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ENCLOSURE

SUMMARY AND HISTORICAL ANALYSIS
OF THE LAOS INCIDENT, AUGUST 1960 TO MAY 1961

PART I, AUGUST TO DECEMBER 1960

17 October 1962

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SUMMARY

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SUMMARY

i. This is a historical study of problems of command and control in the management of U.S. affairs in Laos from August to December 1960. It is the first half of an intensive study of the experience in Laos, the second half of which will carry the story into May 1961. During the four months from August to December 1960, the JCS had a growing interest and participation but still a comparatively minor role because the problem was predominantly political at that time. [ ] But this is a period of real interest to the JCS partly because of its participation and partly because it set the stage for the later period, from December 1960 to May 1961, when the JCS role was much greater.

ii. The analysis of the Laos incident is one of a series of historical analyses of critical incidents in the recent past that was undertaken to develop empirical data concerning the circumstances and problems of national command and control systems. The data and findings thus developed are expected to provide a realistic guide to the requirements of command and control systems, to the evaluation of proposed equipments, and as an aid to those considering means of more effective command organization. It is hoped that the data and findings developed by these historical studies, when made available to those with operating responsibilities at higher command echelons, may form the first part of a dialogue. The second part of the dialogue will be, hopefully, a response of responsible operators, who may add insights, drawn from their practical experience, to the historical analysis, the ultimate purpose being to sharpen our understanding of the workings and problems of the national command control structure.

iii. This study begins by summarizing the events and circumstances leading up to the Kong Le coup of 9 August 1960. The intensive analysis begins with that event. The narrative analysis describes the initial sensing and reactions to the Kong Le coup, first in Vientiane and then in Washington, the undermining of the initial U.S. decisions by the fall of the Tiao Somsanith government which we had originally supported, and the reconsiderations of U.S. policy in Washington beginning a week later. There then ensued the seesaw, repetitive history of U.S. policy in Laos from late August 1960 to late November, during which time the U.S. undertook to support both the Souvanna government and the opposed group headed by Gen. Phoumi. Then came decisions to support Phoumi more vigorously; but the implementation was always complicated, and sometimes undone, by the desire to conceal the American hand and to forestall a possible spoiling action by Souvanna or Kong Le before Phoumi's strength was sufficiently developed. The events of this first half of the intensive history of the Laos incident were culminated by the flight of Souvanna and the capture of Vientiane by Phoumi [ ]

iv. Figure 1 is a diagram of lines of administrative subordination effective for Laos during the period of this study. It will suggest part of the circumstances that gave rise to jurisdictional problems during the Laos incident, some of which are described or commented upon in paragraphs 65-82, 159-163, 180-185, 227, 240, 245 of the historical analysis.

v. Table I lists in chronological order 22 definable decisions taken in the period from 9 August to 14 December with an indication of the agency and echelon responsible for each decision, and the section of the historical analysis that deals with the decision in more detail.

[redacted]

[redacted]

FIGURE 1

LINES OF ADMINISTRATIVE SUBORDINATION,
AUGUST 1960 THROUGH MAY 1961
LAOS INCIDENT

[redacted]

TABLE I

TABLE OF DEFINABLE DECISIONS, CHRONOLOGICALLY ARRANGED, IN LAOS INCIDENT AUG-DEC 1960, TO INDICATE AGENCY AND ECHELON RENDERING THESE DECISIONS

Date	Agency and Echelon[a]	Decision	Pertinent Paragraphs of Historical Analysis
Aug 9	Ambassador	Not to permit PEO to foster an accommodation between Phoumi and Kong Le.	43
Aug 9	Asst SecState	Instructions to U.S. Ambassador (constituted short-range ad hoc policy) to exhort ministers to rally behind legal government, [redacted]	48
Aug 9	Ambassador and State Dept/Wash. State echelon unknown	Not to channel aid to RLG through Phoumi until Embassy representative got Royal confirmation of Phoumi authority.	56
Aug 11	Dep SecDef; representatives OASD/ISA-FER, Asst SecState	[redacted]	60
Aug 17	Under and Asst SecState; [redacted]	[redacted] seek compromise between Phoumi and Souvanna.	90-94
Aug 22	State; Defense; echelon unknown	[redacted]	103
Aug 23	SecDef/JCS, OASD/ISA-FER; Under and Asst SecState	Inform Phoumi of U.S. support; [redacted] inform Souvanna of U.S. support of Phoumi and FAL.	108-111

a/ Agency according to documentary records available; only the highest known echelons are usually given here.

TABLE I (Cont'd)

Date	Agency and Echelon[a/]	Decision	Pertinent Paragraphs of Historical Analysis
Aug 29	U.S. Amb/Laos	[redacted]	115
Aug 30	OASD/ISA, Asst SecState	Resume airlift.	115
Aug 31	Asst SecState	Ambassador to inform Souvanna U.S. would support new cabinet as composed only if it would deal strongly with Kong Le and restore authority of RLG; offer of aid in principle to deal with Kong Le if asked, [redacted]	121
Sep 28	CINCPAC	[redacted]	196
Oct 2-3	State-Defense; echelon unknown	[redacted]	197
Oct 7	State-Defense, echelon high but not known; consultation with U.K. and France	Suspend military aid to Laos.	163
Oct 7	SecDef, OASD/ISA-FER;	Require Souvanna: to move RLG to Luang Prabang, to prevent Kong Le acts against Phoumi, to cease negotiations with PL.	175-176
Oct 8	Under and Asst SecState; OASD/ISA and OASD/ISA-FER; CJCS; Ch SAD/J-5;	Decide terms of reference of impending mission to Laos. See King and encourage him, see Phoumi and tell him U.S. support, agree on amount of supplies to Phoumi; [redacted]	178-179
Oct 8	AChPEO and Ambassador	[redacted]	199

TABLE I (Cont'd)

Date	Agency and Echelon[a]	Decision	Pertinent Paragraphs of Historical Analysis
Nov 10	SecState and Asst Secs State; Under SecDef; SA; CJCS for Policy; ChSAD/J-5 for JCS	Neutralist Laos unacceptable; support Phoumi unequivocably, oust Souvanna by Phoumi coup, using King to form new govt.	218-222
Nov 21	AASD/ISA; ACJCS; SecState; draft embodying decision by Pres. by telephone	Contingent directive to "let Phoumi fight" if Luang Prabang under attack.	232
Dec 2	Asst SecState; VDJS; Ch SAD/J-5; OASD/ISA; OASD/ISA-FER; Asst for Policy CJCS	Attempted clarification and updating of 21 Nov decision. Specified limits to Phoumi operations in order to facilitate political settlement. No restraints if RLG/PL attack Luang Prabang.	247
Dec 7	JCS, concur State and Defense, probably OASD/ISA; OASD/ISA-FER [redacted]	Authorization for Phoumi to support coup in Vientiane against Kong Le and PL elements.	253
Dec 14	CINCPAC	Initiated readiness for JTF 116.	263
Dec 14	State, Defense, [redacted] Military Asst to Pres.--clearance by telephone of key provisions with President	ChPEO to provide military advice directly to Phoumi. [redacted]	267-268

vi. In the following subparagraphs are some summary observations concerning the problems of command and control and national decision making experienced in the Laos incident, August-December 1960, with a reference to paragraphs in the historical analysis that illustrate or elaborate upon the observation.

a. The problem overwhelming all others was lack of clearly defined, clearly felt national policy and purpose. This was a problem beyond the power of JCS to resolve, and was in fact resolvable only at a national level. Each agency involved [ ] had a legitimate interest in Laos. Without clear-cut resolution of policy, each agency was predisposed to favor policies based on its accepted mode of operations and to maintain a proprietary interest in them, even when they were in conflict with policies being attempted by other and competing U.S. agencies. So long as higher authority did not assert itself decisively to develop a unified U.S. policy, it was possible for peer agencies to appeal decisions and to delay actions or programs lacking unequivocal support of higher authority. No one policy ever had the best possible chance to work because no one policy was ever followed to the exclusion of others that lessened its chances of success (see paragraphs 34-35, 55, 65, 85, 100, 128, 180-185, 200-202, 205, 218-219).

b. The issues we faced in Laos were ambiguous. This ambiguity resulted partly from the fact that we lacked a clear-cut, consistent, national consensus concerning the basic nature of the U.S. problem in Laos and the wisest course for the U.S. to follow in dealing with it. But the ambiguity resulted also from the fact that intelligence was generally incomplete, often conflicting and in error, and commonly dependent upon sources with an axe to grind. Many of the

decisions involved the commitment of the prestige of the U.S. to a given policy within Laos on the basis of a judgment of the personal characteristics of a Lao individual or group. This also involved, indirectly, a sociological appraisal of the political forces at work in the land -- a subject upon which there were evident and probably inescapable differences of opinion as between honest and ordinarily competent U.S. officials. In addition to the slipperiness of the subject, lack of solid information created a situation in which the proprietary or emotional interests of those either dealing with intelligence, or acting upon it, often made it quite impossible to escape the influence of the wish upon the thought. Intelligence information was sometimes sought for the purpose of supporting a policy contention; and was often supplied, by our Lao sources, on an axe-grinding basis to cultivate or support the particular American viewpoint that it seemed most profitable to cultivate. Differences of opinion among Americans on U.S. policies in Laos were evident to the Laotians, who accepted this invitation to exploit American differences for their own partisan advantages. In place of coldly judicial and essentially technical analysis, the situation frequently produced polemics. The competitive atmosphere made it difficult to await dispassionate analysis or to defer commitment until a confident judgment would be rendered. (See paragraphs 35, 37-42, 49-51, 136-138, 144-157, 240-242, 252-256.)

c. CINCPAC was empowered by JCS and DOD to make all decisions which they could make without interagency consultation. There was a manifest lack of comparable delegation of responsibility, by the State Department, to the Ambassador. Because the Ambassador was Chief of the Country Team, the failure of State to delegate to the Ambassador had the effect of reducing

the effectiveness of delegation by other agencies of operational responsibility to their field representatives; the affairs of other agencies tended to become involved in the problem of delegation of political authority to the Ambassador, and thus to impair or destroy the power to expedite action that was the intent of the delegation of power. (See Table I and paragraphs 56, 64, 75, 93-94, 180-185.)

d. Referral of issues to Washington for resolution often created serious operational problems. Without passing judgment now on the necessity or wisdom of such referral, it is to be observed that the situation in the field frequently changed so fast that the bureaucratic procedures in use could not keep pace, and decisions were being made in response to conditions no longer in effect by the time the decisions could be implemented. This was not a result of inadequate communications, but rather a result of the inherent time-consuming characteristics of interagency consultation and coordination, as these functions were conducted at that time. (See paragraphs 56, 61, 75, 86, 110, 159-163, 227, 245.)

e. What appeared to be clear and binding decisions at higher echelons in Washington repeatedly turned out to be neither clear nor binding. In some cases this seems due to lack of incisive guidance from the national level to the competing federal agencies, in other cases the changed situation in the field by the time the Washington decision was made led to the decision being set aside by one or another device in deference to changed circumstances. These points have already been noted above. Another important factor was that higher echelon Washington decisions sometimes failed to be explicit concerning complications upon which operating personnel in the field were concentrating their attention, and for

this reason the decisions failed to be understood in the field in the same way in which they were rendered in Washington, even on occasions when Washington tried to be most emphatic. This was partly due to the loss of detailed acquaintance with local issues and operating conditions in proportion as decisions were referred upward. Upward referral tended to mean a wider basis of consideration, which was no doubt necessary as issues grew in importance. But it frequently happened that those in a position to judge issues from a broader base lacked continuity of knowledge of details of pressing importance to those engaged at the local level. Decisions based on broad principle, and communicated in broad terms, sometimes failed therefore to be understood as they were intended. (See Table I; paragraphs 232-244, 227, 74, 114, 103, 111.)

f. Determination of U.S. policy in Laos was by no means limited to those occasions when U.S. officials consciously addressed themselves to formal determinations of policy. Some important decisions were rendered inevitable by prior events or commitments, others were made without full realization that an option was being exercised, or else were taken as ad hoc, tactical decisions which, it is possible in retrospect to see, carried with them commitments of more long-range strategic consequences than were envisioned at the time. Perhaps the most important decision taken with respect to Laos was that it was a practical possibility for the U.S. to obtain a desired political outcome in Laos by an immediate, activist program, or, if not, that it was better to accept the consequence of failure in an immediate activist program than to defer action to a later and possibly more auspicious occasion. (It is arguable that this was less a free decision, as commonly understood, between readily available options, than it was an

implicit acceptance of a judgment that U.S. involvement was already so great that to stand totally to one side was not a practical possibility.) This issue was apparently never debated; it was accepted, rather, as an item of faith. However, whenever issues presented themselves in a form recognizably affording a choice in the actions open to us, there was a tendency to view even comparatively minor operational matters as possible threshold acts involving consequences far beyond the magnitude of the matter immediately at hand. For this reason, operational matters of comparatively minor immediate importance were frequently referred to very high echelons where decisions were rendered, not according to the criteria of efficient operations as such, but rather according to judgment of broad political consequences. (See paragraphs 48, 54-55, 84, 169, 194-199, 202, 115.)

g. Formal meetings and procedures often constituted a mere formalization of decisions already largely worked out, often on the basis of informal and unrecorded contacts and communications. These informal exchanges included telephone and telecon conversations between points in Washington, Hawaii, Thailand and Laos, personal and out-of-channel personal contacts in all places. The direction of inquiries and the assignment of responsibilities sometimes went to individuals rather than to formal stations or organizations in the established chain of command, reflecting a preference to deal with known individual capabilities and predilections, at times, rather than with official stations and formalized procedures. (See paragraphs 81-82, 180-185, 225-227, 245, 249.)

vii. Alternative procedures that it seems in retrospect might have improved the effectiveness of U.S. performance during this period would have included:

a. Incisive decisions and necessary implementing actions at the national level requiring complete cooperation and coordination of U.S. efforts in the field.

b. Broad and deep investigation and definition of alternative courses of action open to the U.S., with attention to the practical prospects of success and the consequences of failure of each of these.

c. Assurance that agency specialists regularly responsible for monitoring local problems were specially qualified, were privy to all information and all considerations of issues directly related to their special responsibilities, and were present and invited to speak on all occasions when decisions were rendered.

[redacted]

[redacted]

HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE LAOS INCIDENT
AUGUST 1960 TO MAY 1961

PART I, AUGUST TO DECEMBER 1960

[redacted]

[redacted]

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page No.
GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS AND UNUSUAL TERMS	1
PROBLEM	6
PURPOSE, METHOD, AND SCOPE	6
DISCUSSION	10
SOME IMPORTANT BACKGROUND FACTORS	10
INITIAL SENSING OF AND REACTIONS TO KONG LE COUP	29
THE DECISIONS OF 11 AUGUST	43
OBSERVATIONS ON THE FIRST REACTIONS TO THE COUP	46
ARRANGEMENTS IN WASHINGTON	48
ARRANGEMENTS IN LAOS	54
FIRST RESPONSE TO THE FALL OF THE TIAO SOMSANITH GOVERNMENT	59
THE POLICY DECISIONS OF 17 AUGUST	63
A FIRST TRY AT ACTIVE SUPPORT OF BOTH PARTIES TO THE QUARREL	66
THE SOUVANNA-PHOUMI MEETING AT SENO, 23 AUGUST	75
THE INTERDEPARTMENTAL DECISIONS OF 23 AUGUST	76
A SECOND TRY AT GOING TWO WAYS AT ONCE	79
THE PROBLEMS OF THE COALITION CABINET OF 31 AUGUST	83
A PERIOD OF MARKING TIME AND RECONSIDERATION	90
PAKSANE AND SAM NEUA	97
PROBLEMS OF INTELLIGENCE	109
CINCPAC VISIT TO VIENTIANE	114
THE CONFUSING WORD OF A CUTOFF OF MAP	114
THE MEETINGS OF 5, 7 and 8 OCTOBER	118
THE ISSUE OF PEO REPRESENTATION IN SAVANNAKHET	129
THE PARSONS' MISSION TO LAOS	132
WASHINGTON FOLLOW-UP ON SAVANNAKHET REPRESENTATION	135

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TABLE OF CONTENTS (Cont'd)

	Page No.
INTERNAL CONFLICTS OF U.S. NATIONAL POLICY	141
SAVANNAKHET COMMUNICATIONS	143
THE EROSION OF EARLY OCTOBER POLICIES	145
ISA-FER PROPOSES AN OPERATIONS PLAN TO JCS	147
THE NAM CA DINH FRONT	149
THE QUESTION OF RESTRAINTS ON PHOUMI	152
THE INTERAGENCY MEETING OF 10 NOVEMBER	154
THE FOLLOW-UP OF THE 10 NOVEMBER MEETING	157
PROBLEMS OF CONSTRAINTS ON PHOUMI AND DIPLOMATIC NEGOTIATIONS	163
PROBLEMS OF A CONTINGENT DIRECTIVE	165
THE "GO-NO-GO" SITUATION AND REVIVED PROBLEMS OF THE CONTINGENT DIRECTIVE	167
HOW ONE DECISION WAS MADE	172
THE PHOUMI VICTORY AT NAM CA DINH	173
THE RUSSIAN AIRLIFT	176
CONTINGENT CLAUSE OF U.S. DIRECTIVE INTERPRETED BY PHOUMI	176
THE KOUPRASITH COUP	177
GUIDANCE TO PHOUMI	181
THE PROBLEM OF THE RUSSIAN AIRLIFT, AND THE RUSSIAN NOTE	182
JTF 116 READINESS	184
THE MEETINGS OF 14 DECEMBER	185
THE FALL OF VIENTIANE	188
OBSERVATIONS ON COMMAND PROBLEMS EVIDENT IN PERIOD UNDER REVIEW	189

TABLE OF CONTENTS (Cont'd)

Page No.

FIGURES

FIGURE 1 - Lines of Administrative Subordination, August 1960 through May 1961, Laos Incident 49

FIGURE 2 - U.S. Communications Within Laos 55

FIGURE 3 - Communications Out of Laos 57

TABLES

TABLE I - Regional Loyalties and Outlook, and Prespects of Phoumi's success and Aid Needed to Assure It 93

TABLE II - Resumé of Russian Airlift Into Laos to 31 December 1960 176

TABLE III - Table of Definable Decisions, Chronologically Arranged, In Laos Incident Aug-Dec 1960, To Indicate Agency and Echelon Rendering These Decisions 190

APPENDICES

APPENDIX "A" - CHRONOLOGICAL BACKGROUND OF THE LAOS INCIDENT 199

APPENDIX "B" - SOME OFFICIAL STATEMENTS AND DOCUMENTS BASIC TO THE HISTORY OF THE LAOS INCIDENT 215

APPENDIX "C" - A WHO'S WHO OF LAOTIAN AND THAI PERSONALITIES IN THIS STUDY 288

LAOS

NORTH VIETNAM
GULF OF TONKIN
SOUTH VIETNAM
THAILAND
CAMBODIA
PHONG SALI
NAMTHA
LUANG PRABANG
HOUA PHAN
MEKONG RIVER
PLAINE DES JARRES
HIENG KHOUANG
VIENTIANE
THAKHEK
SAVANNAKHET
SARAVANE
PLATEAU DES BOLOVENS
CHAMPASSAK
ATTOPEU
Phong Saly
Sam Neua
Luang Prabang
Vientiane
Nong Khai
Udon
Pakse
Savannakhet
Tchepone
Muong Phin
Saravane
Kratie
Lao Buri
Tawili
Don Muang
Sattahip
Phnom Penh
Saigon
102°
104°
106°
108°

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GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS AND UNUSUAL TERMS

GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS AND UNUSUAL TERMS

AAIRA	Assistant Air Attache
ACAN	Army Command Administrative Network
AIRA	Air Attache (USAIRA)
[ ]	[ ]
ARMA (USARMA)	(U.S.) Army Military Attache
ARPAC	U.S. Army Pacific Command
ASAP	As Soon as Possible
[ ]	[ ]
[ ]	[ ]
CDNI	"Committee for the Defense of the National Interest," formed June 1958, is predominantly military, right wing, and is controlled by top ranks of FAL.
ChiCom	Chinese Communist
ChiNat	Chinese Nationalist
ChPEO	Chief of Program Evaluation Office (Laos)
CHJUSMAAG (Sometimes CHJUSMAG)	Chief, Joint U.S. Military Assistance and Advisory Group (Thailand)
CINCPAC	Commander in Chief, Pacific
CINCPACPOLAD	Political Adviser to CINCPAC
CINCUSARPAC	Commander in Chief, U.S. Army, Pacific
CT	Country Team
DCM	Deputy Chief of Mission (of an Embassy)
DepTel	State Department Telegram to an Embassy
DRV (Sometimes DRVN)	Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam)
DTG	Date Time Group, supposedly representing date of sending a message, and used by CINCPAC and others as an identifying reference number. (As, DTG 020045Z, Jan. 61; 0045 hours Zulu-"Zulu" meaning Greenwich Time- of 2 Jan. 61.)

