if Souvanna should yield to Communist pressure. This American action, Thanat observed, might consist of "military, economic, and vigorous diplomatic support." After criticizing the activities of Western Ambassadors in influencing RLG policy, Thanat warned that Thailand would not "automatically sign" a Geneva Agreement.

In a message dated 4 May, Under Secretary Ball advised Young that US financial aid could not be resumed until Phoumi had proved his good faith. Although the US would provide both diplomatic and economic support to a Lao coalition, the President could not give the Thai Government a "blank check on military intervention."

Young

Young, moreover, was instructed that Phoumi's new approach to Souvanna, together with his abandonment of the King's government scheme, had justified the continuation of military aid to the FAR. Yet, because the threat of military sanctions had spurred Phoumi to action, Young was to go no farther than to indicate that these sanctions were being held in abeyance. Finally, Ball suggested that the Ambassador, for the present, avoid discussing the Geneva Agreements with Thanat.

(S) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 1691, 1 May 62, 1701, 3 May 62. (S) Msgs, SecState to Bangkok, NIACT 1687, 2 May 62; PRIORITY 1700, 4 May 62.

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2 May 62

No. 6

At a briefing on both Laos and Viet Nam, the President made no major decisions relating to the Laotian crisis. He did, however, express a desire to see all Department of State cables being drafted to advise Ambassadors Brown and Young on the current negotiations in Laos.

(S) JCS 2343/120, 19 Jun 62; JMF 5410 (3 May 62).

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2 May 62

No. 7

[redacted] the expansion of the Kha ADC units (see item 6 March 1962) was progressing at a rapid rate, and that 10 of the authorized 12 companies had already been recruited. [redacted] all 12 units would be operational by 30 June.

The

[redacted]

[redacted]

3 May 62 The FAR reported the capture of Muong Sing by a two Chinese Communist battalion force.

No. 8 According to the FAR, the Chinese force had turned the town over to a PL battalion and then returned to Yunnan. CHMAAG verified the capture of Muong Sing on the following day; but he noted the FAR charge of Chinese Communist participation had not yet been proved (see item 12 May 1962).

[redacted]

(S) Msgs, CHMAAG to CINCPAC, DA IN 226430, 3 May 62 DA IN 227094, 5 May 62.

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4 May 62 Acting upon Secretary Rusk's 28 April instructions (see item), Ambassador Nolting

No. 9 approached President Diem concerning the impending visit to South Viet Nam by Boun Oum and Phoumi. On the whole, Diem's attitude

was

was "realistic but sorrowful." He said that, although he had neither the means nor the desire to change US policy, he did not share the American confidence in Souvanna. The President agreed, however, to state the US position toward Laos and to inquire if Boun Oum or Phoumi could offer an alternative course. Diem also said he would consider giving his visitors a "shove" in what Nolting considered to be the right direction.

(The joint communique issued on 7 May merely reaffirmed the desire of the two nations for peace and declared that the Communists should prove their good will by ending the hostilities in Laos.)

(S) Msg, Saigon to SecState, 1409, 4 May 62. (U) Msg, Saigon to SecState, 1413, 7 May 62.

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4 May 62

No. 10

By the transfer of $59,000 from AID to the Department of the Navy, the US Government transferred fiscal accountability for the MAAG Laos civic action program among the Kha to the Department of Defense, as recommended by CHMAAG Laos and CINCPAC (see item 6 April 1962).

(C) Msg, OSD to CINCPAC, DEF 913750, 4 May 62.

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4 May 62

No. 11

CHMAAG Laos published Annex T to his OPLAN 63-62 providing for the withdrawal of the MAAG from Laos (see item 30 March 1962).

Fulfilling

Fulfilling a requirement imposed by CINCPAC (see item 28 March 1962), Annex T provided for the formation in Bangkok, after the withdrawal of the MAAG from Laos, of an "adequate cadre" for the "quick reestablishment" of MAAG Laos in the event of a rapid deterioration of the situation there

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(TS) Annex T (Continuity of Operations) to MAAG Laos OPLAN 63-62, 4 May 62; OSD(ISA) FER/SEA Br. Files.

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4 May 62

No. 12

During the NATO Ministerial Meeting at Athens, Secretary Rusk characterized the Lao situation as "troubled and dangerous." He added, however, that the goal of a neutral and independent Laos could be achieved if an agreement on the establishment of a coalition government could be reached quickly. Secretary Rusk laid the greatest share of blame for the failure of the Lao factions to reach agreement on the obstructionist attitude of the RLG. He noted in this connection that the US was doing its best to persuade Phoumi to negotiate seriously.

The Secretary also said that, if a successful coalition were not formed, the presence of Western forces might be required to prevent Laos, and eventually the other countries of SEA, from falling to the Communist forces. He observed, however, that Western intervention was difficult geographically and carried with it the danger of escalation. The most significant difficulty,

difficulty, the Secretary thought, was the fact that there was a "lack of real concern for independence by the Lao people themselves." The Secretary concluded by saying that although a coalition government offered the best solution to the Laos problem, it was possible that the West might in the future be faced with the question of putting forces into Laos or increasing aid to that country.

(S) Msg, Athens to SecState, SECTO 43, 5 May 62.

5-7 May 62

No. 13

An unidentified enemy force of several battalions launched a heavy attack against the FAR position at Nam Tha. CHMAAG reported that the FAR reserve, consisting of the 1st Parachute Battalion and one volunteer company, had been committed to block enemy forces approaching from the vicinity of Muong Sing but had been gradually forced back on Nam Tha. The city had soon come under coordinated attack from the northwest, north, and east. On the morning of 6 May, after destroying their 105 mm howitzers and an unknown amount of ammunition, the FAR withdrew to the southwest toward Ban Houei Sai. US training teams withdrew to Luang Prabang.

Also on 6 May the CHMAAG transmitted to the JCS, at their urgent request, an assessment of the battle by his senior adviser

adviser in the Nam Tha area. The senior adviser described the FAR defense of Nam Tha against a highly organized, fully coordinated, and skillfully executed attack by Viet Minh and PL units as "vigorous," and surpassing any previous FAR effort.

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1508, 7 May 62, 1513, 8 May 62. CHMAAG Laos to JCS, DA IN 227275, 6 May 62 and DA IN 227338, 7 May 62; JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 4379, 6 May 62.

6-8 May 62

No. 14

George Ball, Acting Secretary of State, suggested that the Secretary of State, who was in Athens, ask Lord Home to speak to Foreign Minister Gromyko in an effort to persuade the Soviets to secure the immediate evacuation of Nam Tha by Communist forces and arrange for the ICC to make an on-the-spot investigation of the incident. Ball also expressed the hope that Home would instruct UK Co-Chairman MacDonald to see Souphanouvong or to take some other action that would bring about these results.

Ball further suggested that Secretary Rusk instruct Ambassador Thompson to outline orally to Gromyko US views on the Communist action at Nam Tha. In a draft message, included for Thompson's use, the Acting Secretary indicated that the US had pressured Phoumi very strongly to join in responsible discussions with other Lao factions, and that in the last few days the Western Ambassadors at Vientiane had reported that these efforts were on the verge of success. Gromyko also was to be told that the US was disappointed to learn that Communist forces had seized

Nam

Nam Tha in flagrant disregard of the cease-fire agreements, and in the face of the nearly successful efforts to resume negotiations. The Ambassador also was to point out that the RLG could not be expected to negotiate under military pressure. Recalling Gromyko's former assurances that the PL would not exploit the cease-fire situation, the Ambassador was to request Gromyko to use his influence to obtain immediate evacuation of Nam Tha by the Communist forces.

Ball concluded his message to Secretary Rusk by indicating that he was considering calling on Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin to reinforce Thompson's presentation to Gromyko. (See items 9 and 15 May 1962.)

On 8 May, UK Ambassador Roberts and US Ambassador Thompson presented to Gromyko the line of argument suggested by Under Secretary Ball. In both interviews, the Soviet Foreign Minister maintained that the attack upon Nam Tha had been provoked by Phoumi. In essence, Gromyko reiterated the Soviet desire for a peaceful settlement and advised the West to exert stronger pressure on Phoumi.

(S) Msgs, Acting SecState to Athens, TOSEC, NIACT 97, 6 May 62; Moscow to SecState, 2881, 8 May 62; 2883, 8 May 62.

7-8 May 62 — The JCS informed CINCPAC that, as a result of recent events in Laos, the US Army battle group

No. 15 — (-) then engaged in training exercises in Thailand would remain in that country pending further developments.

developments. Accordingly, CHJUSMAG Thailand was to make the necessary arrangements with the Thai Minister of Defense and the US Ambassador to Thailand which would enable the American forces to continue training exercises beyond the 9 May termination date of Exercise AIR COBRA. CHJUSMAG Thailand also was to show this JCS message to General Lemnitzer, who, along with Secretary McNamara, was en route to Bangkok.

On the following day, CINCPAC further advised CHJUSMAG Thailand that, subject to coordination with Ambassador Young, the presence of the US battle group should be explained as an extension of AIR COBRA. The US general was to avoid any comments which might lead to press speculation linking the presence of American troops to the recent developments in Laos. CHJUSMAG, also on 8 May, reported to CINCPAC that the Thai Minister of Defense and the US Ambassador concurred in the decision to retain the American troops.

(S) Msgs, JCS to CINCPAC, 4407, 7 May 62, ADMINO CINCPAC to CHJUSMAG Thailand, DA IN 227563, 080315Z May 62. CHJUSMAG Thailand to CINCPAC, DA IN 227595, 080615Z May 62.

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8 May 62

No. 16

Analyzing the attack on Nam Tha for the JCS, CINCPAC termed it a departure from the earlier Communist strategy of "limited but constant encroachment" of the cease-fire line. The Pathet Lao and Viet Minh apparently

apparently had ignored Souvanna's supposed authority and were now attempting a military solution to the present political stalemate. The enemy might have thought that a crushing defeat of the elite forces at Nam Tha would cause wholesale defection and consequent capitulation of the FAR elsewhere in Laos; and the attack had certainly lowered severely the morale of the FAR. CINCPAC expected the Communists to pursue the retreating FAR column in an attempt to eliminate all RLG influence in northern Laos and to increase their pressures against the FAR in central and southern Laos.

[redacted]

(S) Msgs, ADMINO CINCPAC to JCS, 082151Z May 62, [redacted]

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8 May 62 The President met with White House, Defense, and JCS representatives and decided that:

No. 17 1. The Department of State should inform Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin of "the information which we have on the situation in Laos." The Soviet Ambassador should be told of the "deep concern" of the US over the situation, particularly in the light of information suggesting that Souvanna had not been consulted about the attack and that forces responsive to him had apparently not participated in the attack.

2. Ambassador

2. Ambassador Brown should emphasize to Phoumi that the Nam Tha debacle was "exactly what we had told him to expect as a result of his intransigence in the negotiations." US military personnel in Laos should be sure to take the same line.

3. US sources of information on happenings in Northern Laos should be improved.

(See items 8, 10, and 16 May 1962.)

(TS) JCS 2344/45, 11 May 62; JMF 9155.2/9105 (8 May 62).

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8 May 62

No. 18

Ambassador Brown, with the approval of the Secretary of State, delivered Souvanna's note (see item 1-4 May 1962) to Sisouk and expressed the hope that the RLG, while protesting vigorously against the breach of the cease-fire, would not abandon the private exchange of views with Souvanna regarding the solution of the Lao crisis. Sisouk indicated that, unless the attack on Nam Tha had altered the situation, Phoumi still wished to negotiate on the basis of his 30 April (see item) message to Souvanna. The Lao Foreign Minister, however, disapproved of the Prince's proposal for three Secretaries of State for Defense and Interior because it did not meet the RLG's demand for tripartite Defense and Interior decisions and for maintaining separate forces pending the agreement on integration

integration. He would prefer having Souvanna retain both ministries, provided all decisions would be tripartitely made. Brown replied that the West would be sympathetic on this point and suggested that the RLG convey these arguments to Souvanna lest RLG silence be interpreted as acceptance of his proposal. Sisouk said he would consider the matter, discuss it with Phoumi, and perhaps send a reply to Souvanna in the next few days.

At Sisouk's request, Brown also discussed the US reaction to the Nam Tha attack. Brown suggested that the RLG protest to the ICC and Co-chairmen but omit reference to the possible presence of Chinese Communist troops at Nam Tha since this might become a matter of argument which would dilute the force of the RLG's protest.

Sisouk also speculated that Souphanouvong might have struck at Nam Tha to exert pressure on the RLG immediately before negotiations resumed. When informed that Souvanna had disapproved the attack, Sisouk said Souvanna should make his disapproval public, and then the RLG would invite him back to Laos.

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1509, 7 May 62; 1515, 8 May 62. SecState to Vientiane, 964, 7 May 62.

Having

8 May 62

No. 19

Having learned in Paris of the seizure of Nam Tha, Souvanna cabled Khamsouk, his personal representative in Laos, that he was astonished by the attack. The Prince then instructed Khamsouk to arrange for a Pathet Lao withdrawal to the May 1961 cease-fire line. Souvanna termed the attack contrary to the instructions he had given upon his departure from Laos, that PL/KL forces would merely defend themselves against enemy attacks.

Souvanna also cabled Souphanouvong his concern at the recent attack. He told the NLHX leader that the attack was likely to create new difficulties for the settlement of national problems. Souphanouvong was asked to withdraw his troops to the 1961 cease-fire line and refrain from further attacks.

(S) Msg, London to SecState, 4113, 8 May 62.

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8 May 62

No. 20

Avtar Singh, Indian Chairman of ICC Laos, told Ambassador Brown that, in his opinion, the seizure of Nam Tha had been "'absolutely wrong,'" and that he had so advised his Government. Singh also passed on to Ambassador Brown reports from Xieng Khouang of rebel jubilation at the capture of Nam Tha and boasts of further impending military actions.

At

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1518, 8 May 62.

8 May 62

No. 21

At a meeting of representatives of the State Department, the White House, CAS, DOD and the JCS, the discussion centered about lack of "hard intelligence information" on the situation in Northwest Laos since the Nam Tha attack (see item 5-7 May 1962). Admiral Riley, speaking for the JCS, informed the conferees that the lack of intelligence information was caused by the enforced withdrawal of the White Star team during the Communist offensive, and that no improvement in the situation would be forthcoming until the fighting front was stabilized. In response to strong representations by the White House spokesmen, the Admiral noted that the improvement of the US intelligence capability in Laos would require a policy decision to accept the substantial risk of capture which US personnel would have to take in order to collect more information.

On the same day, in a message to CINCPAC, the Acting Chairman of the JCS, General Decker, requested that CHMAAG Laos prepare a plan for improving the intelligence gathering and evaluating capabilities of the US in Laos. The Acting Chairman also requested that CHMAAG submit his estimate of the risks which his plan would involve

involve for US personnel, and indicate what additional equipment he would require to put it into effect.

Replying the following day, CHMAAG Laos outlined a plan which called for daily visual and photo reconnaissance of the major road routes in northwest Laos for an indeterminate period. He also suggested that the F-101 fighters based in Thailand (ABLE MABEL) be used every two or three days for the following two weeks to obtain photos of Communist airfields at Nam Tha, Muong Sai, and Ban Nam Bac. CHMAAG also requested the use of two B-26s with pilots and crews, to be used as low altitude reconnaissance planes.

[redacted]

He was also attempting to get the RLG to accept the deployment of MAAG advisors and WSMTTs with the Headquarters of General La, and to place WSMTTs with the forward elements of the withdrawing forces. (CHMAAG made no reference to the risk to US personnel that would be involved in his proposals.)

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, 4430, 082305Z May 62. (S) Msgs, JCS to CINCPAC, 4431, 090018Z May 62; CHMAAG, Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 228000, 091050Z May 62.

In

8 May 62

No. 22

In a private summary of his 6 May audience with King Savang, Co-Chairman MacDonald concluded that the King would agree to anything the three Princes requested, but there was little chance of his accepting leadership of the Lao Government himself even if the National Assembly should present it to him as a fait accompli. MacDonald pictured the King as being confused, long-winded, and full of contradictions on political subjects, and exuding a spirit of hopelessness. Not only was the ruler completely without hope himself regarding the future of his country, but he was incapable of inspiring hope in others.

(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1516, 8 May 62.

8-9 May 62

No. 23

Secretary of Defense McNamara, General Lemnitzer, and Assistant Secretary of Defense Arthur Sylvester made a two-day visit to Thailand. Besides conferring with members of the JUSMAG and the Country Team concerning matters directly related to the defense of Thailand, the Secretary's party inspected Thai units in central and northeastern Thailand and discussed the Laotian crisis with Sarit and his advisers.

During his tour of the area near the Lao border, the Secretary observed that, although certain civic endeavors by Thai

troops

troops appeared "promising," the over-all civic action program was "proceeding on a low key." Because of the Lao crisis, the Thai Government was thinking of sending more troops to the region, but mere strength, in Mr. McNamara's opinion, was not the answer to Communist subversion. The solution, he believed, lay in improving the economic condition and educational level of the people, in making them aware of the danger of Communism, and in organizing village defense units. According to the Secretary, Thai officers stationed in the border area exhibited a "phlegmatic -- almost complacent -- attitude" regarding the threat of Communist subversion.

Sarit, during the meeting between US and Thai officials, indicated that, if the situation in Laos grew worse, he would dispatch four additional battalions toward the border, expand public information and civic action activities, and intensify the psychological warfare campaign in Laos. The increased psychological warfare operations, however, would require the immediate services of ten additional US-Thai psychological warfare teams, each one consisting of two Americans and three Thais.

In addition, Thai officers informed General Lemnitzer that their intelligence reports indicated that a total of 12 Pathet Lao, Chinese Communist, and Viet Minh

battalions

battalions had taken part in the Nam Tha offensive. The CJCS observed, however, that the rumor of Chinese Communist participation could not be confirmed by "hard intelligence."

After this visit to Thailand, the Secretary and his party left for South Viet Nam. There Mr. McNamara was briefed by CHMAAG Laos on various aspects of the fighting around Nam Tha (see item 10 May 1962).

(TS) "Visit to SEA by the Secretary of Defense, 8-11 May 1962," with app., JMF 9150/5420 (14 May 62), sec. 1. (S) Msgs, CJCS, Saigon to JCS, DA IN 228149, 9 May 62, Bangkok to SecState, 1748, 11 May 62.

8-11 May 62

No. 24

The FAR troops defeated at Nam Tha (see item 5-7 May 1962) retreated in complete disorganization down the Nam Choak Valley nearly 100 miles to Ban Houie Sai, on the banks of the Mekong. There were early reports of plans to regroup, first at Vien Pou Kha, and then a few miles to the northeast of Ban Houie Sai, but the FAR just kept on going. By 10 May, troops and refugees were crossing the Mekong into Thailand, and by 11 May, 1500 to 2000 FAR soldiers and 3000 to 4000 civilians had arrived in Thailand. Ban Houie Sai was abandoned without any attempt to defend it.

Reports from CHMAAG during this retreat portrayed graphically the state of the FAR troops and their commanders. General Bounleut,

Bounleut, Commander of the FAR, contended to CHMAAG on 9 May that two PL and one Viet Minh battalion were hotly pursuing his retreating column, although US aerial reconnaissance on the same day failed to discover such pursuing forces. Bounleut also refused CHMAAG's offer to place a White Star Team with the retreating forces, to assist in planning a defense. General La, the Commander of the former Nam Tha forces, was described simply as "not receptive to US advice." Regarding the troops, CHMAAG likened them to Coxie's Army, their combat effectiveness was, he believed, "nil."

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1523, 1524, 9 May 62; 1535, 10 May 62; CHJUSMAG Thailand to CINCPAC, DA IN 228379, 10 May 62; CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 227667, 8 May 62, DA IN 227986, 9 May 62, DA IN 228010, 9 May 62; DA IN 228309, 10 May 62; DA IN 228381, 10 May 62; DA IN 228424, 10 May 62; DA IN 228782, 11 May 62, DA IN 229222, 12 May 62.

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9 May 62

No. 25

USARMA Vientiane reported that General Kham Lom, Chief of Staff of the Kong Le forces, maintained that the neutralist forces had not been informed of the planning of the Nam Tha and Muong Sing attacks and had been denied permission to participate in them.

(S) Msg, USARMA Vientiane to DA, DA IN 228165, 9 May 62.

At

9 May 62 At a meeting of the ANZUS Council attended by Secretary of State Rusk and CINCPAC,

No 26 Admiral Felt, in briefing the Ministers on the military situation in Southeast Asia, noted that the major concern of the US in Laos was whether the Nam Tha attack presaged a full scale resumption of the PL offensive. The Secretary of State then declared that in Laos the primary US objective was to secure the withdrawal of foreign troops; for he believed that the Laotians, if left to themselves, would not present too serious a problem.

In response to Australian inquiries as to whether the US was prepared to put troops into Laos, the Secretary replied that although the US did not rule out that possibility it wished to avoid a Korean-type situation. He pointed out, however, that South Viet Nam presented a different case, and that he thought that US troops could be used effectively in that country.

Sir Garfield Barwick, Australian Minister of External Affairs, asked about the possibility of the US using nuclear weapons in Southeast Asia the point of the inquiry apparently being Australian concern that the US might use these weapons irresponsibly and thus set off a full-scale war. The Secretary reassured the Australians on this point and concluded by stressing the "importance of Australia and New Zealand joining the U.S. in aiding South Viet-Nam."

Ambassador

(S) Msg, Wellington to SecState, A-25, 10 May 62. (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, DA IN 229050, 11 May 62.

9-10 May 62

No. 27

Ambassador Brown reported that, after talks with General Phoumi, Co-Chairman MacDonald was convinced that Phoumi's approach to Souvanna was sincere, that he wanted a meeting of the three Princes, and that he anticipated a solution to the Lao problem, including an agreement on the issue of the Defense and Interior positions. MacDonald described Phoumi as still the same "disgusting, unreliable and deceptive person" as before, with the same ambitions and desires. He added, however, that Phoumi had been forced to change his viewpoint by US and Thai pressures.

MacDonald also reported that he stressed two points to "all whom he saw" in Khang Khay. First, seizure of Nam Tha, a clear breach of the cease-fire, was undermining the confidence of the world, and specifically of the British, in the PL. Second, the seizure gravely prejudiced the chance of fruitful negotiations just at the moment when Phoumi, under pressure from effective US sanctions, had made sincere motions toward reopening them. It was, therefore, up to the PL to decide how to remedy the situation.

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On 10 May, the UK Co-Chairman also visited Ambassador Young at Bangkok. Although MacDonald did not seem optimistic about forcing the Pathet Lao to yield Nam Tha, he showed interest in a suggestion, made earlier by Falaize, that all parties might agree to a restoration of the cease-fire line, provided this were done simultaneously with the meeting of the Princes at the Plaine des Jarres. MacDonald also confided to Young that he had suggested to his Government that he seek to persuade Pushkin (see item 15 May 1962) the Soviet Co-Chairman, that Phoumi would negotiate in good faith.

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1531, 10 May 62; Bangkok to SecState, 1739, 11 May 62. (C) Vientiane to SecState, 1518, 9 May 62.

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10 May 62

No. 28

Ambassador Brown, in analyzing the "dangerous and ugly" situation brought on by the Nam Tha attack, warned that if the US did not react in some convincing way, further aggression would be encouraged and the effort to achieve a really neutral Laos would fail. He therefore suggested that the RLG might be purged of its weak and undesirable members and that, possibly, a new Prime Minister pledged to a policy of national reconciliation might be appointed.

In addition, the US should give every possible assistance to re-equipping, reorganizing, and retraining the FAR troops who

who had escaped Nam Tha and assist them in any effort, considered reasonable by MAAG Laos, to recover at least some of the lost territory. Souvanna should be urged to declare his opposition to the cease-fire violation. In his survey of possible US reactions, the Ambassador discussed the question of resuming economic aid to the RLG and suggested that resumption could be justified by the cease-fire violation which had taken advantage of US "good faith."

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1534, 10 May 62.

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10 May 62 CINCPAC directed certain "precautionary steps," to shorten the 96-hour reaction time of

No. 29 Joint Task Force 116 (the force assigned for CINCPAC OPLAN 32-59-Phase II Laos), as follows:

1. The Commanding General, 3rd Marine Division, was to activate JTF-116 Headquarters, of which he was the designated commander (CJTF-116), also, he was to assemble the task force staff, and begin refining movement plans. (JTF-116 component commanders were not, however, to report to the CJTF until ordered by CINCPAC.)

2. CINCPACAF was directed to arrange through CHJUSMAG Thailand for moving 4 F-100s to Thailand for an "operational visit."

3. CINCPACFLT

3. CINCPACFLT was directed to "give afloat BLT a good workout ashore," anticipate moving the VALLEY FORGE toward the Gulf of Siam, and operate the HANCOCK in the southernmost extremity of her "normal readiness operating area."

4. CINCUSARPAC was directed to compute the "tail" needed to support the 1st Battle Group, 27th Infantry Regiment, 25th Infantry Division, which had been training with Thai contingents in Exercise AIR COBRA (see item 23-28 April 1962), and report this requirement to CINCPAC.

On 11 May, Ambassador Young approved the deployment of the F-100s to Thailand, and gave his "full endorsement" to the retention in Thailand of the US Army Battle Group. on 12 May CINCPAC authorized the actual movement of the F-100s from Clark AFB, P.I., to Don Muang, Thailand.

Also on 11 May, CINCPAC was directed by the Acting Chairman, JCS, to sail "appropriate elements" of the Seventh Fleet to the Gulf of Siam, and he directed CINCPACFLT to sail to that area the VALLEY FORGE with its BLT.

(See item 12 May 1962.)

(TS) Msgs, CINCPAC to CG, 3rd MARDIV (CJTF 116) et al., DA IN 228346, 10 May 62; PACAF to CINCPAC, DA IN 229463, 11 May 62; ADMINO CINCPAC to PACAF, DA IN 229462, 11 May 62. (S) Msgs, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 4490, 11 May 62. CINCPAC to CINCPACFLT, 110625Z May 62; Bangkok to SecState, 1747, 11 May 62.

The

10 May 62 The President met with the Acting Secretary of State, the Director, CIA, the Acting

No. 30 Chairman, JCS, and State and White House officials to consider State Department proposals concerning Laos.

The State Department believed that the capture of Nam Tha and other "continuing military encroachments" by the Pathet Lao had raised the possibility of a Communist attempt to take over Laos by force. Moreover, the recent Communist actions implied that they did not believe it likely that the US would intervene to stop them. this belief would become even more firm if the US did not take some action to "re-establish a deterrent."

Regarding the cause of the attack on Nam Tha, the State Department assigned indirect responsibility to Phoumi. He had invited the attack and would as a consequence probably lose all of northern Laos, as well as some of his best battalions.

The State Department recommended that the US, in order to bring about a "new cease-fire" and the temporary stabilization of a "new de facto partition," should:

1. Notify the Soviets, Souvanna, and Souphanouvong that the US remained committed to negotiating a neutral coalition government for Laos, but that the US could not tolerate unilateral Communist military advances.

2. Provide plausible evidence of the above commitment by:

a. Initiating

a. Initiating appropriate movements of the Seventh Fleet toward the Gulf of Siam.

b. Sending the US Army Battle Group now in Thailand (see item 23-28 April 1962) to the Thai border opposite Vientiane, and urging the Thai to take some similar action and to plan with the US for possible future action.

c. Initiating measures for improvement of communications in Thailand.

d. Beginning the longer range measure of improving port and transit facilities in northern South Viet Nam.

3. If the above actions had their anticipated effects, persuade Souvanna to return to Laos and increase its pressure on Phoumi to enter realistic negotiations. At the same time the US should attempt "to progressively undermine Phoumi's prestige and political influence and to encourage opposition to Phoumi especially in the Assembly and the Army--laying the groundwork . . . for Phoumi's removal and replacement."