EmbTel	State Department Telegram originating in an Embassy, addressed to State Department/Washington, D. C. unless otherwise specified.
[ ]	[ ]
ETA	Estimated Time of Arrival
FAL	The Laotian Army (Forces Armées Laotiennes)
FAR	The Laotian Army (Forces Armées Royalles)
FBIS	Foreign Broadcast Information Service
FMM	French Military Mission
GM	Groupe Mobile, A French military cadre approximately like a mechanized, reinforced infantry battalion
GRC	Government of the Republic of China (Nationalist)
HRC	High Revolutionary Committee
ISA-FER	International Security Affairs - Far East Region
ICC	International Control and Supervisory Commission
LCVP	Landing Craft, Vehicles and Personnel
LDM	Laos Defense Ministry
LCM	Landing Craft, Mechanized
LTAG	Liaison and Technical Advisory Group
MAP	Military Assistance Program
Military Region	Laos was divided into 5 military regions. The first military region was in the northernmost area north of Luang Prabang, the second region was just south of there and covered the important area of the Plaine des Jarres. The fifth region was in the center of Laos with headquarters in the administrative capital of Vietnam. The third region was south of this, with headquarters in Savannakhet, and the fourth region was the southern tip of Laos with headquarters at Pakse.
[ ]	[ ]

NIACT	Night Action (refers to State Department cables requiring that an officer be notified immediately upon receipt regardless of time of day).
NLHX	Neo Lao Hak Xat. (Also, see Pathet Lao.) The legally constituted political party, created in 1957 by the Vientiane Agreements, of the Pathet Lao (PL), a left wing military group reinforced by Viet Minh, which was to have metamorphosed into the NLHX, but which only went underground for a time while PL military goals were subordinated to the political goals of the NLHX.
NOTAL	Naval Communications term meaning "not to all (nor needed)," or "restricted distribution"
NVN	North Vietnam (same as DRV or DRVN)
OASD/ISA-FER	Office of Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, Far East Region
OSD/OSO	Office of Secretary of Defense/Office of Special Operations having the formal title of Assistant to the Secretary of Defense
OCB	Operations Coordinating Board
Para	Paratrooper
PARU	Police and Resupply Units
Pathet Lao (PL)	The Pathet Lao (Free Lao State) was formed in 1953 by Prince Souphanouvong, with the financial and military backing of Ho Chi Minh and his Viet Minh. At this time, it sought to expel the French Colonials and to establish the sovereignty of Laos. The Geneva Agreements of 1954 took note of the Declaration of the RLG that all elements within the country (referring primarily to Pathet Lao) should be integrated into the National Community of Laos. Although the Agreements required that the Pathet Lao be gathered together into two provinces before this integration, they did not specify the means of bringing about this required integration. After the Pathet Lao and RLG had bargained intermittently for 3 years, they reached a formal agreement dissolving the Pathet Lao and sanctioning the creation of the Neo Lao Hak Xat, which replaced the insurgent Pathet Lao military group as a legal party. However, the Pathet Lao, many of whom joined the Neo Lao Hak Xat, still remained a dissident militant force; thus, the Neo Lao Hak Xat is often identified as the Pathet Lao in the popular mind. The Neo Lao Hak Xat is Communist-

	infiltrated, but it is not the Communist party of Laos, which party, although well-concealed, is recognized as existing as a separate entity.
PEO	Program Evaluation Office
PEO Rep	PEO Representative, used with reference generally to representatives in localities outside the administrative capital of Vientiane
POL	Petroleum, Oil and Lubricants
POLAD	Political Adviser
PRC	Peoples Republic of China (Communist China)
RCT	Regimental Combat Team
RLG	Royal Laotian Government
RTAF	Royal Thai Air Force
RTG	Royal Thai Government
SAD/J-5	Subsidiary Activities Division, J-5
SEA	Southeast Asia
SecDef	Secretary of Defense
[redacted]	[redacted]
SitRep	Situation Report
SVN	South Vietnam, same country sometimes simply called Vietnam
TSX	Top Secret, Exclusive
USG	United States Government
USIA	U.S. Information Agency
USOM	U.S. Operations Mission, the AID mission (then ICA, before that FOA, and originally ECA)

HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE LAOS INCIDENT, AUGUST 1960 TO MAY 1961

PART I, AUGUST TO DECEMBER 1960

PROBLEM

1. To develop, from examination of American experience in Laos, August to December 1960, observations and data useful to the development of improved command and control systems applicable to crisis situations.

PURPOSE, METHOD, AND SCOPE

2. This is the first half of a study of American experience in Laos, August 1960 to May 1961. It is one of a series of historical analyses of critical incidents of the recent past. This is a historical study employing familiar procedures to historical research. Its particular form is shaped, however, by the special purposes it is intended to serve. It is believed that empirical data can be developed concerning the circumstances, problems and essential functions and characteristics of national command and control systems, in real situations. These, it is hoped, may provide a realistic guide to the requirements of such systems, for those who are considering means of the most effective command organization and also those who are evaluating equipments proposed as means of improving the command and control process. Data and findings thus developed will be made available to those with higher echelon operating responsibilities, as a first part of a dialogue. It is hoped that, as a second part of the dialogue, a response from these operators may be elicited, based on their practical experience, that will sharpen further our understanding of the nature and needs of the national command control structure.

3. Although Laos has been a particularly thorny problem to the United States ever since the Geneva Accords of 1954, and remains so to this day, this study, as a whole, is limited to events in the period from August 1960 until May 1961; and this volume, comprising the first half of the study, covers only the first four months, from the Kong Le Coup of 9 August 1960 until the capture of Vientiane by Phoumi-Boun Oum forces on 16 December 1960. During this first half of the period that has been studied intensively, the JCS had a growing interest and participation, but still a comparatively minor role, because the problem was generally considered to be predominantly political [ ] period from December 1960 to May 1961, which is the subject of the succeeding second half of the study, the JCS role will be found to be much greater. But the earlier period is of real interest to the JCS. There was some measure of JCS participation throughout. This period set the stage for the later period. And the Defense establishment cannot afford to ignore such crises, both because they share many characteristics of situations in which the JCS responsibility is immediate, and because such situations always carry with them the possibility that military operations will become the dominant consideration.

4. The narrative of events will be carried by a series of analytical accounts of problems that arose for the American command structure concerned with Laos during this period. An attempt will be made to depict these problems, as much as possible, in the light in which they appeared to persons in the chain of command, at that time. With respect to each of the problems

studied, wherever it would be useful to do so and available source materials permit, the account will describe how it arose and was sensed, how it was understood at different echelons, what information and other factors entered into the process of dealing with it, and how the problem was finally disposed of or resolved.

5. Laos has been a controversial issue within American politics as well as between the U.S. and some of its major allies from the beginning of our concern with it. The controversial quality of the issue makes it both very difficult to deal with and potentially very illuminating. The difficulties arising from its controversial nature result in part because dispassionate treatment is always difficult in the presence of an emotionally heated controversy, and in part because the fact of controversy has made it difficult to get information that would be necessary if the study were to pretend to completeness. The potentially illuminating features resulting from the controversial nature of the issue derive from the fact that some important element of controversy may be expected in almost all crisis situations, and is bound to affect the workings of a command and control structure, and must therefore be accepted as an important part of the real world in which a command and control structure must operate.

6. This study will render no judgments upon the merits of the opposing American views on policy concerning how the Laos issue should have been handled. But it will not avoid attention to the effect of this controversy upon the U.S. management of the problem.

7. The principal single source of information for this study is the collection of message traffic in the files of J-3 Records and Research Branch made especially available by J-3. These files are voluminous, but far from complete. The message traffic data have been supplemented by Joint Staff papers, by materials

made available from the files of OASD/ISA-FER, by a miscellany of classified materials available through the WSEG and JCS documents sections, by interviews with a number of the participants in the events described, and finally by the standard open-source research materials available to any historian.

8. In spite of the very voluminous materials that have been available, the study has been severely handicapped by the fact that a considerable amount of documentary data have not been available; even a JCS Historical Division chronology of the Laos affair has been withheld. The lack of availability of these and other materials is plainly due, in many cases, to the political sensitivity of the Laos issue, even as the subject of an in-house study. The principal sources known to be missing are as follows:

a. Intelligence carrying special security classifications, [ ]

b. [ ]

c. An indeterminate number of "eyes only," "exclusives" and other personally privileged messages. Many messages so labelled have been available, but it is believed that many others exist that have not been available.

d. Records of several high level meetings.

e. Most of the State Department message traffic.

f. Informal messages of many kinds, including unrecorded conversations and telephone calls, telecons, hand-carried messages, etc.

g. A chronology of the Laos affair compiled by the Historical Division of JCS.

9. Because often there is redundant evidence of a single happening, and this evidence is so widely scattered that it is difficult to conceal it all, the gaps in our knowledge of the general nature of events are probably not nearly as great as the apparent gaps in the evidence. It requires only one residual clue, out of a great many that once existed, to prove that a given event occurred. It repeatedly happens that the nature of missing messages or unrecorded meetings or understandings is revealed by the content of other messages or other documents or testimony. It is believed, therefore, that a general knowledge of the course and nature of the events, even of many rather fine details, is possible without full documentation. But the study of the mechanisms whereby decisions were made and policy implementation developed would certainly have been more comprehensive, and confidence that all important factors were taken into account would have been greater, if there had been a more complete access.

DISCUSSION

SOME IMPORTANT BACKGROUND FACTORS[1/]

10. Laos is a landlocked, relatively inaccessible, loosely knit kingdom covering 90,000 square miles and embracing about 2,000,000 people, of whom about one-tenth are literate, and of whom about nine-tenths are subsistence farmers living in small villages self-contained economically, socially and politically. Although the Lao are the dominant ethnic group, they comprise less than half of the total population, and there are 6 other ethnic groups (Kha, Meo, Yao, Tribal Thai, Overseas Chinese and Vietnamese) that have generally preserved their own language, customs, and separate in-group loyalties. There are 4 major language groups and one minor language group (T'ai, Mon-Khmer, Tibeto-Burmese, Miao Yao, and Malayo-Polynesian), and about 80 dialects of these, in addition to Chinese, Vietnamese and French. The dominant Lao

1/ Some readers will find it helpful to refer briefly, at this point, to Appendix "A," "Chronological Background of the Laos Incident."

are concentrated in a narrow band along the Mekong and along its Nam Hou tributary in northern Laos. The Tribal Thai are located mostly in the northern valleys and the Chinese and Vietnamese in urban areas, while the Kha, Meo and Yao inhabit largely the mountainous and plateau areas. The ruling elite of Laos is essentially a closed group of about 25 families that make up the Lao nobility.

11. While an overlay of French culture has been imprinted upon the nobility and upon the commercial life of Vientiane and other Mekong Valley cities in the south, the life and culture of most of the peoples who inhabit the land is primitive in technology, and either tribal or of the peasant-village type in social and political organization. The authority of the Royal Laotian Government (RLG) ordinarily does not extend far beyond the boundaries of the major towns in which its troops are quartered. Military leaders are often more like local war lords or medieval condotieri than officers of a modern western army. The troops themselves generally are unusually scraggly youngsters turned mercenaries for want of some other steady employment. The suzerainty of the RLG is generally acknowledged by the various tribes only when the physical force of the RLG is immediately present and recognizably superior. Laos can scarcely be thought of correctly as a modern nation: it is a land of diverse tribal and peasant cultures, with an early iron age technology, suddenly thrust into the atomic age at a major point of contest between the two conflicting political ideologies of the modern world. There are eight family groups that dominate Lao political, social, and economic life: the Katay-Prince Boun Oum group; the Luang Prabang group, centered around the junior branch of the Royal family and led by Prince Souvanna Phouma; the Sananikone group, which is essentially a Vientiane Province family; the Souvanavongs; the

Voravongs of Savannakhet Province; the Say family, descended from the former royal family of Xieng Khouang; the Chounramany of Khammouane Province; and the Royal family.

12. The Geneva Agreements of 1954, which terminated the Indo-China War, included two sets of provisions, some knowledge of which is important to an understanding of events in Laos since 1954, and of the problems of American participation in Lao affairs since that time. The first such provisions are those that governed the presence of foreign military personnel and establishments in Laos; the second are those that related to conditions, established by the treaty, for the integration of the Pathet Lao into the political structure of the Kingdom of Laos and Pathet Lao fighting forces into the Royal Laotian Army.

13. The Agreements prohibited the presence of foreign military personnel or establishments in Laos except in the case of the French, who were permitted to leave not to exceed 1500 officers and NCOs within Laos for the training of the Lao Army, and, in addition, were permitted to retain two military establishments within Laos, one at Seno and the other in the Mekong Valley either in Vientiane Province or downstream from Vientiane. To maintain these latter establishments, the French were permitted by the terms of the Agreements to retain a total of not to exceed 3500 men.[1/]

14. The section of the agreements relating to the cessation of hostilities specified also that Sam Neua and Phong Saly Provinces were areas into which the fighting units of the Pathet

1/ Department of State Publication 6446, American Foreign Policy 1950 to 1955, Basic Documents, Vol. I, "Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities in Laos, 20 July 1954," Chap. II, pp. 775-777, UNCLASSIFIED.

Lao might move, within the following 120 days, and remain in thereafter pending a political settlement (Article 14). This provision had the practical effect of giving possession of these two provinces to the Pathet Lao, and endorsing their claim to it until they chose to come to terms with the Royal Laotion Government (RLG). A political settlement was not specified by the Agreements -- being left, presumably, for the Lao to accomplish themselves. However, the International Control Commission (ICC), which was established by, and its Terms of Reference described by, Chapter VI of the Agreements, was entrusted with the control and supervision of the provisions of the Agreements.

15. In the Final Declaration of the Conference, 21 July 1954, all of the participant nations at Geneva took formal notice of the Declaration by the RLG, same date, of its intention of adopting measures to permit all citizens to take their place in the national community, specifically promising guarantees of fundamental rights and freedoms to all citizens, and general elections by secret ballot. The difficult central issue of the integration of the fighting units of the Pathet Lao into the Royal Laotian Army -- the Forces Armées Laotiennes (FAL) -- was left dangling.

16. The United States was not signatory to the treaty, and the U.S. representative, attending as an observer, expressly refrained from joining in the Final Declaration of the Conference. However, the U.S. representative did make, for the U.S., a unilateral Declaration that expressly "took note" of the provisions of the Agreements restricting the introduction of foreign military aid or personnel, and also concerning the integration of the

Pathet Lao and the Pathet Lao armed forces into the government and army of the Royal Kingdom of Laos.[1/]

17. In the latter stages of the Indo-China War the U.S. had been supplying large quantities of materiel to the French Army in Indo-China. After the signing of the Geneva Agreements, it became evident that if Laos were to have a chance to become the independent nation presumably intended by the Treaty, it would need financial help for its government and its economy, and military supplies for its Army to provide internal stability and national defense. France was financially unable to meet these demands and the U.S. undertook to supply them. From FY 1955 to FY 1961 the U.S. appropriated $371.6 million for military and economic aid to Laos. Two-thirds to four-fifths of the budget of the Laos government was paid from U.S. assistance, and all of the pay of FAL and military supplies, and most of the rice for the Laotian Army, came from the United States.[2/]

18. It was necessary to establish an administrative mechanism in Laos through which to funnel the supplies to the French for the use of the Laotian Army. This was accomplished by the establishment of a group, in December 1955, called the Program Evaluation Office (PEO). It was staffed at first mainly by retired U.S. military men who, because of retirement, were bona fide civilians and therefore met the terms of the Geneva Accords. The main function of this group was to receive and screen the French requests for aid for the Laos Army, and to arrange the

1/ Geneva Agreements as cited above, Final Declaration of the Conference, pp. 785-786, and "Statement by the Under Secretary of State at the Concluding Plenary Session of the Geneva Conference," pp. 787-788.

2/ Agency for International Development, Office of Statistics and Reports, "Foreign Assistance and Assistance from International Organizations, Obligations, and Other Commitments, 1 July 1945-30 June 1960," UNCLASSIFIED; Discussion with Mr. Waskoff, Laos Desk, Agency for International Development, 30 Mar 62, UNCLASSIFIED.

details of delivery. This arrangement was followed until the fall of 1958. Little attempt was made to influence the use to which the military aid was put, and as time passed there was a growing feeling that the aid supplied in this way was not being efficiently utilized, and that the purposes of the program were not being served. But before events in the military aid program after 1958 can be related it is necessary to recapitulate political and military developments within Laos that led up to the special conditions at the end of the year 1958.

19. The Pathet Lao (PL) combat units that had remained in Sam Neua and Phong Saly provinces were the key to the political settlement within Laos that had been anticipated but not effected by the Geneva Agreements. These units were left over from the Indo-China War in which they had been associated with the Viet Minh. In the period thereafter they continued to be supplied and to receive some training from the Viet Minh. They were in fact the Army of the Communist-infiltrated political groups that controlled most of Sam Neua and Phong Saly provinces. They engaged occasionally in guerrilla activities and were always a menace to the integrity of the RLG and to the peace of Laos. The controlling issue in the history of Laos after the Geneva Agreements is the issue of the political settlements that the Agreements had not achieved. And the key to the settlement of that issue was the matter of the disposition to be made of the Pathet Lao fighting units which were the seat of Pathet Lao power.

20. Informal talks had begun at the Plaine des Jarres on 3 January 1955, then were broken off on 21 April because PL proposals were entirely unacceptable to the Royal Government and negotiations were suspended on 21 April 1955. Various external and internal pressures were exerted on the Royal

Government to resume negotiations. The PL launched an attack on government troops in Sam Neua two days after the breakdown of negotiations. The Indian chairman of the ICC urged RLG concessions to the PL. Later, an ICC resolution recommended continued negotiations. A new Indian delegate was dispatched from New Delhi with special instructions to stimulate negotiations. Neither the Lao people nor the members of the National Assembly understood the Communist ties of the PL and the nature of their demands. They only saw that the civil strife was continuing. Despite the Government's explanations of the reasons for the breaks in negotiations, the National Assembly appeared convinced that a solution should be possible. In June 1955 the RLG moved to strengthen its negotiation position by repeating an earlier request for an ICC ruling on the question of RLG sovereignty over the northern section, stating that further negotiations were impossible until an answer was received. When the ICC formally recognized the RLG sovereignty (15 June 1955) in Sam Neua and Phong Saly, the government agreed to meet again with the PL. Negotiations were resumed on 15 July 1955.[1/]

21. In 1956, under Souvanna Phouma leadership, and responsive to ICC pressures, talks were resumed and early in August some provisional agreements were signed which in general terms called for the enlargement of the RLG to include Pathet Lao elements as a first step, with integration of Pathet Lao combat units into FAL as a second step. Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma and PL Chief Souphanouvong issued joint communiqués outlining unification settlement. Terms called for neutral foreign policy,

1/ Division of Research for Far East, Intelligence Report 7584, "Chronology of Negotiations Between the Royal Lao Government and the Communist PL, Jul 20, 1954-Aug 15, 1957," 26 Sep 57, Dept. of State, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, p. 2, SECRET.

guarantee of civil liberties and right of Pathet Lao to operate as political party, to participate in supplementary elections to the National Assembly, and to be represented in a "government of national union." Pathet Lao controlled provinces and troops were to be placed under Royal Lao Government authority.[1/]

22. These provisional agreements were followed by a trip to Peiping and Hanoi by a 30-man Lao delegation headed by Souvanna and the Conservative Katay Don Sasorith. This good will tour yielded nothing perceptible beyond entertainment. Souvanna and his half brother Souphanouvong, the leader of the Pathet Lao, then proceeded to take up the problem of the concrete measures that would be necessary to carry out the provisional agreements. As these concrete measures began to become known and understood, opinions developed and spread in many political quarters in Laos that the RLG was walking into a Pathet Lao trap. As a result, such opposition developed that following almost a year of further negotiations on specifics, the talks collapsed in the spring of 1957.

23. Contrary to general expectation, Souvanna Phouma did not immediately resign as a result of his failure to achieve a political settlement when the National Assembly convened in its regular session on 11 May. Instead, he appeared to have been given a new lease on life by the promise of support from Deputy Prime Minister Katay, leader of a rival faction in Souvanna's Nationalist Party, who felt he would be unable to form a government if Souvanna resigned. With the full expectation of remaining in office, Souvanna presented a report on negotiations with the PL at the National Assembly on 27 May and announced that he intended

1/ Central Intelligence Agency, Office of Central Intelligence, Log. 35388, OCI Handbook: Laos, OCI No. 0331-58, Copy 22, p. II-4, SECRET.

[redacted]

[redacted]

to continue negotiations on the basis of the agreement reached so far. Neither Souvanna nor any of the deputies proposed a vote of confidence on the basis of his policy. However, during the discussion of Souvanna's speech, eight deputies suggested that an informal vote to reflect the Assembly's opinion on the problem be taken. On 29 May, a motion affirming that the Assembly wanted the government to carry out the policy outlined by Souvanna was defeated by 13 to 11. Both the leftist faction which considered his policy too firm, and the most anti-Communist faction, which viewed Souvanna's policy as too weak, in its opposition to PL demands, voted against the motion. Souvanna's cabinet promptly resigned and refused to withdraw its resignation even when pressed to do so by such ordinarily opposed personalities as the Crown Prince Savang Vathana and Souphanouvong. The crisis was prolonged by the requirements in the 1956 constitution that cabinet members-designate abstain from the investiture vote. Abstention by 10-12 cabinet members in the 39-member Assembly enabled the relatively small opposition parties to prevent a proposed slate from obtaining the necessary two-thirds vote.[1/]

24. Parliamentary leadership then reverted briefly to the conservative Katay Don Sasorith. But he, in turn, was unable to obtain clear majorities, and after two months of parliamentary clashes and maneuvering, Souvanna at the end of the summer of 1957 was back as Prime Minister. This time he enhanced his powers to obtain agreement within the Cabinet by reducing its numbers drastically and after this step he proceeded quickly to negotiate the so-called 1957 Agreements.[2/]

1/ Dept. of State, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Division of Research for Far East, 26 Sep 57, Intel. Rpt. 7584, "Chronology of Negotiations Between the Royal Lao Government and the Communist PL, 20 Jul 54-15 Aug 57," p. 8, SECRET.
2/ Source as above, p. 8.

[redacted]

[redacted]

25. The 1957 Agreements were signed by Souvanna Phouma and Souphanouvong on 2 November 1957. The main provisions stipulated:

a. Formation of a National Union Government, including the Pathet Lao, with restoration to Laos of the provinces of Sam Neua and Phong Saly.

b. Surrender of Pathet Lao military equipment to the RLG.

c. Establishment of a new political party, the Neo Lao Hak Xat (NLHX), to replace the Pathet Lao.

d. The assembly of the Fighting Units of the PL in the province of Phong Saly (in Ban Nam Saleng and Muong Khoua) and the Province of Sam Neua (Sam Neua and Saleui), where the Royal Government would undertake to integrate them into the National Army within the limits of the budget provisions. Because of the ceiling limit of the budgetary strength of the National Army in 1957 and 1958, the strength of the combatants of the PL fighting units which could be integrated into the National Army could not be more than 1500 men (officers-NCOs-rank and file). The remainder of the Pathet Lao troops would return home with their families.[1]

Implicit in the 2 November 1957 Agreements were those terms of the Geneva Agreements that stipulated Laos would make no military alliances with other countries; that there would be no military establishments in Laos other than those permitted under the Geneva Accords; and that Laos would endeavor to follow a policy of neutrality.[2]

26. Shortly after the signing of these Agreements the two northern provinces of Phong Saly and Sam Neua were symbolically

1/ Fourth Interim Report of the International Commission for Supervision and Control in Laos, 17 May 57-31 May 58, Annexes 14-16, UNCLASSIFIED.
2/ Indo-China Misc. 20 (1954), London, Her Majesty's Stationery Office, reprinted 1959, Cmd 9239, UNCLASSIFIED.

restored to the crown on 18 November 1957, and two days later a coalition government including Pathet Lao representation (Prince Souphanouvong and Prince Vong Vichit) was installed.[1/] On 4 May of the following year (1958), a supplementary election, required by the November Agreements, was held and of the 21 new deputies chosen, nine were members of the NLHX and four were members of the Santiphab Party, which frequently formed a common front with the NLHX. The campaign before the election was marked by bitter charges and countercharges, many of which centered upon the claim of the NLHX to be the sole guarantor of peace for the Laotian people. The election was also marked, and its outcome influenced, by many personal squabbles among right wing groups and leaders.[2/]

27. The NLHX successes in the May election induced alarm that led directly to two right wing political developments, [ ] supported by the Embassy Political Officer at that time, and the Ambassador is believed to have looked with favor upon CDNI until it became involved, in 1959, in intrigues against the U.S.-sponsored Premier. It was dominated by top ranking officers of FAL (Col. Phoumi, Gen. Ouane, Cols. Bounthieng, Bounpoune and Sang), with a few right wing political leaders (Sisouk Na Champassak, Sopsaisana, Khamphan Panya, Leuam, and Impeng Suryadhay). Second, when the alarm caused by the NLHX successes

1/ Joint Weeka 47, 25 Nov 57, SECRET.
2/ Sisouk Na Champassak, Storm Over Laos (Praeger) New York, 1961, p. 63.

led to the resignation of Souvanna, whose 1957 Agreements were blamed, the new government was headed by Phoui Sananikone, an older, highly conservative, dependably anti-Communist politician, formerly a favorite of the French Colonial administration, and whose establishment as Prime Minister was due in no small measure to pressure from the American Ambassador. The Phoui Cabinet originally contained four members of the CDNI. A period followed in which the accommodations with the bloc characteristic of the previous period were repudiated, and the ties with the West were strengthened and extended. One of the measures important to our considerations was the undertaking of major reform in the U.S. military aid program in Laos.

28. This growing concern with the inadequacies of the military aid program in Laos led to the dispatch to Laos of B/Gen. John H. Heintges, in the Fall of 1958, to make a report on the state of the military aid program. Gen. Heintges necessarily went into Laos as Mr. Heintges, a civilian, out of respect for the Geneva Accords. He surveyed the situation and found glaring deficiencies not only in supply, but even in the most primary requirements of military discipline and skill. Apart from requirements of a purely military nature, there were problems growing out of the different national viewpoints of many of the Lao, French and Americans directly concerned. Some of the Lao wished to get rid of the French. Some of the French were resentful of the American presence, except perhaps as suppliers of funds and materiel. Some Americans wanted to displace the French entirely. Mr. Heintges decided that not only the force of the Geneva Agreements, but also the deep penetration of the French culture throughout Laos, required that an effective U.S. military assistance program would need French cooperation.

29. With the active cooperation of the then Col. Phoumi Nosavan of the Laos Defense Ministry, and of General d'Arriviere, Chief of the French Military Mission (FMM), Mr. Heintges developed a program which called for increased American aid and considerably increased American participation in the administration of that aid. The program was presented as a Joint Franco-American proposal and was approved as such by the French and American Ambassadors in Vientiane. On the American side it was then brought into Washington in December 1958 where it was quickly approved by high levels of the American Government.

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1/ Based in some part upon a talk by B/Gen. Herbert G. Sparrow before the U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Pa., 7 Apr 60, "SE Asia, Laos," SECRET.

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[redacted]

31. In late December 1958, Khamphan Panya, Foreign Minister, informed the American Ambassador that there had been Viet Minh violations of Lao territory in the vicinity of Tchepone, possibly in response to the anti-Communist measures of the Phoui government.[2] The Lao government, in a letter to the UN Secretary General on 17 January 1959, protested against the occupation by Vietnamese troops of parts of Lao territory.[3] On 11 February 1959 Prime Minister Phoui Sananikone made a formal declaration that Lao had fulfilled its obligations under the Geneva Agreements for a political settlement. This impaired the claim of the ICC to jurisdiction in Laos and had the effect of reducing (actually it eliminated) the prospect of reconvening the ICC to

1/ Joint Weeka 29, 19 Jul 59, SECRET.
2/ Joint Weeka 1, 5 Jan 59, SECRET.
3/ Joint Weeka 3, 21 Jan 59, SECRET.

[redacted]

judge the Laos-DRVN border dispute. On 9 March 1959, UN Secretary General Dag Hammarskjold visited Laos as part of a Far East tour. He conferred with Prime Minister Phoui, Foreign Minister Khamphan Panya, and Crown Prince Savang Vathana. The American Embassy gathered that the Secretary General assumed the attitude of listening sympathetically, seeking to reduce existing tensions and yet avoiding becoming personally too deeply involved in issues.[1] The DRVN incursions in Tchepone area appear to have been identified as a DRVN border security regiment. There may or may not have been actual incursions, as there is an uncertainty of exact border locations, which were discussed before the Indo-China War, but not permanently resolved then or since. Hammarskjold's presence may have helped reduce tensions in the Tchepone area. Joint Weeka reports by Embassy and military attaches indicate that the activity did fade away for a while after Hammarskjold's visit, although there was a brief alarm again at the end of the month.[2]

32. Meanwhile, the two battalions of Pathet Lao fighting units had remained encamped, pursuant to the November 1957 agreements, awaiting integration into FAL. When the agreed time arrived, in May 1959, for integration of the Pathet Lao battalions, a dispute arose over the unreasonably large number of officers proposed by the Pathet Lao forces for integration, and also over the Pathet Lao insistence upon the battalions being integrated as units. The camps were surrounded by FAL forces. The battalion at Xieng Ngeun accepted the RLG terms, and a brief surrender ceremony took place on 18 May. The battalion in the Plaine des Jarres, however, although encircled by five FAL battalions, did not accept the terms and escaped intact through

1/ Joint Weeka 11, 17 Mar 59, SECRET.
2/ Joint Weeka 12, 31 Mar 59, SECRET.

the cordon of surrounding forces.[1] About this time Souphanouvong and other NLHX and Santiphab Party leaders in Vientiane were placed under house arrest. After a very short time the previously demobilized Pathet Lao in the northern provinces took to arms again. Encouraged, supplied, provided with technical training, given asylum and very possibly some leadership cadres, by the DRVN, they began extensive guerrilla operations in late July. They struck first in the Sam Neua area and later in Phong Saly Province. The RLG announced at the end of July that the Pathet Lao were reinforced by DRVN officer cadres, and were attacking in force. On 4 August, the RLG issued an appeal to the UN. The U.S. announced an increase in military aid to Laos. Some hostilities continued in the northern provinces, but Sam Neua did not fall.[2] In September and October a UN fact-finding committee composed of representatives of Argentina, Italy, Japan, and Tunisia, conducted an investigation of the Lao charges of aggression by DRVN. In November the UN committee reported no evidence had been found to support charges of "flagrant aggressions," but it did cite evidence of material support of the rebels by the Communists.

33. In the following month -- December 1959 -- Phoumi led the CDNI in a coup that upset the Phoui Sananikone government. Throughout the month there had been rumblings reflecting a power struggle between Phoui and the CDNI. Following the dismissal

1/ Joint Weeka 24, 12 Jun 59, SECRET.
2/ Joint Weeka 32, 7 Aug 59, SECRET, and Joint Weeka 33, 18 Aug 59, SECRET.

from the cabinet, on 15 December, of three prominent CDNI members -- Phoumi, Khamphan Panya, and Sisouk Na Champassak -- events moved toward a climax. The CDNI held closed meetings, and reports of plans to stage a coup penetrated outside the circle, were confided to Americans, and even on one occasion became known to Prime Minister Phoui who passed word of it to Ambassador Smith. The Ambassador sought means to prevent the threatened coup, including orders to Americans not to associate with Phoumi in a way to suggest American support for his plan. Word got to Phoumi that his plan was known, and he quickly ordered his troops to seize some key installations the next morning. From Christmas Day until 30 December the CDNI gradually extended its hold on the government until finally on the last day of the year the coup was complete. Phoui was forced to resign and Phoumi and the CDNI were in possession of the government. They declared they would rule until the forthcoming elections, to be held in April 1960. But apparently in response to pressure from the American Ambassador, Phoumi and his group agreed to step aside, and on 7 January 1960, the King appointed Kou Abhay to head a caretaker government until new national elections could be held.

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35. The differences in views of American officials, then as later, centered upon the choice of individuals and groups who were to receive American support, This choice involved judgment of complicated political factors and of the character and motivations of individual local leaders and head men. It also probably reflected the political predilections of those exercising the choice. Choice among contenders for political power also involved special considerations in Laos, because coups d'etat and palace revolutions, in a mild Byzantine style, with much double-dealing and intrigue but little violence, were the usual manner of transferring political power; what would be called graft in the U.S. was the accepted fashion in politics, and political alignments of individual leaders commonly fluctuate widely, in defiance of what would be regarded readily understandable political motivations in the U.S. or in most western countries. It is not surprising, therefore, that there were differences of

judgment on such matters among different American officials. But when it was permitted to become evident to leaders among the Lao that important differences of opinion existed among U.S. officials in Laos concerning matters of importance to Laos and its competing factions, an invitation was extended to the latter to exploit these differences. Nothing less than excessive innocence or excessive magnanimity should have been expected to prevent any Lao leader, or pretender to power, to turn these differences to his advantage. Such an effort was bound to involve playing off one American official against another; it suggested presentation of Lao issues and information in a way calculated to appeal to the advertised predilections of the American officials whom the Lao leaders deemed it profitable to cultivate. It would seem that this particular problem was a management problem properly solvable in Washington at an echelon having authority over all of the warring American officials and agencies. The JCS could have been expected to cooperate with a national solution, but hardly expected to provide that solution. [ ]

36. In April 1960, new national elections were held which resulted in all seats in the assembly being won by rightists, although the victory was marred somewhat by charges that the elections had been partially rigged. Following the elections, on 31 May, a strongly pro-Western government headed by Tiao Somsanith was installed. B/Gen. Phoumi Nosavan was the reputed strong man of the cabinet in his part as Defense Minister, and his uncompromising anti-Communist views were widely expected to dominate the policies of the new government. About the same time the post of Ambassador Horace Smith was taken over by Ambassador Winthrop G. Brown. [ ]

[ ] In the Embassy, Ambassador Brown replaced Miss Francoise Queneau as political officer with Mr. Julian Fromer. He and another Foreign Service Officer, Mr. Holt, thereafter became the principal political advisers to Ambassador Brown. Thus in the period just before the Kong Le coup there were extensive changes in the line-up. But it is not clear what effect these changes had, if any, in the later play of the game.

INITIAL SENSING OF AND REACTIONS TO KONG LE COUP

37. On 8 August 1960, Prime Minister Tiao Somsanith and most of the members of his cabinet, including most notably General Phoumi Nosavan and Khamphan Panya (Minister of Foreign Affairs), journeyed to the Royal Capital of Luang Prabang to participate in preparations for the funeral ceremonies for the late king, which were to take place in the following spring. Two members of the cabinet who did not go to Luang Prabang were in Xieng Khouang. Profiting from the absence of most officials of the government from the administrative capital of Vientiane, as well as from the absence of the regular Commanding Officer of the unit, Captain Kong Le, Acting Commander-in-Chief of the Second Paratroop Battalion of the Laotian Army, executed a coup d'etat in the small hours of the morning of 9 August.

38. The first official American perception of the event was by the PEO Duty Officer, who awoke the Chief of PEO, with the report that there were unusual activities going on, including shooting in the area of Gen. Sounthone's house. (Gen. Sounthone was Chief of Staff, FAL.) Soon afterward, the U.S. ARMA (Lt. Col. Joel Hollis) came in, and Heintges and Hollis telephoned the PEO compound to direct the dispatch, from there, of a brief message, first notice to CINCPAC and Washington of the coup d'etat. At that time, however, they knew very little of the nature of what was occurring. Immediately after the message went out, the telephone

connection was broken, and shortly after that, trucks appeared in the street with Second Paratroop Battalion troopers. It was not until about 6:30 in the morning that ChPEO, USARMA and others cautiously made their way through the streets to the PEO compound, from which they could communicate with the outside world.

39. Shortly after arriving at the PEO compound, ChPEO sent out word that he had been able to contact Col. Kouprasith Abhay, Commanding Officer of the 5th Military Region, who went to Chinamio to investigate and was detained, but managed nonetheless to slip a revolutionary leaflet to the Assistant USARMA. A translation of the leaflet was provided in the message. It announced that the military had seized power to oust the corrupt government that oppressed the people, took money from the great powers -- specifying the U.S. -- and led to Lao letting blood of Lao. The leaflet was signed by "The Revolutionary Committee, Capt. Kong Le." ChPEO commented that the troops controlled the city, that it was too early to assess political implications, and that Kong Le was related to Gen. Ouane by marriage.[1/]

40. In the early afternoon the USARMA reported the situation was calm, although Kouprasith was still under arrest, and the fate of Sounthone still unknown. He commented that Kong Le's motives were difficult to judge, but he leaned to the view that they were associated with discontent of the unprivileged role of the Second Paratroop Battalion within FAL, and with resentment of the American presence in Laos.[2/] FBIS soon reported a Vientiane broadcast in Laotian of a statement by Kong Le which gave the ostensible reasons for the coup. The motivation was to stop the civil war, eliminate greedy officials, investigate

1/ ChPEO to DA/Washington, CINCPAC, others, PEO 2219 DTG 082330Z, August 1960, CONFIDENTIAL.
2/ USARMA/Vientiane to DA/Washington, CX 102, PEO 2221, DTG 090600Z, August 1960, CONFIDENTIAL.

graft among higher military commanders, and oust foreign military personnel. The statement complained about U.S. interference in Lao affairs and specifically charged that ten Americans had been surreptitiously authorized by the RLG to command the Second Paratroop Battalion and that other Lao battalions were similarly commanded. The U.S. was charged with responsibility for the civil war, and for buying Lao officials and army commanders.[1/] The propagandist charges in this statement looked like a melange of complains of malcontents including both left-wing doctrinaries and Vientiane rice merchants to whom Phoumi was indebted. Through his communications with PEO representatives (PEO Reps) in the regions, ChPEO was able promptly to ascertain, and report, that outside of Vientiane all was quiet.[2/] (See Figure 3, page 55.)

41. Kong Le had for some time been an American favorite. He was believed by PEO to like Americans, and was generally considered the best soldier in the Laotian Army. His unit, the Second Paratroop Battalion, was considered the best unit of that Army. [ ] Furthermore, Kong Le's Second Paratroop Battalion was headquartered in a camp 17 kilometers outside of Vientiane where jungle training was conducted [ ] This will suggest one of the reasons why knowledgeable American officials were somehwat at a loss to interpret the Kong Le coup when it first became known. The consensus now seems to be that Kong Le acted from petulant impulsiveness in seizing Vientiane,

1/ FBIS 819 904A WP, UNCLASSIFIED.
2/ CINCPAC to JCS, DTG 092017Z Aug 60, CONFIDENTIAL.

then began to look about for political content and direction for the coup that had come off so easily and without deep motivation.