After the State Department proposals had been presented to the President the Acting Chairman, JCS, General Decker, acting with the concurrence of the JCS, recommended the following alternative courses of action:

a. Demand that the International Control Commission go to the scene for investigation of the cease-fire violation around Nam Tha. Also demand that

that the Communist forces withdraw to positions held prior to the attack on Muong Sing.

b. Bring diplomatic pressure to bear on the USSR to discontinue aid to the enemy forces.

c. Institute an information program designed to display to the world the flagrant and unprovoked violation of the cease-fire agreement.

d. Resume financial assistance and increase military assistance to Laos provided they will agree to accept US advice.

e. Remove current restraints on Phoumi's freedom of military action.

f. Provide for appropriate air support to the RLG forces (to include T6, B-26, Jungle Jim).

g. Enlist Thai and other Allied support in the increased training effort.

h. Deploy the US Army Battle Group (-) now in Thailand to positions along the Thai-Laos border as a further extension of Joint US-Thai training exercises.

i. Increase the tempo of Meo and Kha operations.

j. Make it apparent that US forces for deployment to Southeast Asia in support of SEATO Plan 5 or CINCPAC Oplan 32-59, Phase II (Laos), have been alerted.

k. Request increased alertness and movements of additional Thai forces towards Laos borders.

l. Provide aircraft, either covert US, or other, to interdict Communist airlift in Laos.

In the event that the foregoing actions did not result in the restoration of the 3 May 1961 cease-fire line, the Joint Chiefs of Staff considered that the only alternative to prevent Communist domination of Laos rested in the implementation in substance of SEATO Plan 5 with such SEATO members as would be willing to participate.

(On

(On the following day, the JCS presented the same recommendation to the Secretary of Defense. In the memorandum containing these recommendations the JCS indicated that they did not concur with the State Department proposal that Phoumi be undercut and eventually deposed. Although Phoumi must be made to understand that he must follow US advice he must also, as the strongest known anti-Communist Lao, remain the head of pro-Western Lao forces.

The JCS also stated that the attack on Nam Tha had indicated conclusively to them that Souvanna could not control the Pathet Lao. It seemed futile to the JCS, therefore, to depend upon Souvanna to provide the requisite leadership for a neutral Laos. (See item 3 May 1962 for messages sent by Souvanna indicating his concern over the Nam Tha affair.)

The conclusion reached at the White House meeting was that all proposed courses of action, except those diplomatic moves already implemented (see item 8 May 1962), should be held in abeyance until the views of Secretary McNamara, and General Lemnitzer, both touring Southeast Asia (see item 8-11 May 1962), and CINCPAC had been obtained (See item 12 May 1962.)

(TS) JCS 2344/43, 10 May 62, (TS) JCSM-376-62, 11 May 62, derived from JCS 2344/44, 16 May 62; (TS) Note to Control Div, 10 May 62; all in JMF 9155.2/3100 (10 May 62). (TS) Msg, JCS to COMUSMACV Saigon, JCS 4488, 10 May 62.

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10 May 62 Phoumi met with Ambassador Brown at the General's request to discuss the Lao

No. 31 situation in light of the Nam Tha defeat. Assuming Phoumi wanted to discuss Nam Tha, Ambassador Brown had requested instructions from the State Department on the previous day. The Department ordered him to "hammer on the theme" that Phoumi had only himself to blame for the recent defeats. Nam Tha had proven that a political solution was Phoumi's only salvation. Therefore, he should be responsive to Souvanna's message (see item 1-4 May 1962), and indicate that he was ready to initiate negotiations immediately on the basis of giving up the Defense and Interior posts.

During the meeting, Phoumi admitted that Nam Tha had been a serious military as well as political defeat and asked the US to help arrange for RLG re-occupation of the town and the stationing of an ICC team there. Ambassador Brown agreed to these points. After listening to Brown's detailed advice, Phoumi said that he would have Sisouk draft a message stating that the RLG was prepared to resume three-party negotiations and to yield the Defense and Interior posts to Souvanna with the understanding that all important decisions would be made by the three Princes jointly and that the armed forces and civilian administration would

remain

remain in being pending agreement on national integration (see item 11 May 1962).

Ambassador Brown also reported that Sisouk had admitted to Co-Chairman MacDonald the reasons for Phoumi's present sincere approach to Souvanna: the effectiveness of US economic pressures against the RLG; and the RLG's diplomatic defeat at Bangkok (see item 9-10 May 1962).

(C) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1527, 9 May 62; 1530, 10 May 62. SecState to Vientiane, 928, 9 May 62.

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10 May 62

No. 32

General Tucker, CHMAAG Laos, met with Secretary McNamara at Nha Trang, South Viet Nam, and gave a summary of recent events in Laos. During this presentation, General Tucker stated that, prior to the Communist attack, he had tried unsuccessfully to persuade the FAR to adjust its "low-ground defenses" at Nam Tha. Although the leadership given by FAR NCOs and officers during the battle had been notoriously poor, the Lao private soldiers had given a reasonably good account of themselves. The FAR, however, could not be expected to fight effectively unless the quality of its leaders was improved. General Tucker also expressed doubt that any really violent fighting had taken place after the initial blow at Nam Tha. Finally, CHMAAG,

CHMAAG, on the basis of enemy logistic activities, warned that an attack might be expected in the general area of Thakhek.

(TS) Visit to Southeast Asia by the Secretary of Defense, 8-11 May 62, with app , JMF 9150/5420 (14 May 62) sec 1.

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10 May 62 Under Secretary of State Ball, in a message to the US Ambassadors at Bangkok and

No. 33 Vientiane, declared that the immediate objectives of US policy were the re-establishment of the cease-fire and the restoration of a situation in which a coalition government could successfully be formed. The US, he emphasized, was directing its Laos policy toward these ends and not toward the support of Phoumi. The Ambassadors were to make sure that all US agencies and personnel in both Laos and Thailand conformed to this policy. In addition, the Ambassadors were to inform the Lao and Thai Governments that the US blamed the Nam Tha disaster upon Phoumi's refusal to heed American political and military advice.

(S) Msg, SecState to Bangkok, 1737, 10 May 62.

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11 May 62 Acting Secretary of State Ball directed Ambassador Brown to influence the RLG

No. 34 against making an appeal to the UN concerning the recent breach of the cease-fire, even though the plea was merely intended to inform the international body

and

and therefore did not call for a meeting of the Security Council. Since initiative in restoring the cease-fire lay with the Soviets, an appeal of any sort to the UN could only force the USSR to harden its position and abandon any behind-the-scenes action to re-establish the truce in Laos The Department of State also hoped that Brown had squelched any RLG impulse to appeal to SEATO, since any such action would produce a "nearly impossible situation."

On the following day, the US Ambassador reported that the Lao Foreign Minister had yielded to arguments of the Western Ambassadors and agreed to defer an appeal to the UN. Sisouk also had agreed to withhold an appeal to SEATO, but he reserved the right to take such action if the situation became untenable.

(S) Msgs, SecState to Vientiane, 984, 11 May 62, Vientiane to SecState, 1546, 12 May 62. (C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1548, 11 May 62.

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11 May 62 No. 35 The Department of State transmitted an exchange of messages between Prince Souvanna in Paris and the RLG. The RLG informed Souvanna it desired the rapid resumption on a solid basis of negotiations toward the formation of a coalition government. In view of the breach of the cease-fire, the RLG regretted Souvanna's prolonged absence from Laos. Specifically the RLG was

was prepared to discuss the assignment of Defense and Interior ministries to Souvanna provided firm assurances were given on the following: 1) a three-Prince agreement would be sought on all important decisions by the new government; 2) the three groups would keep their forces in place pending their integration in a unified army as provided for in the Zurich agreement, and 3) the cabinet was prepared to accept the idea of a tripartite meeting.

Ambassador Gavin reported from Paris on 12 May that Souvanna demanded the right to summon the tripartite meeting at the Plaine des Jarres under previous agreements. He reported that the British and French considered Souvanna both proper and practical in naming the place and date of the meeting, especially since Souphanouvong would not attend if the session were held elsewhere. Furthermore, if Souvanna met with Phoumi and the RLG ministers before returning to the Plaine des Jarres, he would be considered suspect by Souphanouvong.

Souvanna's reply to the RLG, delivered to Foreign Minister Sisouk by Ambassador Brown, contained four statements: 1) he refused to agree to any preliminaries to immediate negotiations, 2) he would return to Laos if all accepted the principle of a tripartite meeting at the Plaine des Jarres and sincerely desired a peaceful settlement of the Lao problem; 3) he affirmed that assurances and concessions could be given during the meeting by representatives of the various groups in order to form a coalition government promptly; and 4) he would set a date for the tripartite

tripartite meeting before returning to Laos if such a meeting at the Plaine des Jarres was agreed to.

On the same day the French Embassy gave the Department of State its country's views on Souvanna's message. In brief, the French declared that the three Princes should meet as soon as possible at the Plaine des Jarres where Souvanna's presence would have the useful effect of curtailing Souphanouvong's military actions.

The Secretary of State agreed with the French and British that the RLG had no basis for refusing to meet at Plaine des Jarres, and that the meeting of Souvanna and Phoumi at Vientiane would give the wrong impression to Souphanouvong. The US wanted the French to urge Souvanna to accept privately Phoumi's modified troika proposal for Defense and Interior. If this were done the US could probably pressure the RLG into publicly giving up the posts without stating preconditions and agreeing to a meeting at the place chosen by Souvanna.

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1543, 11 May 62. Paris to SecState, 5342 and 5343, 12 May 62. SecState to Paris, 6087, 14 May 62.

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11 May 62 The Defense Intelligence Agency in an appraisal of the Lao situation observed that:

No. 36 1. The fact that Kong Le troops were apparently excluded from the assault phase of the Nam Tha operations emphasized the "expanding domination of North Vietnamese-Pathet Lao forces over those of Souvanna."

2. The

2. The military capability of the Communist forces in Laos has been built up by the continued delivery of material from the Bloc countries.

3. The Communists had the capability of taking control of major population centers with little prior preparation and without giving any advance indications.

4. The FAR had no will to fight, and there was no reason to believe that this attitude would be overcome in the near future.

5. The withdrawal of RLG troops from Nam Tha virtually eliminated governmental authority in northern Laos and opened western Luang Prabang Province and Nam Tha Province to Communist domination.

6. It was not believed that the Nam Tha attack marked the opening of a general offensive, but in the absence of either an effective military counter to the Nam Tha action or significant progress toward a coalition government, there would be an increasing likelihood that the Communists would undertake "nibbling" offensive operations elsewhere in Laos.

7. A Communist military victory in Laos would orient Burma and Cambodia further toward the Communists, and expose Thailand to invasion from Laos. It would make South Viet Nam the primary target of the Communists in SEA.

8. It

8. It was not believed possible that indigenous Southeast Asian military forces could prevent the Communists from subjugating Southeast Asia.

(S-NOFORN), DIA Intelligence Bulletin, 93-62, 11 May 62, pp. (1)-(3).

11, 12 May 62

No. 37

In preparation for a White House meeting, the JCS on 11 May asked CINCPAC's views on: 1) the adequacy of SEATO Plan 5 and CINCPAC OPLAN 32-59 in the light of the current situation in Laos, 2) the best position for the US battle group (-) presently in Thailand for "maximum political effect and military flexibility"; and 3) the adequacy of the forces remaining committed for SEATO Plan 5 if some SEATO nations did not provide their contingents.

On the following day, CINCPAC provided his views as follows:

1. Either SEATO Plan 5 or CINCPAC OPLAN 32-59 (Phase II - Laos) was adequate for achieving its stated objectives under current conditions in Laos.

2. The Battle Group (-) would be most effective politically in the Udorn-Nang Khai are (near Vientiane), but more militarily flexible at Ubon (near Pakse). For both political and military effect, the battle group should be stationed at Ubon and a Marine BLT sent to Udorn.

3. Replacements

3. Replacements could be provided for any of the scheduled national contingents that were not in fact provided.

(The meeting, held on 12 May, was the occasion of no major decisions regarding Laos.)

(TS) Msgs, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 4497, 11 May 62. CINCPAC to JCS, 120919Z May 62.

11-12 May 62

No. 38

Ambassador Young reported that Thanat, during a conversation with British Co-Chairman MacDonald, had proposed that the Geneva Conference reconvene to consider the breach of the Laotian cease-fire by Communist forces at Nam Tha. The Thai Foreign Minister believed that the Conference, proceeding with the members presently on hand, could prove that it was carrying out its responsibilities, could publicize the Pathet Lao's disregard of the cease-fire, could spur neutral nations to criticize the Communist attack, and could possibly assist the USSR in restraining other outbursts by the Pathet Lao and Viet Minh. MacDonald, however, had expressed doubts regarding the propaganda value to the West of a Conference session dealing with Nam Tha.

Ambassador Young, in requesting guidance concerning Thanat's proposal, expressed to the Secretary of State his belief that a reconvened Conference would enable the US and its Allies to register a strong protest

over

over the Nam Tha offensive and also might possibly serve to deter the Communists from launching further attacks. Secretary Rusk, however, replied on the following day that the only hope of restoring the cease-fire "lies with Soviet action behind the scenes." In the Secretary's judgment, a Conference session, with its attendant publicity, would force the USSR to support the Viet Minh and Pathet Lao, thus resulting in a hardening of the Soviet line which, in turn, would lessen the chances for restoration of the cease-fire.

(S) Msg, SecState to Bangkok, 1741, 12 May 62; (C) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1749, 11 May 62.

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12 May 62

No. 39

The Secretary of State informed Ambassador Brown and others that it had been decided at the highest level (see item 10 May 1962) to remove General Phoumi from the Lao scene. The decision resulted from Phoumi's stubborn resistance to an international agreement on the Lao problem, his untrustworthiness, and his constant disregard for US military advice, culminating in the defeat at Nam Tha. The Secretary of State considered it an opportune movement to bring Phoumi under control and to diminish his paramount influence within the RLG in such a manner that he could gradually be removed as a power factor

factor in Laos. The first steps should be directed toward removing Phoumi from ministerial responsibility and restricting him to his position as FAR military commander functioning directly under MAAG guidance. Later, the US could work toward a possible reorganization of the RLG.

The Secretary ordered that the following measures be taken immediately: 1) CHMAAG should outline to Phoumi in elaborate detail the causes of the Nam Tha defeat, emphasizing his responsibility for the rout; 2) steps should be taken to follow up and encourage proposals for the reorganization of the RLG that would restrict Phoumi to the role of military commander, 3) MAAG should drive a hard bargain with Phoumi, exchanging an agreement to re-equip and transport his defeated forces for a pledge that the FAR would accept MAAG advice and Phoumi would drop all ministerial functions, and 4) [redacted] should begin subverting Colonel Siho's units in an effort to remove Phoumi's most effective terror weapons over Vientiane politicians.

The Secretary of State noted that the removal of Phoumi from Laos political and military life was now an undeviating policy objective of the US, paralleling the fundamental US aim of restoring the cease-fire, establishing a coalition government,

government, and implementing the Geneva Agreements. (See item 13 May 1962.)

(S) Msgs, SecState to Vientiane, 987, 12 May 62; Vientiane to SecState, 1552, 13 May 62; and 1553, 13 May 62.

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12 May 62

No. 40

CINCUSARPAC summarized and attempted to explain several reports that KMT remnants were prepared to enter battle on the side of the FAR in northern Laos. [redacted] CHMAAG Laos and others, over 1000 KMT were ready to fight in the Ban Houie Sai area. CINCUSARPAC believed that the explanation for this possible KMT intervention might lie in recent reports from Taiwan that the GRC intended to place or activate guerrilla forces all along the Chinese Communist borders as a prelude to invasion of the mainland. (See item 18-22 May 1962.)

(S) Msg, CINCUSARPAC to CO 500th INTC Gp, Cp. Drake Japan et al., DA IN 229383, 12 May 62.

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12 May 62

No. 41

CINCPAC informed DIA that, although Lao and Thai sources were persistently reporting that Chinese Communists troops had participated in the attacks on Muong Sing (see item 3 May 1962) and Nam Tha (see item 5-7 May 1962), no reliable evidence had been found to verify these charges.

CHMAAG

(S) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, DA IN 231133, 16 May 62.

12 May 62

No. 42

CHMAAG informed CINCPAC that he had sent a White Star team to Ban Houie Sai after the FAR exodus. The team reported that neither FAR nor enemy were there. CHMAAG moreover, had reconnoitered the area as he flew into Thailand to see Bounleut, and had seen no troop activity at all. He therefore planned, if CINCPAC approved, to send the White Star team up the road toward Nam Tha in order to establish the actual location of the enemy.

On the same day, CINCPAC approved CHMAAG's plan. He also told CHMAAG to make every effort to persuade the FAR to reoccupy Ban Houie Sai; in so doing, he anticipated a JCS request of the following day. (See items 13 and 14-17 May 1962.)

(S) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 229243, 12 May 62; CINCPAC to CHMAAG Laos, DA IN 229367, 12 May 62; JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 4526, 13 May 62.

12 May 62

No. 43

Phoumi arrived in Rangoon for a one-day good-will visit during which he saw General Ne Win and the Burmese Foreign Minister.

The visit probably corresponded to similar trips made by Phoumi and Boun Oum to other Asian countries in an effort to gain support for the RLG.

Ne Win's approval of Phoumi's visit indicated, in the US Ambassador's opinion,

increased

increased Burmese concern over Laos due to the recent deterioration of the situation there.

(LOU) Msg, Rangoon to SecState, 836, 14 May 62.

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13 May 62

No. 44

Ambassador Brown, in a message to the Secretary of State, recommended that in order to launch an effort to reorganize the RLG and to persuade Phoui Sananikone to become Prime Minister, the US offer some inducement to add to current pressures. It could promise to restore economic aid immediately to the RLG if Phoui would accept the leadership of a reorganized, strengthened government pledged to negotiate urgently with Souvanna and Souphanouvong for a coalition government. Brown believed that Phoumi might be persuaded in these circumstances to restrict himself to the role of military commander.

Ambassador Brown also reported that the only apparent obstacle to Souvanna's return was the selection of a locale for the next three-Prince meeting. Brown was pressuring Phoumi to meet Souvanna on the Plaine des Jarres. Both Souvanna and Souphanouvong had made it clear that they considered Phoumi's cooperation and participation essential to the success of negotiations. Brown requested guidance. (See item 13 May 1962.)

The

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1553, 13 May 62.

13 May 62

No. 45

The JCS directed CINCPAC to: 1) offload a Marine BLT and its helicopters from the VALLEY FORGE and move them to Udorn, 2) dispatch one Marine attack squadron to Udorn, 3) deploy the US Army Battle Group (-) already in Thailand for AIR COBRA to Ubon, reinforce it to "self-contained" strength, and reinforce the 9th Logistical Command unit at Korat to the extent necessary to support the augmented battle group; 4) move one USAF tactical air squadron and supporting units to a Thai base satisfactory to CINCPAC and agreeable to the RTG; and 5) move CJTF-116, necessary elements of his staff, his component commanders and their staffs to Thailand, and assign CJTF-116 operational control of all US combat units in the country. The interim mission of the US forces in Thailand was set forth by the JCS as "to give clear indication of US intentions to carry out its commitments to assist in the defense of Thailand," to provide by their presence a "precautionary impact" upon the situation in Laos, and to attain positions that would reduce US "reaction time" to possible further developments in the area.

In an immediately subsequent message of the same day, CINCPAC was also directed

directed to establish the United States Military Assistance Command, Thailand (USMACTHAI), with General Harkins (COMUSMACV) as commander (COMUSMACTHAI). The Deputy CINCUSARPAC, Lieutenant General Richardson, was designated CJTF-116. JTF-116 was placed under COMUSMACTHAI, as were JUSMAG Thailand and such other US military elements as were in Thailand.

On the same day acting on instructions from the Secretary of State, Ambassador Young and General Harkins sought the necessary Thai approval of the US deployments. Thai Prime Minister Sarit agreed readily to all deployments, withholding his approval only to the exact locations of the various units.

(On 14 May, the Thai approved all deployments, except the stationing of the Battle Group at Ubon. Because of this objection the JCS on 15 May ordered the Battle Group to deploy, not to Ubon, but to the vicinity of Korat. At the same time, the JCS specified that the USAF squadron would deploy to Takhli, the location agreed to by the Thai. On 15 May, all diplomatic clearances having been obtained, CINCPAC actually established USMACTHAI, ordered CJTF-116 to assemble elements of his staff, and directed CINCPACAF, CINCPACFLT, and CINCUSARPAC to move the desired units to Thailand.)

Phoumi

(TS) Msgs, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 4527, JCS 4528, 13 May 62, Bangkok to SecState, 1760, 14 May 62, SecState to Bangkok, 1742, 12 May 62. CHJUSMAG Thailand to CINCPAC, DA IN 229645, 14 May 62 JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 4551, 15 May 62.

13 May 62

No. 46

Phoumi told CHMAAG that he intended to reoccupy Ban Houie Sai. He claimed that one FAR battalion from across the Mekong was already back in town and he said that more troops would be sent in from other areas in Laos. Phoumi asked MAAG assistance in transporting these troops and in transporting to Laos and re-equipping the FAR evacuees in Thailand.

CHMAAG did not commit himself at this time to transporting the evacuees. Later in the day, pursuant to Secretary Rusk's 12 May directive (see item) CHMAAG informed the Lao leader that the US would not move the FAR troops in Thailand back to Laos unless there was concrete evidence that Phoumi would: 1) remove incompetent FAR officers, and heed MAAG advice in selecting replacements. 2) develop a first class NCO corps, 3) reorganize the Ministry of Defense and delegate ample authority to major staff officers. 4) make the logistical command effective; 5) make full use of training facilities in Thailand and allow CHMAAG to approve the units nominated for such training. 6) produce qualified and promising personnel for

off-shore

off-shore training, 7) obtain CHMAAG approval for all plans, tactical operations, and deployments of battalion- or larger-size units, and 8) accept MAAG advice and assistance when and where it was offered. The effect of the recent debacle in the north, CHMAAG said, had been to destroy all US confidence in Phoumi as a military leader.

Phoumi in reply agreed that there should be the closest cooperation between CHMAAG and himself, and he averred that he had long ago instructed all his commanders to cooperate freely with their MAAG opposite numbers. Reiterating his intention to send troops back into Ban Houei Sai, Phoumi promised CHMAAG that his advice would be sought on any new FAR defense plans.

CHMAAG termed this promise "a good first step," and he counselled Phoumi to concentrate in the future on military rather than political affairs. CHMAAG decided finally that he would institute the evacuation airlift on the following day.

Also on 13 May, a report from US officials in the Ban Houei Sai area indicated that two FAR companies had indeed re-entered the town, which the enemy had not yet even approached. The great majority of the FAR troops in Thailand, the report continued, had been

been disarmed and were awaiting transportation to an airfield for subsequent evacuation to Laos.

(See item 14-17 May 1962.)

(S) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 229473, 13 May 62, DA IN 229501, 13 May 62, USARMA Bangkok to ACSI et al., DA IN 229552, 13 May 62.

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13 May 62

No. 47

When Ambassador Young and General Harkins approached Sarit to secure his approval of the US deployments (see item 13 May 1962), they also asked for assurances of Thai cooperation, especially in allowing US forces to use communication and transportation facilities, and for the deployment, if possible, of additional Thai troops along the Lao border.

Sarit guaranteed the US full use of Thai transportation facilities, asking only that the US use as much air transport as possible in order to place minimum strain on ground transportation, but added that no final decision had been made concerning the dispatch of additional forces to the threatened frontier.

When Young disclosed that the reduction of US reaction time to future crises was a mission of the American force assigned to Thailand, both Sarit and Thanat called the Ambassador's attention to a crisis which they believed was already in the making. The Thai Prime Minister stated that

that Phoumi appeared to be planning to abandon the population centers and, if necessary, to withdraw to the south. Since this strategy would expose the greater part of the Lao-Thai border, Sarit hoped that the US would prevent the partition of Laos. Ambassador Young believed that Sarit, in agreeing to the US deployments, had assumed that the troops might be used to prevent Phoumi from being forced to adopt a strategy that would divide the kingdom.

The Secretary of State, in a message sent on 13 May, characterized Young's conversation with Sarit as "satisfactory." The purpose of the agreed deployments, Secretary Rusk pointed out, was to "reinforce the position and morale of Thailand and to send a message to Moscow that a major breach of the cease-fire could be dangerous business." Thus, it was important that both Sarit and Phoumi realize that the deployment of American forces to Thailand did not constitute a commitment to sustain the RLG, for the US was continuing to follow a policy designed to achieve a neutral and independent Laos under a coalition government.

In commenting upon Sarit's indecision regarding the dispatch of additional Thai troops to the Lao border, Secretary Rusk declared that the US and Thailand would have to

act

act together. Although the US would honor its commitments, the fact remained that Thai forces, since they were more acceptable than Caucasian soldiers in the opinion of the populace, would be far more suitable, on both political and military grounds, for a campaign against guerrillas. Thus, in the absence of organized enemy action, US troops should support the indigenous forces.

The Secretary of State, turning to Sarit's concern lest Laos be partitioned, repeated the US conviction that Thailand's security would best be served by a political settlement that would rid Laos of all foreign troops. Left to themselves, the Lao would be "little or no threat to anyone." Secretary Rusk warned, however, that events might force the US to choose between a divided Laos and a kingdom controlled in its entirety by the Communists.

The Secretary pointed out that Sarit should not judge the US determination to help defend Thailand according to the standards that had applied to Laos, a landlocked kingdom whose citizens seemed unwilling to fight for their independence.

The Secretary instructed Ambassador Young to make these sentiments clear to Sarit. Young was also asked to obtain Sarit's concurrence to a possible SEATO action, such as the return to Thailand of the

the various AIR COBRA contingents, so that the member governments might be approached (see item 14 May 1962).

(TS) Msgs, SecState to Bangkok, NIACT 1742, 12 May 62; PRIORITY 1747, 13 May 62; Bangkok to SecState, 1760, 14 May 62.

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13 May 62

No. 48

The Secretary of State forwarded to Ambassador Brown a clarification of the high-level US decision to eliminate General Phoumi from the RLG (see item 12 May 1962). While the ideal result of US efforts, Phoumi's "complete disappearance" at one stroke was patently unfeasible, the Secretary proposed a two-stage operation: 1) removal of Phoumi from the political scene by restricting him to his role in defense, and 2) reduction of his military power by bringing him under MAAG control. The US preferred that Phoumi resign from both ministerial positions and function solely as the military commander of FAR. If this was impossible to arrange, Ambassador Brown was instructed to attempt a reorganization of the RLG with Phoui as Prime Minister, or at least as deputy under Boun Oum with full responsibility for political and civil affairs and equal rank to Defense Minister Phoumi.

As an inducement, the Secretary of State authorized Ambassador Brown to inform Lao politicians that US assistance would be resumed, although not necessarily on a monthly basis

basis, if the RLG was reorganized along these lines. A more closely controlled system of financial assistance was considered necessary in dealing with the possibly intractable RLG. The Secretary also stated to Ambassador Brown that CHMAAG might transport those FAR elements in Thailand to Laos, but ordered that an offer to re-equip these elements be withheld pending a favorable response from Phoumi. [redacted]

(S) Msgs, SecState to Vientiane, 990, 13 May 62; and 993, 14 May 62; Vientiane to SecState, 1555, 14 May 62.

In

14 May 62 In a meeting with the British and French Ambassadors, the Secretary of State announced

No. 49 that the President's decision to move US forces into Thailand at the request of the Thai Government was an effort to strengthen the US position in SEA and to prepare the US to fulfill promptly its SEATO commitments if the need arose. The Secretary asked all SEATO Allies to support the US action in Thailand and specifically asked the British and French to return to Thailand the air units recently used in the AIR COBRA exercise. The US had made no decision to commit troops to Laos, the Secretary added, and its policy remained unchanged, for it still sought a new cease-fire in Laos and a resumption of negotiations for a coalition government. Although the US wanted to leave the Communists in doubt concerning future intentions, it did not want to give Phoumi the "least impression" that the US would support him or the Lao Government.

The Secretary of State also charged that the attack on Nam Tha was not only a flagrant breach of the cease-fire, but a complete "double-cross" by the USSR. The Secretary pointed to Foreign Minister Gromyko's assurance that the PL would not attack Nam Tha or any other important center while the US was pressuring Phoumi into negotiations on a realistic basis

(see

(see item 27 January 1962). Phoumi was on the verge of coming to an agreement when the PL attacked Nam Tha.