42. In Vientiane, in Bangkok -- important to our considerations because it served as an undisturbed listening post for events in Laos -- and finally in Washington, the first pressing problem was to ascertain enough facts to permit an interpretation of events on which to base a determination of the response the U.S. should make. The first report sent out by Heintges and Hollis made known that an attempted coup d'etat was in process. That was about all. When the first revolutionary handbills were distributed from the trucks, which was after the first message was sent out, it was possible to identify Kong Le and the Second Paratroop Battalion with the coup. But this was far from enough information. Who else was associated with the coup? Who might be the power behind it? Were there connections between the coup leaders and the Pathet Lao? What were the real purposes and the ultimate aims of the coup?

43. All available evidence indicates that in Vientiane, in Bangkok, and in Washington there was full agreement, initially, on the principle that the U.S. should not only continue to support the established legitimate government, but also should actively support efforts of that government to reestablish itself in Vientiane (and elsewhere if needed). But full agreement on the principle was not accompanied by full agreement upon means to be employed to implement this principle. The PEO group in Vientiane tended to be activist in its philosophy, and as early as the morning of the 9th began to lay plans. But the Ambassador and his political advisors tended to prefer to wait until the pattern of events was clearer, to avoid actions not specifically authorized by guidance from Washington if they involved risk of embarrassment or of creating incidents. PEO plans centered on

an initial objective of getting Phoumi back to Vientiane. Friendship with Phoumi and acquaintanceship with Kong Le convinced ChPEO that if the two could be brought together, a satisfactory accommodation would result. It was proposed to send a radio to Luang Prabang to be put at Phoumi's disposal. But the Ambassador turned down this and other specific suggestions, apparently on grounds that his guidance from State Department did not authorize commitment to the political risks or complications that were involved.

44. The earliest available State Department message traffic indicates preoccupation with retention of undisputed claim to legality by the RLG, with ideas of using the King to achieve restoration of legitimate authority in Vientiane, with fear of rash intervention by Thailand and consequent international complication and magnification of the affair, and with the persistent uncertainty about the dimensions and extent of the intrigue.[1/] Most of the information that came from Vientiane in the first two days of the coup did little to provide answers to Washington's questions, or to resolve Washington's hesitancy concerning specific, positive actions to restore the legitimate government.

45. The available J-3 files of message traffic contain only a random few of the many messages that were received and sent, in Washington, in the first few days after the Kong Le coup. Apparently this results from the fact that the special file

1/ DepTel to Vientiane 141 NIACT, 9 Aug 60, 5:50 PM, CONFIDENTIAL; DepTel to Bangkok 131 NIACT, 9 Aug 60, 5:50 PM, SECRET. The writer of the Vientiane DepTel, Assistant Secretary for Far Eastern Affairs J. Graham Parsons, a former Ambassador to Laos, expressed his misgivings on the last point [in reference to possible Thai intervention]: "while information upon which to base U.S. policy decisions is understandably thus far lacking, we would not wish in any way [to] complicate or have our friends complicate any determined effort which [the] legitimate government under [the] King's direction might make to restore its authority."

was not set up immediately, and when it was, some messages were not available for inclusion. Laos was then being followed, within the Joint Staff, by the Pacific Section of the Eastern Branch of the Commands Division of J-3. There was a disposition within this group to judge the first reports of the Kong Le coup as "just another coup" not startlingly different from the many that had occurred in Laos in the previous 5 years.

46. Throughout 9 and 10 August, the Vientiane Embassy transmitted to the State Department, in a series of messages, translations of the leaflets, communiques and radio broadcasts put out by the High Revolutionary Committee (HRC), together with some comment and such scanty solid information as circumstances permitted. The Revolutionary Committee statements, being deliberately contrived to appeal to as many as possible in order to reduce popular alarm, foster public order, and attract as wide public support as possible, were not very illuminating. Somewhat more factual was the word, transmitted to Washington by both ChPEO and the Ambassador, that the HRC had called for a public demonstration before the National Assembly, which was taken to suggest that the coup leadership seriously intended to convene the National Assembly and to legitimatize itself by act of that Assembly.[1/] But this did little more than confirm that the coup leadership intended to hold on to what it had already seized in Vientiane, and to expand that into control of all of Laos. Later in the day of the 9th, Kong Le addressed the National Assembly, saying Souvanna Phouma should be Prime Minister. But Souvanna declined, saying such power resided in the National Assembly.

47. The first specific event, after the coup itself, to elicit a strong, evident Washington responsive action, was the movement

1/ PEO 2219 and 2221 and EmbTel 240.

of Defense Minister Phoumi and Finance Minister Impeng, with other officials not of cabinet rank, from Luang Prabang to Ubon, Thailand, on 9 August. This move was evidently first reported in an EmbTel (#210) from Bangkok the same day.[1] The first report of this permitted the impression, apparently, that more than these two ministers might be present. And it stimulated fear, at the State Department: (a) that they were seeking asylum in Thailand, which would facilitate Kong Le's efforts to solidify his position and to gain recognition of other governments with Embassies in Vientiane; (b) that their presence (by design or otherwise) would lead to Thai intervention, which in turn might serve as pretext for Viet Minh or Chinese Communist (Chicom) counterintervention; (c) and that mass exodus of RLG officials would undercut argument that Kong Le coup was merely a local uprising.

48. Responding to these fears, State issued specific instructions to the Ambassador in Bangkok which amounted to a very short range ad hoc political action policy for Laos, but it specified no implementing action details, and no U.S. participation in overt acts. A responsible U.S. official was to be dispatched immediately to Ubon to meet the Lao ministers, ascertain their plans, urge them to put down rebellion as quickly as possible to avoid creating opportunities for the Pathet Lao. All ministers should, as a first essential, return to Laos, and seek to rally all elements behind the government. The Prime Minister and Foreign Minister might stay in Luang Prabang, whence the King might be induced to issue a call for national unity. Bouavan Norasing and Touby Lyfong might proceed to Xieng Khouang to look after things there. Those "at present in Thailand should return

1/ Nature of the missing message is partially evident from reference to it in DepTel to Vientiane 141, stamped out at 5:50 PM Washington time, 9 Aug.

to Laos possibly to [the] South."[1/] There is an interesting note, in handwriting, on the copy that was reproduced for inclusion in the J-3 files, to wit: "State wants Phoumi to Return to Fight." The message also gave instructions to contact Col. Sourith Sasorith, commander of the Lao Air Force, who was scheduled to arrive in Bangkok at midnight, 9 August, on a PAA plane from the U.S., and induce him to contact the Lao ministers at Ubon. Sourith was described as "possibly . . . one officer who could restore situation in Vientiane." But the ad hoc political policy of these instructions still did not come to grips with the question of the specific means -- other than purely hortatory means -- by which the RLG might restore its authority.

49. The major questions cited at the end of paragraph 42 above remained unanswered with consequent perplexity strikingly evident even in high places. At Secretary of State Herter's news conference on 9 August in Washington, his response to a question on Laos was,

> "Well, I am sorry to say that I cannot give anything more specific than what has come over the news ticker.
>
> "Apparently a battalion of paratroopers whose principal commander was out of the country . . . but under the command of a Captain, did in the early hours of this morning stage what appeared to be a nonviolent coup d'etat. We know that there was a little firing during the night, but no violence to speak of.
>
> "Just what the orientation of that group will be, whether it will be supported out of the immediate locality of Vientiane, we don't know. The information is extremely limited at the present time and I don't want to generalize with respect to it until we have further information." 2/

50. The following day, 10 August, when the President was asked at his news conference whether he saw any need for the United States to reexamine its aid program to Laos in view of the rebel regime that had ousted the government we were supporting, he replied,

1/ DepTel to Bangkok 131, SECRET.
2/ NYT, 10 Aug 60, p. 6.

> "Well, actually for, I guess, about 30 hours, I have been trying to get some real details on the Lao situation and we really don't know anything about it. It does appear that all of the country except the capital, taken over by a battalion of parachutists, remains loyal to the Government. So, until there is some clarification, I don't think we can make any real answer." 1/

51. In the considerable official perplexity concerning the dimensions, extent and motivations of the plot, there was little disposition at first to attribute the initiative to Kong Le. For instance, State's DepTel No. 131 to Vientiane, 9 August 1960, began, "Not yet clear here who is behind Second Airborne move in Vientiane but on basis info available most likely would appear to be Souvanna Phouma." The American Embassy in Paris, in touch with appropriate officials of the French Foreign Office, reported on 10 August that French officials had at first suspected that Souvanna Phouma was behind the coup, had next turned their suspicions to the Pathet Lao, and then, concluding this was unjustified, they continued to be puzzled because they found it difficult to believe that Kong Le was acting for himself. 2/ From the American Embassy in Bangkok the report came in on 10 August that the Thai Foreign Minister, Thanat Khouman, was quite confident that the revolutionary group was very friendly to, if not actaully allied with, the Pathet Lao. 3/ The USARMA/Bangkok justifiably began his report on 10 August, "Situation Laos as viewed here confusing. Reports are numerous but contradictory." 4/ The USAIRA, who later in the day was to file a dispatch with much solid information on Phoumi which greatly advanced a grasp of the situation, also complained that "Laos info here very contradictory" and reported that even Sarit, whose pipelines

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1/ From Transcript of President Eisenhower's News Conference, 10 August 1960; NYT, 11 August 1960.
2/ Paris EmbTel 549, SECRET.
3/ Bangkok EmbTel 214, SECRET.
4/ USARMA/Bangkok to DA/Washington, No. CX-50, DTG 100918Z, August 1960, SECRET.

to Laos were perhaps the best, had remarked it was "too early to determine accurately what is happening" and was waiting "until situation firmed up before taking possible action."[1/]

52. Nevertheless both SitReps identified more than a score of persons reported (not verified) to be members of the HRC or otherwise supporters of Kong Le. And the shape of events became slightly less obscure in the course of the day when reports came in of U.S. officials from the Bangkok Embassy meeting the Phoumi party at Ubon. Col. Sourith had been taken along to meet Phoumi (see paragraph 48). This led to knowledge of Phoumi's movements from the afternoon of 9 August through the evening of the following day. If it did not explain the Kong Le coup, at least it revealed the activities of one who might be used to oppose the coup.

53. The most comprehensive available report of these events was filed by the USAIRA/Bangkok (sent as a Joint Army, Navy, Air Force message), DTG 101240Z, August 1960, SECRET, although earlier fragmentary reports were sent in, perhaps prematurely, by the U.S. Embassy/Bangkok (Bangkok EmbTels Nos. 210 and 215, SECRET). The USAIRA's dispatch had the effect of clarifying details that were left somewhat obscure in the latter of these messages, which bore a dating nearly 7 hours earlier (1300G). The USAIRA's account -- which is not disputed by available later evidence -- may be summarized as follows: The USAIRA and the Political Officer of the Bangkok Embassy went to Ubon the afternoon of 10 August. There they learned that Phoumi had arrived in Ubon the day before, in a Lao AF C-47, accompanied by Finance Minister Inpeng, Gen. Bounleut and others of lesser rank. The next morning (the 10th), Phoumi had taken Impeng and Bounleut

1/ USARMA SitRep 100600Z, August 1960, SECRET.

to Savannakhet. There he had left them after talking to the troops at that Third Military Region Headquarters; and quickly returned to Ubon. At this juncture he was met by the Americans from the Bangkok Embassy and Col. Sourith. Phoumi announced he was installing Col. Phasook as commander of the 4th Military Region, with Headquarters in Pakse, and Phoumi went back to Pakse that afternoon to be assured of this and to talk to the troops there. Phoumi claimed he had been in contact with Kong Le (by means not specified), and that Kong Le had refused his offer of amnesty if he surrendered promptly. He also indicated he would return from Pakse that night to Bangkok, to confer with Sarit.

54. In EmbTel No. 247, SECRET, dispatched to Washington at 8:00 p.m. local time, 10 August 1960 -- while Phoumi was at Ubon for the night -- Ambassador Brown reviewed both events, and statements put out by the High Revolutionary Committee (HRC), to determine the political trend and character of the coup. He concluded that the great danger was not in the leftist tendencies of the HRC, but rather in the opportunity extended to the Pathet Lao by the coup to take advantage of a confused state of affairs. He concluded that the danger of a Pathet Lao exploitation of this confusion was so great that U.S. interests required support of the restoration of authority of the RLG -- recognizing, however, that the RLG might be forced to make some compromise with the Kong Le group to achieve this end. Some such compromise might be necessary, he felt, because the widespread desire for internal peace was the primary basis for the popularity of neutralist sentiment and popular discontent now being exploited by Kong Le. He went on to argue that outside intervention, especially U.S. military intervention, would be undesirable, but that steps should be taken to permit the RLG itself to restore a stable situation to Laos. He therefore recommended that aircraft

and POL, which were the most immediate needs of Phoumi, should be made available to Phoumi [

]

55. The recommendation of Ambassador Brown to provide U.S. support of RLG efforts to regain control [

] should be especially noted. It is an early instance of preoccupation with intervening while avoiding an appearance of intervention. Without attempting to sit in judgment on the wisdom of this preoccupation, it must be observed that it was a characteristic view of Americans with operational responsibilities that this preoccupation was as an unwarranted delicacy, and an unnecessarily, legalistic handicap. The American hand in Laos was plain in any event, with the Army entirely paid, clothed, fed and supplied by the U.S., partially trained by it, and the Civil Government largely supported by the U.S. and obviously guided by it in all important matters. [

]It was almost a fair question: whom were we fooling by such delicacies except ourselves? The issue was scarcely as simple as this, yet it must be pointed out that this issue was a major source of the divergent and conflicting actions of American officials in the days and weeks that followed.

56. An event reported in interviews, but concerning which there is no available documentary evidence, illustrates this point further. As early as 9 August, the idea arose within the PEO group in Vientiane to exploit the fact that Phoumi was still the legal Defense Minister. Support to the RLG would be channeled

directly through him. To ensure that such an operation was provided with an undeniable cloak of legality, it was proposed to get an explicit royal declaration, from the King in Luang Prabang, to the effect that he still regarded Phoumi as the legal Minister of Defense. A message was accordingly sent to the PEO Regional Advisor in Luang Prabang (Lt. Col. Nelson) asking him to obtain the necessary royal statement. Promptly a reply came back from Nelson saying that not only the King, but the King's legal advisor as well, declared Phoumi still to be the authentic Minister of Defense and that he had the King's blessing. But when the proposal, and the means by which Phoumi's position had been certified, were presented to the Ambassador, he referred the matter to Washington. State then sent back a message indicating that an Embassy representative would have to verify the facts, which could be accomplished only by sending a responsible Embassy official to Luang Prabang. The political officer of the Embassy (Mr. Julian Fromer) was therefore smuggled out of the beleaguered city across the Mekong to Nong Khai (Thailand), from whence he proceeded to Bangkok in order to get a plane to Luang Prabang. It was not until the 13th of August, according to this account, that Fromer was able to send a message back from Luang Prabang which in effect confirmed the earlier message sent by Lt. Col. Nelson. But by this time the proposal had been overtaken by events.

57. [

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58. On 10 August, while Phoumi was flying back and forth between Ubon, Savannakhet, Pakse and Bangkok, Gen. Ouane Rattikone had flown into Vientiane to negotiate with the High Revolutionary Committee (HRC). Gen. Ouane's visit to Vientiane, as well as Phoumi's visit to Ubon and conference with Prime Minister Sarit in Bangkok, were reported in dispatches to the New York Times from Bangkok on 11 and 12 August. The earliest documentary evidence available to this study concerning official American knowledge of the terms of the Ouane/Rattikone visit was in the form of a Vientiane EmbTel No. 257, SECRET, dispatched from Vientiane at 10:00 p.m. local time, 11 August, and stamped received in Washington at State at 1:39 p.m. of 11 August. (The receipt stamp indication was a little over 2 hours before the first interagency meeting of record in response to the coup.) In this message Ambassador Brown related what he had learned of the Ouane visit on the basis of information supplied to him by French Ambassador Falaize, who in turn had gotten his information from Souvanna Phouma. According to this report, Gen. Ouane had returned the afternoon of the 11th to Luang Prabang, bearing with him an agreement proposed by the HRC Executive Committee asking that

1/ ChJUSMAG to CINCPAC 6814, DTG 101955Z, Aug 60, TOP SECRET.

the RLG return to Vientiane, promising that if it did so the Second Battalion Paratroopers would withdraw from the city to Chinaimo, to the airfield, to supply depots, and that police and all other services would be returned to routine conditions. Under these conditions, negotiations would be undertaken to determine the constitution of an ensuing government. (A censure motion against the Tiao Samsonith government had been introduced into the National Assembly that day.) It was notable in the HRC proposal that they were demanding large changes in the established RLG at a minimum, and meanwhile retaining control of all key military installations and supplies.

59. Following the factual report of these events, Ambassador Brown commented "in evaluation above report Department should recall consistent French support [of] Souvanna Phouma and Kong Le's desire [to] have him head of government, and note that government would be placing head in lion's mouth if it accepted." This is the last item of significant intelligence concerning developments in Laos, to be found in the available records, before the State-Defense meeting at 4:00 p.m., 11 August, at which meeting the first decisions were made concerning initial U.S. response to the Kong Le coup.

THE DECISIONS OF 11 AUGUST

60. The 11 August meeting was attended by the CJCS, the Deputy Secretary of Defense James H. Douglas and representatives of OASD/ISA-FER for DOD, and by Assistant Secretaries of State Merchant and Parsons and Mr. Bell for State. The available record does not explicitly indicate any participation by CIA. There is a note in the file of the Chief, Southeast Asia Branch of the Pacific Division/J-3, of a debriefing on the meeting by the Chief, OASD/ISA-FER, which appears to have been the first word to J-3 of the decisions reached at that meeting. This

debriefing note briefly listed the decisions, and indicated that State with ISA help was preparing the presentation for the NSC meeting on 12 August, that the CS/CINCPAC had been immediately informed by telephone of the outcome of the meeting by the Chief, OASD/ISA-FER, and that word had been received that the Secretary of Defense would formally notify the JCS of the decisions of the meeting by memorandum, in due course. This formal note came, the next day, as a memorandum from the Deputy Secretary of Defense to the CJCS.[1/] This memorandum was written in OASD/ISA-FER and was later included as the enclosure to JCS 1992/836, 15 August 1960, SECRET. The exact language of the Deputy Secretary's memorandum was then incorporated into an action message to CINCPAC, as follows:

> "1. The following courses of action are approved by State and Defense as means of carrying out U.S. policy of continued support to the Royal Government of Laos (RLG) and of military operations specifically authorized by that government:
>
> "a. [ ]
>
> "b. Designation of 2 senior representatives of the Chief, Programs Evaluation Office (ChPEO) Laos as advisors to the senior Lao Army Commanders at Luang Prabang and Savannakhet . . . Functions of these advisers will include:
>
> "(1) Serving as a channel for logistic support requests from the Senior Lao Army Commanders in Luang Prabang and Savannakhet to the Chief, Joint United States Military Advisory Group (ChJUSMAG) Thailand.
>
> "(2) Advising the Senior Lao Army Commander and ChJUSMAG as to the practicality and appropriateness of Lao requests.
>
> "(3) Providing intelligence to ChJUSMAG, Thailand.
>
> "(4) Carrying on, insofar as practicable, normal functions of the PEO . . . inform their French counterparts that they are performing this function . . .

1/ I-15301/60, Memo for CJCS from DepSecDef James H. Douglas, Subject: "Assistance to the Royal Laotian Government," 12 August 1960, SECRET.

"c. Establishment of secure communication channels between the PEO representatives and ChJUSMAG, Thailand.

"d. [

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These instructions were passed on from CINCPAC to ChPEO about six hours later.[2/]

61. These decisions concerning approved operations had scarcely been made and transmitted to the field, however, before events in Vientiane took a new turn. On the afternoon of 13 August, demonstrations evidently incited by the HRC took place first in the street in front of, and later within the gallery of, the National Assembly; that evening, acting on the measure put before it two days before, the National Assembly cast a vote of no confidence in the government of Prime Minister Tiao Somsanith. If the time differential is considered, it will be noted that the instructions pursuant to the State-Defense agreements of 11 August, late afternoon, Washington time, were transmitted late the following day to CINCPAC, and thence reached Vientiane, assuming no time consumed in transmission, between 9 and 10 o'clock on the morning of the day of the vote of no confidence. All of the contemplated U.S. measures to support the RLG, it should be noted, required time to be set in motion, and still more time to have effect. So far as strengthening a military effort to upset Kong Le, this delay cannot be judged important. But had the U.S. support been openly proclaimed, it may be conjectured that such a delay could have been critical.