In a message sent the same day to the US Ambassadors to the other SEATO nations, Secretary Rusk expressed hope that, if the RTG so requested, Australia and New Zealand would again deploy those forces which had taken part in AIR COBRA, and that the Philippines and Pakistan would send military units to Thailand.

Ambassador Young, moreover, was instructed to await official announcement of the deployment of US troops and then call a meeting of the Council representatives. He would provide them with whatever information might be authorized by the JCS and urge the RTG to invite the other SEATO members to send troops to Thailand.

The Secretary, by urging that the military moves be treated as precautionary measures that would enable the organization to fulfill its treaty obligations, hoped to avoid debate concerning the justification, under the terms of the Manila Pact, for landing troops in Thailand.

(The meeting of the SEATO Council representatives was held in Bangkok on 16 May. The representatives approved the US action and noted that consultations were continuing regarding similar deployments by

by other member nations. For those SEATO nations which joined the US in its precautionary measures and the extent of their contributions, see item 31 May 1962.)

(S) Msgs, SecState to Bangkok, 1756, 14 May 62. SecState to Vientiane, 1014, 16 May 62. (U) Dept of State Bulletin, vol. XLVI, no. 1197 (4 Jun 62), pp. 905-906.

14-15 May 62

No. 50

On 14 May Harriman requested Gavin to inform Souvanna that the movement of the Seventh Fleet (see item 10 May 1962) in no way indicated a change in US policy towards Laos or toward Souvanna personally. After conveying the message to Souvanna, Gavin reported the next day that Souvanna, although relieved by the US assurances, continued to be somewhat apprehensive lest the Thais succeed in persuading the US to send its forces into Laos. Souvanna believed that this action could "have most unfortunate results." Souvanna also expressed his belief that the action at Nam Tha had been deliberately started by Phoumi in an effort to precipitate US intervention. He added, however, that he would attempt to have Souphanouvong withdraw the Pathet Lao to its 3 May positions.

(S) Msgs, SecState to Paris, NIACT 6098, 14 May 62; Paris to SecState, 5390, 15 May 62.

CHMAAG

14-17
May 62

No. 51

CHMAAG ordered a White Star team to advance toward Nam Tha to ascertain the location of enemy forces (see item 12 May 1962). From 14 to 16 May, the team advanced some 30 kilometers without encountering any opposition. At this point CHMAAG ordered the patrol to stop and prepare a defensive position. Obviously angered, CHMAAG reported to CINCPAC that the 20 FAR troops supposedly helping the patrol were "worthless"; further advance by the WSMTT would result only in "American blood . . . spilled for a gutless group."

During the time of the patrol's advance, most of the Lao troops in Thailand were evacuated by boat and Air America planes to Luang Prabang and Savannakhet. Also, some 600 FAR troops moved back into Ban Houie Sai and began to establish defensive positions; but CHMAAG was not altogether satisfied with their efforts. He related that he could get no Lao of higher grade than major to return to Ban Houie Sai, despite the fact that the US had been using the air strip for several days. He told CINCPAC that he planned to ask Phoumi for a fresh battalion to move back up the road toward Nam Tha (see item 18 May 1962).

The

(S) Msgs, USARMA Vientiane to ACSI, DA IN 230955, 15 May 62, DA IN 230748, 16 May 62, USARMA Bangkok to DA et al., DA IN 230591, 16 May 62; CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 230168, 15 May 62; DA IN 229946, 15 May 62, DA IN 230672, 16 May 62; DA IN 231379, 17 May 62.

15 May 62

No. 52

The British Ambassador to the US called upon Harriman to discuss Phoumi's status, possible action by Co-Chairman MacDonald, and the American attitude toward SEATO Plan 5.

Ambassador Ormsby Gore expressed Lord Home's concern that a US attempt to replace Phoumi (see items 12 and 13 May 1962) would complicate future negotiations among the Lao factions. Harriman replied that the US was convinced that Phoumi's presence would destroy a government of national union. Thus, although replacing Phoumi might prolong negotiations, such a move would result in a stronger Lao Government. Harriman also pointed out that Phoumi, even after his departure from the political scene, would retain a purely military post and would participate in the military aspects of the negotiations.

Concerning possible action by the British Co-Chairman of the Geneva Conference, Harriman indicated that the US would study the Soviet response (see item 16 May 1962) to the American protest over the Nam Tha incident in an effort to determine how Co-Chairman MacDonald might prove useful.

When

When questioned about SEATO Plan 5, Harriman answered that the US moves in Thailand were not based upon this plan. This, moreover, was not the time to discuss the partition of Laos or other similar contingencies. Although bilateral US-UK military planning might be useful, the US did not want to plan on a SEATO basis, since such a course could lead to a misinterpretation of the objective of the deployment of forces to Thailand. Thus far, the US had done no more than ask SEATO members to contribute to precautionary moves.

(On 18 May, Ambassador Ormsby Gore, under instructions from Lord Home, again expressed to Harriman his Government's concern over the possible consequences of Phoumi's removal. Harriman replied by explaining that Phoumi might, as he had done in the past, disrupt the negotiations among the Princes. For this reason, it would be necessary to impress upon Phoumi that the deployment of US troops to Thailand did not indicate American support of him. The opportunity, which had been presented by the defeat at Nam Tha, of reducing Phoumi's dominant influence in the RLG should not be allowed to pass.)

(S) Msgs, SecState to London, 6124, 16 May 62, NIACT 6173, 18 May 62.

Ambassador

15 May 62 Ambassador Brown, in an informal conversation, told Phoui Sananikone

No. 53 that the US had lost all confidence in Phoumi and had decided to withhold all military and economic aid from any Lao Government dominated by him (see items 12 and 13 May 1962). The US, he continued, was taking certain military actions to fulfill obligations to Thailand and South Viet Nam and to impress the Soviets with the seriousness of the recent cease-fire violation. These measures, however, were not designed to show support of Phoumi.

Ambassador Brown also alluded to the possible reorganization of the RLG, a reorganization sufficiently drastic to oust Phoumi from control. He stated that such a reorganized government, willing to press ahead in negotiations with Souvanna, might be the best answer to the Lao problem. Phoui indicated that "if by taking some action he could help save his country from catastrophe" he would do so. He had, however, refused to accept the presidency of the National Assembly because that would in fact place him under Phoumi's control. Phoui suggested that the US should try convincing Phoumi that it still desired a Souvanna government and that Phoumi should proceed with negotiations. If the

the US continued to exert pressure, Phoui believed that Phoumi would negotiate sincerely. Ambassador Brown concluded by saying that nothing the US could do would convince Phoumi of its intentions.

In reporting the conversation, Brown informed the Secretary of State that he was encouraged by Phoui's apparent willingness to enter politics. As a result, the Secretary on 17 May ordered the Ambassador to determine what additional assurances Phoui desired from the US before he would assume a leading role in the RLG.

(On 16 May, Ambassador Brown made similar approaches to both King Savang and Foreign Minister Sisouk. Neither the removal of Phoumi nor the reorganization of the government appealed to the King, who charged that all Lao politicians, except possibly Souvanna, were insincere. The King then declared that, since Souvanna's mandate remained in effect, it was up to the Prince to form a government. If a reorganization were necessary, the King continued, the Assembly should take the initiative by showing its disapproval of the Boun Oum regime Sisouk expressed confidence in Phoumi's sincerity, advised against a reorganiztion at this time, and said he would resign if Phoumi were dismissed.)

James

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1559, 15 May 62; 1569, 17 May 62; 1573, 17 May 62; SecState to Vientiane, 1013, 17 May 62.

15 May 62

No. 54

James Engers, acting as the personal representative of UN Secretary-General U Thant, called on Assistant Secretary of State Harriman in order to discuss with him the most recent developments in Laos.

Engers conveyed the Secretary-General's assurances that, contrary to newspaper reports, he did not intend to take the Laos question to the Security Council and that he intended to discourage any RLG initiative in that direction. Mr. Engers also expressed U Thant's concern over the possibility that US troop movements might invite Chinese Communist response and would thus upset the tenuous prospects for a negotiated settlement.

Harriman explained for U Thant's benefit US policy in Laos, and asked that the Secretary-General be reassured that the US intended to continue its efforts toward reaching a peaceful political solution. He indicated that the US thought it essential that the Soviet re-establish the cease-fire and support the tripartite approach to a solution.

(C) Msg, SecState to USUN, 2969, 16 May 62.

President

15 May 62 President Kennedy and the Royal Thai Government issued separate statements

No. 55 announcing the deployment of US troops to Thailand. By means of a White House press release, the President stated that he had acted at the invitation of the Thai Government in order to help insure the "territorial integrity of this peaceful country." The presence of US forces had become "desirable" because of recent Communist attacks in neighboring Laos and the subsequent advance of Communist forces toward the Thai border.

"A threat to Thailand," the President declared, "is of grave concern to the United States." Thus, he had chosen to deploy American forces so that the US would be in position to fulfill speedily its obligations under the Manila Pact, "a defense agreement which was approved overwhelmingly in the US Senate and to which the Secretary of State and the Foreign Minister of Thailand referred in the joint statement of March 6, 1962" (see item).

The military moves, President Kennedy continued, were purely defensive in character and thus consistent with the UN charter. The deployment, moreover, represented no change in US policy toward Laos, which continued to call for the re-establishment of an effective cease-fire

and

and prompt negotiation toward the formation of a coalition government.

The Thai statement, issued the same day, emphasized that the US troops had been requested to help Thailand meet the definite threat to Thai security posed by the southwestward advance of Communist troops following the capture of Muong Sing and Nam Tha.

In explaining the diplomatic basis for its action, the Thai Government cited that provision of the Rusk-Thanat communique of 6 March 1962 in which the US had re-affirmed the vital importance of Thai independence and security and had expressed the "firm intention of aiding Thailand to resist Communist aggression and subversion." In keeping with the terms of the SEATO agreement, the Thai statement continued, the RTG had agreed to the stationing of US troops in Thailand.

(On 14 May, Ambassador Young had forwarded to the Secretary of State an English translation of a draft of the statement with which the RTG intended to announce the deployment of US forces to Thailand. This version declared that the American military moves were based on the Rusk-Thanat communique. The Secretary of State, however, had instructed Ambassador Young to seek Thai approval of a

US

US draft which avoided any mention of the communique and referred instead to the Manila Pact as the basis for the US action.

Upon receiving the Thai draft, the Secretary of State advised Young that it was "imperative that the March 6 Rusk-Thanat communique not be used as the basis for stationing US units in Thailand." The President, Secretary Rusk explained, wanted it made clear that he was acting under the terms of an agreement approved by the Senate rather than honoring an Executive arrangement to which the Congress had not been a party. The Secretary also proposed that certain language in the Thai statement be altered. Where the draft declared that Communist advances "mean" that the pro-Communists "seek" not only to control Laos but to expand beyond that kingdom, Secretary Rusk suggested the substitution of "indicate" and "may seek."

Thus, each nation's final statement differed from the earlier draft. The President referred to the Rusk-Thanat SEATO agreement, while the Thai Government mentioned the SEATO treaty as the means by which the pledges contained in the Rusk-Thanat communique were redeemed. The final Thai announcement, however, did not contain the changes in language suggested by the Secretary of State.)

The

(TS) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1769, 14 May 62. (S) Msgs, SecState to Bangkok, NIACT 1752, 14 May 62. NIACT 1753, 14 May 62. (U) Dept of State Bulletin, vol. XLVI, no. 1197 (4 Jun 62), pp. 904-905.

15 May 62

No. 56

The Deputy US Representative to the UN informed the Secretary-General that President Kennedy had ordered additional US forces to Thailand. The deployment had been judged necessary because of recent Communist attacks in Laos and the subsequent advance of Communist units toward the Thai border.

(U) Dept of State Bulletin, vol. XLVI, no. 1197 (4 Jun 62), p 905.

15, 19 May 62

No. 57

The JCS on 15 May requested CINCPAC's assessment of the feasibility of holding the Laos Panhandle under two alternative assumptions: 1) that a coalition government was not established and the Pathet Lao and Viet Minh attacked the Panhandle, or 2) that a coalition government was established but was not able to stabilize the situation, and the PL and Viet Minh subsequently attacked the Panhandle CINCPAC was to assume also that the US would support the RLG and FAR logistically and financially. His assessment should include consideration of the effectiveness of the following combination of forces:

1. FAR forces with only logistical and financial support from the US.

2. FAR

2. FAR and Thai forces.

3. FAR, Thai and South Vietnamese forces.

4. FAR, Thai and South Vietnamese forces, assisted by US forces holding Savannakhet, Pakse, and Thakhek, and by US tactical air support.

On 19 May 1962 CINCPAC replied to the JCS queries. According to CINCPAC, it would make little difference whether a Lao coalition government did or did not exist at the time of a Pathet Lao-Viet Minh attack on the Panhandle, for if an ineffective coalition did exist the US would simply have to work around it or ignore it. To CINCPAC, the more important consideration was the manner in which the FAR was employed. Supported by US money, airlift and equipment, the FAR would still flee from the Viet Minh, but if properly encadred by Thai or Vietnamese troops (approximately 1600, and probably Thai, given the present situation in Viet Nam) in addition to the 400 US Special Forces already in place, the FAR could be a military asset against the Communists.

Turning to the four specific combinations of forces proposed by the JCS, CINCPAC summarized as follows:

1. The FAR, with only financial and logistical support from the US, would lose the Panhandle.

2. With

2. With substantial Thai participation, the FAR could probably hold the Panhandle; the Thai, however, would probably not be willing to participate unless the US also sent troops into Laos.

3. Joint FAR-South Vietnamese-Thai operations without direct US participation were "difficult to conceive."

4. A US-FAR-South Vietnamese-Thai operation was "the winning combination," provided that the US forces were not prevented from using air power to destroy the Communist logistical system. The US could not, CINCPAC concluded, "[sit] back in rear areas in a supporting role, expecting local nationals of questionable military effectiveness to take objectives in forward areas and roll back the enemy."

(TS) Msgs, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 4561, 15 May 62; CINCPAC to JCS, DA IN 231908, 19 May 62.

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16 May 62

No. 58

The Public Safety Division of the US AID Mission to Laos published the first revision of the Ryan Plan for reorganization, under US and French guidance, of the Lao National Police Force (LNP) (see item 21 August 1961). The revision, which represented a joint French-American planning effort (see items 27 November, 14 December 1961 and 27 January 1962) differed from the original plan principally in

in that heavy weapons units had been eliminated from the police force proper in favor of a Gendarmerie within the Army, which would be called upon when the LNP needed help in quelling banditry and terrorism in strength.

The Public Safety Division felt that the plan could be of real benefit to a future RLG if the LNP could be constituted of well-trained and consequently well-respected Lao, and of particular value in rural areas where the influence of the central government had been notably lacking in the past

The revised plan assumed, as had the earlier version, that future Lao governments would be sufficiently friendly to the West to accept it. In contrast to its earlier form, however, the Ryan Plan now envisioned, as a "calculated risk," the acceptance of Pathet Lao into the police; but it continued to assert that the police should be loyal to the government and the King, rather than to any individual or political party. The plan emphasized, however, that the greatest internal security problems in Laos lay in the rural regions. Hence, the preponderance of police personnel would under the Ryan Plan be assigned to rural areas.

Before the program was put into effect, the Lao Government should

clearly

clearly understand, and agree in writing, that:

1. The LNP would be returned to the Ministry of Interior.

2. The LNP would re-acquire from the FAR as much as possible of the equipment provided it in the past by the US.

3. Effective budgetary and inventory control systems would be applied to funds and equipment for the LNP.

4. USAID auditors would perform end-use audits as necessary.

5. All payments of bills and contracts involving AID funds would be approved in writing by Director General, LNP, and the Chief, Public Safety Division, USAID, Laos.

6. In the event a Pathet Lao was appointed Minister of Interior, or in the event the entire coalition fell under Pathet Lao influence, the program would require radical readjustment or termination.

7. The future LNP would be able to operate throughout all of Laos, including areas now held by the Pathet Lao.

8. All police personnel now serving in or directly under Army control would be returned to the LNP.

(On 30 May, the Laos Country Team put its endorsement on the Ryan Plan by recommending that it be implemented after a Lao

a Lao provisional government of national unity had been established)

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, D-215, 18 May 62, w/encl; on file in OSD (ISA), FER/SEA Br. Files. (S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, A-117, 30 May 62.

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16 May 62

No. 59

In the belief that recent developments had made necessary the immediate preparation of new defense plans for Thailand, the JCS requested CINCPAC to develop as soon as possible an outline plan that would take into account such factors as:

1. The increased Communist threat to the security of Thailand, through either insurgency or overt aggression.

2 The deployment of US forces to Thailand.

3. Existing Thai and SEATO plans.

CINCPAC should assume, the JCS continued, that only Thai and US forces would be available initially and that within this framework Thailand would participate to the maximum extent.

(On 26 May, having in hand the recommendations of COMUSMACTHAI, CINCPAC forwarded such an outline plan to the JCS.)

(TS) Msgs, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 4671, 16 May 62. COMUSMACTHAI to CINCPAC, 241103Z May 62. CINCPAC to JCS, DA IN 234034, 26 May 62. CINCPAC to COMUSMACTHAI, 290419Z May 62.

In an

16 May 62 In an interview appearing in Le Monde, Souvanna expressed his confidence that

No. 60 his mission to Laos would be successful, provided that US troops did not intervene in Laos. He explained that the term "intervention" embraced the encadrement of the FAR. Souvanna attributed recent military moves by the PL to the provocation of RLG troops. He denied Chinese influence on the PL, and indicated that the PL was still ready to compromise. He went on to say that recent events had left Prince Souphanouvong and him in complete accord. Souvanna concluded the interview by expressing his opposition to a partition of Laos.

(U) Msg, Paris to SecState, A-2131, 17 May 62.

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16 May 62 Answering questions raised on 9 May by Assistant Secretary of State Harriman in

No. 61 an effort to determine whether the fall of Nam Tha indicated a change in Soviet policy toward Laos, Ambassador Dobrynin officially replied that his government believed "now as formerly" that it was necessary to solve as soon as possible the Laotian problem by the formation of a coalition government and the signing of the agreement being worked out at the Geneva conference. The US, therefore, should force the RLG to stop its sabotaging of these efforts to negotiate and its systematic provocations undertaken in violation of the cease-fire.

The Secretary

The Secretary of State told Dobrynin that the attack on Nam Tha raised the following possibilities, all most disturbing to the US: 1) the attack was an effort to take advantage of the situation. 2) it meant that the USSR did not retain its former influence on Laos and someone else was responsible; or 3) perhaps the PL was making military decisions without the knowledge of the USSR. Because of these many uncertainties, the US had taken two steps: it had raised the question of Soviet policy toward Laos, and it had taken precautionary measures, including the movement of US troops to Thailand.

Ambassador Dobrynin replied that the USSR would regard the movement of US troops as a very serious step, and his government did not believe the US was doing all it could in influencing Phoumi. The Secretary explained that lacking Soviet assurances to the contrary, the US could not take additional steps against Phoumi which would open the way for further PL advances. If the cease-fire were maintained and there were a demonstration of intent by a pull-back of PL troops from the Thai border, the Secretary was sure negotiations would start soon in Laos and Phoumi would be prepared to negotiate realistically.

Following

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 1006, 16 May 62.

16 May 62

No. 62

Following Boun Oum's visit to Taipei, in which he called for a strengthening of the bonds of friendship between the GRC and RLG, GRC Vice Foreign Minister Chu informed Ambassador Clough that the Lao and Chinese Governments had announced the establishment of full diplomatic relations. The US Ambassador expressed regret at this decision and reminded Chu that various Asian states had joined the US in urging Boun Oum to cooperate in forming a Lao coalition. Chu replied that the GRC had consistently followed a policy of establishing diplomatic relations with as many nations as possible. Ties between Nationalist China and the RLG were especially important because Communist China had accredited a consul general to the Souvanna Government and also had established economic and cultural missions.

(S) Msg, Taipei to SecState, 788, 8 May 62. (C) Msg, Taipei to SecState, 825, 16 May 62. (U) Msgs, Taipei to SecState, 810, 14 May 62, 824, 16 May 62.

16 May 62

No. 63

Ambassador Brown informed the British and French Ambassadors of US plans to eliminate Phoumi from the Lao political scene and reorganize the RLG (see item 12 May 1962). The French Ambassador admitted sharing US views

views concerning Phoumi but believed nothing should be done to delay the negotiations. The British agreed with the French and added that reorganization would simply introduce a new element of confusion and delay and might be impossible to bring about. Moreover, the PL was likely to be suspicious of reorganization, considering it a ruse to gain further delay. (See item 17 May 1962.)

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1570, 16 May 62.

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16 May 62

No. 64

Ambassador Young informed the Secretary of State that Thai officials, though apparently unaware of Ambassador Brown's suggestion that Phoumi be replaced (see item 13 May 1962), believed, as a result of speculation in the American press, that the US was thinking of eliminating Phoumi and Boun Oum from the existing RLG. Sarit and his advisers suspected that the Nam Tha debacle might have been a deliberate attempt to "suck in" US and Thai forces. They feared, moreover, the possible results of Phoumi's apparent intention to seek the partition of Laos. Thus, because Sarit in particular had lost confidence in Phoumi, the Ambassador believed that the Thai Government might give discreet assistance to any attempt to reorganize

the RLG

the RLG, and he requested guidance concerning this possibility.

In response to Young's request, Secretary Rusk said that the RTG should be made aware of the US conviction that, for the sake of both Thailand and the US, Phoumi should be removed from the RLG. If Sarit chose to assist in this effort, Young was to offer encouragement and extend cooperation.

The Secretary also advised Ambassador Gavin in Paris that Souvanna should be informed that the Thai Government did not desire US forces to cross the Mekong. Gavin, however, was not to mention Sarit's suspicion that the retreat from Nam Tha had been staged by Phoumi to force the US and Thailand to intervene.

(S) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 1788, 16 May 62. State to Bangkok, PRIORITY 1785, to Paris, PRIORITY 6161, 16 May 62.

16-17 May 62

No. 65

The Marine BLT, its helicopters, the Marine attack squadron, and the Air Force F-100 squadron ordered to Thailand (see item 13 May 1962) arrived at their planned locations. In addition, the Army Battle Group already in Thailand redeployed to its authorized location. (See item 22 May 1962.)

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to AIG 930, 160343Z May 62. (S) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 162351Z May 62.

A Joint

17 May 62 [redacted] authority

No. 66 had been granted for the organization and equipment of 12 additional Kha guerrilla companies thus bringing the total authorized strength of the units to 24 (see item 2 May 1962).

[redacted]

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17 May 62 The Secretary of State instructed Ambassador Brown to obtain the support of "Addis and

No. 67 other colleagues" in reducing Phoumi's influence in the RLG (see items 12 and 13 May 1962), even at the expense of some delay in the three-party negotiatons. The US believed that a slight delay now was preferable to putting up with Phoumi's obstructionist tactics during the negotiations. The US continued to be in full agreement, however, with efforts to achieve early negotiations, and desired a quick, affirmative RLG response to Souvanna's request for another meeting. Although the US was determined to prevent Phoumi's participating in the three-Prince meetings as the leading RLG political negotiator, Phoumi would remain an important participant in the military area. Once it became clear that Phoumi had irrevocably lost US support, his importance in Laos would "disappear."

The US

17 May 62 Ambassador Brown cautioned the Secretary of State against assuming that either

No. 68 Souvanna or Souphanouvong would necessarily welcome Phoui as a replacement for Phoumi in the coalition government (see item 13 May 1962). Both the British and French Ambassadors agreed with Brown that the bulk of the evidence seemed to indicate that the contrary was more probable. Brown noted several factors which had influenced this conclusion: 1) neither Souvanna nor Souphanouvong had the same personal antipathy toward Phoumi that each had toward Phoui; 2) both had repeatedly stated their desire to include Phoumi in the coalition to prevent him from making trouble on the outside, and 3) both would probably suspect that the US was keeping Phoumi out of the coalition in order to prepare him for future moves against the government.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1577, 17 May 62.

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17 May 62 The Secretary of State outlined US intentions in Laos following the fall of Nam Tha. In

No. 69 particular, the Secretary believed it important to inform the Communists by action and message of US intentions, and to specify under what circumstances the US would consider withdrawing its additional military forces deployed in SEA. The Secretary assumed that the rapid and

significant

significant US military reaction to Nam Tha had prevented the Communists from making further attacks against strategic points and from massive action to exploit and physically invest the northwest territory opened by the FAR rout.

It remained, however, to re-establish the general territorial pattern which had existed in Laos since the cease-fire had been declared. Since the Zurich communique of June 1961, the Soviets had indicated that, during the period of provisional government, Communist forces would be confined to those areas of Laos over which they exercised de facto control at the time of the cease-fire. The US should therefore encourage the RLG to recoup as much northwest Laos as it could. Secretary Rusk instructed Ambassador Brown to inform ICC Chairman Singh of US intentions in order to minimize the risks involved in the RLG's reinvesting operation. Furthermore, he wanted the Communists informed as soon as possible through the Polish Commissioner.

Secretary Rusk suggested that the ICC might also be helpful in releasing Nam Tha from Communist control. Ideally, the village should be reoccupied by the FAR, and Singh should be requested to approach

approach Souphanouvong to obtain the necessary consent. It was highly unlikely, however, that the Communists would allow an RLG reoccupation of Nam Tha, but they might accept the principle of an open city. In any event, it was highly desirable to engage Singh and the ICC mechanism in a continuing and consistent effort to restore the cease-fire and to provide a sanction for the restoration of the territorial status quo ante in the remainder of northwest Laos.

On the same day Ambassador Brown informed the Secretary that Singh had shown no surprise or made no objection to the idea of an RLG reinvestment operation in northwest Laos. Singh had agreed with Brown that the Polish Commissioner should not be informed of any possible military moves at this time since he could warn the PL who could easily mobilize a force superior to the advancing RLG column. Singh believed the RLG could not recapture Nam Tha but agreed that the proposal for making the village an "open city" was excellent. He promised to urge this on Souphanouvong after first presenting it to Souvanna.

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1575 and SecState to Vientiane, 1007, 17 May 62.

Anticipating

17-24
May 62

No. 70

Anticipating that the arrival of other SEATO contingents in Thailand (see items 14 and 31 May 1962) would raise questions of command arrangements, CINCPAC on 17 May suggested to COMUSMACTHAI that the US act as a "coordinator" of forces, so that the various SEATO forces and the Thai forces would not clash or interfere with each other. CINCPAC opposed the adoption of the command arrangements of SEATO Plan 5, under which Sarit would become the Force Commander with either COMUSMACTHAI or CJTF-116 as his subordinate Field Forces Commander. Such an arrangement, CINCPAC held, would not allow the US the flexibility needed in the current situation.

During the following week, it became clear that the Thai, too, preferred to avoid the formal invocation of a SEATO plan, since they arranged that UK and Australian contingents be brought to Thailand under the same formula that authorized the US forces (see item 15 May 1962). Consequently, on 24 May, COMUSMACTHAI informed CINCPAC that, although he would have preferred some operational control of the SEATO nations' forces in Thailand, he would accept the role of "coordinator" as the only presently feasible arrangement.

(On 6 June

(On 6 June, military representatives from the participating nations formally approved COMUSMACTHAI's role as "coordinator" of their forces in Thailand.)

(TS) Msgs, CINCPAC to COMUSMACTHAI, 171006Z May 62; CINCPAC to CHJUSMAG Thailand, DA IN 231320, 17 May 62. (S) Msgs, CINCPAC to COMUSMACTHAI, DA IN 232741, 22 May 62; Bangkok to SecState, 1812 and 1814, 21 May 62. SecState to Bangkok 1817, 21 May 62; COMUSMACTHAI to CINCPAC, DA IN 233226, 24 May 62. USMILADREP, SMPO, Bangkok to CINCPAC, 080130Z Jun 62.

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18 May 62

No. 71

Ambassador Brown reported to the Secretary of State the assurances Phoui would demand before joining a reorganized RLG (see item 13 May 1962). Phoui told Brown that he would expect a senior post in the new government, at least a deputy premiership of equal rank with Phoumi. Although he would accept the "inoffensive" Boun Oum as Prime Minister, Phoui demanded the inclusion of one or two of his followers in senior positions thereby insuring his influence in the reorganized government.