62. Phoumi's evident prime intent was to use whatever powers he could muster to upset the Vientiane regime established by the Kong Le coup by force, if necessary. It will be observed,

1/ JCS to CINCPAC, JC981358, DTG 122237Z, Aug 60, SECRET.
2/ CINCPAC to ChPEO, 7762, DTG 130407Z, Aug 60, SECRET.

in following the course of later events, that PEO, JUSMAAG [ ] many of them close to Phoumi and understanding this much of his motives at least, inclined naturally and generally to interpret a directive to aid Phoumi as authority to assist him in his evident prime intentions, which were to drive out or to force the Kong Le and Souvanna group to give up its hold on the seat of government in Vientiane. The Ambassador in Vientiane, backed generally by the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, tended consistently either to ignore or to reject the prospect that Phoumi's own first objective in building up strength was to overturn the Vientiane regime. Their rationale appears to have been, from the 13th on, that the build-up of Phoumi was to preserve FAL as an anti-Pathet Lao military force, and to strengthen Phoumi's bargaining position only, so far as Kong Le and above all Souvanna were concerned.

63. On the morning of 14 August a few deputies representing the National Assembly left by plane for Luang Prabang to report to the King on the vote of no confidence. On the 15th, the King accepted the resignation of the whole Cabinet. The U.S. was thus presented with the basic materials of a new political situation, which seemed to call for reconsideration before we could move confidently ahead on an agreed national policy, if indeed U.S. policy was to be keyed to the state of affairs in Laos.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE FIRST REACTIONS TO THE COUP

64. In the period from 9 to 13 August, the principal question confronting U.S. decision-makers concerned what means the U.S. might employ to support the recognized government of Laos. That government was in fact the creature of U.S. policy. No decisions which permitted positive action of the sort widely accepted as necessary were approved at a level lower than an Assistant

Secretary, interagency level (actually Deputy Secretary in the case of DOD in this case). There is no evidence of JCS participation at this time. At this incipient stage, there was apparent readiness, in Washington, to regard the Laos incident as a matter primarily for political decision rather than of military operations. In the JUSMAG office in Bangkok and the PEO office in Vientiane, a capability existed to render immediate assistance to the established government in ways consonant with the spirit of the actions that were later approved, in Washington. But these involved unusual measures not clearly approved by existing guidance or established usage. The question of use of this capability was referred back to Washington for decision, where decisions were rendered on an interagency consultation basis. By the time the decisions were taken and authority delegated to the field, the situation there was significantly altered.

65. It is possible that unusual procedures of the kind proposed, and which might have been effective if undertaken promptly and resolutely, would have been adopted had there been greater mutual confidence among the American officials and agencies concerned. But the specific means that came immediately to mind for supporting the RLG inescapably involved problems of policy concerning which there were differences among Americans. To reassert its authority in face of the Kong Le position in Vientiane would have required strengthening Phoumi, who had already become the symbol of differences of opinion within the American mission in Vientiane. If Phoumi was assisted without reservation, it might lead directly to the kind of CDNI dominance which the State Department and the American Ambassadors had consistently opposed as politically unwise. It is possible that the proposal to channel aid to the RLG through Phoumi was interpreted as motivated in part by a desire to attain this end, as well as to get rid of Kong Le. The

question of the immediate means, specifically including the provision and circumstances of provision of MAP assistant to the recognized government therefore had political policy implications that related vitally to the policy differences which had developed, in the previous years [ ] The kind of information wanted, from the President on down to the lowest echelon concerned with either policy or program, was information that would give an understanding of the motivations of the principal actors, what were their prospects of success, and what was the ultimate direction in which events were leading.

ARRANGEMENTS IN WASHINGTON

66. It is necessary at this point to interrupt the narrative and describe summarily the administrative arrangements by which the U.S. undertook to manage its interests in the Laos incident. The lines of command from Washington to the field are portrayed in Figure 1, "Lines of Administrative Subordination, August 1960 through May 1961 - Laos Incident." Within the field the line of command went through Thailand in some instances. Another point of significance is that field personnel in some cases were responsible to two or more bosses.

67. [ ] Washington [ ] agencies were involved directly in the management of the Laos incident: State, DOD, JCS [ ] During the period of the first half of this study there is record of referral of issues to the White House on only two occasions. Both times the President was at Augusta. On the first occasion, the President was consulted by telephone and approved a message to the field drawn up at the Assistant Secretary level and conveyed to him by voice by the Secretary of State. On the second occasion, Gen. Goodpaster, the military assistant to the President acted on behalf of the President, but apparently checked his

FIGURE 1

[ ]

FIGURE 1

actions by telephone. It is important to keep in mind that a U.S. Ambassador is a personal representative of the President of the United States as well as a representative of the Department of State.

68. The four operating agencies below the White House level behave generally as operating agencies with respect to their field personnel, and through interagency meetings within Washington for policy formulation. In addition to the formalized NSC and Operations Coordinating Board (OCB) meetings, there were occasional State-Defense-JCS meetings at which Laotian affairs were considered along with other matters. The most important interagency meetings so far as Laos was concerned, however, were the special ad hoc meetings called to deal with special problems as they arose. In these meetings there was generally representation of all four of the operating agencies. OASD/ISA generally represented DOD, although on some occasions the Deputy Secretary of Defense took part and upon a few occasions the Secretary of Defense himself attended. ISA generally attended and participated in meetings even when the Secretary of Defense took apparent initiative. ISA participation commonly involved preparation of work by FER-Laos Desk, and attendance at meetings by ASD/ISA, ASD/ISA-FER, and ASD/ISA-FER-Laos Desk.

69. State was regularly represented by the Assistant Secretary for Far Eastern Affairs as well as by a desk officer for Laos and generally several others. When events were judged more momentous, representation from State rose to a higher echelon -- to the Under Secretary level; and at least twice during the August-December period the Secretary of State participated in person.

70. [

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71. JCS participation in interagency meetings tended to reflect the importance attached to the issue immediately at hand and during this period was lacking in continuity. At the time of the Kong Le coup there was no single special group within the JCS having responsibility for Laos. Responsibilities were exercised principally by the S.E. Asia Branch of the Pacific Division of J-3, but J-5 was upon occasion called in to assist on problems of policy. In the S.E. Asia Branch one officer specialized in exercises and plans, another on South Vietnam, and a third on Thailand and Laos. The earliest activity of record of this group was a briefing, prepared by the Chief of the SEA Branch on 11 August, for the JCS in preparation for a State-JCS meeting that, according to the briefing sheet, was scheduled 12 August.[1/] The information necessary to the group was not always either prompt or complete. For instance, an unsigned draft memorandum in the files of the Chief, SEA Branch, Pacific Division, J-3, addressed to the Director/Joint Staff listed and described ten key messages on Laos, 20-22 August, whereof two State messages, and one ISA memorandum to State transmitting a JCS paper as an inclosure, had not been received in the Joint Staff. The memorandum concluded with the observation that neither the Joint Staff nor ISA were receiving regular, prompt or complete distribution of key messages.

72. There was no special organizational recognition, within J-3, of the Laos incident until 11 October. At that time a Laos Working Group was formed, consisting of 3 colonels from J-3 with one representative from each of the other J's. The Group met once a day in the morning to review incoming intelligence and

1/ "Briefing Sheet for the JCS for the State-JCS Meeting, Friday, 12 August, Agenda Item e.," 11 August 1960, TOP SECRET.

developments, and ordinarily they returned thereafter to their other duties. Participation in the Laos Working Group was not a full-time commitment of the personnel involved. But after mid-November, when the Battle Staff was set up the personnel assigned to the Battle Staff were assigned 100 percent to that function. In the period after mid-December (to be covered in the second half of this study) there were further changes in arrangements for dealing with the Laos incident. These were due in part to the increasing intensity of the JCS involvement, as military and operational functions grew, and also to the reassignment of responsibilities, at the national level, that came about following the advent in January of the new national administration.

73. Within DOD, the operational responsibilities for management of the Laos incident were assumed by OASD/ISA-FER, Laos-Cambodia Desk. This operation was characterized by informality and directness, and by an unusual continuity of participation by the individuals responsible, in matters pertaining both to operations and to formulation of policy. In response to questions concerning the division of functions as between ISA and JCS during the Laos affair, some responses tended to define the ISA function exclusively in terms of the ISA control of funds, whereas others placed emphasis upon the role of ISA in functions that were quasi-political quasi-military, this view tending to define the role of ISA as predominant where political considerations were strong and the role of JCS as predominant where operational considerations were strong. One definition described a major function of ISA as that of a buffer between the politically innocent views of the JCS and the militarily innocent views of State.

74. Within all of the jurisdictions concerned there was a characteristic tendency to refer decisions upwards in the

hierarchy of authority as the political importance increased with respect to the incident in question. This is a natural and inescapable tendency which directly reflects the fact that as the importance of issues increases the breadth of considerations to be brought to bear in resolving them comparably increases, automatically requiring higher levels of authority. This upward referral of issues as their importance increased tended rather commonly to squeeze out from participation in high-level decisions those lower-level specialists who had the best knowledge of the details involved in the local incident. In those cases where the higher level decisions involved matters of local detail this was potentially a serious disadvantage. In those cases where understanding of the range of considerations involved in the high-level decisions was not fully conveyed to those working upon national policy at a lower level, the decision-making process was again and in a different way placed at a disadvantage.

75. One major participant in the events that have been chronicled said that Bangkok was 12 hours behind Vientiane, that Hawaii was 12 hours behind Bangkok and that Washington was 24 hours behind Hawaii. This is no doubt an impressionistic statement, but if accepted as an impression it is probably not misleading. The more important a question was considered to be, the higher the echelon of authority that was required to deal with it. The higher the echelon, the greater was competition for attention, and the greater was the chance that delay would be encountered in effecting consultation, and the more need for supplying background, by briefings or otherwise, before a knowledgeable decision could be made. Almost every person interviewed within the Defense Establishment indicated in one way or another that the lack of delegation of authority by the State Department to the Ambassador, had the effect not only of reducing the effectiveness

of the Ambassador, but also of reducing the effectiveness of operations conducted by other agencies within the country over which the Ambassador presided as Chief of the Country Team. Other agencies might delegate authority to the field but so long as State did not, the affairs of other agencies tended to become involved in the problem of delegation of political authority from the State Department to the Ambassador.

ARRANGEMENTS IN LAOS

76. For purposes of administering the FAL, Laos was divided into five military regions (see Figure 2). Before the Kong Le coup there had been PEO advisors and LTAG teams at the regional headquarters. [

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After the coup the military advisors already in the regions remained in place except that the 4th Military Region advisor was transferred to Savannakhet from Pakse and was named the senior PEO representative in southern Laos, and Liaison Officer to Gen. Phoumi. A logistics man drawn from Region 3 then took over as Chief PEO representative in Region 4.[1/]

77. The function of the PEO regional advisors and LTAG teams in the regions was not only to administer the aid program and to assist in the training of FAL, [

]

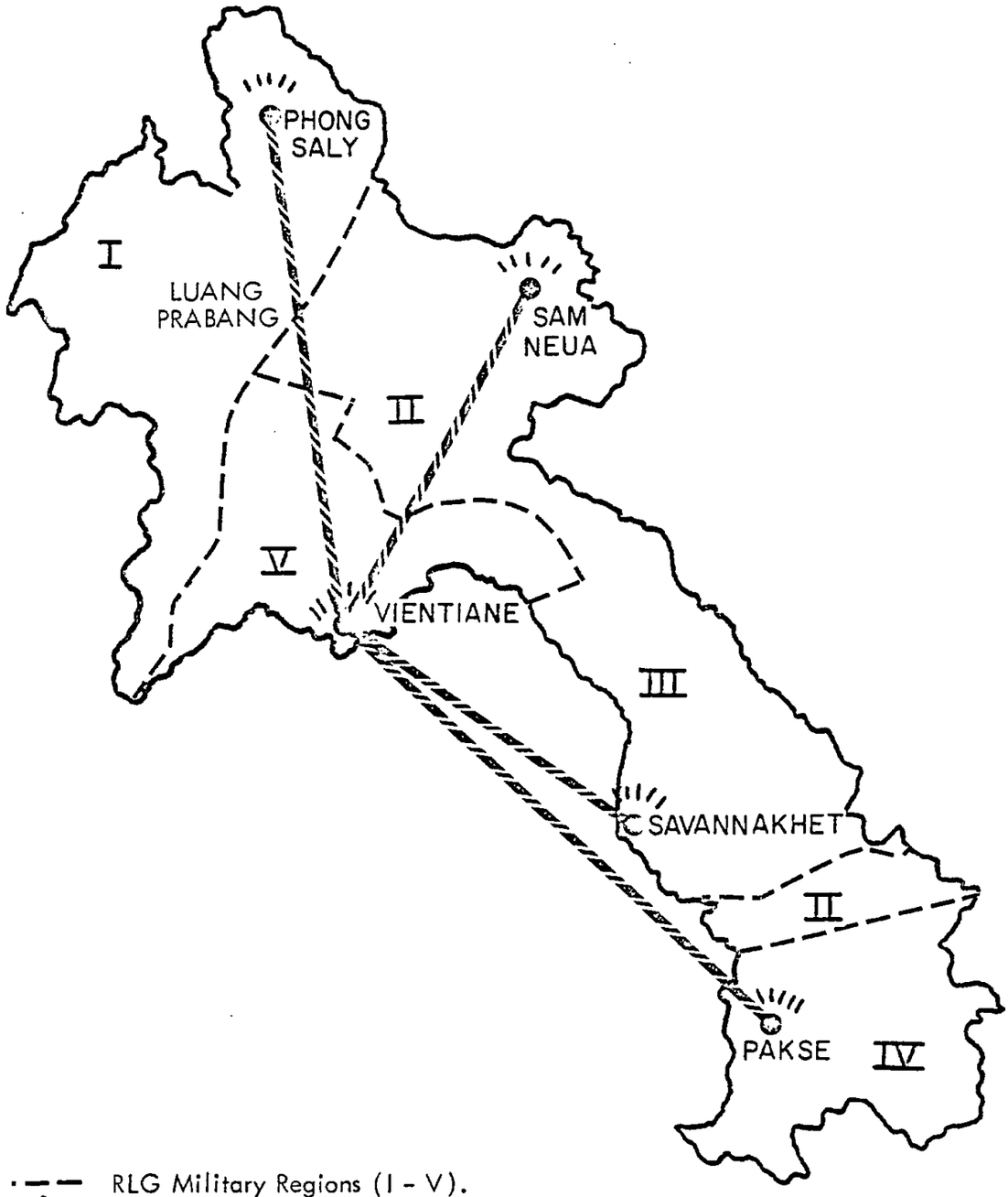
78. Within Vientiane, there were two centers of American administrative activity, the Embassy and the PEO compound, in which the PEO Operations Center was established. Following the Kong Le coup, the American Ambassador established a Country Team in his

1/ ChPEO to CINCPAC, "Narrative Report of PEO Operations During Period of Coup d'etat, 9 August 1960," DTG 081215Z, September 1960, SECRET.

FIGURE 2

U.S. COMMUNICATIONS WITHIN LAOS

U.S. COMMUNICATIONS WITHIN LAOS
AUGUST 1960 - MAY 1961
FROM CHPEO TO PEO ADVISERS IN MILITARY REGIONS
AND BETWEEN REGIONAL HQ.



RLG Military Regions (I - V).
Regional teams had RS-1 radio sets for communications within and between military regions.
CHPEO Vientiane had SSB (Single Side Band) connections with each military region HQ.
U.S. Communications within Laos, Aug. '60 - May '61, from CHPEO to PEO Advisers in military regions and between regional HQ.

Note: Military Region II was divided and was established in two separate areas of Laos.

6-20-62-5

FIGURE 2

office at the Embassy, composed of the Chiefs of all U.S. agencies. This team remained in more or less continuous all-day session at the Embassy throughout the crisis period. It was provided reports on a current basis from the regional PEO advisers, first received at the PEO Operations Center and forwarded from there to the Embassy. As decisions were reached by the Country Team at the Embassy, they were passed, when appropriate, for implementing actions to the PEO deputy chief who took action through the PEO Operations Center. The PEO Operations Center was also established following the coup d'etat, and it operated on a 24-hour basis.

79. Within Vientiane a walkie-talkie circuit was set up for all members of the team after the Kong Le coup. This proved a satisfactory replacement for the local public telephones of Vientiane which had gone out of operation at a critical moment on the early morning of 9 August. From the PEO compound there also was an Army Command Administrative Network (ACAN) hook-up which permitted direct communication, when necessary, as far as Washington.

80. Shortly after the coup, control procedures were established at the Embassy intended to systematize reporting procedures. The Embassy was to report on political and policy decision matters.

and USARMA with the collaboration of PEO was to report

FIGURE 3

[ ]

6-19-62-1

FIGURE 3

on military subjects. (The USARMA was in fact dependent on the PEO organization for most of his information.) To avoid duplication, all agency representatives were to exchange and pool information, and single reports were to be sent back from Vientiane embracing contributions from all of the agencies involved. To insure appropriate distribution, messages were to carry, in addition to notation of specific addressees, instruction that the addressees should also pass to other interested agencies.[1/] Reports from Vientiane which embraced policy recommendations or appraisals were formally understood, according to the arrangements prevailing, to carry the approval of all members of the Country Team except where specifically indicated.[2/]

81. Such were the formal arrangements, and much of the time they worked out as planned so far as is known. [ ]

1/ EmbTel 262, 12 Aug 1960, SECRET.
2/ ChPEO to JCS 7670, DTG 110545Z, August 1960, SECRET.

82. [

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FIRST RESPONSE TO THE FALL OF THE TIAO SOMSANITH GOVERNMENT

83. on 14 August, Ambassador Brown reported, in an evening message, that he had talked that day with Souvanna Phouma, reproaching him for the duress under which the National Assembly had voted down the Tiao Somsanith Government. Brown reported that Souvanna defended the action, stressing that the vote had occurred an hour after the crowd was removed and order restored. He further reported that Souvanna told him that a delegation of

four deputies had gone to Luang Prabang with official notification and a request that the Government resign and return to Vientiane.[1]

84. The following day Brown confirmed reports already made public over the radio that the King had accepted the resignation of the Tiao Cabinet. He proceeded to argue that Phoumi would probably not accept a political defeat, but that the new government should be supported. He argued that Kong Le and the HRC were not Communists, had in fact so far refused Pathet Lao support, although it was conceded that they were neutralist and had lent themselves on occasion to Communist exploitation. He seemed to shy away from the stark conclusions that his reasoning led him to, which would have been throw all aid to the Souvanna Government and none whatsoever to the Phoumi Government. Instead, he appeared to accept the fact that some aid would continue to go to Phoumi. To accommodate this idea with the notion of supporting the new government, the Ambassador urged that

> "It should be made unmistakably clear /to Phoumi/ that U.S. opposed any military effort on his part to regain control of or split the country.
>
> "This point of view should also be made clear to Sarit."[2]

This is one of the earliest explicit proposals of what later became the anomalous American policy of supporting both a government and a faction intent upon overturning that government, though the emergence of that policy could not correctly be attributed to any single proposal or individual. This was, in fact, a policy that we entered into piecemeal by a series of

1/ EmbTel 282, 7:00 PM, 14 Aug 60, SECRET.
2/ EmbTel 288, noon, 15 Aug 60, SECRET. (Sarit was Prime Minister of Thailand.)

decisions and acts on lesser matters; and we appeared not to have been fully aware of a national policy commitment as such until we had made that policy inevitable by ad hoc decisions.