Phoui suggested to Ambassador Brown that in view of Souvanna's expected return to Laos it would be best to allow the RLG to continue in power. If Phoumi remained intransigent it would quickly become apparent, and Phoui could then spur the National Assembly into criticizing Phoumi's failure to negotiate sincerely with Souvanna. Phoui believed a reorganization impossible

impossible without the consent of Phoumi, who controlled the military and a majority of the deputies. A revolt in the National Assembly was impossible unless the security of the deputies could be assured, a pledge which Ambassador Brown said the US could not give.

Although the US wished to avoid giving Phoumi an opportunity to wreck the negotiations, Phoui refused to act until after Phoumi, as chief negotiator, had demonstrated his intransigence. Until then, Phoui would not approach the King, Boun Oum, or Phoumi on the subject of reorganization.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1582, 18 May 62.

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18 May 62

No. 72

In a lengthy conversation with General Phoumi, Ambassador Brown was able to reach the following conclusions which Phoumi agreed might be officially reported to Washington: 1) Phoumi would go to the Plaine des Jarres for a tripartite meeting if Souvanna first went to see the King, preferably in Luang Prabang; 2) future talks must be on a three-Prince basis and should be pursued as quickly as possible; 3) Phoumi would demand only two assurances from Souvanna and Souphanouvong -- unanimous tripartite decisions on all important Defense and Interior points, and the maintenance of tripartite

tripartite forces pending agreement on integration; 4) discussion of Nam Tha would not be raised as a pre-condition to any further tripartite discussion; and 5) approval for this plan of action would be requested at a 19 or 20 May cabinet meeting. Phoumi also promised full collaboration with MAAG on military matters.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1580, 18 May 62.

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18 May 62

No. 73

On leaving Paris for Laos, Souvanna sent a message to Secretary Rusk in which he expressed the hope that Phoumi and Boun Oum would finally agree to accept a coalition government. Souvanna warned, however, that if they made more difficulties, he intended to return to Paris. Whatever the attitude of the RLG, he nevertheless intended to return to Paris in time for his daughter's wedding on 28 June. He concluded by saying that he hoped that Rusk would be able to induce Phoumi-Boun Oum to cooperate.

(C) Msg, Paris to SecState, 5480, 19 May 62.

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18 May 62

NO 74

M. Manac'h told Ambassador Gavin that the French Government was reluctant to make a contribution to the Western forces in Thailand, primarily because of evidence that the Communists did not intend to expand their offensive operations in Southeast

Southeast Asia at the present time.

The Foreign Office also indicated its disappointment over: 1) the failure of the US to consult with France prior to its committing troops to Thailand; 2) the US appointment of General Harkins to command in both Thailand and SVN at the same time; and 3) the US proposal to reorganize the RLG at this time.

Ambassador Gavin also learned that the Foreign Office had told the Thai Foreign Minister that France did not in any way disapprove of the US policy of sending troops to Thailand, but that the French Government felt that the sending of French forces would not have a constructive effect.

(On 28 May, Manac'h informed Ambassador Gavin that the Government of France, though it did not disapprove of the US deployment of forces to Thailand, would not participate in any such venture. France objected on the grounds that the move was provocative and might inperil the future status of the French Military Mission to Laos. For a list of those nations that did participate, see item 31 May 1962.)

(S) Msg, Paris to SecState, 5464, 18 May 62. (C) Msg, Paris to SecState, 5705, 28 May 62.

CHMAAG

18 May 62 CHMAAG tried to persuade Phoumi to move a fresh battalion to Ban Houie Sai.

No. 75 CHMAAG envisioned this battalion moving toward Nam Tha to determine the enemy's whereabouts and to retake, without combat, as much ground as possible. Phoumi agreed with the military wisdom of CHMAAG's plan, but he refused to deploy the troops, saying that political considerations were overriding. "One step up the Nam Tha road" would be considered an aggressive act by the enemy, it would upset the new negotiations for a political settlement, and would be repulsed by a superior force from Nam Tha. In brief, Phoumi wanted to "initiate no action whatsoever in that area other than to cooperate in the defense of Ban Houie Sai." The MAAG Chief warned Phoumi that unless the probe toward Nam Tha was made, the US would refuse to re-equip the Nam Tha evacuees; but Phoumi did not change his stand.

At the same meeting, CHMAAG agreed to help Phoumi in reorganizing the FAR. In addition he told the Lao leader that the FAR officer corps should be revamped. CHMAAG told Phoumi among other things, that Bounleut, the FAR commander, "could not lead a squad around the corner and should be relieved."

(S) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 231608, 18 May 62.

The State

18-22
May 62

No. 76

The State Department informed the US Embassy in Taipei of concern at the "highest levels" over reports (see item 12 May 1962) which indicated that the Nationalist Chinese Government was considering renewing support to the remnants of KMT irregulars in Southeast Asia, including Burma. The Department informed the Ambassador that any renewal of contact with the KMT irregulars by the Government of the Republic of China would be considered by the US as a flagrant breach of faith which would require the US Government to re-examine the whole basis of US relations with the GRC.

On the 17th the Department requested that the US Embassy in Taipei advise the [redacted] to inform the responsible Chinese official, Chiang Ching-kuo, that he was mistaken if he believed that the US would agree to the use of Chinese irregulars to support RLG forces. The main effect of such action, the Department pointed out, would be to justify Chinese Communist intervention.

After discussing the questio[redacted] Ambassador Clough reported that [redacted] satisfied that Chiang understood US policy and would not resume support of the irregulars. The Ambassador also indicated that he did not think that

that any responsible GRC official believed that the irregulars were of any military value, or that Laos and adjacent areas could be used successfully as a springboard for an attack on Communist China. The Ambassador characterized the reports regarding the use of the Chinese irregulars as the "harebrained" notion of low-ranking civilians who had no access to responsible GRC views.

The Ambassador concluded his views on the problem of the Chinese irregulars by saying that, though it was useful to remind Chiang Ching-kuo from time to time of the US position in regard to the use of the irregulars, as long as President Chiang had hopes of securing US cooperation in an action against the mainland, he would be unlikely to jeopardize these hopes by attempting to use the KMT remnants.

(S) Msg, SecState to Taipei, 657, 18 May 62. (C) Msg, SecState to Taipei, 662, 19 May 62. (S) Msg, Taipei to SecState, 864, 22 May 62.

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19 May 62

No. 77

Lord Home spoke with Souvanna, who had paused in Britain while en route via Burma to Laos. During their conversation, the British Foreign Secretary emphasized the importance of Souvanna's remaining in Laos until an agreement was reached. Lord Home

Home informed the Prince that Phoumi had agreed to attend a meeting of the Princes on the Plaine des Jarres. Other points mentioned were the US attitude toward Phoumi, the importance of maintaining the cease-fire, and the purpose of the deployment of US troops to Thailand.

In response to Lord Home's comments, Souvanna stated that he realized the importance of his presence in Laos. He indicated, however, that he intended to return to Paris in time for the wedding of his daughter on 28 June. The Prince agreed that, though Phoumi should be present at the negotiations, a more reliable person, preferably Leuam Insisiengmay, should eventually replace him. Turning to the composition of the cabinet, Souvanna said that his faction would retain the ministries of Defense and Interior, both of which would be subject to the Troika principle. The political portfolios of Education and Information and the technical posts of Economics and Finance should be divided equally between left and right. Souvanna also mentioned that he had requested an appointment with the King.

(S) Msg, London to SecState, 4273, 19 May 62. (C) Msg, London to SecState, 4253, 18 May 62.

Harriman

19 May 62 Harriman, in an interview with the Lao Ambassador, called for the establishment

No. 78 of a reorganized RLG dedicated to a resumption of the tripartite negotiations, and in which Phoumi would be excluded from any political role (see items 12 and 13 May 1962). After explaining the role of US troops in Thailand, he also informed the Ambassador that there was no plan for US intervention in Laos and that the US certainly would not consider dispatching forces to help Phoumi. Harriman also denied that any negotiations were being conducted that would lead to a partition of Laos. Ambassador Khampan commented that it would be difficult to achieve Assembly approval for a governmental reorganization since many of the deputies were followers of Phoumi who did not hold him responsible for the Nam Tha defeat.

The next day Ambassador Brown informed the State Department that Ambassador Khampan's report of Harriman's remarks came as a "bombshell" to the RLG and caused a "very violent reaction in all quarters." Brown reported that the RLG had just agreed to follow US advice in all respects, including surrendering the Defense and Interior posts to Souvanna. All was now in danger of being lost, the RLG must either resist US

advice

advice or resign. Foreign Minister Sisouk told Brown that the resignation of the RLG would result in chaos. Brown recommended that he be authorized to urge Phoumi's presence at the tripartite meetings. Only if Phoumi obstructed the progress of the negotiations should the US force him to resign.

Harriman answered that nothing in his conversation with Ambassador Khampan should be interpreted as a demand for the RLG's resignation or even of Phoumi's dismissal from the Ministry of Defense. The US wished to see Phoumi accompany Premier Boun Oum to the tripartite meetings along with "capable political advisers." Harriman also instructed the Ambassador that Brown might wish to inform Phoumi that the future US attitude depended upon Phoumi's present and future actions.

(S) Msgs, SecState to Vientiane, 1020, 19 May 62, 1022, 20 May 62, Vientiane to SecState, 1585 and 1586, 20 May 62.

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21 May 62 Souvanna, who had paused in Rangoon en route to Laos, met with the US Ambassador

No. 79 to Burma. The Prince, during a brief conversation, expressed concern lest the Thai Government take advantage of the presence of US troops and attempt to provoke an incident which would lead to combat

combat between American and Pathet Lao forces. According to Souvanna, the Nam Tha attack had been conducted in retaliation for aggressive actions by the FAR. The Prince also urged that the US continue to exert pressure on Phoumi.

The Ambassador replied that Thailand, which endorsed US policy toward Laos, would not take any action that would jeopardize the stability of the situation in Southeast Asia. The deployment of troops to Thailand had been carried out at the request of the Thai Government, was based on both the SEATO agreement and the Rusk-Thanat understanding (see item 6 March 1962), and was in accord with the UN charter. US policy, moreover, had not changed, for the objective remained an independent and neutral Laos ruled by a coalition government under Souvanna's leadership.

Following this conversation with Ambassador Everton, Souvanna attended a gathering at the US Embassy. Also present were the French and British Ambassadors and a representative of the Burmese Foreign Office. The Prince stated that he would not be able to assess the prospects for agreement on a coalition until he had talked with Phoumi and Boun Oum. Furthermore, the decision (see item 22

June

June 1961) to leave undisturbed, prior to a general election, the local administrative machinery in areas controlled by the Pathet Lao had complicated Souvanna's task of unifying the kingdom. In effect, the Pathet Lao had thus been given additional time in which to indoctrinate the inhabitants. Laos, the Prince continued, could not remain neutral unless the people so desired.

The Communist Chinese and Viet Minh, Souvanna declared, sincerely desired a neutral and peaceful Laos. He based this conviction on a belief that the Chinese wanted a respite of from 10 to 15 years and would not antagonize the West during this period. While China rested, Laos would become stronger and more closely unified.

The Prince, however, returned to the subject of Thailand, charging this time that the Thai Government was supporting Chinese Nationalist guerrillas operating in Burmese territory. Souvanna rejected Ambassador Everton's assurances to the contrary, for, according to the Prince, Sarit could not be trusted and Phoumi was merely the Thai Premier's puppet.

In commenting upon Souvanna's remarks at the Embassy, the US Ambassador observed that

that the Prince seemed convinced that Communist China and North Viet Nam sincerely desired a neutral Laos. This conviction was in keeping with Souvanna's view that the FAR had provoked the Nam Tha incident. In addition, the Prince appeared "obsessed with his dislike of Sarit" and therefore unwilling to cooperate with the Thai Government.

(During subsequent conversations with members of the French diplomatic mission to Burma, Souvanna indicated that his success in forming a coalition would depend upon the suspension of US military support to Phoumi. The Prince also admitted that he was running out of funds, but he declared that he had refused financial aid from the Communists.)

(S) Msgs, Rangoon to SecState, 851, 21 May 62 855, 22 May 62, 863, 25 May 62.

21-22 May 62

No. 80

Sarit summoned Ambassador Young and expressed alarm and shock at the contents of a message sent to him on the previous day by Phoumi. Thanat then disclosed that Phoumi had claimed that the US Ambassador to Laos had been instructed to present Boun Oum with the choice of either dismissing Phoumi and forming a new government or forfeiting all US aid. Should Boun Oum retain Phoumi in the

in the cabinet, the US would refuse to give any assistance in the event of further Communist aggression. Sarit requested that Young find out as soon as possible if the US Government had actually made so drastic a decision.

The Thai Prime Minister then warned that the adoption of this policy would render meaningless the informal agreement which Sarit had negotiated with Phoumi (see item 1-4 May 1962). If, however, Phoumi's report proved false, Sarit would be willing to "tell him bluntly" to cooperate with the Americans, particularly in military matters. The Prime Minister also offered to train additional Lao soldiers, provided the US established a satisfactory relationship with Phoumi and the FAR.

After pointing out that Phoumi's telegram was wrong on several counts, Young explained that the US had lost confidence in Phoumi's military ability and for that reason believed that his status should be changed. Phoumi had, in fact, agreed to cooperate fully with his American advisers, for he understood that if he did otherwise the US would not assist him in re-equipping and reorganizing the FAR. Moreover, the US, in addition to entertaining doubts concerning Phoumi's military skills, also suspected

suspected that he "could and probably would" sabotage the negotiations with Souvanna and Souphanouvong. Thus, it was considered necessary that other responsible Lao be brought into the RLG to insure progress toward the rapid formation of a coalition government.

Ambassador Young told Sarit and Thanat that the US did not intend to eliminate Phoumi from the political and military scene and therefore assumed that he would participate, in a proper manner, both in the negotiations among the Princes and "thereafter in some way." The Thai officials argued that the US had assured them that Phoumi would play a key role in any coalition government and that this assurance had enabled them to convince Phoumi to take part in a Souvanna government. Young, however, avoided stating whether the US would agree to retaining Phoumi as Minister of Defense and Deputy Prime Minister in the Boun Oum government and, in general, refused to comment on Phoumi's future.

Secretary Rusk, in commenting upon Young's account of this conversation with Sarit, stated that Phoumi obviously was trying to create support among Thai officials by means of an exaggerated account of the pressures being exerted upon him

upon him by the US Government. Although theSecretary believed that the statements made to Sarit by Young had been helpful, he did not want the Ambassador to offer explanations which might weaken the effect of US efforts to obtain military and political cooperation from Phoumi. In addition, Rusk said that any efforts by Sarit to gain Phoumi's military cooperation would be welcome.

On 22 May, Ambassador Young, acting upon guidance received since his earlier interview with Sarit, again informed the Prime Minister that Phoumi's account of US policy had been exaggerated. After reviewing the reasons for his Government's lack of confidence in Phoumi, the Ambassador explained that, if the FAR was to counterbalance the Pathet Lao in a unified Laos, Phoumi would have to concentrate on military matters and cooperate fully with CHMAAG Laos. Thus, the US Government would welcome Sarit's initiative in obtaining Phoumi's cooperation, particularly in military matters.

Turning to that portion of his instructions that dealt with political problems, Young called Sarit's attention to the urgent need to incorporate into the RLG the "most responsible and wisest advisers possible," so that the

Lao

Lao Government might negotiate realistically regarding the formation of a coalition and the distribution of key cabinet portfolios. The US Government assumed, however, that the existing RLG cabinet would remain essentially intact, with Phoumi holding an important position, preferably military, and participating with Boun Oum in future meetings of the Princes.

Sarit accepted the Ambassador's explanation and dictated an urgent telegram informing Phoumi of the US position. The "tricky point" of the future relationship between Phoumi and the US Government was not raised. The Prime Minister did, however, disclose that he had on the previous day cabled Phoumi to concentrate on being a soldier and to cooperate with General Tucker and Ambassador Brown. Because he believed that the FAR was incapable of providing its own training cadres, Sarit also urged that the US training program be stepped up and that more Lao be indoctrinated in Thailand.

(S) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 1813, 21 May 62, 1829, 22 May 62. (S) Msg, SecState to Bangkok, NIACT 1816, 21 May 62.

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22 May 62 No. 81 CINCPAC requested that COMUSMACTHAI restrict overflights of Laos by US aircraft under his command

his command to: 1) reconnaissance and supply missions requested by CHMAAG Laos, 2) flights to and from the Philippines requiring overflight of southern Laos, and 3) administrative flights to Vientiane.

(S) Msg, CINCPAC to COMUSMACTHAI, DA IN 232500, 22 May 62.

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22 May 62

No. 82

CHMAAG, still unable to persuade any Lao to accompany the advance White Star team in its mission of making contact with the enemy (see item 14-17 May 1962), proposed to CINCPAC that the WSMTT undertake such a reconnaissance by itself.

In a message of the same day, CINCPAC refused permission for this undertaking, stating that the situation was too "delicate" for any action that could be construed as a US probe or advance party. CINCPAC did not, however, preclude joint US-FAR patrols if CHMAAG could get any Lao to participate. (See item 25-28 May 1962.)

(S) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 232578, 22 May 62; CINCPAC to CHMAAG Laos, DA IN 232557, 22 May 62.

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22 May 62

No. 83

As of this date, approximately 6,000 of the approximately 9,000 US troops ordered to Thailand (see item 13 May 1962) were in that country. The troops not yet on hand were principally Army and Air Force supporting units.

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(During the remainder of May, no further appreciable numbers of troops arrived in Thailand. See item 26 June 1962.)

(S) Msgs, CINCPAC to JCS, 240026Z May 62, 300232Z May 62.

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23 May 62

No. 84

According to USARMA Bangkok, the Royal Thai Army (RTA) had moved several companies and one battalion to the Lao-Thai border area, as requested by the US (see item 13 May 1962).

(S) Msg, USARMA Bangkok to DA, DA IN 233012, 23 May 62.

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24 May 62

No. 85

The Chairman, JCS, urged CHMAAG Laos to continue pressuring Phoumi to improve FAR leadership, morale, effectiveness, and responsiveness to US advice (see item 13 May 1962). CJCS hoped that by such improvement the anti-Communist elements of future Lao governments would have a stronger FAR as a bulwark against the extension of Communist influence. CHMAAG was asked to prepare a list of "simply-stated, easily verifiable immediate actions," that the RLG should take. Finally, both CINCPAC and CHMAAG were granted authority to regulate the flow of MAP material into Laos, in order to put additional pressure on Phoumi to follow CHMAAG's recommendations. (See item 6 June 1962.)

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(S) Msg, CJCS to CINCPAC, JCS 4757, 24 May 62.

24 May 62

No. 86

Since a new rupture of the Lao cease-fire seemed possible, the President at a White House meeting requested that contingency planning be undertaken for: 1) the investing and holding of Sayaboury Province by Thai forces with US support; and 2) the holding of the Panhandle by the FAR with Thai, South Vietnamese, or US forces. In connection with this planning, the President also desired an estimate of the military value of the Mekong River in Sayaboury Province as a defensive barrier in relation to the cost of taking and holding it (see item 25 May 1962). All this planning, the President emphasized, was to be done unilaterally by the US, without discussion with the Lao or Thai.

Finally the President indicated that he intended to keep US forces in Thailand during the three-Prince negotiation and the early days of the government of national union--in other words, "as long as they serve a necessary purpose."

(TS) JCS 2344/47, 25 May 62; (C) 1st N/H of JCS 2344/47, 5 Jun 62, in JMF 9150/3100 (24 May 62).

24 May 62

No. 87

Since the deployment of US troops to Thailand was all but completed, and because the Thai Government was inviting similar action

action by SEATO forces, Ambassador Young believed it necessary that he raise four policy questions which might be the subjects of further Departmental guidance or additional contingency planning. The Ambassador, however, in his message to the Secretary of State, listed only the following questions: 1) the "right bank problem", 2) a further violation by the Communists of the cease-fire, and 3) the withdrawal of US forces.

The right bank problem. Because the Thai Government was concerned lest the Communists control that part of Sayaboury Province west of the Mekong, the Ambassador feared that the Thai might send troops into Laos to defend this area. The RTG, Young continued, might either undertake a preventive occupation or arrange with the RLG for the passage of Thai troops if it appeared that Communist units were entrenching themselves along the Mekong's east bank or preparing to infiltrate across the river. The Ambassador suggested that guidance should be prepared to cover this eventuality.

Further breaches of the cease-fire by Communist troops. The Ambassador believed that higher US authorities should consider the possibility of another

another Communist offensive, such as had occurred at Nam Tha, and issue guidance concerning the actions which he and General Harkins should take to meet Thai pressure for the employment of US troops in Laos. Since this was an "extremely tricky and difficult question," Young realized that it might not be feasible to issue instructions at the present time.

The withdrawal of US troops. For political and military planning purposes, Young suggested a "confidential working assumption" that the American units would withdraw in 90 days. Once the situation had become stabilized, the Ambassador continued, the US should revert to a planned, rotational, training cycle, under which the first contingents would be replaced, at least in part, by similar units. The US Ambassador also observed that the Thai Government, though reluctant to have US forces permanently stationed in the country, would certainly want some US units on hand for the time being and might even desire the permanent presence of foreign troops under SEATO auspices.

(On 25 May, Under Secretary Ball informed the Ambassador that "highest authority" had directed that there be no bilateral US-Thai planning for the possible

possible movement of Thai forces into Laos. For the present, the US would engage only in unilateral planning concerning the possible further deterioration of the military situation in Laos. The JCS would so instruct Admiral Felt, General Harkins, and General Tucker.

In a second message sent that day, Under Secretary Ball pointed out that the withdrawal of US troops from Thailand would have to be "characterized by maximum flexibility." For purposes of confidential planning, the Ambassador was told that at least some of the US forces would remain until satisfactory progress had been made toward the establishment of a Lao coalition, the withdrawal from the kingdom of foreign military forces, and the integration and demobilization of Lao armed forces. Thus, the troops might remain for as long as six months.)

(See item 4 June 1962.)

(TS) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1844, 24 May 62. (TS) Msgs, SecState to Bangkok, 1849, 25 May 62; 1855, 25 May 62.

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25 May 62 Pursuant to the President's 24 May requests (see item), the JCS asked CINCPAC and

No. 88 COMUSMACTHAI to comment upon the necessity or desirability of the Thai occupying Sayaboury Province in the event the Lao cease-fire

cease-fire collapsed. The US commanders were also requested to present their concepts for such a Thai occupation, and for the occupation of the Lao Panhandle after the cease-fire had been violated. Several specific questions were presented for the commanders' replies, and several specific topics were presented for inclusion in their respective concepts of operation.

As backgound for CINCPAC and COMUSMACTHAI in formulating their replies, the JCS expressed judgments on certain pertinent issues:

1. The JCS agreed with opinions from the field that the FAR could not effectively resist any determined enemy attack at any major point, and that Thakhek, Sayaboury, and Attopeu were particularly vulnerable points that could be held by the FAR for only 48 hours.

2. The JCS believed that measures to strengthen the FAR, "within the limits of existing policy," while desirable, would have only limited effect. Even with maximum assistance--large scale Thai encadrement, US helicopter and Jungle Jim support, and a substantial increase in US advisers--the FAR would still require Thai and probably US tactical air support to hold threatened points indefinitely.

3. The

3. The JCS felt that introduction of US forces for the sole purpose of holding key river towns would probably lead to a "creeping" Pathet Lao-Viet Minh response. US forces confined to these towns would make no real contribution to the recovery of Laos, the defense of Thailand, or the destruction of Viet Cong routes into South Viet Nam.

(See item 29, 31 May 1962.)

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, COMUSMACTHAI, JCS 4790, 25 May 62.

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25 May 62

No. 89

Souvanna, accompanied by Quinim Pholsena, arrived at Plaine des Jarres. Souvanna informed the Canadian ICC observer at Khang Khay that he was most anxious to meet with the British Ambassador in order to be informed of the situation in Vientiane.

During a meeting with Ambassador Addis on the following day, Souvanna declared that if no agreement were reached by 15 June he would return to Paris.

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1608, 25 May 62 and 1612, 26 May 62.

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25 May 62

No. 90

Soviet Premier Khrushchev, in a TV-Radio talk following his visit to Bulgaria, spoke at length on the Laotian situation. In regard to the arrival of American forces in Thailand, Khrushchev confined himself to noting that the American action seriously

seriously complicated efforts to arrive at a settlement of the Laotian problem. Khrushchev once again repeated the Soviet desire for an independent and neutral Laos.

(See item 27 May 1962.)

(LOU) Msg, Moscow to SecState, 3067, 25 May 62.

25-29 May 62

No. 91

A patrol of 26 FAR and 4 US personnel finally made contact with the enemy some 35 kilometers northeast of Ban Houie Sai on 25 May. They were attacked by a force of 100-150 Pathet Lao and, with the FAR soldiers fighting "exceptionally well," withdrew 5 kilometers to their prepared defensive positions (see item 14-17 May 1962) with the PL in aggressive pursuit.

On 27 May, these defensive positions, defended by about 75 US and Lao personnel, were attacked by Viet Minh troops, and despite one reinforcement by helicopter, the defenders were forced to withdraw. In this encounter the FAR troops had no fight in them at all, because the attackers were Viet Minh.

The enemy attacked the defenses on the outskirts of Ban Houie Sai itself on 28 May. Although only ten rounds of mortar fire and a dozen attackers were reported, the FAR commander and most of his command fled across the Mekong to Thailand

to Thailand. The US personnel remained in Ban Houei Sai, which the enemy made no attempt to occupy.

General Bounleut was told by MAAG of the FAR's precipitate flight to Thailand. he termed the movement consistent with Phoumi's plan to employ the forces at Ban Houie Sai in a guerrilla role, rather than to establish a defensive perimeter. This statement and Bounleut's attitude signified to CHMAAG that the FAR had no intention of defending Ban Houei Sai. It was becoming increasingly apparent to CHMAAG, moreover, that the FAR would not fight anyone except "pure PL" units and that the FAR had "no intention of fighting for any part of Laos if they could get somebody else to do it."

On 29 May, the FAR commander and 20 of his men returned to Ban Houie Sai--to what purpose CHMAAG did not know. (See item 4 June 1962.)

(S) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 233645, 25 May 62; DA IN 234194, 27 May 62; DA IN 234247, 28 May 62, DA IN 234314, 28 May 62, DA IN 234680, 29 May 62.

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27 May 62 The State Department requested Ambassador Thompson to inform the Soviet Foreign

No. 92 Office of its pleasure concerning the "constructive tone" of Premier Khrushchev's remarks on Laos in his recent TV address

(see item

(see item 25 May 1962). The Department also directed Thompson to state that the US hoped that, in view of Mr. Khrushchev's attitude and Phoumi's willingness to negotiate, a settlement on Laos could very quickly be reached.

Thompson was to add, however, that reports of PL and VM military pressure against the provincial capital of Saravane had caused the US grave concern over the prospects for a speedy settlement of the Laos situation. It was, after all, impossible for negotiations to take place in an atmosphere of military threat. Therefore, Thompson was to declare that, if the constructive statements made by Premier Khrushchev were to have any meaning, the Soviet Government would have to influence Souphanouvong to cease his military pressure, thus helping to restore an effective cease-fire.

(On the following day, Deputy Foreign Minister Kuznetzov replied to the US representation by saying that, although he was unaware of the events at Saravane, the US always became excited over PL actions but remained silent when Phoumi broke the cease-fire.)

(S) Msgs, SecState to Moscow, NIACT 2706, 27 May 62; Moscow to SecState, 3072, 28 May 62.

Boun Oum

29 May 62 Boun Oum and Phoumi arrived in the Philippines and were greeted with full

No. 93 military honors. Phoumi announced that he had come to explain the political and military situation in Laos in hopes of winning more understanding from his "Southeast Asian friends." He indicated that he was uninformed about the 15 June deadline set by Souvanna for the organization of a coalition government (see item 25 May 1962).

At a luncheon given by President Macapagal for Boun Oum and Phoumi, the Philippine President expressed his regret that Laos had not been given full support by the leading powers in the "struggle for human liberty and dignity." He said further that the Philippine Government could see no merit in a policy of neutralism which he regarded as the "gateway to communism." He therefore found it incomprehensible that in Laos Phoumi and Boun Oum should receive less support from the West than did the neutralists. He expressed his entire sympathy with the Boun Oum Government and termed the support of the neutralist approach by the West, "a species of sophistry."

The US Ambassador to the Philippines reported that he, as well as the British and Australian Ambassadors, thought that

that Macapagal had acted impetuously because of his pique at US failure to pay Philippine claims for war damages. Ambassador Stevenson also observed that there was no indication as to whether Macapagal's remarks had any effect on Boun Oum's and Phoumi's announced determination to make a sincere try at forming a coalition

(On 30 May Harriman and an aide discussed the Macapagal speech with Philippine Ambassador Abello. The US diplomats reviewed Phoumi's irresponsible and unreliable record and inquired how Macapagal could characterize Phoumi and Boun Oum as "stout leaders of the anti-communist struggle who had been abandoned by the US."

Harriman then informed Abello that President Kennedy was much disturbed by Macapagal's undercutting of US policy by offering encouragement to RLG leaders to disregard commitments which they had already undertaken. In response Abello emphasized that he thought the incident was brought about by Macapagal's ignorance of the situation and by his strong anti-Communist feelings.

In a joint communique issued by Macapagal and Boun Oum on the 30th, the two leaders repeated the substance of their previous remarks and concluded by announcing that,

that, as a sign of friendship, the two governments had made arrangements for the opening of a Philippine diplomatic mission in Vientiane.)

(OUO) Msg, Manila to SecState, 1441, 29 May 62. (C) Msg, Manila to SecState, 1442, 29 May 62. (U) Msg, Manila to SecState, 1446, 30 May 62. (S) Msg, SecState to Manila, 1470, 1 Jun 62. (U) Msg, Manila to SecState, 1451, 31 May 62.

29, 31 May 62

No. 94

On 29 and 31 May COMUSMACTHAI and CINCPAC presented their respective replies to the JCS message of 25 May (see item) asking the importance of Sayaboury Province and directing certain contingency planning desired by the President (see item 24 May 1962).

COMUSMACTHAI did not think it either necessary or desirable for the Thai to occupy Sayaboury Province if the cease-fire broke down. Sayaboury was "not a particularly valuable piece of real estate". Its terrain was mountainous and lines of communication were extremely poor and difficult to maintain. By advancing to the Mekong River through Sayaboury, the Thai would gain time and space for defending against an overt attack, but the river would not be an improved barrier to covert infiltration. The military gains would not be commensurate, in COMUSMACTHAI's opinion, with the "potential international implications" of the

of the occupation. In accordance with the JCS request, however, COMUSMACTHAI set forth the forces he thought the Thai would require to occupy the province: 2 infantry battalions to hold the 2 small airfields in the province, and 2 calvary squadrons to conduct patrols. He suggested finally, that as an alternative to Thai occupation, the FAR move a battalion to Sayaboury, while the US moved a helicopter unit to the area and undertook to organize the Kha tribesmen there into guerrilla units.'

Turning to a JCS request that he recommend the appropriate military response to a Communist breach of the cease-fire, COMUSMACTHAI opined that the assumptions of SEATO Plan 5 and CINCPAC OPLAN 32-59 were being overtaken by the Pathet Lao and Viet Minh advances in Laos; more positive measures to bolster the FAR and actively participate in holding and clearing actions would be required. He recommended that the response to further Communist attacks be the recapture of the Panhandle and, if feasible, the holding of Vientiane. The FAR could not accomplish this task, even with US air support, and encadrement as proposed by CINCPAC (see item 15, 19 May 1962) would not insure success either. According to COMUSMACTHAI,

encadrement

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encadrement "on a scale of about 50%" would be required for a chance of success. This was not practicable and, in any event, if this many US personnel were to be committed, he would prefer that they be formed in US units.

COMUSMACTHAI recommended, therefore, that the Panhandle be secured by the FAR in combination with SEATO forces on the scale contemplated in SEATO Plan 4 for the defense of Thailand, together with expanded Kha activities from the Bolovens Plateau south. SEATO Plan 4 called for ground forces of one US infantry division, one armored cavalry regiment, and one airborne battle group, Commonwealth forces of about division strength, and the entire Thai Army; air support of nine squadrons, and one US airborne division in theater reserve. From this force, COMUSMACTHAI would send one division from Thakhek along Route 8 to Nape Pass; another division would establish blocking positions to the north of Route 8 to protect this venture; a third division would conduct clean-up operations to the north of the Bolovens Plateau; while a fourth would be held for possible reinforcement of the Thakhek expedition. Air operations would support all these operations and

might

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might have to extend into North Viet Nam. Moreover, COMUSMACTHAI warned, the logistical problems would be enormous; attention should be given them quickly.

Having received COMUSMACTHAI's report, CINCPAC on 31 May cabled his separate recommendations to the JCS. Like COMUSMACTHAI, CINCPAC felt that the political disadvantages of Thai occupation of Sayaboury overrode any military advantage thereof; he stressed in addition that this occupation would lengthen Thai borders and thereby further dilute their defenses. The forces he recommended if the Thai were to occupy the province were on the same small scale proposed by COMUSMACTHAI. Also, while not discarding encadrement entirely, CINCPAC believed that any successful effort would take at least several months and would have to include firm provision for US control of FAR operations; in the meantime, US and Thai units would be the best bolsters for the FAR.

Unlike COMUSMACTHAI, CINCPAC believed that SEATO Plan 5 and CINCPAC OPLAN 32-59 could still be adapted to the Laotian situation generally and the clearing of the Panhandle specifically. CINCPAC's concept of operations, however, was "in the same ballpark" with COMUSMACTHAI's. Using OPLAN 32-59 as the basis for initial

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initial US deployments--thereby leaving aside the question of SEATO arrangements--CINCPAC thought the FAR should be supported in holding the Panhandle by 1 Marine Brigade, 1 Army infantry divison, 1 Thai infantry division, 1 logistical command, and 4 tactical air squadrons, with 7th Fleet air strike groups operating in the South China Sea, and with 1 airborne division (+) in reserve.

For tactical reasons and for the purpose of most expeditiously blending outside forces with the FAR, CINCPAC would have deployed his force in smaller units--battle groups, BLTs and RCTs--than COMUSMACTHAI and to more locations--Vientiane, Paksane, Thakhek, Seno and Pakse. CINCPAC suggested, moreover, covert and overt retaliatory operations against North Viet Nam and he stressed large scale interdiction as the proper role for US air power.

What differences existed between his and COMUSMACTHAI's recommendations were, in CINCPAC's opinion, occasioned principally by their different estimates of North Vietnamese reaction to US and Thai operations in the Panhandle. CINCPAC conceded that, if COMUSMACTHAI's estimate was correct, then COMUSMACTHAI's force requirements were also valid.

Ambassador

(TS) Msgs, COMUSMACTHAI to CJCS, CINCPAC, DA IN 234703, 29 May 62; CINCPAC to JCS, DA IN 235086, 31 May 62.

30 May 62

No. 95

Ambassador Brown reported to the Secretary of State that although the RLG would not make the recovery of Nam Tha a precondition of tripartite negotiations, it was possible that this question might arise early in negotiations. The Ambassador requested instructions on what advice he should give the RLG and outlined for the Secretary the five possible dispositions of the disputed territory: 1) the PL could remain in complete control; 2) the PL and Kong Le troops could share control of the area as they did the Plaine des Jarres 3) Kong Le could be given complete control of the disputed territory; 4) it could be completely demilitarized and policed by the ICC, or as a variant, it could be made an "open city" under ICC guard but with the Souvanna government in control of administration and 5) as a last and most improbable disposition it could be returned to the RLG. After discussing these alternatives at some length, the Ambassador concluded that RLG's initial position might be the return of Nam Tha to the RLG, but they would have to abandon this position, perhaps early in the negotiations, to avoid a rupture, and accept

accept as a maximum goal a demilitarized zone policed by the ICC

In his response the next day, the Secretary of State observed that the Nam Tha debacle left the RLG little to bargain with. Although the US would not wish to see complete capitulation and ready acquiescence in Communist control over an area bordering Thailand, it did not want to see prolonged arguments detract from the essential negotiations for a neutralist government. Therefore, the RLG's first position should be that Nam Tha be returned to RLG control, but it should be ready to fall back on a demand for the demilitarization of the area, and if necessary, accept replacement of the PL by Souvanna, preferably reinforced by the ICC.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1638, 30 May 62. SecState to Vientiane, 1057, 31 May 62.

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30 May 62

No. 96

Lord Home, UK Foreign Secretary, in a personal message to Secretary Rusk noted that there was little time left in which to obtain a negotiated settlement of the Lao crisis, since Souvanna had laid down a 15 June deadline (see item 25 May 1962) and the King had refused to see Souvanna before 4 June. Home therefore suggested that Phoumi must go the Plaine des Jarres on 5 or 6 June.

Since

Since this might be the last chance to arrange the meeting, Home expressed the hope that Harriman would do everything possible to insure that Phoumi actually would sign an agreement. Home further desired that Harriman disabuse Phoumi of the hope that the US would intervene to secure partition. In addition, the Foreign Secretary agreed that some other Lao besides Boun Oum should go with Phoumi in order to prevent subsequent misrepresentation and that the US or UK ambassador should also go to keep pressure on Phoumi during the meetings.

If Phoumi again obstructed settlement, Home believed that another group should be substituted for Phoumi's clique. If no negotiations occurred and military intervention was inevitable, Phoumi's absence would remove an objection to intervention. Unfortunately, observed Home, Phoumi would not resign voluntarily, nor could any Lao in Vientiane remove him. Physical force might therefore be necessary, unless Phoumi could be bypassed and US military support transferred to Souvanna.

Lord Home further indicated that, if intervention became necessary, it would be difficut to predict how it would develop. He pointed out that events had rendered obsolete the holding operations considered

considered last year as a prelude to negotiations. Any further intervention, Lord Home suggested, would tend to develop beyond original aims with the danger of a Korean-type war developing. Home requested urgent discussion of these matters.

On the same day the Secretary discussed the message with Harriman and asked that he talk to Deputy Chief of Mission Hood who was acting in the absence of Ambassador Ormsby Gore. In outlining the US position in regard to the issues brought up in Lord Home's message, Harriman, after expressing the Secretary's gratitude for Home's interest in the question, indicated that the US thought that further talks on some of the points mentioned would be desirable at some later date.

Turning to the Prince's meeting, Harriman said that the US agreed that it should take place immediately after Souvanna saw the King Ambassador Brown, Harriman continued, would be so instructed.

Harriman then questioned the phrasing in Home's message which implied that the US must, if necessary, force Phoumi to sign. The US diplomat pointed out that the Souphanouvong faction might raise the ante to a point where the US might not want to force Phoumi's acceptance. Harriman added,

added, however, that the US would pressure Phoumi to sign an acceptable agreement. Hood assented to this interpretation.

In regard to US intervention to secure partition, Harriman said that Phoumi had been informed several times that the US would not intervene militarily to back him. Hood expressed the hope that the US would reiterate this position to Phoumi.

On the question of ambassadorial representation at the Plaine des Jarres meeting, Harriman indicated that the State Department had complete confidence in Addis and said that the UK Ambassador definitely should accompany Phoumi to the meeting. The Department, however, thought it best that Brown not attend. Perhaps some junior officer would go instead.

As to the possibility that Phoumi might again refuse to sign, Harriman believed it would be best to wait and see how he acted. The US diplomat added that he was still seeking a way to get Phoumi out of the picture (see item 12 May 1962) and would welcome any ideas on the subject. He indicated that the Secretary had considered the transfer of recognition and support to Souvanna, as suggested in Lord Home's message, but had not

had not found a satisfactory method of doing it, the difficulty being that US support would place Souvanna in opposition to Souphanouvong so that Souvanna would no longer be neutral.

In regard to the method of intervention, if that became necessary, Harriman indicated that various alternatives were being considered but that any such action should be directed to the support of the political objective of a neutral and independent Laos.

Harriman concluded his remarks to Hood by saying that the Secretary was also concerned over Souvanna's deadline and felt that it might be suggested to Addis and Falaize that they insist to Souvanna that he relax his position. In response to Hood's suggestion that Souvanna might be more easily pressured on this point after negotiations had started, Harriman said he felt it best to put the idea into Souvanna's mind "right off" so that he could retract the deadline at the most opportune moment.

As a result of this exchange of ideas between the UK and US Governments the Secretary of State requested that Ambassador Brown suggest to Addis that he persuade Souvanna to issue invitations for the Princes' meeting to be held on June 5 or 6 and that he impress Phoumi with the absolute

absolute necessity of his accepting the invitation and attending the meeting.

The Secretary further requested that Brown request of Addis and Falaize that they recommend to Souvanna that he be prepared to relax his June 15 deadline.

(S) Msgs, SecState to Vientiane, 1053 and 1054, 30 May 62.

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30 May 62

No. 97

The Secretary of State informed Ambassador Thompson that the British Foreign Office had instructed UK Ambassador Roberts to support US representations concerning the latest cease-fire violations by the PL. The British felt, Rusk reported, that the situation was moving toward a breakdown of negotiations. The UK therefore wanted its views on record.

As a result, Lord Home had sent a note to Gromyko in which, after reviewing recent events in Laos, he warned that the military pressures being exerted by the Communists at Saravane and Ban Houie Sai precluded the continuation of fruitful negotiations and could result in a resumption of general hostilities. The UK, he said, could not believe that any party would be so ill-advised as to risk for some minor military advantage all that had been achieved over the last year.

Lord Home informed the Soviet Foreign Office that he was confident that the

Co-Chairmen

Co-Chairmen could prevent the break-up of negotiations. He noted that the UK was constantly pressuring the RLG to avoid clashes, and he hoped that the Soviet Union might do the same with regard to the PL forces. These influences, the Foreign Minister thought, were the best means of preventing repeated violations of the cease-fire and of assuring a negotiated settlement. In view of this, the UK was unable to understand Soviet reluctance to issue further instructions to the ICC, and hoped that the Soviets would be able to declare that they had now agreed to take this action.

(C) Msg, SecState to Moscow, 2736, 30 May 62.

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31 May 62

No. 98

The Defense Intelligence Agency reported that certain SEATO contingents had either arrived in Thailand or were expected to arrive shortly. According to the report, the Australian element consisted of 350 personnel including 50 paratroops, eight F-86 aircraft, five Canberra bomber aircraft, and two C-130 transport aircraft. These forces would probably be located at Ubon. New Zealand was sending 35 paratroops, who probably would be located near Ban Na Khu, plus Bristol transport aircraft and 25 personnel to be located at Korat. The UK contingent was composed

was composed of 20 Hawker Hunter fighter aircraft based near Chieng Mai.

(S-NOFORN) DIA Intelligence Bulletin, 107-62, 1 Jun 62.

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31 May 62

No. 99

The Department of State provided the US Embassy in Vientiane and other diplomatic posts with an intelligence estimate of Viet Minh and Pathet Lao units in Laos, designed for briefing foreign government officials and selected press representatives. According to this estimate, there were 10,000 Viet Minh troops in Laos: 5,000 formed into 10 battalions in northern and central Laos, 5,000 serving as "advisers" to the Pathet Lao. The "advisers" served not only to advise but also to command Pathet Lao combat units and to control and fire both antiaircraft and field artillery. The Pathet Lao were comprised of 19,500 combat troops formed in 39 battalions throughout Laos, and 2,000 guerrillas. The Viet Minh and Pathet Lao were supplied extensively from North Viet Nam, by truck convoy and by Soviet airlift.

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 1059, 31 May 62.

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1. During

JUNE

Summary of Major Subjects

1. During June, Phoumi agreed to accept the Troika principle as a means of safeguarding the interests of the rival factions in Laos and conferred with Souvanna, who rescinded his deadline on negotiations. These meetings, also attended by Souphanouvong, resulted in agreement on a coalition government headed by Souvanna. The Lao national assembly ratified the compromise reached by the rival factions, and the coalition government was formally installed.

Nos. 2, 5, 6, 8, 13, 16, 19, 20, 23, 24, 34, 39.

2. With the formation of a neutral government in Laos, the US decided to increase the strength and alter the composition of the American forces in Thailand.

Nos. 26, 35, 55, 63.

3. The new coalition began functioning as the legitimate government of Laos, holding cabinet meetings and indicating a willingness both to accept Soviet aid and to establish diplomatic ties with nations of the Sino-Soviet Bloc.

Nos. 47, 50, 56, 64, 66, 67, 68.

4. US diplomatic preparations also were made to gain acceptance by America's allies of the agreements that had been under negotiation at Geneva.

Nos. 28, 29, 32, 33, 40, 41, 46, 53, 60, 62, 65.

5. Although the US, like the Soviet Union, expressed satisfaction at the compromise, the establishment of a coalition government necessitated a restatement of the US position toward the kingdom and raised certain military, political, and diplomatic problems. In the military sphere, the major problems included the eventual withdrawal of the MAAG and the establishment of a stay-behind guerrilla force in Laos. The most important political question was the future relationship

between

between the US and Phoumi. In the diplomatic field, the US attempted, through French influence, to orient Souvanna toward the West, and to secure the release of Americans still held prisoner in Laos.

a. US position toward Laos.

Nos. 27, 31, 36.

b. Military.

Nos. 1, 3, 4, 7, 10, 11, 12, 14, 17, 18, 21, 25, 26, 30, 37, 38, 45, 48, 54, 57, 61.

c. Political.

Nos. 5, 43, 44, 49, 59.

d. Diplomatic.

Nos. 21, 31, 41, 42, 51, 56, 62.

General Phoumi,

1 Jun 62

No. 1

General Phoumi, reportedly at the behest of CHMAAG, reorganized the FAR command structure, making Laos a single military theater and appointing General Bounleut theater commander. The theater was divided into northern and southern fronts, with headquarters at Vientiane and Savannakhet respectively, and divided by the Nam Ca Dinh. The fronts were further divided into zones, which corresponded to the previous military regions. The remaining FAR commands remained, generally speaking, unchanged.

(S) Msg, CHMAAG LAOS to CINCPAC, DA IN 236695, 6 Jun 62; (C) Msg, USARMA Vientiane to DEPTAR, DA IN 238127, 11 Jun 62.

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2 Jun 62

No. 2

Foreign Minister Sisouk made an "impassioned plea" to Ambassador Brown that the US resume economic aid to the RLG now that Phoumi had agreed to all US demands concerning the resumption of tripartite negotiations. Sisouk claimed that a resumption of aid would bolster the present RLG's influence in the negotiations and in the resultant coalition. Without economic aid it would be difficult for Phoumi to do what the US wanted.

Ambassador Brown requested that the Department of State instruct him to reply to Sisouk that the US would consider resumption of aid after the three Princes agreed but before the new government was actually installed. The Secretary of State approved this recommendation but added that the Lao should not

necessarily

necessarily expect aid to be resumed in the form of a monthly check. The US wished to preserve flexibility in the amount and means as well as the conditions for future aid.

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1652, 25 Jun 62; SecState to Vientiane, 1062, 2 Jun 62.

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2 Jun 62

No. 3

As part of his effort to evaluate the extent to which Communist control of part or all of Laos would aid the Viet Minh and Chinese Communists in their efforts to infiltrate Thailand, Cambodia and South Viet Nam, the Secretary of Defense asked CINCPAC, COMUSMACTHAI, and CHMAAG Laos to evaluate:

1. The effect a coalition government would have on the ability of the North Vietnamese to infiltrate through Laos into South Viet Nam and Thailand.

2. The effect that control by a Western-oriented government of the Mekong Valley, or of the entire Laotian Panhandle, would have on the ability of the Communists to infiltrate into South Viet Nam and Thailand.

3. The likelihood that Communist efforts to subvert Thailand and South Viet Nam could be defeated if the Communists gained political control of all Laos.

On the next day the Secretary received replies from CINCPAC and COMUSMACTHAI that expressed almost identical opinions. The two commanders agreed that the proposed coalition government of Laos would do little to inhibit

to inhibit the present use of Laos by the Communists in their efforts to infiltrate and subvert South Viet Nam and Thailand.

Neither CINCPAC nor COMUSMACTHAI believed that control by Western-oriented forces, including US troops, of the Mekong Valley, or even of the entire Panhandle, would be more than partially effective in preventing Communist infiltration, because of the continued existence of alternate routes for the infiltrators.

In regard to the Secretary's last question, COMUSMACTHAI thought that it would be very difficult to prevent the subversion of Thailand and South Viet Nam if the Communists controlled Laos, while CINCPAC thought that it would be impossible.

[Careful search of JCS records failed to reveal a reply from CHMAAG Laos.]

(TS) Msgs, OSD to CINCPAC et al., DEF 910536, 2 Jun 62; CINCPAC to SecDef, 032205Z Jun 62; COMUSMACTHAI to SecDef, DA IN 236047, 3 Jun 62.

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2 Jun 62

No. 4

At a meeting of White House, Department of State, and Department of Defense officials, Secretary McNamara sought to clarify US military objectives with respect to Laos by enumerating those courses of action to which the Department of Defense was opposed. Defense, he declared, would recommend against: 1) a "solo" effort by the Thais to occupy Sayaboury Province; 2) US encadrement of the FAR; 3) the employment

employment of US air forces in combination with the FAR alone; 4) the substantial use of South Vietnamese forces in Laos; and 5) the occupation of the Mekong Valley with only 8,000 or 10,000 US troops. In elaborating upon this last point, Secretary McNamara stated that, because such a small force could neither defend itself in all contingencies nor rely on the FAR for support, his Department would propose a variant which would involve the employment of some 40,000 US troops, most of whom would be used as "back-up" in Thailand.

The conferees then discussed various military aspects of the Laos question. Afterward, a representative of the Department of State summarized the conversation by listing six phases of the potential US military response to further Communist attacks in Laos. These phases were: 1) a build-up of military forces; 2) occupation of the Mekong River Valley; 3) US air action in Laos; 4) forward movement in Laos to secure the Panhandle; 5) US air action against North Vietnamese targets; and 6) amphibious operations against North Viet Nam.

Secretary McNamara then observed that: 1) the build-up should be accomplished in such a manner that Phoumi would not be encouraged to resist the formation of a Lao coalition; and 2) he would "contemplate" US aerial action in Laos only in conjunction with the forward movement of US ground forces into the Panhandle. Following these remarks, the Secretary of State commented upon: 1) the need for a clear-cut directive

directive to the military commander delineating phase lines; 2) the need for readiness in Korea against the possibility of Communist reaction in that quarter to any form of US intervention in Laos; and 3) the fact that the President should be informed that there was insufficient information available to make a totally reliable estimate of Communist actions.

No firm decisions were reached during the discussion, although there was general agreement that, while Laos was not important in itself, the Mekong Valley in particular was important to the defense of Southeast Asia. The Departments of State and Defense, however, were directed to prepare a memorandum (see item 4 June 1962) which would serve as the basis for a forthcoming discussion with the President concerning possible US intervention in Laos.

(TS) JCS 2344/56, 19 Jun 62; JMF 9150/3100 (30 May 62), sec 2.

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3 Jun 62

No. 5

During a visit to Bangkok, Phoumi, according to information later given by Sarit to Ambassador Young, endorsed the Troika principle, declaring that no one Lao faction should be allowed to act alone, especially in matters pertaining to the Ministries of Defense and Interior. Phoumi, Sarit continued, had also stated that all RLG executive agencies, both civilian and military, should retain their present status until integration was underway.

In addition, Phoumi asked Sarit to inquire: 1) what the US would do if Souvanna rejected US aid,

aid, accepted aid from both East and West, or turned US aid over to the Communists; 2) what guarantees the US would provide against Communist domination of Laos; and 3) how the US would assist the anti-Communist element within a coalition government. In making this request of Sarit, Phoumi indicated that the RLG desired specific answers before the meeting of the Princes began. Phoumi also expressed a desire for American sympathy for his cause, and requested some indication of US firmness toward the Communists.

Sarit, in relating this conversation to Ambassador Young, remarked that Phoumi, although willing to enter negotiations, desired assurance that the US would not abandon him once the coalition had been formed. Young responded by affirming once again that, if a satisfactory government were formed, the US would help maintain its friends in power.

In his report of the Sarit-Phoumi conversation, the Ambassador added that the Thai Prime Minister admitted giving Phoumi some "'stern advice.'" According to sources other than Sarit, Phoumi had been told that the US would not abandon him if he negotiated in good faith. The Prime Minister, it was said, also told Phoumi to stop seeking assistance from other Asian countries, to "stay at home where he is needed," and to "keep his mouth shut."

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 6 Jun 62.

Prior

4 Jun 62

No. 6

Prior to a meeting with Souvanna at Luang Prabang, Ambassador Brown discussed with Phoumi the resumption of tripartite negotiations . Phoumi agreed that no new conditions should be imposed before negotiations began and that the formation of a new government should be the first order of business. If Souvanna and Souphanouvaong agreed to the Trioka principle for Defense and Interior posts and the maintenance of forces pending agreement on integration, the RLG would accept all of Souvanna's other requests. Phoumi did not believe the composition of the center neutralist group nor locale of the negotiations to be problems.

In response to Ambassador Brown's report of this conversation, the State Department expressed concern over the possibility that Phoumi's interest in Defense and Interior posts in the new government would divert him from the essential bargaining on other portfolios and on issues such as the composition of the center group. The Secretary of State said that the final composition of the new government must have an acceptable tripartite balance and that Phoumi must resist Souphanouvong's stepped-up demands for changes in the cabinet formula.

Later that day Souvanna summarized for the Western Ambassadors the progress toward negotiations. He reported that the King had renewed his mandate to form the coalition government and urged him to act quickly. He agreed to Phoumi's demands and said that the distribution of cabinet portfolios

portfolios should be easy to settle. The Prince warned, however, that if the question of Nam Tha was raised there could be no agreement with Souphanouvong.

Ambassador Brown requested instructions on what position he should take if Phoumi refused to accept the de facto loss of Nam Tha. The Secretary of State answered that Phoumi was in no position to take issue over Nam Tha and that he should not use it to obstruct negotiations. Phoumi would suffer greater loss of face by raising the subject of Nam Tha and then being forced to back down. If he understood that the US would not support him in his demands, he would not force the issue. When questioned later the same day by Ambassador Brown, however, Phoumi gave assurances that he would not raise the question of Nam Tha as a condition to the formation of a coalition government except to insist that henceforth there should be a "real cease-fire." Phoumi also indicated that he would work for the inclusion of at least four Vientiane neutrals in the ten-man center group.

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1655, 4 Jun 62; 1661, 5 Jun 62; 1662, 5 Jun 62; SecState to Vientiane, 1067, 4 Jun 62; 1070, 5 Jun 62.

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4 Jun 62

No. 7

CHMAAG reported that the past week had been uneventful at Ban Houie Sai (see item 25-29 May 1962): no contacts had been made with the enemy; a US advisory group of 10 remained at the airstrip; and several hundred FAR troops were in the vicinity. The FAR troops were still under

under orders from Bounleut to conduct a "mobile" defense of the town. To CHMAAG these instructions meant only that the FAR would "fade away again if Ban Houie Sai is threatened."

(S) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 236034, 4 Jun 62.

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4 Jun 62

No. 8

The Canadian Government informed the US Ambassador that Souvanna's threat to return to Paris (see item 25 May 1962) had produced a state of crisis in the Laotian situation. Unless significant progress towards a settlement could be reached before 15 June, the Western position would be completely undermined. The Canadian Government therefore urged the US both to increase its efforts to get Phoumi to come to terms and to persuade the RLG to allow an ICC team to make an early visit to Ban Houei Sai. This visit, the Canadian Government believed, might be a stabilizing factor in this sensitive area.

Basing its judgment on the reports of the Canadian member of the ICC, which were believed to represent the consensus of the Western diplomatic community in Vientiane, the Canadian Government expressed its belief that Phoumi had deliberately invited the Pathet Lao aggression at Nam Tha in an effort to provoke US military intervention. The Canadian member of ICC had also reported that the Indian member, although in apparent agreement with his draft report

report on the Laos situation, refused to forward it as an Indian/Canadian majority report. The Canadian Government speculated that Indian reluctance was due to a fear that the Communists would conclude that India was no longer neutral and hence that the "structure" of the ICC was no longer compatible with Communist interests.