85. On 16 August, around noon, the first Phoumi leaflets announcing a counter coup were dropped over Vientiane. [

]

was proceeding with his plans to seize Vientiane on the 20th or 21st with a combined paratroop drop and an overland attack. When the PEO Rep in Savannakhet (Lt. Col. Wood) on 16 August delivered to Phoumi the Ambassador's message that "The United States /is/ not at this stage prepared to support him in forcible efforts to retake Vientiane or to prevent establishment of new government, and that he should not drop leaflets on Vientiane," Phoumi acknowledged the report with a polite nod, and said he would proceed with his original plan.[2] This original plan was, of course, to do precisely what the Ambassador in his message asked him not to do. The image of different parts of the U.S. Government trying to go in two directions at the same time could hardly have been more eloquently demonstrated.

1/ USARMA/Bangkok to DA, CNO, Hq USAF, 8938/9221, in a joint Army-Navy-Air Force SitRep, DTG 160850Z, August 1960, SECRET.
2/ CINCPAC to JCS 27666, DTG 162113Z, August 1960, TOP SECRET.

86. There are no available messages in this period which express explicit qualification of the instructions to the field (see paragraph 60 above) which followed the State-Defense meeting of 11 August. It is clear, however, that there was a good deal of subsequent State Department traffic (with most of the outgoing messages missing from available J-3 files). The tenor of the available EmbTels suggests that Ambassador Brown received considerable encouragement to believe that the thrust of the 11 August policy decisions was being softened in response to the resignation of Tiao Somsanith and his Cabinet, but there is no definite documentation on this point. Above all there is nothing [illegible] concerning any change in the [illegible] drives intended to strengthen and support Phoumi. At the heart of the problem was the [illegible] a government of [illegible], nor the emergent government of Souvanna Phouma was in all respects a legal government. The Tiao Somsanith government had resigned, and Tiao was now a part of the Souvanna regime. But before the Souvanna government could lay full claim to constitutional legality it needed not only approval by the National Assembly, but formal validation by the King. Meanwhile, the problem of recognition [illegible] had to be handled de facto because there was no [illegible] de jure.

[illegible] of the night, Ambassador Brown sent a message to [illegible] for the immediate personal consideration of [illegible] Harriman, reporting that though progress was being made on the formalities to establish legality of the new government of Souvanna Phouma, the actual power of that government was diminishing, and there might soon be a condition in which there would be no responsible governmental authority in Vientiane which could enforce its own rule. The leaflets dropped on Vientiane announcing Phoumi's intention to retake the town by force were having their effect, and Ambassador Brown considered the future unpredictable

and certainly not promising.[1] The Ambassador underlined his alarm by saying that he was seriously considering evacuation of nonessential Americans. (This was done later, but it is not a part of our story.)

88. On the same day, the Acting Chief of Mission of the American Embassy in Bangkok talked to Sarit in an effort to ascertain the truth of reports [

] Sarit told the American that, much as he would like to, he was not intervening; but the American Acting Chief of Mission ended his report by saying that Sarit had failed to persuade him. [

]

89. Preparations to carry out Phoumi's attempts to capture Vientiane were continuing although they did not promise to live up to his objective of recapturing Vientiane by the 20th or 21st. With assistance from PEO personnel, three LCVP's and an unspecified number of LCM's were moving up the Mekong to advance Phoumi's forces on Vientiane.[3] The leaflet dropping over Vientiane continued and the French Foreign Office told American Embassy officials in Paris that the use of planes for leaflet dropping by the Phoumi forces was taken as proof that Phoumi was already receiving foreign aid.[4]

THE POLICY DECISIONS OF 17 AUGUST

90. In Washington on 17 August, at 1530 hours, a State-Defense-CIA meeting was held to consider problems of policy for Laos and

1/ EmbTel 301, SECRET.
2/ Bangkok EmbTel 274, midnight, 16 August 1960, TOP SECRET.
3/ ChPEO to CINCPAC 9736, DTG 180045Z, August 1960, SECRET.
4/ Paris EmbTel 614, 17 August 1960, CONFIDENTIAL.

the focus of attention was upon a policy guidance draft message, for the American Ambassador in Vientiane, that had been prepared by Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs Parsons. At this meeting, State was represented by Under Secretary Dillon, Assistant Secretary Parsons, and Messrs. Anderson and Chapman of the Office of Southeast Asian Affairs. Representing CIA were the Director Mr. Dulles, Mr. Bissell, [ ]. Defense had three representatives from ISA; and J-3 represented the JCS.

91. [

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92. [

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[ ]

[redacted]

[redacted]

93. [redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

94. It should be noted that this guidance was susceptible to the interpretation that the policy decision that it set forth, and that had been reached at an interdepartmental level, was contingent, at least in some details, upon approval by the Ambassador to whom it was directed. At the same time, it suggested that operations, being initiated by other agencies, might have their authorization rescinded if the Ambassador objected; yet it announced that the nature of these plans was to be confided [

] In the files of OASD/ISA-FER there is a copy of a draft memorandum, dated 18 August, addressed but apparently not sent to the Secretary of Defense, its subject being "U.S. Position with Respect to Laos;" the gist of this memorandum is that the message sent out by the State Department after the 17 August conference did not correctly represent the sense of that meeting. It complained, among other things, of its denigration of Phoumi's leadership, and of its calling for Phoumi to recognize the Souvanna Cabinet. This unsent message asked the Secretary of Defense to take these matters up with the Secretary of State. Nothing further is known except that the message was written, and that it represented widely held views within the Pentagon.

A FIRST TRY AT ACTIVE SUPPORT OF BOTH PARTIES TO THE QUARREL

95. By the third week of August, American policy had gravitated into a position of supporting both of the contesting factions in Laos. There had been at least a mention of the awkwardness of this in the State-Defense-CIA meeting of 17 August. As individuals, there were many persons who were critical of this anomalous character of American policy at that time. There is no record of the issue having risen at that time, however, above the level of the Secretary of Defense and the Under Secretary of State. Because the inconsistency in U.S. policy reflected

differences in policy views held by three executive agencies (State, Defense, CIA), and none of these was ready to relinquish voluntarily its views in the matters, and finally, because in this circumstance there was no definitive resolution of the difficulties at the echelon having power to do so, American policy became a mixture, or compromise, of the conflicting viewpoints.

96. In Laos, the two opposed factions supported by the U.S. Government (USG) continued their contest. On the 18th, the PEO representative in Savannakhet reported that Phoumi would move to seize Vientiane with or without U.S. aid, that he was capable of moving 5000 troops by road to Vientiane within ten days, and that one could not overemphasize the intensity of spirit and the will to win of the Phoumi forces.[1/] This was an obvious case of partisan enthusiasm destroying the validity of what should have been a technical military judgment. Nevertheless, it reflected more or less accurately what Phoumi would have liked to do. Phoumi had an agent in Luang Prabang, Khamphan Panya, who was master-minding the activities there on behalf of Phoumi to prevent Souvanna from seeing the King to secure royal confirmation of the investiture voted by the Lao National Assembly. Souvanna's emissary to Luang Prabang was seized and held by Khamphan's order, and the King had not ordered his release. Souvanna reported to Ambassador Brown, at one time, that these difficulties, plus the reports of Phoumi forces advancing on Vientiane, plus the leaflets and radio threats of conquest of Vientiane by Phoumi, and finally the continued rumors of Thai intervention, had brought him about to the end of his rope. His actual words: "Je suis au bout."[2/]

97. But one arm of American policy assisted in preventing delivery of the coup de grace that the other arm of American

1/ ChPEO to CINCPAC 9746, DTG 180745Z, Aug 60, SECRET.
2/ ChPEO to CINCPAC 9736, DTG 180045Z, Aug 60, SECRET; Vientiane/EmbTel 328, 7:00 PM, 18 Aug 60, SECRET; Vientiane/EmbTel 324, 2:00 PM, 18 Aug 60, SECRET.

policy clearly desired and strove to accomplish. On 20 August, just as the situation for the Souvanna government appeared to have become almost hopeless, it received a moral boost from the action of the UN representative, Zellweger. Zellweger that morning embarked by plane for Luang Prabang, ostensibly to ascertain the situation, probe the King's views, and express hope to the King for a negotiated settlement. Zellweger had embarked upon the mission with the blessing of the French, British, and American Ambassadors. Unbeknownst to Ambassador Brown, however, Zellweger had taken with him, on behalf of Souvanna, a copy of the investiture decree to deliver to the King. Only his status as a UN representative permitted Zellweger to land safely in Luang Prabang and to see the King. The Ambassador was apparently promptly informed, through the PEO communication channel, of the arrival of Zellweger in Luang Prabang and of the fact that he carried a copy of the decree from Souvanna to the King. The King's reaction to the Zellweger visit was not known at the time Brown reported to Washington on the visit, briefly and rather hastily, in the early afternoon of the 20th.[1/] Brown refrained from judgment of the action the King would take, tending to believe that the King would avoid taking strong sides between the contending factions, although he probably preferred Phoumi. However, in view of the fact that Zellweger's trip made it clear that the King was under duress, Souvanna was in a position to claim that failure of the King to sign the confirming ordinance could not justifiably invalidate his (Souvanna's) Government. The Ambassador went on to suggest that Phoumi's troops were not in a position to threaten Vientiane for another 48 hours and that Phoumi-Souvanna negotiations were continuing.

98. At six o'clock that afternoon (20 August 1960), Ambassador Brown sent off another message, this one outlining a proposed

1/ Vientiane/EmbTel 349, SECRET.

compromise, which it seems fair to judge was intended to take advantage of the reprieve granted by Zellweger's visit to save the Souvanna government from collapse. Pressure would be exerted on both Souvanna and Phoumi, employing:

a. Personal persuasion,

b. The promise of funds,

c. Influence with the government of Thailand and Vietnam,

d. Food supply,

e. The possible threat of later ambassadorial démarche with the King, and

f. As a possible last resort, the threat of swinging support entirely to one or the other.

Zellweger might be brought into the act to assist in the negotiations, but this was not made specific. The proposed terms of the agreement were that:

a. The Phoumi forces would not come all the way to Vientiane,

b. Kong Le and his forces would withdraw to their garrison headquarters,

c. The Vientiane police chief would be someone acceptable to both Phoumi and Souvanna,

d. No reprisals on either side,

e. Commander in Chief and Chief of Staff to be acceptable to both Souvanna and Phoumi and be appointed by the King,

f. Phoumi might be Commander in Chief or Chief of Staff, but not Minister of Defense,

g. No Communists or Pathet Lao in the Government,

h. Defense and Foreign Affairs ministers to be acceptable to both Phoumi and Souvanna,

i. Quinim (who was very offensive to Phoumi) was to be given a lesser portfolio or else ousted completely,

j. Souvanna was to release pay for all of the Army, including the Phoumi forces,

k. Assembly to be free to conduct affairs without any military duress from either side,

l. Army and police must not be so weakened that Pathet Lao become dominant,

m. Phoumi to accept Souvanna on above terms if accepted by King.

The message closed by stating that all members of the Country Team concurred.[1/]

99. As might be expected, these proposals encountered strong opposition from CINCPAC, who passed his opinions on to JCS. The main thrust of his arguments was that the United States would be ill advised to yield to the British, French and UN (Zellweger) pressure to support a neutralist government of the type that the Ambassador's proposal would lead to, and that the U.S. should take the position that the Souvanna/Kong Le had not been legitimately invested and that the Kong Le rebellion had been a military insubordination which should be settled by the Lao military authorities (Phoumi), whom we should support with money and "discreet transportation" through Thailand, and by other pressures that might be needed to unseat the subordinate faction in Vientiane.[2/]

100. As already indicated, the U.S. diplomatic representation was operating in Vientiane to induce Souvanna to reach agreement with Phoumi, [

] The effect of the repeated proposals advanced in Vientiane for new bases of negotiation and agreement was to give continued life to a regime which probably could not

1/ Vientiane/EmbTel 355, 6:00 PM, 20 Aug 60, SECRET.
2/ CINCPAC to JCS, DTG 202317Z, Aug 60, SECRET.

have survived otherwise, and which the group we supported in Savannakhet was bent upon overthrowing. The effect of the support and encouragement to Phoumi was to strengthen his resolve not to come to terms with Souvanna.

101. On 21 August, Souvanna's position was strengthened somewhat when he was able to announce that he had received agreement from Phoumi that Gen. Ouane Rattikone could resume his post as Commander in Chief of FAL, the position he had held before the Kong Le coup. This move must have been testimony more to Gen. Ouane's desire to be ready to jump either way, or possibly to influence the future course of events, than of loyalty to Souvanna. Ouane had previously been an insider in the CDNI group. This and the ever-present quality of intrigue that characterized Lao politics make it necessary to suspect double dealing in a move of this kind. But no documentary evidence is available to support the suspicion, except the event of Ouane's later coup in Region I, and his switch to the Boun Oum-Phoumi group. Nevertheless, Rattikone went through a ceremony assuming the duties of the office and led a group of 150 officials in taking an oath of loyalty to the Souvanna government, and this served to strengthen, temporarily at least, the Souvanna government.[1/] This whole affair may be considered one of several examples that might be chosen from this narrative of the risks and problems of defining U.S. policy in terms of support of one Lao political figure rather than another.

102. On August 22, in replying to new instructions concerning FAL troop payments, Ambassador Brown related that he had talked to Souvanna, who had agreed to the importance of paying all troops, had agreed in principle to do so, and finally had

1/ NYT, 22 August 1960, p. 4, UNCLASSIFIED.

promised to talk to Gen. Ouane about arrangements for the payment of troops in the Provinces.[1] The point discussed at this time, which was later to prove quite critical, was that of the channeling of pay. This was of importance, of course, because the officers through whom the pay was delivered to the troops were most likely to command the loyalty of the troops.[2] In the case of the troops in the Provinces, naturally enough both the Vientiane and the Savannakhet factions wanted to be known as the paymasters. On such an issue as this might rest the outcome of the internal power struggle, which was indeed the central issue. Thus, what might be regarded as a mere technicality of a paymaster operation was to become a central issue of U.S. national policy in Laos.

103. [

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1/ Vientiane/EmbTel 367, 8:00 p.m., 22 August 1960, SECRET.
2/ This concept of the private army, which had disappeared in the Western World with the rise of the modern national state system, was still common to Laos in spite of the nominal national character of FAL. Failure to take this into account, and to think of Lao military organization and practices by analogy with Western ideas, could lead to serious misunderstanding of some events in Laos. On this score it is interesting to note that several of those with considerable first-hand experience in the area have expressed the opinion, in the course of interviews connected with this study, that many American mistakes in policy are traceable to a tendency in Washington to think of Laos (or other comparable countries, for that matter), in terms that would be valid only for a modern European or American nation.

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

104. An initial draft that may be found in the same folder in the OASD/ISA-FER files proposed, in addition to the above, that the U.S. should make available funds to cover back pay for July and urgent subsistence requirements of FAL. It was further proposed, in this draft, to specify that if arrangements between Phoumi and Souvanna were concluded within 48 hours in a manner to assure that the Phoumi forces were promptly paid, the Vientiane FAL Headquarters might be used as the disbursing mechanism. If not, other means of payment would be used. [redacted] These provisions, not approved on 22 August, although evidently proposed by OASD/ISA-FER at that time, became a major part of the interdepartmental agreements that were reached the following day. The presumption seems reasonably strong that the conferees of 22 August lacked certain powers of decision that the conferees of 23 August did not lack.

105. On 22 August (which was the day Phoumi forces occupied Paksane), the PEO representative in Savannakhet had reported to his chief in Vientiane that he was finding Phoumi increasingly reluctant to disclose either his plans or information concerning his troop movements, due to the U.S. failure to provide expected

1/ ChPEO to CINCPAC 1444, DTG 221330Z, August 1960, SECRET.

[redacted]

logistic and financial support.[1] This appears to be further evidence of abandonment of some of the U.S. plans that had been considered decided upon in the 11 August meeting. The inference seems clear that the restraints upon aid to Phoumi were intended to make Phoumi readier to join Souvanna in a compromise government. In Vientiane also the American influence exerted in the other direction was failing notably to attain its goals, however. Kong Le was found to have begun distribution of arms to Pathet Lao regulars and sympathizers; and the Ambassador reported further that the efforts of Souvanna and General Ouane to reduce the power and influence of Kong Le had not yet been very successful. There were rumors of a secret visit of Souphanouvong to Souvanna, and the Ambassador further replied that Souvanna had seemed to him "Something less than candid."[2]

1/ ChPEO to CINCPAC 1444, DTG 221330Z, Aug 60, SECRET.
2/ Vientiane/EmbTel 371, 1:00 PM, 23 Aug 60, SECRET.

THE SOUVANNA-PHOUMI MEETING AT SENO, 23 AUGUST

106. The long-awaited meeting of Souvanna with Phoumi, upon which so many hopes of the American Embassy in Vientiane were built, took place at 12:15 local time of 23 August at the French base at Seno, near Savannakhet. [ ] Present at the meeting were Souvanna, General Ouane, an unnamed Captain representing Kong Le, and Phoumi. The meeting lasted an hour and a half. There was agreement on General Ouane as Commander in Chief of FAL and on General Amkha as Chief of the Defense of Vientiane. Phoumi agreed to stop the advance of his troops on Vientiane and to withdraw to Paksane as soon as General Amkha was in the position to secure Vientiane from a Pathet Lao attack. (The last condition must be interpreted as essentially a ceremonial tribute to a convenient fiction, for everyone present knew that the Phoumi forces north of Paksane were part of his move to capture Vientiane and thus seize control of the seat of government.) It was conceded that neither Souvanna nor Phoumi had full claims to a legal government, and it was agreed that the first problem was to reunify the military command. After this was done, it was agreed, the question of a new government should be debated before the National Assembly in Luang Prabang, and there (away from the untoward influences of Vientiane), the National Assembly could choose between Phoumi and Souvanna, and a new government would be presented to the King for approval. Kong Le's representative was reported to have said that arms had been given to 3000 Pathet Lao, but that these were Pathet Lao whom they

[ ]

controlled. Phoumi said that the arms must be withdrawn and the Kong Le representative was reported saying that this would be done.

107. This meeting in Savannakhet occurred only one hour after the ISA message was dispatched from Washington reauthorizing the transfer of MAP stocks from Thailand to Phoumi.[1] The information that is available does not explain why the MAP stocks were held up in the preceding period, then released before the results of the meeting were known.

THE INTERDEPARTMENTAL DECISIONS OF 23 AUGUST

108. Later in the day in Washington (it is always to be remembered that Washington is 12 hours behind Laos on the clock), there was a State-Defense meeting attended by Secretary of Defense Gates, by personnel from OASD/ISA-FER, by the Joint Chiefs, and by Assistant Secretary of State Parsons and Undersecretary of State Merchant. This was evidently a higher echelon meeting than that of the day before. It is likely that there was CIA representation, although the available records do not specify this. The meeting resulted in the approval of a series of courses of action which had been set forth in a memorandum drawn up in ISA,[2] and strongly supported in general terms by a memorandum originally submitted to the Joint Chiefs by the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, then approved by them and forwarded to the Secretary of Defense on 19 August.[3] The ISA and JCS memoranda, together with a message from CINCPAC

1/ OASD/ISA to CINCPAC, Defense 981786, 2330R, 22 Aug 60 (230430Z, Aug 60), SECRET.
2/ I-59397/60, Memo to Undersecretary of State Dillon from Assistant Secretary of Defense, ISA, Irwin, 22 Aug 60, SECRET (apparently discussed but not approved at the meeting on the 22nd).
3/ JCS 1992/839, TOP SECRET.

(DTG 202317Z, August 1960, SECRET), were apparently largely responsible for the special meeting on 23 August and for the decisions taken at that meeting. Those decisions were:

a. Phoumi was to be informed that he may expect moral and material support from the United States and that the U.S. would meet any reasonable request;

b. Money would be made available to pay FAL and supply it with rice;

c. [ ] planes would be made available for rice lift to FAL troops in northern Laos and that ChPEO would be in charge of this operation;

d. Souvanna to be informed of the U.S. intent to support Phoumi and FAL.