(C) Msg, Ottawa to SecState, 1246, 4 Jun 62.

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4 Jun 62

No. 9

Ambassador Young, in a message to the Secretary of State, urged the adoption of certain courses of action suggested in General Harkins's analysis of the problem of Communist infiltration of Thailand from Sayaboury Province (see item 29 May 1962). Specifically, the Ambassador recommended that the US intensify its efforts to train Sayaboury's Kha tribesmen in guerrilla operations. He further urged the preparation of contingency plans for the stationing of FAR units at the airfields in the province, the deployment toward the border of two RTA cavalry squadrons, and the stationing of US helicopters at Phrae to support the augmented border patrol. These measures, Young believed, would satisfy Sarit's concern for his nation's security and thus forestall the possibility of intervention in Sayaboury Province, an action which could result in Thailand's being branded as an aggressor. The Ambassador again emphasized that Sarit, regardless of US wishes, might feel compelled to take such action, with or without Lao approval, if he felt Thailand was in peril (see item 24 May 1962).

An interdepartmental

(TS) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1917), 4 Jun 62.

4 Jun 62

No. 10

An interdepartmental working group completed a draft memorandum to be used in a forthcoming meeting with the President. Discussed in this draft were the six phases of potential US military action (see item 2 June 1962) to be undertaken in the event that the military situation in Laos deteriorated to a dangerous extent.

1. Further military build-up outside Laos. Although an obvious military build-up in Thailand would tend to cause Phoumi to resist a settlement, "this should not preclude buildup measures that would not become clearly visible . . . ." The build-up could be speeded and made "as visible as possible," if the Communists sought unacceptable concessions during the negotiations being conducted in Laos.

2. Occupation of the Mekong River areas. Such a course of action, which would require that 35,000 troops be readily available, could result in a long-term occupation by US/SEATO forces. Since the garrison would be immobilized and subject to possible Communist attack, the military situation might require further action in Laos or against North Viet Nam.

3. Air attacks against selected targets in Laos. Although such attacks might deter the Communists to some extent, aerial action could not stop a really determined offensive.

4. Offensive

4. Offensive operations in Laos. This course of action would compel the US to maintain large forces in the Panhandle area and in Thailand for an indefinite period of time, since it would not end permanently the possibility of continued North Vietnamese pressure.

5. Air action against North Viet Nam. These attacks could be made in conjunction with offensive operations in Laos or, as an alternative, in conjunction with the occupation of the Mekong Valley. The severity of the US aerial action would correspondingly increase the chances that Communist Chinese air forces would intervene. Except as a last resort, massive attacks on Hanoi should be avoided, since they would vastly increase the chances of full-scale Chinese intervention.

6. Amphibious operations against North Viet Nam. Although the full military needs and the risks of such an undertaking would have to be assessed carefully, these operations might, in the absence of Chinese Communist intervention, be a "more persuasive and cheaper action than an attempt to win control of the Panhandle."

After its examination of these six possibilities, the draft memorandum set forth the following recommendations for immediate action:

1. The carrying out of those build-up measures which would not indicate, either to Phoumi or to the Communists, a major strengthening of the US position.

2. In the

2. In the event of a sufficiently serious Communist military move before this build-up was completed, the US should seek UN action and employ aircraft against Communist forces at the point where the cease-fire had been broken. The US forces in Thailand would be moved to the maximum number of key points which they could successfully occupy. These units would be reinforced, and plans would be made to extend the occupation throughout the Mekong Valley and to build up ready strength in Thailand to 45,000 men.

3. If the negotiations in Laos should break down, major reinforcements should, with a minimum of publicity, be dispatched to Thailand.

(See item 6 June 1962.)

(TS) JCS 2344/50, 5 Jun 62; JMF 9150/3100 (30 May 62).

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5 Jun 62

No. 11

In a memorandum to the JCS, the Secretary of Defense registered his increasing concern over the logistical limitations on possible US combat operations in Laos (see item 29, 31 May 1962). According to the Secretary, a preliminary estimate by ISA had concluded that successful logistical support of the forces proposed for Laos would be problematical. The support program, moveover, was uncomfortably dependent upon the vulnerable Thai railways. The President would never approve combat operations in Laos, the Secretary said, unless he was shown "carefully thought-out and detailed plans" to supply US forces.

US forces. The Secretary urged therefore that detailed logistic planning for possible intervention be undertaken at once by COMUS-MACTHAI, CINCPAC, and the Joint Staff. (See item 8 June 1962.)

(TS) JCS 2344/51, 5 Jun 62; JMF 9150/3100 (31 May 62).

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6 Jun 62

No. 12

Responding to a request from CJCS (see item 24 May 1962), CHMAAG listed the improvements he thought the FAR could begin to make within 90 days. Repeating in many cases the recommendations he had made to Phoumi on 13 May (see item), CHMAAG told CJCS that Phoumi should being at once to: 1) replace incompetent officers; 2) delegate adequate authority to FAR commanders; 3) place the Lao Air Force under the operational authority of the FAR field commander; 4) improve the FAR logistical system; 5) reduce the FAR to authorized strength; 6) redeploy units according to MAAG recommendations; 7) rescind the requirement that MAAG personnel secure Ministry of National Security clearance for visiting FAR elements; and 8) make better use of Thai and other training facilities.

(S) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CJCS, DA IN 236783, 6 Jun 62.

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6 Jun 62

No. 13

Boun Oum accepted Souvanna's invitation to meet at Plaine des Jarres on 7 June to negotiate on the formation of a coalition government for Laos. He announced that he would be accompanied by associates and members of the cease-fire committee.

The JCS

(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1672, 6 Jun 62.

6 Jun 62

No. 14

The JCS, in a memorandum for the Secretary of Defense, suggested that the interdepartmental working group's draft memorandum on possible military actions in Laos (see item 4 June 1962) might be modified to, among other things: 1) shift the emphasis from US response to US offensive action; 2) provide a larger role to the FAR, although that organization admittedly had proved relatively ineffective; 3) specify that Vientiane would be held; 4) note that air attacks on targets in Laos could possibly limit the Communist ability to mount a major offensive; 5) state that US air attacks on North Viet Nam might possibly deter Communist Chinese intervention; and 6) avoid placing restrictions upon either the targets to be engaged during aerial actions in Laos or North Viet Nam or the forces required for amphibious operations against North Viet Nam.

On the same day, the JCS met with the Secretary of Defense and discussed his objections to the interdepartmental draft. In Mr. McNamara's opinion, the draft: 1) should treat all possible phases of action as possible plans rather than firm proposals; 2) overstated the military usefulness of a US occupation of the Mekong Valley; 3) failed to make it clear that Communist reaction to a US move into the Mekong Valley might be both prompt and vigorous, thus leading

leading quickly to some further US action; 4) erred in not requiring that a 35,000-man reserve force be actually present in Thailand, rather than near at hand, at the time the occupation of the Mekong Valley was undertaken; and 5) underestimated the type of opposition that could be encountered in the Panhandle, and therefore assigned fewer than the necessary 45,000 US troops to this operation.

(TS) JCSM-431-62, 6 Jun 62, derived from JCS 2344/52; JMF 9150/3100 (30 May 62). (TS) 1st N/H of JCS 2344/50; JMF 9150/3100 (30 May 62).

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8 Jun 62

No. 15

Ambassador Gavin reported that the French Government feared that the presence of US troops in Thailand might be used by the USSR or by Communist China as an excuse to "make trouble" in reaching agreement on the final accords at Geneva. The French fear, Gavin added, might be justified.

(C) Msg, Paris to SecState, A-2277, 8 Jun 62.

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8 Jun 62

No. 16

Indian Commonwealth Secretary Gundevia in a general review of the situation in Laos informed US Charge Timmons that the ICC had made a formal request to the RLG and PL for their approval of the proposed ICC investigative visit to Ban Houei Sai. Timmons reported that Gundevia seemed optimistic when he noted that Souvanna had agreed not to return to France on 15 June (see item 25 May 1962) if prospects for the formation of a coalition government appeared good.

The CJCS

(S) Msgs, New Delhi to SecState, 3948, 8 Jun 62, 3957, 9 Jun 62; (C) Msg, SecState to New Delhi, 4412, 29 Jun 62.

8 Jun 62

No. 17

The CJCS informed the Secretary of Defense, in response to the Secretary's memorandum of 5 June (see item), that detailed logistical planning for the support of possible combat operations in Laos was going forward on an urgent basis in Honolulu and Bangkok. Regarding the possible logistical limitations on US actions, the CJCS remarked that US and SEATO plans for Southeast Asia, including plans for possible intervention in Laos, had been thoroughly examined by the JCS and declared logistically supportable, even during the rainy season. With respect to the vulnerability and limited capacity of the Thai railroads, CJCS reported that air and road lift could take up any slack left by rail lift. He emphasized, moreover, that the US would deploy substantial logistical support forces during any intervention; these forces would be used to maintain and improve existing lines of communication. It was his considered view, CJCS concluded, that existing US and SEATO plans, and the concepts proposed by CINCPAC and COMUSMACTHAI (see item 29, 31 May 1962), could be supported logistically.

(TS) 1st N/H of JCS 2353/20, 12 Jun 62; JMF 9150/3100 (31 May 62).

In response

8 Jun 62 In response to a request made to Admiral Riley by Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Bundy, the

No. 18 CJCS forwarded to the Secretary of Defense a memorandum containing information on the deployment times of various units. These units were the forces which CINCPAC had listed as necessary for the expansion of his OPLAN 32-59 (Phase II-Laos) to include the clearing of the Panhandle and the occupation of key Laotian cities.

The Chairman informed the Secretary of Defense as follows:

Major Units	Location Now	Mode of Transportation and Closing Time	Improvements Feasible, Sea to Air
US			
Marine Brigade	1 BLT Thailand. Brig (-) Okinawa.	In Place. Air, D plus 1 to D plus 9. Sea, D plus 9 to D plus 30	D plus 1 by air for sea elements less heavy equipment.
Army Division	1 BG Thailand 25th Div (-) Hawaii.	In Place. Sea, D plus 6 to D plus 27.	D plus 7 for austere division.
Logistical Support	CONUS.	Air, D plus 4 to D plus 25. Sea, D plus 30 to D plus 40.	All pax by air in three days. Air transportable cargo in 18.8 days after movement of 25th Div.
US Air			
TAC Bomber Squadron	Japan	Air, D plus 1.	
1 Fighter Squadron	Clark Field	Air, D plus 1.	
1 Fighter Squadron	Thailand.	In Place	
1 TAC Recce	Okinawa	Air, D plus 1.	
1 US Div. (in reserve at Clark Field)	101st Abn, Fort Campbell.		Air, close within 9 days (austere division) after movement of logistical support.

Major Units	Location Now	Mode of Transportation and Closing Time	Improvements Feasible, Sea to Air
503rd BG-Reserve. (At Clark Field.)	Okinawa.	Air, D plus 1.	
Non-US			
1 Thai Div.	Thailand.	In Place.	
New Zealand, Inf. Battalion	Singapore.	Air, D plus 1 (Approximately 60 paratroopers and two transport aircraft in place.)	
Australia, Inf. Battalion.	Singapore.	Air, D plus 1.	
UK, Inf. Battalion	Singapore.	Air, D plus 1.	
Australia, Fighter Squadron	Singapore.	In Place.	
UK, Fighter Squadron.	Thailand.	In Place.	

(TS) CM-926-62, 8 Jun 62, CJCS-091 Laos (4).
(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, DA IN 235086, 310001Z May 62.

9 Jun 62

No. 19

Commenting on various aspects of the current negotiations for a coalition government, Ambassador Brown noted the desirability of denying the Foreign Affairs portfolio to Quinim Pholsena. He recommended to the Department of State, however, that he be allowed to advise Phoumi not to make the presence of Quinim in the Foreign Affairs post the reason for breaking up the negotiations. At the same time, Brown agreed with the British and French Ambassadors that the designation of Souphanouvong as Senior Deputy Prime Minister would be improper. The Secretary of State concurred in Ambassador Brown's recommendation.

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1688, 9 Jun 62; 1690, 9 Jun 62; SecState to Vientiane 1088, 9 Jun 62.

Tripartite

12 Jun 62

No. 20

Tripartite agreement was reached on the formation of a Provisional Government of National Union with Souvanna Phouma as Prime Minister. The 19-man cabinet was split into four groups, as follows: 1) 4 PL, with Souphanouvong as Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Economy and Planning and Phoumi Vongvichit as Minister of Information; 2) 4 RLG with Phoumi as Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and his followers holding Education, Fine Arts, and Sports and Youth; 3) 7 Souvanna neutralists, with Souvanna as Minister of Defense, Veterans, and Rural Affairs as well as Prime Minister, Quinim Pholsena as Foreign Minister, and Pheng Phongsavan as Minister of Interior and Social Welfare; and 4) 4 Vientiane neutralists, including Ngon Sananikone as Minister of Public Works and Keo Viprakone as Secretary of State for Social Welfare. The Souvanna neutralists would retain control of the Defense and Interior Ministries, and all political groups were agreed the tripartite decision rule on all important questions would apply in both these Ministries as well as that of Foreign Affairs.

During the three-day negotiations an agreement was reached on procedures for the installation of the new government. Souvanna would report the agreement to the King on 14 June; Phoumi would report to the National Assembly on 15 or 16 June. Souvanna had agreed, and would seek Souphanouvong's approval, to a

plan

plan that would make the Assembly's approval of the Plaine des Jarres accord, together with the King's formal designation of Souvanna as Prime Minister, the legal investiture of the new government. After investiture, Souvanna would lead a delegation to the 14-nation Geneva conference to sign the agreements on a neutral Laos.

As a result of Phoumi's performance during the negotiations, Ambassador Brown announced that cash grant aid to the RLG would be resumed even though several steps remained to be taken before the new government was installed (see item 23 June 1962).

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1676, 7 Jun 62; 1680, 8 Jun 62; 1697, 10 Jun 62; 1698, 11 Jun 62; and 1725, 14 Jun 62.

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12 Jun 62

No. 21

The Secretary of State instructed Ambassador Gavin to mention to the French Government that the US believed it was necessary for France to take a positive and responsible role in its relations with Souvanna. More specifically, the Secretary expressed to the Ambassador his hope that the French would attempt to get Souvanna to cooperate with all the non-Communists in Laos, as well as with the Western Allies.

Secretary Rusk noted that the presence of the French Military Mission in Laos would provide the only means by which the Lao armed forces could receive Western orientation. For this reason, the Department instructed

Gavin

Gavin to stress to the French the importance of selecting qualified personnel for their military mission.

(In response to Gavin's suggestions, M. Manac'h on 14 June noted that he was to meet with the General Staff to discuss the problem of the Military Mission. Manac'h said that he thought the French had funds for the support of 300 to 400 people, but that as yet the Government had set no specific target figure. Gavin noted that French thinking on the Military Mission was not very far advanced.)

(S) Msgs, SecState to Paris, 6696, 12 Jun 62; Paris to SecState, 6005, 14 Jun 62.

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12 Jun 62

No. 22

Ambassador Brown recommended that the US again invite Souvanna to visit Washington on his way home to Laos from Paris. Souvanna's previous objections, particularly his objection to not being received as head of the Lao government, were now eliminated, and the Ambassador believed such a visit would be both timely and "mutually advantageous." (See item 14 June 1962.)

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1700, 12 Jun 62.

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12 Jun 62

No. 23

President Kennedy and Premier Khrushchev exchanged messages regarding the successful formation of a Lao Government under Prince Souvanna. Both the US President and the Soviet Premier expressed pleasure at this accomplishment and called for the fulfillment of the obligations

obligations undertaken at the Geneva Conference. The President declared that the establishment of an independent and neutral Laos, securely sustained by the cooperative efforts of the US and USSR, would have a significant and positive effect far beyond the borders of that kingdom. Mr. Khrushchev expressed similar sentiments, stating that the Lao settlement indicated that other international issues might also be resolved.

Department of State Bulletin, vol. XLVII, no. 1201, 2 Jul 62, p. 12.

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12 Jun 62

No. 24

Prime Minister Khrushchev sent a message to Prime Minister Macmillan in which he expressed his pleasure at the successful completion of the Laotian negotiations.

Khrushchev termed this event "pivotal . . . in the life of the Laotian people . . . and in the cause of strengthening peace in south-east Asia." The Soviet Premier also thought that the Laotian settlement provided a good example of the way in which all outstanding international problems might be solved.

(U) London to SecState, A-1331, 18 Jun 62.

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12 Jun 62

No. 25

Noting that the three Princes had signed an agreement on the formation of a coalition government, CHMAAG Laos asked CINCPAC for authority to enter Phase I (Warning Phase) of his OPLAN 63-62 (see item 30 March 1962) for the withdrawal of the MAAG

the MAAG. CINCPAC replied on the same day that, although planning for the withdrawal of MAAG personnel should continue, no steps toward actual withdrawal should be taken until "hard evidence" indicated that the Communists were withdrawing their forces. (On the following day, the JCS concurred in CINCPAC's instructions.)

(S) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 238321, 12 Jan 62; CINCPAC to CHMAAG Laos, 122310Z Jun 62; (TS) Msg, CJCS to CINCPAC, JCS 4993, 13 Jun 62.

12-13 Jun 62

No. 26

The Secretaries of State and Defense and their senior advisers, White House officials, and representatives of the CIA met on 12 June to discuss US military planning in the light of the agreement by the three parties in Laos to form a government of national union (see item 12 June 1962). The officials agreed that the apparent settlement had not altered the military basis for contingency planning. They further affirmed that planning should continue along the following lines: 1) air operations in Laos and North Viet Nam; 2) defensive ground operations in Laos; 3) offensive ground operations in Laos, including holding Vientiane and the Panhandle; and 4) less extensive offensive operations to hold only the Mekong Valley.

The conferees also conceded that there remained some difference of opinion between State and Defense regarding that phase of contingency planning which anticipated US forces holding the Mekong River Valley. The two Departments

were

were agreed on the importance of holding the Valley, but Defense, including the JCS, felt that the State Department concept of introducing US forces for the sole purpose of occupying the valley was militarily unwise, in that such forces might find themselves immobilized in the valley and unable to control the movement of enemy personnel and equipment through Laos into South Viet Nam. Despite this conviction, however, the Defense Department expressed itself as willing to proceed with contingency planning under the State Department concept for holding the Mekong Valley. Such planning, Secretary McNamara said, would be helpful to the President if and when he had to make a decision on intervention. There was no need at present, McNamara continued, for the President to make such a decision.

There was, however, one decision that the Secretary of Defense did want made: a program for the improvement of logistical facilities in Thailand. (See item 15 June 1962.) The Secretary had in mind a program costing about $20 million in US funds; but this program, he stressed would not only support contingency planning for Laos, but also support the defense of Thailand itself and speed the economic development of Northeast Thailand.

On the following day, the two Secretaries and the Chairman JCS, and other State, Defense, CIA and White House officials covered the same ground in a meeting with the President. The President accepted the report on contingency planning

planning without comment; and he decided to discuss further with the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of State the logistical support program for Thailand.

(TS) JCS 2344/57, 3 Jul 62; JMF 9155.2/3100. (TS) JCS 2344/55, 19 Jun 62; JMF 9155.2/3100 (14 Jun 62). (TS) M.V. Forrestal Memo for Record, Subj: Meeting with the President on Contingency Planning for Laos, 14 Jun 62; 091 CJCS - Laos (4).

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13 Jun 62

No. 27

The State Department instructed Ambassador Brown to inform the RLG that US economic aid to Laos was being resumed, and that a payment of $3 million was being made to the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, as fiscal agent of the US, for the account of the National Bank of Laos. The Department told Brown that Lao funds derived from US aid would henceforth be held exclusively in the United States.

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, NIACT 1110, 13 Jun 62.

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13 Jun 62

No. 28

Secretary Rusk instructed Ambassador Young to deliver, on the following day, a letter from President Kennedy to Prime Minister Sarit. In this letter, the President expressed his personal thanks for the support given by Sarit and the RTG in the establishment of a Lao coalition. The US, President Kennedy continued, was depending upon Thailand's continued assistance in obtaining ratification of the Geneva Agreement. In addition, the President looked forward to US-Thai cooperation in providing the "tangible support and assistance necessary to enable the

new Lao

new Lao Government to maintain its independence as well as its neutrality."

(LOU) Msg, SecState to Bangkok, NIACT 1976, 13 Jun 62.

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13 Jun 62

No. 29

Secretary Rusk informed Ambassador Young that the Department of State was "uneasy" because of Thailand's apparent reluctance to accept a Lao renunciation of SEATO protection or to sign a Geneva Agreement. The Secretary of State therefore instructed Ambassador Young to warn Thanat that, if Thailand refused to sign the agreement, North Viet Nam might also refuse, thus destroying the basis for international control over the withdrawal from Laos of foreign troops. Since this controlled withdrawal was the "paramount US objective," Thai cooperation was vital. In addition, Young was to seek assurance that Thailand would agree to modifying SEATO's role in such a way that the organization's activities would be compatible with Lao independence and neutrality.

(On 14 June, Ambassador Young suggested that the RTG be invited to take part in Allied pre-Conference strategy sessions at Geneva. Secretary Rusk, on the following day, again instructed Young to approach Thanat, since Thailand's accession to the Geneva Agreement was a matter that could be decided only at the highest levels of the RTG. If this approach seemed successful, the Secretary continued, it probably would be possible to include Thailand

in the

in the pre-Conference meetings. Secretary Rusk than pointed out, for Young's information, that Thailand already had been "consulted at every turn" and given ample opportunity to present its case at Geneva.)

(See items 22 and 26 June 1962.)

(S) Msgs, SecState to Bangkok, PRIORITY 1980, 13 Jun 62; SecState to Bangkok, PRIORITY 2002, 15 Jun 62; Bangkok to SecState, 2000, 15 Jun 62.

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14 Jun 62

No. 30

ACSI requested USARMA Laos for recommendations concerning the advisability of increasing attache strength in Laos so that USARMA might take over some of the functions of the MAAG when the latter organization was withdrawn from Laos. On 19 June, by means of a joint State-Defense message, Ambassador Brown was given additional details regarding the proposed augmentation of the attache group. The Ambassador was informed that the US Government was considering the assignment of additional personnel in order to: 1) strengthen US intelligence capabilities; 2) provide assistance to USOM in military programming and supply activities; and 3) increase the capabilities for unofficial end-use observation of US military supplies.

(USARMA replied on the 19th, and Ambassador Brown's response followed on the 21st. USARMA, with the Ambassador's approval, advised that it could not effectively assume all MAAG functions, calling particular attention to the recovery of US property and the supervision of Filipino technicians as matters which it should not be required

required to handle. See item 5 July 1962.)

(S/NOFORN) Msg, ACSI, DA, to USARMA Laos, DA 915536, 141615Z Jun 62. (S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, NIACT 1154, 19 Jun 62. (S-NOFORN) Msg, USARMA Laos to ACSI, DA, DA IN 240512-C, 191100Z Jun 62. (S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1776, 21 Jun 62.

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14 Jun 62

No. 31

Brown delivered letters of congratulation to Souvanna from the President and Harriman, in which they pledged US support of the new Government and expressed their desire to meet with the Prince. The Ambassador also renewed a long standing invitation to come to the US, which Souvanna said he would consider.

Souvanna agreed to Brown's suggestion that he head the Lao delegation to Geneva but added that it would be a good thing if Phoumi remained in Laos during his absence. Brown then told Souvanna that the US was resuming monthly aid payments as a tangible expression of its confidence in this Government (see item 13 June 1962); the Prince made no reply. Souvanna indicated his approval of the recommended return of US dependents to Vientiane and also agreed to Brown's suggestion that he get his own forces into as much territory as possible before the factional armies were ordered to remain in position.

In addition, the Ambassador reported that he had mentioned the matter of the release of the Americans held prisoner and indicated that he intended to take the matter up with Souvanna again at a later date. Brown noted that he had gotten the impression, during his discussion with

Souvanna

Souvanna, that he intended to play some role in the dispute between North and South Viet Nam.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1720, 14 Jun 62.

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14 Jun 62

No. 32

Acting upon a British proposal for a London meeting, just prior to the Geneva Conference session, of the tripartite working group, the Secretary of State, after receiving a French suggestion that the meeting take place at Geneva, advised Ambassador Bruce that the group should meet from 20 to 23 June, prefereably in Paris. By coming together in Paris, the representatives of the three powers would be able to confer with Souvanna, who was expected to return from Laos for his daughter's wedding. If, however, the UK, acting on its prerogative as Co-Chairman, insisted upon a London meeting, the group might convene there, adjourn, and hold a second session in Paris.

(On the following day, the British Foreign Office agreed to hold preliminary tripartite talks in London, beginning on 20 June. A second session would begin in Paris no later than 24 June. See item 19-27 June 1962.)

(S) Msgs, SecState to London, PRIORITY 6677, 14 Jun 62; PRIORITY 6681, 15 Jun 62.

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15 Jun 62

No. 33

The Vientiane Ambassadors' "Joint Recommendations on the Ceasefire Proclamation," though approved by the US Government, were found unacceptable by the Geneva Working Group (see item 7 March 1962).

The US

The US Charge in Vientiane noted that any further action on the subject lay with the Working Group.

(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1731, 15 Jun 62.

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15 Jun 62

No. 34

The Laotian National Assembly passed a motion approving the Plaine des Jarres Agreement (see item 12 June 1962). The motion specifically gave unconditional approval to the composition of the proposed Government, the Troika method of administration, and to the manner in which the three parties had agreed to set up the provisional government.

(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1735, 15 Jun 62.

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15 Jun 62

No. 35

The President approved the $20 million logistical support program for Thailand proposed to him by Secretary McNamara (see item 12, 13 June 1962), on the conditions that: 1) the net US gold drain would be limited to $2 million; 2) movements of both personnel and materiel would be made without publicity; and 3) personnel movements would be delayed and would not increase the number of US personnel assigned to Thailand. This last condition would be met by substituting construction units for combat units. (The Chairman, JCS, expressed great concern" on 16 June over this final condition of the President's approval. He feared that the substitution of construction units for combat units would weaken US combat capability in Thailand "far too drastically."

drastically." Nonetheless, the program of exchanging combat troops for construction troops was begun (see items 26 and 29 June 1962).)

(TS) JCS 2339/77, 20 Jun 62; JMF 9150/3100 (31 May 62).

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15 Jun 62

No. 36

In a Circular telegram to US Ambassadors, the Department of State outlined the US Government's position in regard to the new Laotian Government (see item 12 June 1962). The Department said that the Lao coalition was acceptable to the US and that the US was therefore prepared to support it to the maximum extent possible. The State Department observed that, despite certain weaknesses, the Laotian cabinet was probably not significantly worse than the one which would have resulted had an agreement been reached several months earlier.

The success of the new government, the Department thought, would depend on the moral and material assistance it would receive from the Free World and on the extent to which non-communist elements in Laos rallied to its support. As evidence of US interest in the welfare of Laos, the State Department noted that the US Government had already resumed financial assistance to Laos in the form of a three million dollar grant (see item 14 June 1962).

(C) DEPCIRCTEL 2109, 15 Jun 62.

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16 Jun 62

No. 37

On this date, there were 886 US personnel assigned to or under the control of MAAG Laos:

293 MAAG

293 MAAG personnel, 444 WSMTT personnel, 147 MTT and other individuals on temporary duty, and 2 technical representatives. In addition, 465 Filipino technicians were in MAAG employ.

(S) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 160250Z Jun 62.

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16 Jun 62

No. 38

CHMAAG reported to CINCPAC that, in the period since Nam Tha, MAAG officials had attained closer working relations with the FAR than at any past time. Although all the FAR commanders thought the coalition government would not work, they nevertheless realized that it had to be supported for the present and were eager to have US advisors remain to help them.

In the same report, CHMAAG related that, since Nam Tha, he had withheld MAP equipment for re-equipping the units routed there. Moreover, since the agreement on the coalition government (see item 12 June 1962), he had stopped the import of all ammunition and major items of MAP equipment to the FAR, inasmuch as the FAR already had on hand far more equipment and ammunition than a 20,000-man integration force would require. The only materials CHMAAG was releasing to the FAR were spare parts and essential individual equipment. CHMAAG recommended to CINCPAC that these procedures be continued.

In another message of the same day, CHMAAG informed CINCPAC that ample reserve stocks of ammunition for the FAR were already on hand in Thailand. He suggested that CINCPAC might wish, therefore, to cancel or redirect future

ammunition

ammunition shipments for Laos.

(On 19 June, CINCPAC did take action to reduce the flow of ammunition for Thailand reserve stocks.)

(S) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 239711, 16 Jun 62; 160407Z Jun 62; (C) Msg, ADMINO CINCPAC to CHUSAROSASF, et al.. DA IN 240346, 19 Jun 62.

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17 Jun 62

No. 39

Ambassador Brown reported a "major last minute hitch" in the tripartite negotiations, the question whether the Assembly's approval of the Plaine des Jarres agreement should be mentioned in the royal ordinance designating the new government. The King and Phoumi insisted that it should; Souphanounvong, apparently fearing that it could provide a legal basis for a future no-confidence vote by the Assembly, insisted that it should not. The State Department agreed with Brown that the specific reference to the assembly vote in the royal ordinance was not necessary.

(On 21 June after lengthy discussion Phoumi and Souvanna reached agreement on the procedures for the installation of the new government.)

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1761, 19 Jun 62; 1768, 20 Jun 62; 1769, 20 Jun 62; 1779, 21 Jun 62; 1780, 21 Jun 62; SecState to Vientiane, 1157, 20 Jun 62. (C) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1740, 17 Jun 62; 1750, 18 Jun 62; SecState to Vientiane, 1143, 17 Jun 62.

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19 Jun 62

No. 40

In his discussions with French President de Gaulle, Secretary Rusk indicated that the State Department had departed from the previous Administration's

Administration's unilateral approach to the Laos situation. In line with this new policy, Rusk said, all negotiations concerning the Laos settlement that had taken place at Geneva had been conducted in full concert between the Western Allies. The Secretary emphasized that the US had no intention of negotiating independently of its Allies on questions as important as Laos.

(S) Msg, Paris to SecState, SECTO 13, 20 Jun 62.

19-27 Jun 62

No. 41

Representatives of the US, UK, and France met in Paris to discuss problems relating to the implementation of the final Geneva agreements. The US was particularly anxious to persuade the French to take advantage of their cordial relationship with Souvanna to get him to accept various US proposals designed to strengthen, and orient toward the West, the integrated Laotian armed forces.

In line with this general philosophy the US delegation proposed that the total Laotian armed forces number 30,000 men including an 11,000 man gendarmerie. It was hoped that an Army of this size would be able to engage infiltrating elements with sufficient vigor to create a situation that clearly indicated the existence of the Communist aggression. A larger force, the US delegation felt, would prove unacceptable to Souvanna and would be too expensive to maintain.

The French, in line with their pessimism regarding the Laotian situation, felt that the size

size of the forces proposed by the US would be provocative to the Communists and inexpedient in view of the possibility that the Laotian army would not remain neutral. The French suggested instead the creation of a force of 15,000 men including 3,000 gendarmes. Although skeptical about the eventual neutrality of a Laotian Army the French were confident of their ability to aid in the creation of a gendarmerie which would be effective in combating internal Communist subversion. (The question of the Ryan Plan for a Lao National Police was given only passing notice by the conferees. See item 27 November, 14 December 1961.)

Another disagreement arose over the efforts of the US delegation to convince the French of the need to increase the number, and improve the quality of the personnel who were assigned to their Laotian military mission. The US representatives hoped that by making this greater commitment the French could create an elaborate support and maintenance operation patterned after the MAAG; but the American concept was unacceptable to the French who planned to maintain a simple, relatively inexpensive operation which would assist Lao efforts rather than substitute for them.

A recurring issue between the French and US delegations was the continued presence of Filipino technicians in Laos. The US tried to convince the French of the desirability of keeping the Filipinos in Laos, maintaining that their presence would

supply

supply an additional Western influence. The French objected to the presence of the Filipinos on the grounds that they were not needed, would be unacceptable to Souvanna, and would provide an excuse for the introduction of Viet Minh technicians.

On the question of the integration of the Lao armed forces, the French shared the US desire that the integration process be accomplished within three to six months, if possible. The French, however, considered the Vientiane Ambassadors' text (see items 20 October and 3 November 1961) on integration procedures unduly complicated and suggested the development of a simpler plan.

Summarizing the results of the Paris meetings for Assistant Secretary Nitze, Deputy Assistant Secretary Bundy indicated that the US delegation had failed to shake French convictions concerning the composition of the integrated Laotian Army or the role of the French military mission. Nor had the delegation been able to persuade the French to accept the continued presence of the Filipino technicians. The French, according to Bundy, thought that the Lao must solve their own problems and they showed no inclination to give extensive aid to the new government. Finally, Bundy observed, the French appeared to have given little thought, and to have made no specific plans, concerning their role in Laos during or after the implementation of the Geneva Agreements.

(On 21 June,

(On 21 June, a lower-level Triparitite Working Group met in London to discuss the same issues under study in Paris, and the conferees expressed much the same agreements and disagreements. Reporting this to the Secretary of State, Ambassador Bruce noted with concern that the French seemed willing to delay, until after the Geneva Agreement had gone into effect, reaching a firm agreement with Souvanna concerning their military mission.

(S) Msgs, DEFREPNAMA Paris to OSD, CJCS, DA IN 241164, 19 Jun 62; DA IN 240857, 20 Jun 62; DA IN 241823, 23 Jun 62; DA IN 241852, 23 Jun 62; DA IN 242466, 26 Jun 62; DA IN 242893, 27 Jun 62; DA IN 242961, 27 Jun 62; (S) Msgs, DEFREPNAMA to OSD, DA IN 240676, 19 Jun 62; DA IN 240976, 20 Jun 62; (S) Msgs, London to SecState, 4725, 21 Jun 62; 4747, 4748, 4749, 22 Jun 62.

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20 Jun 62

No. 42

In a discussion between Secretary Rusk and French Foreign Minister Couve concerning Laos, the Secretary stressed the US view that the French were in a position to assume the burden of bringing Western influence to bear on the new Laotian Government.

Couve acknowledged that France was on good terms with Souvanna and noted that the French Government had already started the training and instruction of the Laotian armed forces. Couve also indicated, in response to the Secretary's inquiry, that there had been no objection on the part of the Laotian Government to the French role in military training, but that some difficulty had arisen over the maintenance of French bases in Laos.

The Secretary

The Secretary concluded the discussion by announcing that the US planned to replace Brown with Unger as Ambassador to Laos (see item 28 June 1962). He indicated that the British were probably going to change their ambassador too, and Couve mentioned that France would probably do the same.

(S) Msgs, Paris to SecState, SECTO 2, 20 Jun 62.

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20 Jun 62

No. 43

Thai Generals Chalermchai, Wallop, and Eksakdi, acting upon Sarit's orders, called upon Ambassador Young and presented six questions drafted by Phoumi and forwarded to the Thai Prime Minister. These queries concerned: 1) the course of action which Phoumi should adopt once the coalition had taken office; 2) Phoumi's reaction to the signing of the Geneva Agreements; 3) Phoumi's response to any effort by Souvanna to employ Chinese Communist or Viet Minh military advisers; 4) US reaction in the event that other foreign contingents were not withdrawn from Laos; 5) the US plan for the withdrawal of its MAAG from Laos; and 6) US policy regarding the support of such "underground" elements as the Meos and Khas.

In response, the Ambassador reviewed briefly the plans for a phased US withdrawal which would be linked to ICC verification of the withdrawal of other foreign units. Young, in general, neither refused to answer nor offered complete explanations. Since Sarit might be expected to seek further information concerning US plans, the Ambassador

the Ambassador requested Departmental guidance concerning the replies which he should give.

(See items 21, 23, and 28 June 1962.)

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 2034, 20 Jun 62.

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21 Jun 62

No. 44

During a meeting with Ambassador Young, Sarit disclosed the contents of a telegram in which Phoumi asked, among other things, that Thailand lift its ban on commodities entering Laos. In this same message, Phoumi repeated his request for information concerning US policy (see item 20 June 1962) and asked Sarit to seek from the US badly needed "'funds to assist in political activity.'" The Thai Prime Minister thereupon had requested from Phoumi an explanation of these political operations.

Phoumi's message also stated that Souvanna and Souphanouvong had clashed over the manner in which the members of the coalition government should take the oath of office. Both Phoumi and the King had insisted that a delegation from the National Assembly should be present at the ceremony, as the Lao constitution required. Although Souvanna had agreed in principle, Souphanouvong had refused to observe this constitutional provision.

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 2042, 21 Jun 62.

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22 Jun 62

No. 45

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

Ambassador

[redacted]

22 Jun 62

No. 46

Ambassador Young informed the Department of State that the RTG appeared unwilling to sign the Geneva Agreement. Because the Sarit government seemed intransigent, the Ambassador recommended that the US consider some alternative to Thai ratification, such as a unilateral declaration by Thailand of adherence to the agreement. Such a declaration, the Ambassador believed, would take the place of Thailand's signing the Geneva Agreement and, if accompanied by similar statements by other adherents to the Manila Pact, would accomplish the purpose of a formal recognition by SEATO of Lao independence and neutrality.

(Acting Secretary of State Ball on 24 June replied that, should the RTG refuse to sign the Geneva Agreement, the Communists might demand the withdrawal of US forces from Thailand. "If Sarit has any sense," Ball declared, "he will not want to withdraw at this time." Young was then instructed to use this argument at his discretion.)

(S) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 2068, 22 Jun 62; SecState to Bangkok, PRIORITY 2065, 24 Jun 62.

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23 Jun 62

No. 47

The Provisional Government of National Union (see item 12 June 1962) was officially installed at Vientiane, and Prince Souvanna presented the members of his new government to the King. In his inaugural address Souvanna pledged that the government would follow a path of peace and

neutrality

neutrality in conformity with "the interests and aspirations of the Lao people and the Geneva Accords of 1962 in order to build a peaceful, neutral, independent, unified, democratic and prosperous Laos." He listed the following immediate tasks facing his Government: 1) to form a delegation to participate in the international conference for the settlement of the Lao question; 2) to honor commitments undertaken in the name of Laos at the forthcoming international conference and rigorously execute the Geneva Accords of 1962 and the accords agreed among the three parties; 3) to establish a cease-fire and release all prisoners; 4) to unify the administrative organs and military forces of the nation, and to prepare for the election of a national assembly looking to the formation of a "definitive government"; and 5) to establish diplomatic relations with "various" countries.

According to Ambassador Brown, Souvanna's statement followed generally the terms of the Zurich and Plaine des Jarres Accords with one significant exception: Souvanna made a specific reference to the non-recognition of SEATO protection. Phoumi, however, caught this phrase and persuaded Souvanna to delete it from the official press account since it was contrary to their agreements.

(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1795, 23 Jun 62; (U) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1783, 22 Jun 62; 1788 and 1794, 23 Jun 62.

At CINCPAC's

23 Jun 62

No. 48

At CINCPAC's request, CHMAAG Laos submitted a progress report on efforts to develop a guerrilla force capable of effectively interdicting the Communist supply route through Mu Gia Pass (see item 23 February 1962). CHMAAG reported that the guerrilla forces currently in being were not yet capable of directly interdicting either the Nape or Mu Gia Pass. However, MAAG said that the Lao resistance group [redacted] west of Mu Gia along Route 12 had expanded from three to six units during the past three months and had had some success in interdicting Route 12 in the rear of the Communist forces in the Nhommarath-Mahaxay area.

CHMAAG estimated that three or four months would be required before the guerrilla forces could be developed to the point where they would be capable of restricting, to any significant extent, enemy traffic through the Pass.

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS et al., DA IN 229646, 14 May 62; (S) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 241797C, 23 Jun 62.

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23 Jun 62

No. 49

The Acting Secretary of State informed the American Embassy at Vientiane that Phoumi should be encouraged to deal directly with the Embassy, even though Ambassador Brown's successor had not yet arrived. For this reason, Embassy officials were provided with a general response to the questions which Phoumi, through Sarit, had submitted to the US Ambassador to Thailand (see item 20 June 1962).

In brief

In brief, the Embassy was to urge Phoumi to establish, as quickly as possible, a close working relationship with Souvanna and the neutral center in order to resist the extension of Pathet Lao influence. Phoumi should also strengthen the FAR and accept MAAG advice so that his force would be prepared to face the Pathet Lao during the period of integration and after the withdrawal of the MAAG. Finally, Phoumi should assist the ICC and attempt to insure its freedom of action. In any event, he would not be expected to deal with the possible problem of the introduction of Communist military advisers.

Embassy officers, at their discretion, might discuss general plans for the withdrawal of the MAAG. Phoumi, however, was not to be informed of the planned US reaction to a Communist refusal to withdraw Chinese or Viet Minh contingents. No mention would be made of the future role of the Meo or Kha, although Phoumi could be told that the US hoped to alleviate suffering among the tribes and to prevent reprisals. During these talks, Embassy officers were to attempt to discover for what political activity Phoumi desired funds (see item 21 June 1962).

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 1172, 23 Jun 62.

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24 Jun 62 The Provisional Government of Nation Union held its first Cabinet meeting and among other things

No. 50 appointed a delegation, headed by Quinim Pholsena, to participate

to participate in the Geneva Conference. The new government also declared that it would enter upon its duties immediately and, to show that "national harmony has been established," would proclaim at noon the absolute cessation of all hostilities in Laos.

(U) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1796, 24 Jun 62; 1842, 29 Jun 62.

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25 Jun 62

No. 51

At a Secretary of Defense-JCS meeting, the Secretary and all others present agreed that no financial support should be given the new RLG until all US prisoners held by the Pathet Lao and Viet Minh had been released. Assistant Secretary Nitze was instructed by Secretary McNamara to present this view to Assistant Secretary of State Harriman.

(TS) Note to Control Div., 25 Jun 62; JMF 5410 (62).

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26 Jun 62

No. 52

As of this date, 8567 of the 9508 US troops ordered to Thailand (see items 13 May 1962 et seq.) had arrived there. Since the end of May (see item 22 May 1962) nearly 2,000 troops had arrived.

(S) Msgs, CINCPAC to JCS, 070018Z Jun 62; 132246Z Jun 62; DA IN 241458, 20 Jun 62; 272345Z Jun 62.

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26 Jun 62

No. 53

As instructed by the Acting Secretary of State, Ambassador Young delivered to Sarit a message in which President Kennedy congratulated the Thai Prime Minister for his acceptance of the International

International Court of Justice and called upon Thailand to participate in both the Geneva Conference and the pre-Conference strategy meetings. Sarit, who seemed pleased by the message, confirmed that the Thai Ambassador at Berne had been instructed to attend the pre-Conference meeting.

The Prime Minister added, however, that he and Thanat had not yet decided whether Thailand should take part in the Conference itself. Their recommendation, moreover, would have to be studied by the cabinet before any Governmental decision was made. Ambassador Young nevertheless believed that, thanks to Sarit, the US was "at least on a take-off with the RTG on a Geneva course."

During the conversation, Sarit reiterated his grave concern over the Communist menace in Laos. Thanat told Young that the RTG's fears seemed on the verge of being realized, since Souphanouvong was serving as Acting Premier and Phoumi Vongvichit had begun denouncing the presence of US troops in Thailand. Because of Sarit's apprehension, the Ambassador asked for guidance concerning the Department's plans in the event the Communists made an issue of the US deployment.

(On 27 June, Acting Secretary Ball authorized Young to assure Sarit, if necessary, that the US would reject any Communist attempt to link the Laotian settlement to the withdrawal of US troops from Thailand.)

[redacted]

(S) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 2086, 26 Jun 62; SecState to Bangkok, 2092, 27 Jun 62.

26 Jun 62

No. 54

[redacted]

[redacted]

26 Jun 62

No. 55

Acting Secretary of State Ball informed Ambassador Young that the President had decided to change the "character" of US forces in Thailand in a manner that would not weaken the over-all US military capability in the area. To this end, the President had authorized a strengthening of logistic support accompanied by the withdrawal of certain combat units. Approximately 1,000 Marines stationed at Udorn would be withdrawn and later replaced by 1,700 Army Engineers. Other components would be recalled as conditions might dictate. As a result of the removal of some combat forces, Mr. Ball explained, the US would regain the ability to recommit the troops, if necessary, as a renewed diplomatic warning.

Although the decisions to withdraw certain contingents and to strengthen logistic support were "firm"

were "firm," the President nevertheless desired Young's advice on timing and on the method of explaining the decisions to Sarit. The Ambassador was informed that the redeployment, which would begin no later than 4 July, would probably be explained to the public as an effort to utilize most effectively the forces involved. No immediate public announcement of the logistic reinforcements was planned, but the decision probably would be "explained in terms of economic development."

On the following day, Ambassador Young submitted his suggestions for the timing and method of informing the Thai of the US move. On 28 May the Acting Secretary of State approved most of Young's proposed tactics, but asked Young to emphasize to Sarit that the reasons for the transfer were "diplomatic . . . and not negotiable." The US, while avoiding any lessening of its ability to react, was taking steps which could be interpreted by the Communists as an effort to ease tensions. Since the Marines could, if necessary, return on 48-hour notice, the US, by withdrawing this force, would preserve its freedom to "invoke precisely the same level of deterrent action if the situation sours." The US could thus reestablish the previous deterrent without running the risk of escalation.

(See item 29 June 1962.)

(S) Msgs, SecState to Bankok, NIACT 2083, 26 Jun 62; NIACT 2094, 28 Jun 62; Bangkok to SecState, 2100, 27 Jun 62; 2110, 27 Jun 62.

26-30 Jun 62

No. 56

Souvanna arrived in Paris and in response to Foreign Office inquiries denied any responsiblity for a statement by his Minister of Information, Phoumi Vongvichit, calling for the withdrawal of US troops from Thailand. In further talks with the Foreign Office on the 28th Souvanna indicated that he thought it possible that the Geneva Conference would be ended by mid-July and that he could see no objections to the presence of the French Military Mission in Laos. Souvanna, however, was not at all agreeable to including a statement concerning the reunification of the Lao armed forces in the Neutrality Declaration. He thought that this was an internal matter that should be settled by the coalition government.

Souvanna did express his willingness to exclude any mention of SEATO from the Declaration provided the SEATO nations announced, sometime prior to the issuance of the Declaration, their intention to respect the RLG's desire not to recognize the protection of any military alliance.

After speaking with Souvanna on the 30th, Harriman reported that "he appeared all right on [the] inclusion of integration and demobilization in [the] Lao declaration." Harriman also noted that Souvanna had definitely accepted the US invitation to return to Laos via Washington when the Conference concluded.

(C) Msg, Paris to SecState, 6254, 26 Jun 62; (S) Msgs, Paris to SecState, 6309, 29 Jun 62; 6351, 30 Jun 62.

CINCPAC

27 Jun 62

No. 57

CINCPAC warned COMUSMACV that the Viet Minh, might foresee a slowdown or shutdown in the use of their corridor through Laos to South Viet Nam resulting from coming developments regarding Laos; they might therefore attempt to "rush" Viet Cong into South Viet Nam before any international supervisory machinery could be put into operation. He recommended that COMUSMACV point out this danger to South Vietnamese authorities, urging them to increase their vigilance along the Lao border.

(S) Msg, CINCPAC to COMUSMACV, 270500Z Jun 62.

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28 Jun 62

No. 58

President Kennedy announced the nomination of Leonard Unger, Deputy Chief of Mission and Consul at Bangkok, to replace Winthrop Brown as Ambassador to Laos. Unger's appointment was confirmed by the Senate on 30 June 1962.

NYT, 29 Jun 62, p. 4:7; 30 Jun 62, p. 8:4.

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28 Jun 62

No. 59

Ambassador Young informed the Department of State that Sarit was "pressing" for answers to the six questions asked by Phoumi concerning US plans for Laos (see item 20 June 1962). Young had told the Prime Minister that no instructions had yet arrived upon which he might base a reply. Although willing to encourage Phoumi to deal directly with the American Embassy in Vientiane instead of using Sarit as an intermediary, Ambassador Young nevertheless expected the Thai Government to continue to take an active interest in Lao affairs.

affairs. For this reason, Young believed it would be helpful to inform the RTG, in a general way, of the conduct which the US expected of Phoumi (see item 23 June 1962).

(On the following day, Secretary Rusk authorized Young to make such an explanation to Sarit. The Ambassador, however, was not to discuss Phoumi's request for funds (see item 21 June 1962), since the Department had not yet been informed of the type of political activity that Phoumi had in mind. "At this stage," remarked the Secretary, "we are primarily focusing our attention on ascertaining the precise nature of the aid which Souvanna hopes to obtain from us.")

(S) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 21111, 28 Jun 62; SecState to Bangkok, 2107, 29 Jun 62.

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28 Jun 62

No. 60

During a visit by the Philippine Foreign Minister Pelaez to the US, State Department officials attempted to clarify the US position regarding a Laotian settlement and, in particular, to explain US unhappiness over the Phoumi mission to the Philippines (see item 29 May 1962).

The Foreign Minister during his visit mentioned that Philippine President Macapagal, although hopeful that the Laos coalition would work, was skeptical as to its ultimate success. Pelaez also pointed out that he opposed Laotian renunciation of the SEATO protection. Harriman explained that the severance of ties with SEATO was necessary to obtain Soviet assent to the agreement

the agreement. The renunciation was, in fact, not too significant, for Laos would always have the opportunity of calling for military support from the various members of SEATO as individual nations. Harriman also expressed the US hope that the Philippines would send a token unit to Thailand.

Pelaez indicated that the Filipino instructors in Laos might possibly be transferred from the FAR to the RLG in the event that the Geneva settlement prohibited their remaining in their present positions. In conclusion, Harriman indicated that the Department would endeavor to keep the Government of the Philippines more fully informed on US Laotian policy.

(C) SecState to Manila, 1609, 28 Jun 62.

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28 Jun 62

No. 61

[redacted] also recommended that the training of additional units under the MAAG be pursued as rapidly as possible to take full advantage of the period of 75 days after the signing of the Geneva agreements during which the MAAG would be permitted to remain in Laos. They emphasized that the training should attempt 1) to provide suitable cadres for trail-watching teams in South Laos and along the Laos-Viet Nam border, and 2) hopefully to establish a base for

continued

continued operations in the Bolovens Plateau area.

(See item 19 July 1962.)

[redacted]

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28 Jun 62

No. 62

During a meeting between members of the French and American delegations at Geneva, the French delegation announced that Souvanna had readily agreed to the continued presence of a French Military Mission in Laos. The Prince had also said that, unless there were assurances by all SEATO members that the organization accepted the Lao renunciation of SEATO military protection, he would have to bring the matter up at a future Conference meeting. The French delegation further related that Souvanna had indicated that he already had said enough about the demobilization and integration of Lao forces. Souvanna added, however, that he would consider a French suggestion that he make further reference to the disposition of Lao forces at Geneva in order to provide a basis for ICC competence in this field.

In commenting on Souvanna's remarks, the French delegation declared that it was unlikely that a cease-fire proclamation including reference to the "Private Armies" could be obtained before the final signature of the Geneva agreements. The desired reference, however, might be included, in spite of Communist objections, in the Lao declaration of neutrality.

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 1156, 28 Jun 62.

Ambassador

29 Jun 62

No. 63

Ambassador Young and General Harkins called upon Sarit and his advisers and informed the Thai officials of President Kennedy's decision to alter the composition of US forces in Thailand (see item 26 June 1962). Sarit agreed to the redeployment of 1,000 Marines and to the draft US announcement of this decision.

The Thai Prime Minister also agreed in principle to the US program to improve logistical facilities in Thailand. Sarit suggested, however, that the US, when it chose to announce the logistic support program, should indicate that the resultant improvements would support US military action in Thailand in addition to benefitting the Thai economy.

Also on the 29th, CINCPAC, acting on instructions from the JCS, ordered CINCPACFLT and COMUSMACTHAI to begin the withdrawal on 2 July.

(The withdrawal was completed on 7 July.)

(S) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 2113, 29 Jun 62; 2119, 30 Jun 62; JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 5165, 29 Jun 62; CINCPAC to CINCPACFLT and COMUSMACTHAI, 290433Z Jun 62. (TS) SEA SITREP, No 28, 11 Jul 62.

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29 Jun 62

No. 64

Ambassador Gavin informed the State Department that Souvanna reportedly had told the French Ambassador to South Viet Nam that he intended to give full diplomatic recognition to the DRV. When the French diplomat raised the possibility that, as a result of this action, SVN would refuse "representation" in Laos, Souvanna replied that this was too bad, but he had no choice.

(C) Msg, Paris to SecState, 6314, 29 Jun 62.

The UK

29 Jun 62

No. 65

The UK Delegation's Legal Advisor suggested to the US Delegation at Geneva that signature by the US and UK of the Geneva agreements might imply recognition of North Viet Nam and, in the case of the US, also Communist China unless the Agreement contained a specific statement to the contrary. The US delegation replied that agreements growing out of negotiations such as those at Geneva did not imply recognition and that no reservation was therefore necessary. The UK Legal Advisor, however, was not satisfied and suggested that British misgivings would be relieved if, as a minimum, a statement denying the imputation of recognition were included in the final draft.

(See item 5 July 1962.)

(C) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 1163, 29 Jun 62.

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30 Jun 62

No. 66

Ambassador Brown reported that according to the RLG Director of Protocol, the Lao Government approved "in principle" requests from the governments of Communist China, East Germany, and Poland to establish diplomatic relations and exchange representatives at the ambassadorial level.

(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1848, 30 Jun 62.

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30 Jun 62

No. 67

At its second meeting, the cabinet of the new Provisional Government of National Union agreed on the establishment of a mixed cease-fire committee, composed of three members from each political

political faction. Also established were commissions, with one member from each political group, to study procedures for the military and administrative unification of Laos. The Cabinet also discussed finance and foreign aid and "urgent questions concerning the majority of ministerial departments."

The US mission reported that the consensus of opinion in Vientiane was that installation procedures of the Provisional Government had thus far worked more smoothly and with fewer recriminations and problems than might have been expected. It was, however, too soon to predict to what extent the new government would be able to operate effectively under the cumbersome Troika systems that were rapidly being applied at all levels of government.

(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1847, 30 Jun 62; (U) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1850, 30 Jun 62.

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30 Jun
3 Jul 62

No. 58

According to an AP dispatch carried by the Bangkok Post, Interior Minister Pheng Phonsavan disclosed on 2 July that the Soviet Union had offered to provided Laos with material aid including food, fabrics, and other commodities worth $600,000, and that the RLG Cabinet at its 30 June meeting had asked Vice Premier Phoumi Nosavan to study the offer and report on it at the next cabinet meeting.

On 3 July Acting Prime Minister Souphanouvong announced at a press interview that a large shipment of Soviet aid materials had just arrived in Hanoi

Hanoi and would soon be shipped to Vientiane or the Plaine des Jarres.

(U) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, A-7, 14 Jul 62.

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1. After

JULY

Summary of Major Subjects

1. After resolving the remaining issues, such as the future relationship of SEATO to Laos, the delegations at Geneva arrived at agreements designed to insure the neutrality and independence of that kingdom.

Nos. 6, 8, 9, 21.

2. During July, the Lao coalition continued to struggle with such problems as the establishment of diplomatic relations with both Communist and non-Communist nations and the unification of the political factions that had divided the kingdom.

Nos. 2, 3, 7, 17, 18, 19, 24, 25.

3. The US Government turned its attention to the future of Laos, receiving Souvanna in Washington and laying plans for future economic aid.

Nos. 2, 12, 14, 24.

4. The future of MAAG Laos, its impending withdrawal, and its replacement by a French Military Mission were studied by US officials.

Nos. 5, 15, 20.

5. The task of altering the composition of US forces in Thailand continued.

Nos. 2, 11, 13, 22.

6. By means of a well-equipped and mobile ICC, as well as through information obtained by American and indigenous personnel, the US hoped to verify the withdrawal of Viet Minh forces and detect any future effort by the Communist to infiltrate through Laos into South Viet Nam.