In the course of the meeting, Secretary Gates and the Chiefs were reported to have emphasized repeatedly their view that it was necessary to give expression of support to Phoumi, morally as well as militarily.[1/]

109. There are two details of interest that related to the conduct of the meeting and construction of the message to Vientiane that conveyed to Ambassador Brown the instructions growing out of the decisions of the meeting. Assistant Secretary Parsons began the interdepartmental meeting with a preliminary report which he had just received of the meeting at Savannakhet of Souvanna and Phoumi.[2/] The promise of continuing negotiations and prospects of peaceful settlement which that meeting conveyed to the Ambassador and to State did not appear to affect the tenor or the conclusions that

1/ ISA-FER notes on DepTel 226 to Vientiane, 23 Aug 60, SECRET, in ISA-FER files.
2/ This is revealed in the JCS account of the meeting to CINCPAC in 981848X, DTG 241850Z, Aug 60, SECRET.

were reached at the Washington meeting in any perceptible way (although it will be seen they later had considerable effect upon conduct of operations and affairs in Laos). Concerning the construction of the State message, there is evidence, in an informal note of a telephone call in the ISA files, that following the meeting, the Chief of the Lao desk of ISA-FER was in touch telephonically with Mr. Usher of the Southeast Asia Branch at State concerning specific operational provisions that were to be included as a part of the message.

110. The policy decisions of 23 August were not a response to new political or military developments in the situation to which they were addressed. Certainly, they were not a response to the meeting and developments at Seno. Rather, they constituted a restatement of what the highest levels of the JCS and the DOD believed should have been the operating U.S. policy from the beginning. They were, in effect, a response to the situation that the decisions of 11 August and 17 August had been addressed to, which situation was implicitly assumed not to have changed in a way to require a different policy or program. The decisions were intended to accomplish what the earlier decisions and directives had intended but so far failed to accomplish. It was a reiteration of a basic, long-standing policy, rather than a new response to new developments.

111. In retrospect, 23 August stands out as an unusually important day in the history of the Laotian incident. In Laos on that day, Souvanna and Phoumi were brought together, and although they settled next to nothing of substantive importance in the issues that separated them, they agreed to enough to keep alive the prospect of a negotiated settlement, which prospect became the almost sole preoccupation of State

Department efforts in the ensuing period. In Washington on that day, decisions were taken concerning operational support to Phoumi that inevitably encouraged Phoumi to continue along the lines of stark opposition to Souvanna that he had settled upon from the first. He continued to play along with the fiction of a compromise, and at times appeared to act as if he might have to begin to believe it. He could hardly have done otherwise, because compromise being favored by U.S. declaratory policies and by the Ambassador, to have renounced compromise entirely might have disrupted the assistance he was receiving from other Americans.

A SECOND TRY AT GOING TWO WAYS AT ONCE

112. The fortnight following the decisions of 23 August was characterized by political efforts, centered upon the Ambassador, to induce a Souvanna-Phoumi compromise following up the Seno "agreements" of 23 August, and military efforts, [ ] to build up the Phoumi military position, following the State-Defense agreements of the same date. Specific issues which occupied American attention during this period, as distinct from the general effort to enforce an accommodation between Souvanna and Phoumi, related to finding acceptable means of delivering rice and pay to elements of FAL in outlying areas, and to finding ways of reducing or eliminating the power of Kong Le.

113. The problem of delivering the rice to the FAL forces throughout Laos turned out to be both complicated and exasperating. The first attempt to deliver rice to the outlying areas met with failure because Phoumi refused Ouane's offer to use Air Laos planes to deliver rice in remote areas. Ambassador Brown interpreted this as a move to force the

United States to support Phoumi in a go-it-alone effort.[1/] This may have been true, but the attribution of motivation would perhaps have been equally correct if it had been suggested that Ouane's (or Souvanna's) purpose may have been to bind the recipients of the rice closer to his command. As early as the 26th, the emboroglio over what planes might be employed to airlift the rice was evident in a high-level memorandum in Washington. In this memorandum, the Assistant Secretary of Defense, ISA, was advised by the Director of the Far East Region, ISA, [ ] which indicated Souvanna had agreed to airlift rice only on condition that Air Laos facilities were first used to capacity. Phoumi had refused to accept this condition, the report continued, because Air Laos shipments would imply that Souvanna was providing the rice. The Ambassador had backed Souvanna in this position, and this, it was argued in the memorandum, was inconsistent with the decision reached on 23 August. The ASD/ISA was asked to take up this problem with the Department of State on an urgent basis.[2/]

114. Whatever actions may have been taken in response to this memorandum are not recorded in the available documents. It is evident, however, that some kind of an agreement was considered to have been reached, soon after. In a message originating in ISA the next day, it was noted that it was understood in Washington that Phoumi had accepted the integration of Air Laos and contract aircraft for the ricelift and that contract planes and crews were waiting to go, with the ChPEO designated responsible for the supervision of U.S. support of the airlift.[3/]

1/ Vientiane/EmbTel 383, 9:00 P.M., 25 Aug 60, SECRET.
2/ Memo for Mr. Irwin by R/Adm. E.J. O'Donnell, Director, Far East Region, ISA, Subj: Curtailment of Laos Rice Lift, 26 Aug 60, SECRET.
3/ OSD/ISA to CINCPAC, 982076, DTG 271826Z, Aug 60, SECRET.

115. In Laos, however, there was an off-again, on-again reaction. At 2:00 PM local time on the 29th of August, Ambassador Brown sent a message to Washington stating that because negotiations at Luang Prabang were by then proceeding smoothly, with Souvanna officially designated Prime Minister and with Kong Le's logistics chief having given written approval for the use of [ ] planes for the airlift, the Ambassador had released three planes to fly immediately to Seno to complete arrangements. Two hours later, however, Brown reported that he had decided to defer for a day or two sending [ ] planes because there was no evidence that so short a delay would seriously affect the troops and because the negotiations in Luang Prabang seemed in such a delicate stage that an overt act might affect their outcome in unpredictable ways. As an example, he cited the possibility that Kong Le might interpret U.S. assistance in rice distribution as confirmation of his suspicions that the U.S. was supporting Phoumi and this might therefore cause Kong Le to reject the desired political compromise.[1/] This hesitation was apparently finally brought to an end, at least temporarily, by another message from State to Vientiane, the next day, which declared that rather than witness the deterioration of FAL, the United States Government would be prepared to meet the needs of troops outside of Vientiane, in answer to requests from regional commanders, by appropriate means. Determination of the aircraft to be used in delivering rice to troops, therefore, was an issue resolved at an inter-agency level after failure to resolve an issue in the field, which had been instructed to deliver the rice. The sense of the

1/ EmbTels 412 and 413, 2:00 and 4:00 PM, respectively, 29 Aug 60, both SECRET.

message conveying the U.S. policy decision was reported to have been passed to Phoumi. 1/

116. The problem of getting pay to FAL troops in outlying areas involved similar complications. Many of these complications were reported first hand in the middle of the difficulties in an informal message from ChPEO at the end of August.

> "We are critically concerned at delay in payment [of] FAL...[We] have exercised every effort for more than a week to get this delicate problem solved. I need not go into detail of snarled and complicated intrigue and machinations we [U.S.] find ourselves in at this moment with respect to all problems... I first had problem to convince Phoumi to send paymasters to Vientiane. He wanted treasurer to bring all money to him in Savannakhet including [that for] V Region. Souvanna said no go; [he] wanted pay distributed normal way. Phoumi sent paymasters to Vientiane. PEO controller on 24 August gained entrance to FAL controller. National Bank of Laos and National Treasury still under guard. He found FAL accounts in good order with no money disbursed since 29 July. He assisted FAL controller [to] cut administrative delays and red tape to get pay ready, from normal two weeks to four days. Paymasters were here since 27 August and pay ready to go since 28 August, but Vientiane officials say Ouane who now [is in] Luang Prabang, told them not to release [money] until he gave word. Ambassador had [the Embassy Political Officer] contact Ouane in Luang Prabang yesterday with a personal plea to release [funds]. Ouane sent message back saying he had ordered pay to be released as soon as ready, when he left Vientiane on 27 August. This told FAL controller Vientiane but still not willing [to] release until [he] hears directly from Ouane. I have this AM sent message to Ouane through my regional advisor in Luang Prabang with request he call Vientiane and order release. At 1426 I received message from Nelson [the Luang Prabang advisor], 'Ouane states in radio message this AM to Vientiane telling controller release later today.' My controller with FAL controller Wednesday just reported to me at 1700 that FAL controller not received message from Ouane. Here we go again." 2/

117. The provision of pay to the Lao Army is therefore seen to have involved not only the Souvanna-Phoumi quarrel but also

1/ ISA-FER notes on DepTel to Vientiane 258, 30 Aug 60, SECRET.
2/ ChPEO to OASD/ISA, DTG 311250Z, Aug 60, SECRET.

the politics within the Souvanna group and within the Phoumi group. The FAL controller was a member of the Sananikone family, and the relations of this family with both Phoumi and Ouane were not the best. There was likewise a power struggle going on in Vientiane with Souvanna, Kong Le and Ouane, the focal points of different power groupings. By no means were all of the inexplicable delays and apparent inconsistencies in application of U.S. policies due to our own American disunity. However, pressures from Washington exerted through the Ambassador and the ChPEO, and perhaps even more than these the growing prospect, in the negotiations at Luang Prabang, of an accommodation between Phoumi and Souvanna, resulted in a breaking of the log jam shortly after 1 September. On 1 September, Brown reported definite plans for the payment of troops in the Third and Fourth Regions on 3 September, with funds which were to be delivered to the regional paymasters by a PEO plane; First Region troops would be paid on 5 September; those in the Second Region would be paid on 5 September by PEO plane delivery unless previously paid, on 3 September, by the Fifth Region.[1/] PEO payment was accepted, thus, as a compromise between the two major factions. Thus, the decision in principle in Washington to pay FAL -- an essentially simple and even inevitable decision, under the circumstances -- required negotiations and complicated operational decisions, in the field, to supplement. To say where and when the decision was reached tends to be arbitrary.

THE PROBLEMS OF THE COALITION CABINET OF 31 AUGUST

118. The major political developments of the fortnight embracing the last week of August and the first week or ten days of September centered upon the progress toward a compromise

1/ Vientiane Emb/Tel 451, 4:00 PM, 1 Sep 60, SECRET.

settlement during the last week of August, culminating in the Royal approval on 2 September of a government formed by Souvanna Phouma, then a gradual abandonment of this compromise by the principal parties to it, in response to opposition from Kong Le at one extreme and Phoumi at the other.

119. The procedures whereby a settlement might be reached were announced by Souvanna Phouma in Vientiane on Saturday, 27 August. The National Assembly was to meet not later than Monday, the 29th, in Luang Prabang, in accordance with agreements that had been reached between Phoumi and Ouane at Savannakhet on 26 August. The National Assembly, together with other leaders, would then move toward reorganization of a government, which would be presented to the King for approval.[1/] On the 29th, the King formally called upon Souvanna to form a new government. On 31 August, the coalition cabinet presented by Souvanna, with Souvanna as Prime Minister and Phoumi as Deputy Prime Minister, was given a unanimous vote of approval by the National Assembly. After investiture of the new Cabinet by the National Assembly, Phoumi flew back to Savannakhet. On the same day, Souvanna broadcast an appeal to PL to send delegates to Vientiane. At noon on 2 September, all members of the Souvanna Government were sworn in except Phoumi and Leuam Insisiengmay, these two being particular targets of the Kong Le opposition.[2/]

120. Even before the new government was formally established, therefore, its uncertain foundations were shaken. Some forces to be included within the compromise government were

1/ NYT, 28 Aug 60, p. 2. State Dept., Bur. of Intel. and Res., Intel. Rpt. 8435, Developments in Laos Aug 9 - Dec 31, 60, Summary and Chronology, p. 6, SECRET.
2/ NYT, 30 Aug 60, p. 6; NYT, 1 Sep 60, p. 4; Vientiane/EmbTel 434, 8:00 PM, 30 Aug 60, UNCLASSIFIED; Vientiane/EmbTel 457, noon, 2 Sep 60, UNCLASSIFIED.

recognized to be almost certainly unwilling to accept the presence of the other. The strong opposition from Kong Le was first overtly manifest in a Vientiane radio broadcast at 11:25 local time on 31 August, and repeated in another broadcast less than an hour later over the same station.[1] Late the same day, Brown reported that through the French Embassy he learned that just before the King's acceptance of the Souvanna Cabinet, Souvanna had received a telegram from Kong Le asking for the elimination of Phoumi and Impeng from the cabinet, but that Souvanna had received the message coldly.[2] Whether or not this was intended by Kong Le as an ultimatum is not clear. But the events that follow might lend credence to such an interpretation.

121. Within hours after receiving Brown's report on the formation and approval of Souvanna's new cabinet, the State Department expressed its apprehension over the threat of Kong Le opposition to the new cabinet. The new instructions to Brown told him to make clear that the United States wished to support the cabinet as newly composed, but would find it difficult to deal with a government that was subordinate to the will of a rebellious officer. Souvanna was further to be pressed to reveal the specific actions that the RLG proposed to take in order to reestablish its authority (over Kong Le in Vientiane). The RLG was to be informed that if it needed help in this direction the U.S. would assist [ ] [ ] to any desired location in Laos. It was to be impressed upon Souvanna that the United States could not afford to witness

1/ Vientiane/EmbTel 439, 2:00 PM, 31 Aug 60, SECRET.
2/ Vientiane/EmbTel 446, 10:00 PM, 31 Aug 60, SECRET.

the deterioration of forces outside Vientiane while financing the entire Lao military budget, and it was therefore prepared to help those forces in response to requests received from regional commanders.[1] The available sources do not reveal what role JCS or DOD officials may have had, if any, in development of either the tenor or the details of this message.

122. The overt reaction of Phoumi to the Kong Le demands was less prompt than that of Washington. Acting nominally at least in accord with the agreements of 23 and 26 August, Phoumi had responded to the Luang Prabang settlement by announcing the same day (31 August) the dissolution of the counter-coup committee previously set up in Savannakhet to oppose the Kong Le-Souvanna government. On the evening of the 31st, Phoumi returned to Savannakhet as Souvanna went to Vientiane, both with the word that they would return to Luang Prabang the next day for a cabinet investiture ceremony.[2] Phoumi was not to return to Luang Prabang as promised, however. What motivated him to change his mind is not known, and this constitutes one of our major lacunae. He is reported to have told an American source, on 1 September, that he had never intended to go through with the deal, having participated in the game through 31 August only as a stall for time.[3] Phoumi was conspicuously absent from the royal investiture of the new government that occurred on 2 September.

123. Kong Le, breathing hot and cold in an inexplicable fashion, on September 2 addressed a crowd in the Vientiane stadium, withdrawing his opposition to Phoumi. This behavior might have reflected proposals or concessions made to him by

1/ DepTel to Vientiane 258, 4:57 PM, 31 Aug 60, SECRET.
2/ ChPEO to CINCPAC PEO-Opt. 2425, DTG 011102Z, Sep 60, SECRET.
3/ State Intel. Rept. 8435, SECRET.

Souvanna.[1] But it must also be observed, in the search for motivations, that if Kong Le knew, as he well may have, that Phoumi had already taken the initiative to desert Souvanna's government, such a statement might reasonably have seemed to be a gesture that could cost nothing and might gain something by shifting onus of the breakup of the coalition entirely to Phoumi.

124. There were increasing rumors of measures or policies that the new government would adopt which were bound to be unpopular with Phoumi and not to attract support among those favorable to Phoumi. These began on the day Souvanna's cabinet received the royal sanction. On 2 September, ChPEO stated that reports had reached him that Souvanna proposed to establish a police force of 8000, cut the Army to 15,000 and integrate the Pathet Lao into the Police Force and the Army.[2] On 4 September the charges of high treason against Prince Souphanouvong were formally dropped by the special criminal court on the basis of lack of evidence.[3]

125. On 5 September, Phoumi announced over the radio that he would not return to Vientiane until the situation there returned to normal. This was understood in Vientiane to mean that he would not return until Kong Le's troops had been withdrawn.[4] On the 5th there was word, also, that the revolutionary committee, which Phoumi had dissolved as recently as the 31st, had reconvened in Savannakhet, had accused Kong Le of failing to live up to the Luang Prabang agreements, had asked withdrawal of the offer of amnesty to Kong Le and

1/ NYT, 5 Sep 60, p. 2.
2/ ChPEO to CINCPAC 9937, DTG 021234Z, Sep 60.
3/ NYT, 5 Sep 60, p. 2. The State Dept. Intel. Rpt. 8435 says 3 Sep.
4/ NYT, 6 Sep 60, p. 10.

threatened to reestablish itself if the disorders in Vientiane continued.[1] The same day Ambassador Brown reported a conversation with Souvanna, much of which centered upon Souvanna's lightly veiled protest against U.S. aid to Phoumi. [ ] This gave added credibility to the report sent earlier by ChPEO concerning Souvanna plans to study the curtailment of military strength in Laos and suggested also that Souvanna might be preparing to turn elsewhere for support.[2]

126. Souvanna's next moves in response to the continued support of Phoumi by the U.S. came in the form of a suggestion he might turn to the Russians. In good diplomatic style, this was at first communicated indirectly. On the morning of 6 September, Souvanna told British Ambassador Addis (whom he could count on to leak the information promptly to American Ambassador Brown), that he believed that the Soviet Ambassador in Bangkok should be accredited to Vientiane, but without a residence in Vientiane, in an arrangement similar to the way in which the Lao Ambassador in Paris was accredited to Moscow. Souvanna further confided to the British Ambassador that he did not favor full recognition of the People's Republic of China or of North Vietnam but he did favor closer relations.[3] Publicly taking a strong stand against the Phoumi opposition, Souvanna told a press conference the same day that Phoumi would be considered a rebel if he did not

1/ Vientiane/EmbTel 466, 5 Sep 60, UNCLASSIFIED.
2/ Vientiane/EmbTel, number illegible, 10:00 PM, 5 Sep 60.
3/ Vientiane/EmbTel 473, 4:00 PM, 6 Sep 60, SECRET.

end his resistance to the new Lao government and return soon to Vientiane.[2] The next day France was brought into the act. [

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The Agence France Presse (a French news service roughly comparable to the Associated Press) carried on its wires on 8 September an item, without attribution, entitled "Franco-American Divergencies in the Far East." This article protested against some of the not always perfectly covered covert operations of the U.S., in Laos, declaring "American Special Services may sometimes have exceeded Washington directives but in any event they dramatized Franco-American differences." The U.S. was accused in general of depending, in the Far East,

1/ NYT, 7 Sep 60, p. 3.
2/ Paris/EmbTel 966, 7:00 PM, 7 Sep 60, CONFIDENTIAL.

on personal dictatorships such as those of Rhee, Chiang and Diem, which were bound to be unsuccessful in the long run because they lacked popular support, were not capable of overcoming the kind of resistance that the Communists would offer, and could not win the support of the people or of liberal elements. Souvanna's efforts to unify the country, and to get the Pathet Lao to renounce fighting and adopt a moderate course of action were undermined, the story ran, by the encouragement given by American Special Services to Phoumi and "to cousin Sarit."[1/] This was very much the same criticism that was being leveled against U.S. policy in Laos, from time to time, by other ordinarily staunch friends, most notably the U.K. Such were some of the influences arising outside of Laos itself which were brought to bear upon U.S. policy in response to the renewed quarrel between Phoumi and Souvanna, and also served as a warning of opposition, by our allies, to more aggressive U.S. policy proposals -- which opposition would play a most important part in eventual decisions concerning U.S. policies and operations in Laos.

A PERIOD OF MARKING TIME AND RECONSIDERATION

128. The gradually apparent withdrawal of Phoumi and the Savannakhet faction from the Luang Prabang compromise began a period in which, even more markedly than before, the various elements of the U.S. government found it difficult to adopt, and above all difficult to hold, any clear-cut policy aimed plainly in one direction. [

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1/ Reported by Paris/EmbTel 1015, 9 Sep 60, UNCLASSIFIED.

No policy ever had the best possible chance to work, because no policy was ever followed to the exclusion of other actions that lessened its chances of success. And the attention of operating personnel, and of those in the line of command and control, was devoted perhaps as much to American dissidence as to the problems of Laos as such.