Nos. 1, 4, 5, 10, 15, 16, 22, 23, 26.

[redacted]

2 Jul 62

No. 1

[redacted] plans for the relocation of Thakhek guerrilla units following the formation of a Lao coalition. Although the exact locations to be assigned the various units had not in every case been specified, [redacted] move all of them to secure areas east and southeast of Thakhek where they would be astride the avenue of North Vietnamese infiltration into South Viet Nam. Most of the units [redacted] be supplied overland from Thakhek, but in some areas the aerial delivery of supplies would be necessary. The USOM, it was hoped, could assist in the dropping of supplies.

[redacted]

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2 Jul 62

No. 2

During a meeting at Geneva, Soviet Co-Chairman Pushkin, after reading a message to Harriman in which Premier Khrushchev called for continued cooperation between the US and USSR, advised the American diplomat that the integration of Lao armed forces and the demobilization of excess personnel were matters to be settled by the RLG. Other topics mentioned during this private session were the presence of US forces in Thailand and the need for further private sessions to resolve difficulties that might arise during meetings between the Co-Chairmen. In commenting on the US forces in Thailand, Harriman referred Pushkin to newspaper accounts of the decision to withdraw 1,000 Marines (see items 26 and 29 June 1962).

When

(C) Msgs, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 1176, 3 Jul 62; CONFE 1177, 3 Jul 62.

2 Jul 62

No. 3

When questioned about the RLG's policy regarding diplomatic relations with other governments, Foreign Minister Khamsouk Keola informed a representative of the US Embassy that Laos, because it was a small, neutral state that required assistance from foreign nations, would honor requests by all governments for the establishment of diplomatic relations. When advised that West Germany probably would sever its diplomatic ties with Laos if recognition were granted to East German, Khamsouk said that there nevertheless would be no exceptions to the policy of extending recognition to all that requested it.

(On 8 July, the US delegation at Geneva advised the Secretary of State that, although it would be difficult to convince the RLG that any East German bid for recognition should be spurned, the presence in Laos of representatives of prosperous West Germany was definitely desirable. Four days later, Ambassador Unger added his recommendation that West Germany be encouraged to maintain some form of diplomatic representation at Vietiane, even though the RLG should recognize the East German regime.)

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 1195, 8 Jul 62. (C) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 2, 2 Jul 62; Vientiane to SecState, 43, 12 Jul 62.

4 Jul 62

No. 4

In response to an inquiry from the JCS, CINCPAC stated that he had no credible evidence to substantiate

substantiate newspaper stories that 8,000-9,000 North Vietnamese were moving from the Laotian Panhandle into South Viet Nam.

(S) Msgs, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 5223, 041914Z Jul 62; CINCPAC to JCS, 050042Z Jul 62.

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5 Jul 62

No. 5

The Secretary of Defense, anticipating the withdrawal of the MAAG from Laos, sent to the JCS a memorandum in which he expressed his desire that the DIA make plans to augment as soon as possible the number of US military attaches in that kingdom (see item 14 June 1962). The Secretary believed that the additional service attaches would be required in order to: 1) increase US intelligence coverage in Laos; 2) provide assistance to the USOM in the conduct of any functions formerly assigned to the MAAG; 3) observe the utilization of US equipment; and 4) maintain close liaison with the French Military Mission and other Allied military assistance agencies in Laos.

In response to a JCS request for comments on the Secretary's plan, CINCPAC in messages sent on 12, 15, and 28 July recommended that: 1) attache strength should be increased to the extent necessary to provide both the desired intelligence and the liaison that would be necessary between Vientiane and Bangkok; 2) the military attaches should not take over those MAAG functions relating to administration of the MAP; and 3) a non-resident MAAG should be established at Bangkok to cooperate with AID, Laos, in the procurement, storage, and distribution of MAP materiel.

(On 3 August

(On 3 August, the JCS forwarded to the Secretary of Defense a memorandum in which they recommended: 1) the augmentation of the attache effort in Laos for the purpose of gathering intelligence; 2) the establishment of a non-resident MAAG Laos in Thailand; and 3) augmentation of US AID, Laos. The Secretary of Defense on 11 August informed the JCS that he had approved, in general, the concept they had advanced. Instead of establishing the non-resident MAAG as a separate entity, however, the Department of Defense would assign additional men to JUSMAG Thailand. Although the additional element would deal with Laos, it would have no external identification with that kingdom.)

(S) SecDef memo for the JCS, Subj: Augmentation of Military Attache Strength in Laos (U); (S) JCSM-558-62, 3 Aug 62, derived from JCS 2344/59; (S) JCS 2344/58, 6 Jul 62; all in JMF 9155.2/5195 (5 Jul 62). (S/NOFORN) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 5265, 092336Z Jul 62. (S) Msgs, CINCPAC to JCS, 120411Z Jul 62; 150015Z Jul 62; 282232Z Jul 62.

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5 Jul 62

No. 6

In a message to the US delegation at Geneva, the Secretary of State defended the proposition that the conclusion of a multilateral treaty to which a non-recognized regime was party did not imply recognition of that party. This principle had often been stated by the British in previous multilateral treaties, and if the UK should decide to issue a unilateral statement at the conclusion of the Geneva conference incorporating this principle the US would be willing to associate itself with such a declaration. It would

would be preferable, the Secretary concluded, for the British Foreign Secretary to make such a statement as Co-Chairman, thus obviating the necessity of US affirmation.

(C) Msg, SecState to US Mission Geneva, 928, 5 Jul 62.

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7 Jul 62

No. 7

The Lao Government directed the formation of three integrated battalions to be under the control of the cease-fire committee, a body on which the three political factions were equally represented. Each battalion was to include one company from each of these three factions. In addition, command of the battalions was to be rotated among the political groups. One battalion was to be stationed at Vientiane, another at Luang Prabang, and the third at Xieng Khouang. The directive, however, was not carried out. Rather than permit an FAR company on the Plaine des Jarres, Souphanouvong ordered the withdrawal of the companies he had dispatched to Vientiane and Luang Prabang. Small guard detachments, however, were left behind.

(S) Msgs, USARMA Laos to DEPTAR, DA IN 245916, 100732Z Jul 62; DA IN 248469, 190530Z Jul 62. (TS/NOFORN) SEA SITREP No. 30-62, 29 Jul 62.

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9 Jul 62

No. 8

The problem of SEATO's relationship to a neutral Laos was resolved by the Geneva Conference when the Communist delegations accepted the Laotian proposal to add the phrase "including SEATO" to its disavowal of military alliances. Initially, the Communists

the Communists had demanded that SEATO amend its protocol to exclude any mention of protection for Laos in addition to the Laotian declaration. They finally accepted, however, the renunciation of SEATO protection originally proposed by Souvanna, an acceptance that was interpreted by US officials as a "considerable retreat" from the Communists' original position. The US, UK, France, and Thailand also were willing to accept Souvanna's proposal, and the US was working to enlist the support of other SEATO countries.

(S) Msgs, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 1191, 7 Jul 62; CONFE 1203, 9 Jul 62; Bangkok to SecState, 52, 9 Jul 62, 12, 10 Jul 62; SecState to Bangkok et al., 27, 8 Jul 62.

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10 Jul 62

No. 9

After receiving a letter in which President Kennedy requested South Viet Nam to accept the agreements being negotiated at Geneva, President Diem, through his Foreign Minister, informed Ambassador Nolting that South Viet Nam still desired certain clarifications of the suggested powers of the ICC. In addition, President Diem sought some means to avoid full diplomatic recognition of North Viet Nam by the new Government of Laos. Nolting, however, was confident that the Diem government would accept the agreements once it was fully satisfied that the ICC actually could control the withdrawal of Viet Minh troops from Laos.

(On 11 July, members of the US and South Vietnamese delegations conferred at Geneva. During this meeting, the South Vietnamese disclosed

disclosed that the "clarification" sought by Diem consisted of a clause giving the ICC sufficient authority to control the withdrawal of foreign para-military units stationed in Laos. Although the South Vietnamese eventually agreed that the language of the protocol was adequate, they indicated that nevertheless they would ask Souvanna's representative to insert a clause dealing with para-military forces. The possible establishment of diplomatic ties between Laos and North Viet Nam was not discussed.)

(S) Msgs, Saigon to SecState, 35, 10 Jul 62; Saigon to SecState, 26, 11 Jul 62; Geneva to SecState, CONFE 1222, 12 Jul 62. (C) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 1223, 12 Jul 62.

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10 Jul 62

No. 10

The Secretary of State, in a message to the US Ambassador at Vientiane and to the Geneva delegation, renewed the US offer of equipment for the ICC (see items 17 June 1961, 21-22 June 1961 and 19 July 1961). The US was willing to turn over to the RLG six helicopters and two liaison aircraft, all of which were already in Laos. This equipment, to be flown and serviced by French airmen, would be under the complete control of the ICC.

Because Souvanna was absent from the kingdom at the time of the US offer, the RLG did not decide until 14 August to accept from American sources aircraft needed by the ICC. On the following day, a formal offer of helicopters was made by the US Government, but this time only four of the craft were offered. On 3 September,

Ambassador

Ambassador Unger and Avtar Singh, Secretary-General of the ICC, executed the necessary agreement of sale, and effective the following morning the helicopters passed to ICC control. Heavy maintenance of the craft was to be performed by Air America.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 214, 14 Aug 62. (C) Msgs, SecState to Vientiane, 27, 10 Jul 62; PRIORITY 191, 15 Aug 62; Vientiane to SecState, 119, 25 Jul 62; 132, 27 Jul 62; 333, 3 Sep 62.

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11 Jul 62

No. 11

During an informal discussion at Geneva, Soviet Co-Chairman Pushkin told Harriman of the concern felt by the USSR regarding the presence in Thailand of a large US contingent. Harriman replied that the original deployment had been in response to the attack by the Pathet Lao on Nam Tha. Moreover, the recent decision to withdraw 1,000 Marines (see item 26 June 1962) was proof that the US did not intend to establish permanent garrisons along the Thai-Lao frontier.

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 1233, 13 Jul 62.

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17 Jul 62

No. 12

A Joint State/AID message outlined for Ambassador Brown the "tentative current Washington thinking" on economic aid for Laos. According to this message, the US intended to discuss with Souvanna a total Project Assistance program of $25 million, including $8.6 million previously obligated for the Nam Cadinh Road. The US was also prepared to contribute $14-18 million in non-project assistance. In the event that US assistance and contributions from other countries failed

failed to meet the essential requirements of RLG, the US would consider supplementary cash grants. An elaborate system was also proposed to insure US control of all funds made available to the RLG.

These contributions, the message continued, reflected the US belief that an aid relationship which would underwrite RLG economic stability by simply meeting budget deficits or maintaining the value of the kip would destroy RLG incentive to collect revenues, control budget expenditures, and manage its foreign exchange effectively. The RLG, not the US, must assume the primary responsibility for the economic prosperity and stability of Laos.

Although these new arrangements might involve lengthy negotiations, the Secretary considered the $3 million July 1962 economic assistance for Laos to be the terminal grant under existing arrangements.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 75, 17 Jul 62.

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17 Jul 62

No. 13

Secretary Rusk informed the US Ambassador to Thailand that President Kennedy, acting upon a recommendation by the Ambassador himself, had decided to adjust the rotation of US forces in Thailand, the possibility of which had already been mentioned to the Thai Ambassador to the US. CINCPAC, Secretary Rusk continued, had been instructed to hold the remaining Marine units beyond the tentative rotation date of 20 July, after

after which the troops would be withdrawn without provision for their replacement. Thus, the President would be able to announce the withdrawal shortly after the signing on 23 July of the Geneva Agreements and in this manner to indicate a further easing of tensions in Southeast Asia. If, however, the US Ambassador felt that the proposed withdrawal might cause Thailand to refuse to sign the Geneva accords, he might wait until 25 July before revealing the US plan to Sarit.

(Although the Thai Foreign Minister indicated as early as 19 July that his nation probably would sign the Geneva Agreements, Ambassador Young waited until the accords had been signed before explaining the US plan to Sarit. In anticipation of the Ambassador's action, the JCS on 25 July directed CINCPAC to prepare to implement the withdrawal so that the first plane-load of Marine combat personnel would depart within 48 hours after receipt of the order of execution. The withdrawal of personnel and air transportable equipment was scheduled to be completed within an additional 48 hours. During an audience granted to the US Ambassador on 27 July, the Thai Prime Minister raised no objection to the withdrawal, but he implied that any protest on his part would have been futile. The US Government on the same day announced that the withdrawal was underway; the last of the Marine combat personnel departed from Thailand on the morning of 31 July.)

The State

(TS) SEA SITREP No. 31-62, 31 Jul 62. (S) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 101, 16 Jul 62, SecState to Bangkok, NIACT 97, 17 Jul 62. (LOU) Msg, SecState to Bangkok, NIACT 143, 27 Jul 62. (S) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, 5432, 251659Z Jul 62, JCS 9158/3440 (24 Jul 62).

18 Jul 62

No. 14

The State Department notified the US Embassy in Vientiane that the cash grant of $3 million to the RLG had been approved.

(C) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 80, 18 Jul 62.

18-31 Jul 62

No. 15

On 18 July Secretary Rusk in a message to Ambassador Unger outlined a State Department plan designed to enable the US to utilize the full 75-day period for the withdrawal of the MAAG and also to insure that the ICC remained active during the 30-day period allotted to the RLG by the Geneva Agreement for the determination of withdrawal routes. By keeping the MAAG and ICC in Laos as long as possible the State Department hoped to utilize to the fullest these sources of intelligence on Communist activities. In order to achieve this objective the State Department intended to request the Canadians to use their position on the ICC to ensure that MAAG and ICC be allowed to remain in Laos for the maximum period.

In the event that the Viet Minh withdrew before the establishment of withdrawal routes the US planned to insist on ICC determination of Viet Minh withdrawal routes anyway in order to keep the ICC in Laos as long a possible. By so insisting,

insisting, the US intended to give the ICC the maximum opportunity to determine to what extent the Communists were living up to their obligations under the Geneva Agreements and also to obtain ICC support for the US contention that the Viet Minh had in fact been present in Laos during the hostilities. The Secretary's plan also called for the US Mission in Geneva to request the Canadian and Indian members of the ICC to press for the establishment of the withdrawal points in areas where the Viet Minh was most active.

The State Department also suggested that the Embassy set up an expanded intelligence gathering network to obtain the best possible information on the Viet Minh withdrawal. The Department also passed along the following State-Defense suggestions as to desirable routes for the withdrawal of the Viet Minh:

1) From Tchepone to Mahaxay and east over Route 12 to North Viet Nam.

2) From Xieng Khouang east over Route 7.

3) From Xieng Khouang north to Sam Neua and thence toward Hanoi over the new road.

4) From Phong Saly north over the new road.

On 31 July Ambassador Unger informed the State Department that he would undertake to expand his intelligence gathering facilities using the MAAG, ARMA, and the French Military Mission, but pointed out that there was no overt US intelligence capability in the areas occupied by the Viet Minh, and that it was not likely that one would be developed within the 75-day

withdrawal

withdrawal period. Therefore, the Ambassador reported, it was unrealistic to think that any of the various US agencies in Laos would be able to gather much intelligence information. The US, he said, would have to continue to rely for information concerning the Viet Minh on the FAR and the Government of South Viet Nam. The Ambassador thought that the presence of the ICC teams would not improve the situation very much, if at all.

(S) Msgs, SecState to US Mission Geneva, FECON 980, 16 Jul 62; SecState to Geneva FECON 994, 18 Jul 62; SecState to Vientiane, 95, 21 Jul 62; Vientiane to SecState, 148, 31 Jul 62.

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19 Jul 62

No. 16

[redacted] the future use of Kha units in Laos. [redacted] the three Kha units offering the best potential and security could not be counted upon to fight except in their home areas. For this reason, the three units should be prepared to: 1) establish defensive perimeters in the Bolovens area; 2) serve as guides should it become necessary to send South Vietnamese paramilitary teams into the area to prevent Viet Cong infiltration; and 3) act as trail watchers to detect Viet Cong infiltration of South Viet Nam.

Another loyal Kha unit had been forced from its home area and was training in a refugee center near Saravane. If this group was allowed to return to its villages, it too could provide guides

guides and trail watchers. In its present location, however, the unit had only limited potential.

Seven other units, although not considered reliable, could provide loyal individuals who might prove valuable either as trail watchers or as "staybehind" against the possibility that the Lao coalition might fail. Still another unit was directly controlled by the FAR and would pass under the control of the Souvanna regime, thus forfeiting its security.

[redacted]

19-20 Jul 62

No. 17

In a series of talks with US Embassy officials, Phoumi warned that "a drift toward the left had seemingly begun." He pointed to Souphanouvong's attempts to establish Bloc embassies in Vientiane, the continuing PL propaganda attacks on him, and the impasse reached in the agreement to redistribute PL and FAR units in various regions of Laos. He also mentioned the difficulty encountered in insuring the withdrawal of the Viet Minh who were now inserting their Lao speaking elements in PL units.

Phoumi also believed that Souvanna was finding himself in an increasingly difficult position because of the conflicting demands of the US, the USSR, and France. Phoumi himself remained suspicious of French intentions in Laos, although he now removed his objections to French crews for ICC helicopters (see item 10 July 1962).

The Government

(C) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 79, 18 Jul 62, 86, 19 Jul 62, 87, 19 Jul 62.

20 Jul 62

No. 18

The Government of the Republic of China, in announcing the presentation of credentials by its Ambassador to Laos, noted the presence in Vientiane of an envoy from the Peiping government, a "'self styled Charge d' Affaires having no legal status.'" The Republic of China, the announcement continued, would never recognize the "'fallacious two-Chinas arrangement.'"

In response to this Chinese declaration, Secretary Rusk advised the Ambassadors at Vientiane and Taipei that, because of the Declaration of Laotian Neutrality, Souvanna could not be prevented from recognizing the Chinese Peoples Republic. Since the US believed that diplomatic representation bythe greatest possible number of anti-Communist nations was vital to the future neutrality of Laos, the withdrawal of the Nationalist Ambassador would be unfortunate. Thus, the US would continue to urge the GRC to maintain diplomatic ties with Laos. (See appendix.)

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 113, to Taipei, 74, 26 Jul 62; (U) Msg, Taipei to SecState, 84, 21 Jul 62.

21 Jul 62

No. 19

Phoumi informed the deputy chief of the US Mission that he had been able to manage the accreditation on 19 July of a Chinese Nationalist Ambassador to the new Laotian government in spite of objections from the Souvanna faction. Phoumi also requested

also requested explicit US instructions concerning the accreditation of several Bloc diplomatic representatives in Laos, claiming that he could easily delay the establishment of diplomatic relations with Red China, North Viet Nam, and East Germany.

In commenting upon Phoumi's request for instructions, the Secretary of State agreed with Ambassador Unger that Phoumi should be advised to refrain from vetoing applications for recognition submitted by Sino-Soviet Bloc nations. Instead, Phoumi should be encouraged to support the application already submitted by the Republic of South Korea and to take actions, short of veto, that would prevent the severing of diplomatic relations between Laos and the Federal Republic of Germany, South Viet Nam, or the Republic of China. (See item 30 July 1962 and appendix.)

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, Airgram A-5, 10 Aug 62. (C) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 110, 23 Jul 62; SecState to Vientiane, 114, 27 Jul 62.

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23 Jul 62

No. 20

CHMAAG Laos reported that Ambassador Unger had instructed him to contact the senior French officer in Laos and to make himself available for any briefings that might assist the French Military Mission in taking over the duties of the MAAG.

(S) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 249645, 240156Z Jul 62.

The Geneva

23 Jul 62

No. 21

The Geneva Conference concluded when the participating governments, including South Viet Nam and Thailand, signed a Declaration on the Neutrality of Laos and a Protocol to the Declaration.

By the terms of the Declaration of Neutrality the Royal Government of Laos declared that it would:

1) develop friendly contacts and establish diplomatic relations with all countries, especially its neighbors;

2) refrain from the use, or threatened use, of force and from the interference in the internal affairs of other countries;

3) refrain from entering into any military alliance or into an alliance inconsistent with its neutrality;

4) prevent any foreign country from using Laotian territory for military purposes or as a base for the interference in the internal affairs of other countries;

5) refuse to recognize the protection of any alliance or military coalition including SEATO;

6) prevent any foreign interference in Laotian internal affairs;

7) accept direct and unconditional aid from all countries;

8) abrogate all treaties and agreements which were inconsistent with the principles of the Geneva Agreements;

9) incorporate the Neutrality Declaration into the Laotian constitution.

The other signatories (Burma, UK, Cambodia, Canada, Communist China, North Viet Nam, France, India,

India, Republic of South Viet Nam, Thailand, USSR, and the US) agreed to refrain from taking any action which would give rise to a violation of the principles stated in the Neutrality Declaration, and in the event of a threat of such violation to consult jointly with Laos to consider those measures which might be necessary to ensure the observance of these principles.

The Protocol to the Declaration of the Neutrality of Laos stipulated that:

1) all foreign troops should be withdrawn from Laos as soon as possible and within a maximum of thirty days after the ICC inspection teams were present at checkpoints determined by the RLG and the Commission. [Deadline for the withdrawal was 7 October, for an additional 45 days was allowed for the establishment of checkpoints. Thus, the period during which the withdrawal would take place was 75 days.] Exception to this was made for a limited number of French military instructors who were permitted to remain for a limited time at the request of the RLG;

2) the introduction of foreign military personnel, except as noted in previous paragraph, was prohibited;

3) note was taken that the French and Laotian Governments would make arrangements for the transfer of French military installations in Laos to the Laotian Government;

4) the introduction into Laos of armaments in excess of quantities which the RLG considered necessary for the national defense was prohibited;

5) all

5) all prisoners taken during the course of hostilities in Laos were to be released within thirty days and handed over by the RLG to the countries of which they were nationals;

6) the Commission would report violations of the Protocol and any other important information which might assist the Co-Chairmen in carrying out their functions. The Co-Chairmen might at any time make recommendations to the Commission in the nature of general guidance. The Co-Chairmen were to exercise supervision over the observance of Protocol and the Declaration of the Neutrality of Laos, and would keep the members of the Conference "constantly" informed;

7) the Commission would, with the concurrence of the RLG, supervise and control the cease-fire in Laos. It was understood that responsibility for the execution of the cease-fire rested with the three Laotian factions and with the RLG after its formation;

8) the Commission was to supervise and control the withdrawal of foreign military personnel;

9) The Commission would investigate cases where the introduction of foreign troops was suspected and would assist the RLG at its request, in cases where the RLG believed that excessive armaments had been brought into Laos;

10) it was understood that the RLG would render the Commission all possible assistance in the performance of its functions;

11) decisions of the Commission on questions relating to the withdrawal of foreign military personnel,

personnel, the introduction of foreign troops or excessive armaments, violations of the cease-fire, conclusions on major questions sent to the Co-Chairmen, and all recommendations by the Commission, required a unanimous vote by the members of the Conference for adoption. On other questions, including those relating to the initiation and carrying out of investigations, the decisions of the Commission could be adopted by majority vote;

12) decisions on initiating and carrying out investigations could be reached in the Commission by majority vote. The Commission was to submit reports on its investigations which, when necessary, might contain minority reports. The Commission would, when necessary, set up inspection teams on which the three member-states were to be equally represented;

13) each of the Governments represented on the Commission was to pay the expenses of its representatives. Provision for the accommodation of the Commission would be the responsibility of the RLG. All other expenses would be met by contributions from the members of the Conference;

14) the Co-Chairmen would, upon request of the Laotian Government, or at the end of three years, submit to the members of the Conference a report, with recommendations, on the question of the termination of the Commission. Before making this report the Co-Chairmen would consult with the RLG.

Dept. of State Bulletin, Vol. XLVII, (13 August 1962), pp. 259-263.

During

26 Jul 62

No. 22

During a Secretary of Defense conference on 23 July, no decisions were reached regarding the future of Laos. The American military advisers in South Viet Nam, however, were directed to provide, during the next 70 days, all possible information on Viet Nam and Pathet Lao activities "in order to assist in conclusions as to what should be done with MAAG Laos."

In addition, the Secretary of Defense called upon the Thailand Country Team to reappraise Thai force structures and equipment programs to determine if the proper balance was being struck between military and paramilitary forces. With respect to Thailand, the Secretary also called for: 1) proposals dealing with the rotation of US forces to Thailand for training every two or three months; 2) recommendations, in view of SEATO implications, concerning the withdrawal of the 478th Tactical Fighter Squadron (which was rotated early in September to CONUS); and 3) views on logistical matters.

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 5455, 262318Z Jul 62.

26-28 Jul 62

No. 23

During a series of conversations with the Canadian ICC representative, Ambassador Unger discussed the ways in which the control commission might ascertain that Viet Minh contingents actually were being withdrawn from Laos. Although the Canadian agreed that the ICC could not operate unless it was permitted access to all parts of Laos, he believed that Souvanna could be persuaded to exert

to exert pressure on Souphanouvong to allow ICC teams to visit those areas controlled by the Pathet Lao. Should Souphanouvong agree, the Canadian would seek the establishment of ICC checkpoints at Tchepone, Nape, Xieng Khouang, Phong Saly or Nam Tha, and possibly at both Sam Neua and Col de Mu Gia. These posts were considered adequate to the task of supervising both aerial and overland routes of evacuation.

On 28 July, the Canadian ICC commissioner informed Unger that the Polish representative had indicated that the control commission might be permitted to supervise the withdrawal of Viet Minh technicians from the Xieng Khouang area. Unger, who considered this report encouraging, warned, however, that the establishment of one or two checkpoints would not guarantee adequate supervision of the Viet Minh withdrawal. The ICC should therefore continue to seek access to other areas of Laos.

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 124, 26 Jul 62; 131, 27 Jul 62. (C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 136, 28 Jul 62.

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30 Jul 62

No. 24

Prime Minister Souvanna and Foreign Minister Quinim arrived in Washington for talks with President Kennedy, the Secretaries of State, Treasury, and Defense, and other US officials concerning Lao problems, future policies, and courses of action. In particular they discussed Lao troop integration and demobilization, the role of the ICC--which Souvanna promised to use in accordance with the Geneva Agreements--the release

release of US and Filipino prisoners, the internal political situation in Laos, and Souvanna's plan to form a single neutral Lao political party, US economic aid, and the Lao-Thai improvement of relations. The only commitment made by the US during this series of talks was a pledge to withdraw US forces from Laos in accordance with the Geneva Agreements (see item 23 July 1962).

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 123, 30 Jul 62; (C) Msgs, SecState to Vientiane, 119, 27 Jul 62, 133, and 134, 1 Aug 62, 157, 7 Aug 62. (LOU) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 131, 1 Aug 62, (U) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 147, 3 Aug 62.

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30 Jul 62

No. 25

In further conversation on the problems facing the new Lao government (see items 19-20 and 21 July 1962), Ambassador Unger and Phoumi agreed that until the pending Council of Ministers' meeting nothing could be done to prevent Souphanouvong from encouraging the establishment of Bloc diplomatic missions in Vientiane. They also agreed that Phoumi had to cooperate closely with the French and accept the ICC in those areas under his control, so that similar demands for cooperation might be made to the PL.

Phoumi told Unger that a commission to execute the Geneva Agreements in Laos, particularly the cease-fire agreement and the provisions for the withdrawal of foreign troops, had been established by the new government. He admitted, however, that the subordinate body charged with establishing and enforcing the cease-fire had so far failed to reach

to reach agreement in regard to the continued fighting among isolated units behind the general cease-fire line.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 142, 30 Jul 62.

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31 Jul 62

No. 26

Using the sources available to it, the Laos Country Team estimated that one 300-400-man Viet Minh unit had been withdrawn from Laos. More than 12,000 Viet Minh troops and some 2,400 advisers remained in the kingdom. The Country Team cautioned, however, that there was "no overt US intelligence capability in areas of Viet Minh presence." The various agencies of the Country Team were thus dependent upon secondary sources, such as unverified FAR reports, and could not be completely certain of the degree of Viet Minh compliance with the Geneva Agreements.

(S) Msg, AmEmbassy Vientiane to DEPTAR, DA IN 231906, 311205Z Jul 62.