129. The confusions in national policy in Laos were a matter of concern to Washington officials who were involved, as testified by memorandum sent on 6 September originating in the Laos Desk in OASD/ISA-FER. That memorandum said that at the meeting that morning of key action officers on Laos, "it was concluded that the differing interpretations of U.S. policy with respect to Laos must be resolved." The memorandum further proposed that this might best be done by an issuance of a new and unequivocal [

;] It may be questioned that a message as proposed would have achieved the desired end. What it was possible to get the agencies to agree upon was almost always too generalized to be an effective guide for the immediate, specific problems of practical operations. The desire was clear, was deeply felt and widely shared, however, for policy direction that would permit positive, consistent, and confident operational guidance.

130. A point that continued to be of constant concern to State was that Souvanna had offered to negotiate with Pathet Lao before his government was organized and sufficiently strong to deal with them. Kong Le controlled Vientiane and was believed to hold Souvanna at his mercy, and Phoumi's proclaimed

1/ Draft in ISA-FER, SECRET.

fears of return to Vientiane were judged legitimate.[1] About the same time the USARMA in Vientiane was reporting that, while Phoumi had been informed that the U.S. would not support him in a separatist action, he continued still to believe that the U.S. would support him in his opposition to Vientiane.[2] And State continued to supply Ambassador Brown with arguments to be employed in an attempt to dissuade Souvanna from proceeding to reflect, in the status accorded diplomatic representatives of the PRC, the GRC and DRVN, his announced policy of diplomatic neutrality in the cold war. It was considered that cutting off aid was too blunt an instrument for such issues, but in the discussion of the subject this instrument was nonetheless mentioned. Perhaps the idea was that the Ambassador might, in discussing the matter, let it trickle through to Souvanna that this was a sanction we knew we <u>could</u> employ although we did not yet intend to do so.[3]

131. In Laos the military establishment of the RLG, on the whole, remained loyal to Phoumi except in Region 5 (headquartered in Vientiane), although there was a continuing struggle throughout September, October and November for the loyalties of some of the commanders, junior officers, and troops in various areas. See Table I. Much of the struggle for the control of elements of FAL did not meet the naked eye. Some of these intrigues will be described at their appropriate place in the narrative. Nevertheless, on 11 September ChPEO reported to CINCPAC that PEO regional advisers continued to

1/ DepTel to Bangkok 305, 6:48 PM, 7 Sep 60, SECRET.
2/ USARMA/Vientiane, to DA/Washington, CX140, DTG 110800Z, Sep 60, CONFIDENTIAL.
3/ DepTel to Vientiane 289, PM (hour illegible), 9 Sep 60, SECRET.

TABLE I[a]

REGIONAL LOYALTIES AND OUTLOOK, AND PROSPECTS OF PHOUMI'S SUCCESS AND AID NEEDED TO ASSURE IT

(As of 12 Sep 60, Based on Responses of PEO Regional Representatives to Questions by ChPEO)

Question:	Region: I	II	III	IV
Loyalty of regional commanders?	Souvanna legal, will not fight Phoumi.	Phoumi	Leaning Phoumi	Phoumi
Loyalties of military below regional CO rank?	Souvanna	Phoumi	Phoumi	Phoumi
Loyalties of civil functionaries and local population?	Split	Leaning Phoumi	Leaning Souvanna	Leaning Souvanna
Number of civil and military A/C available and operational?	4 Beavers	1 C-47	1 Beaver	8 Helos
Any military operations planned or contemplated?	PL attacks abated, only defense contempated.	Attacks in Sam Neua renewed.	Outfitting and movements upstream in progress.	Anti-PL patrol.
Any indication of neutral help?	No	No	Possibly 3 Thai C-47's.	No
Your estimate of Phoumi's chance of success?	Negligible without assistance.	Troops this area tied up by PL.	Fair without; sure with 2 companies of troops.	No reply.
Least aid necessary to assure Phoumi's success.	No reply possible[b] without risking a disclosing question.	Food, POL, air transport.	9 C-47's 3 C-46's 500 chutes	No reply.

a/ USARMA/Vientiane to DA, Washington, CX 145, DTG 140425Z, Sep 60, SECRET.
b/ This mystifying response may indicate some knowledge of an impending coup attempt.

report that all regional C/O's, except in Region 5, would follow Phoumi's orders. In Region 5 PEO advisers had not been requested to return to FAL, although General Ouane had authorized the return of the French military advisers. There were difficulties, however, that appeared traceable to intrigues, to inefficiencies or to feet-dragging, because requests for supplies that should have reached PEO through the FAL headquarters had not been reported to PEO; and it was feared that some forces in the Regions that were loyal to Phoumi might now be caught in a squeeze between Pathet Lao attacks and lack of logistic support from the Vientiane Headquarters of that part of FAL loyal to Souvanna.[1/]

132. The first overt response of the U.S. government to the declaration by Boun Oum and Phoumi on 10 September of the establishment of a new revolutionary committee was to emphasize that the American policy was one of nonintervention, accompanied by an explicit warning to all other nations not to encroach upon Laotian affairs. Two hours before the public announcement of the revolutionary movement was made in Savannakhet, the Embassy political officer reported the impending act and about three hours after the revolutionary call was issued, Souvanna called in the diplomatic corps and repeated to them the gist of the announcement and the story of the breakdown of negotiations with Phoumi.[2/]

133. The first major political move in response to the growing awareness of the breakdown of the Luang Prabang agreement was an attempt to invoke the Royal powers of the King to

1/ ChPEO to CINCPAC, PEO Opt 2491, DTG 110815Z, Sep 60, SECRET.
2/ Vientiane/EmbTel 501, 8:00 PM, 10 Sep 60, UNCLASSIFIED; NYT, 12 Sep 60, pp. 1 and 9.

accomplish what the civil government appeared unable to do -- namely, to get a strong, united government. (The assumption was seemingly always made that some formula must exist, which if tried, would result in a strong, unified national government that would be either anti-Communist or "pro-Western neutralist.") One move that was proposed featured a joint approach to the King by British Ambassador Addis, Australian Ambassador Forsyth, French Ambassador Falaize, UN Representative Zellweger, and American Ambassador Brown, the purpose being to induce the King to take a strong hand. As plans for this were discussed, however, it became even more apparent than before that France was exerting strong but quiet resistance to American policies in Laos. Falaize, it was learned, had been instructed not to participate unless the purpose was specifically to urge the King to support the Souvanna government and to order Phoumi to return to it.[1/] Hence, Falaize could not go and Brown was left in a position where he would have to go it alone, because it could not be expected that the other Ambassadors concerned would wish to join in a démarche in which the nonparticipation of the French was so obvious.

134. On 10 September CINCPAC had asked ChPEO for an evaluation of the situation in Laos and on 12 September ChPEO provided an interim reply, concurred in by the Ambassador. It was divided into two parts. The first part presented a list of several possible future developments. The second part provided an estimate of what would be required for Phoumi to retake Vientiane if such a course was decided upon and was supported by the U.S.[2/] On 14 September CINCPAC broke his

1/ Vientiane/EmbTel 514, 3:00 PM, 12 Sep 60, SECRET.
2/ ChPEO to CINCPAC PEO-Opt 2502, DTG 121059Z, Sep 60, SECRET.

silence on policy with a message to the JCS. Presumably, it had been with this in mind that the request had gone to ChPEO on 10 September for an evaluation. CINCPAC's report to JCS began by saying that he had refrained for some time from comment and recommendations on the Laos situation because he had regarded the problem as falling primarily in the political area. But now that it had become apparent that no satisfactory political solution had been reached, and that FAL was beginning to fall apart on factional lines, and its capacity to contain the Pathet Lao therefore deteriorating, Laos was left in a militarily untenable position and the situation was an appropriate one for a basic reconsideration of policies because those we had tried had now demonstrably failed. Recognizing explicitly that the recommendations he was about to make would run counter to the policy preferences of our British and French allies, he acknowledged that we must begin by agreeing to disagree with them concerning Laos. He then proceeded to recommend five specific lines of action:

a. Supply FAL units via Phoumi [ ] in place of the Ouane/Souvanna channel (as favored by Ambassador Brown and State);

b. Advise Phoumi to be prepared to submit to the King a broad successor government with some such distinguished civilian as Boun Oum or Kou Abhay as Prime Minister, possibly including even Souvanna in a harmless post;

c. Encourage Phoumi, with the King's blessing, to liquidate Kong Le group promptly, even at the cost of some bloodshed;

d. Persuade Sarit to arrange the discreet transit of FAL troops across Thailand from Savannakhet to Vientiane;

e. Establish the new government as neutral, not through

diplomatic accommodations with the Bloc but with a reiteration of traditional Lao neutrality.[1]

CINCPAC's policy recommendations were backed up by the Director of the Joint Staff and, without any significant change, were approved by the JCS and forwarded on 16 September 1960 as recommendations to the Secretary of Defense.[2]

PAKSANE AND SAM NEUA

135. The trend toward a firmer and more pronounced policy of aid to Phoumi received serious setbacks during the last half of September through the defeat of Phoumi forces at Paksane and the fall of Sam Neua.

136. In mid-September, the first rumblings of trouble began in Sam Neua, perennial source of worry and trouble in Laos. Near the end of the first week of September, following reports of Pathet Lao activity in the area (such reports were almost always available), Ambassador Brown approached General Ouane concerning the security of Sam Neua and the logistic needs of the FAL garrison there. The Sam Neua garrison was ostensibly loyal to Phoumi. At that time Ouane had said that he had talked with the C/O at Sam Neua and that the situation was not as serious as reports indicated. Brown's offer of support had been refused. On the 14th, spurred by more reports of Pathet Lao activity and of consequent need to bolster the Sam Neua garrison, which reports came principally from Savannakhet, the Ambassador brought the question before Prime Minister Souvanna. Souvanna responded that he would be prepared to send troops from the 2nd Paratrooper Battalion to Sam Neua, except that to do so would place them in an area

1/ CINCPAC to JCS, DTG 142358Z, Sep 60, SECRET.
2/ JCS 1992/847, 16 Sep 60, TOP SECRET.

controlled by Phoumi while weakening Vientiane against possible attack by Phoumi forces coming up from Savannakhet. In reporting this, the Ambassador said that he countered this with a suggestion, which he related as if he expected it to be taken seriously, that Souvanna should get Ouane to offer Phoumi to send troops from the 2nd Battalion to Sam Neua and at the same time ask Phoumi to give assurance, in the national interest, that they would not be interfered with.[1/]

137. The Sam Neua story continued the next day when the U.S. military attache in Vientiane visited the place and was extensively briefed on the situation by the Deputy Commander, Major Thanom. Thanom was temporarily in command at Sam Neua in the absence of Lt. Col. Khong Nongarath. Major Thanom presented what the ARMA considered an "extremely bleak picture," including a desperate shortage of all types of ammunition and critically short supplies of rice. Thanom declared that they were ready to accept help from either Vientiane or Savannakhet, although he expressed resentment at Vientiane radio broadcasts which belittled the imminence of the Pathet Lao peril. He insisted that actual fighting was taking place and also that the enemies were not just the Pathet Lao, but Black Thai and Viet Minh as well. The USARMA's comment upon the picture as presented by Thanom was that he believed Thanom exaggerated the situation generally, citing that the civilians in the town appeared quite calm. But he appraised Thanom as sincere, and concluded that the Sam Neua situation was serious, that a little fighting was going on, and that the needs were real though the fall of the town was not imminent.[2/]

1/ Vientiane/EmbTel 526, 11:00 AM, 14 Sep 60, SECRET.
2/ USARMA/Vientiane to DA/Washington, CS 150, DTG 151310Z, SECRET.

138. A considerable measure of excitement developed in the next two or three days concerning the needs of Sam Neua in the face of the real or alleged offensive threat of the Pathet Lao and their supporters. Generally speaking, the attitude of the Souvanna and Ouane people in Vientiane had at first been to discount the threat, while the news and broadcasts from Savannakhet were quite shrill in their description of the peril. But by September 16, even Souvanna was making public statements to the effect that a large Pathet Lao movement toward Sam Neua was threatening the town.[1] The same day, a plane had been sent to Sam Neua to bring the C/O to Vientiane to report on the situation and outline the needs of the place. The understanding was that the plane would return to Sam Neua the following day, returning the C/O and carrying supplies and ammunition, possibly even reinforcements drawn from the 2nd Paratroop Battalion.[2]

139. The plane made the trip to Sam Neua and returned to Vientiane as planned. However, difficulties were encountered in returning the plane to Sam Neua the next day because Kong Le unexpectedly offered obstacles to the dispatch of the plane, as well as to providing the ammunition and supplies from the depots which he controlled. In the little drama that ensued, as later related by Ambassador Brown, the Ambassador found it necessary to threaten Souvanna with reporting to Washington the failure to supply Sam Neua. Such a report, he explained, would put an end to aid from the United States. It was emphasized that the delay, presumably traceable to Kong Le's objection, would be interpreted as evidence that Souvanna and Ouane were not in control of the government, but rather they

1/ New York Times, 17 Sep 60, p. 167.
2/ Vientiane/EmbTel 541, 5:00 PM, 16 Sep 60, SECRET.

were under the control of Kong Le. Armed with this threat from the U.S., Souvanna and Ouane were able that afternoon to get Kong Le to sign a declaration stating that he had turned over his powers of government to Souvanna and had returned to his post as Commander of the 2nd Battalion. (This was, in fact, broadcast over the Vientiane radio at 4:30 in the afternoon of the 17th.) Release of the plane was given, and by 4 o'clock it had been half loaded. It was still necessary for the Ambassador to follow up on the operation. At 7 o'clock the next morning, he went to the airport and there he found the Commander-in-Chief of FAL (Ouane), as well as the Prime Minister, personally supervising the final loading and clearance of the plane. Shortly after that, the plane flew off to Sam Neua. In his message describing the affair, Ambassador Brown ended his account with the observation, "If this wasn't so desperately serious, it would be funny."[1/]

140. There were both immediate and later sequels to this affair. The immediate sequel came on the afternoon of the same day when the plane from Vientiane arrived in Sam Neua carrying the needed supplies. While Major Thanom was in Vientiane, General Bounleuth had visited Sam Neua. On his return to Sam Neua, Major Thanom was dressed down for his dealings with Vientiane, and ordered to Savannakhet. The rice that was planned to be flown into Sam Neua on the following day, the 18th, never left Vientiane. In the interval since Thanom had first gone to Sam Neua, the regular commander of that military region, Col. Kham Khong, had also returned and had announced, as proof of his loyalty to Phoumi, that

1/ Vientiane/EmbTel 551, 11:00 AM, 18 Sep 60, SECRET.

he would accept no rice from Vientiane without clearance from Savannakhet. Sam Neua at the same time received reinforcements of 125 paratroopers flown in by Phoumi from Seno, and a company was reported dispatched overland from Zieng Khouang. To witness these latter events Phoumi had sent in representatives of the New York Times and the Associated Press, and their stories of the threat of Pathet Lao appeared the following day in the American press.[1/] Both official and public attention were heavily concentrated, by these events, on the situation at Sam Neua. But before further developments of importance occurred there, there were other affairs which must be recorded.

141. Phoumi could ill afford, in fact, the bravado of this diversion of troops and attention to Sam Neua. While attention was being directed almost exclusively to Sam Neua, word suddenly came of activity in the area of Paksane. On 20 September, the USARMA in Vientiane reported in a routine fashion that a skirmish had occurred between Phoumi and Vientiane forces in the Paksane area. There was also mention of Phoumi reinforcements in the area, specifically, 12 boats including 6 LCM's which were believed to carry armor. The comment on this was that it was possible that all the 2nd Battalion of Infantry was then at Paksane.[2/] A matter of minor importance, but of some interest to those concerned with the intelligence process, was the fact that on the following day the ARPAC Intelligence Summary No. 187 gave prominence to a report based on press accounts that Phoumi forces began siege of Vientiane on 20 September and that Phoumi

1/ USARMA/Vientiane to DA/Washington, CS 154, DTG 191215Z, Sept 60, SECRET; Vientiane/EmbTel 554, 8:00 PM, 18 Sept 60, SECRET; NYT, 18 Sept 60.
2/ USARMA/Vientiane to DA/Washington, CS 158, DTG 201300Z, Sept 60, SECRET.

claimed his troops had encircled the city and issued a warning to citizens to remain clear of strategic areas.[1] Shortly after, however, CINCUSARPAC's summary reported as a routine item that Phoumi's troops had clashed with those of Souvanna about 60 miles east of Vientiane and that, while details were unclear, Phoumi's troops apparently broke contact after about 3 hours, and withdrew toward Paksane to form a defensive position.[2]

142. By this time, however, there was a comparatively clear story of the affair in the New York Times. In a special dispatch from Vientiane dated 21 September, Ouane was reported as having given a firsthand account of the battle. He said that a fleet of seven barges and five new U.S. military landing craft, which had just been turned over to Phoumi's forces in the south, had journeyed up the Mekong and had arrived at Paksane on Sunday (18 September). He said that the barges carried two companies of soldiers, six armored cars with mortars, machine guns and ammunition, and constituted a reinforcement for the 500 men who had been moved north by Phoumi nearly a month before. The clash itself had occurred on Monday, 19 September, when Phoumi forces started moving out of Paksane toward Vientiane. When they met up with the forces from Vientiane, they quickly withdrew to the city and Vientiane forces then took up positions just north of it.[3] The extent of the victory of the Vientiane forces was not apparent, however, until the next day, when Souvanna announced in Vientiane that RLG troops had recaptured Paksane after two days of fighting which ended with disorderly flight of the Phoumi forces.[4]

1/ CINCUSARPAC, RJ 94874, DTG 220211Z.
2/ ARPAC Summary 187A, RJ 94874, DTG 220211Z.
3/ NYT, 22 Sep 60, pp. 1 and 4.
4/ NYT, 23 Sep 60, p. 4.

143. Whether by coincidence or otherwise, on 22 September the USSR took the occasion to make a significant public pronouncement on Laos. Pravda on that day published a "Declaration of the Soviet Government in Connection with Events in Laos." This article accused the United States and its Allies, South Vietnam and Thailand, of concentrating military forces to support Phoumi, thereby intervening in Laos internal affairs. The declaration made no specific threats but it confirmed that the USSR was following events in Laos closely and that this violation of the 1954 Geneva Agreement could have serious consequences.[1]

144. As had been feared for some time, Sam Neua finally fell, near the end of September, but not in the way nor for the reasons, nor perhaps even to the enemy, that had been anticipated. For some time after the event, in fact, it was not really clear if the event had occurred, or when it had occurred, or how it had occurred.

145. Up to the moment when it became evident that something very unusual had happened at Sam Neua, alarmist accounts of the situation there were heavily discounted by American Intelligence appraisal in Vientiane. At the urgent request of Phoumi, and under pressure exerted by Ambassador Brown, FAL planes on 26 September resumed a rice lift to the Plaine des Jarres and Sam Neua.[2] The regional commander, Col. Kham Khong, described the situation at that time, for the benefit of the press, as very serious, with shortages of food and ammunition and a need for reinforcements, and with the enemy newly in possession of a hill from which they would

1/ Transmitted to Washington by the U.S. Embassy in Moscow, Air Gram G-172, OFFICIAL USE ONLY.
2/ Vientiane/EmbTel 623, 7:00 PM, 27 Sep 60, SECRET.

soon be able to command the airfield. At the same time, he proclaimed that his loyalty to Phoumi was such that he would accept aid only from Savannakhet unless specifically authorized otherwise by Savannakhet (as the rice was in this case).[1] In a summary report on Sam Neua, apparently dispatched just after midnight of 26 September, the situation was reviewed primarily in the light of four recent sources of information. The first was the word of the Colonel Kham Khong to the PEO regional advisor. This report described a serious situation, with urgent need for rice and reinforcements. The second source was the newsman (Jim Robertson of NBC) who had visited Sam Neua on the 26th. He had been debriefed in Vientiane upon his return to Vientiane from Sam Neua. The third report was that of a pilot who flew into Sam Neua and reported he was told there that any more planes from Vientiane, not cleared by Savannakhet, would be impounded if they landed in Sam Neua. The fourth was the FAL G-2 (of the Vientiane FAL) who was inclined to view the situation as calm. The ARMA's comment was to disregard the newsman's account because of his inexperience in the area. He played down the alarm in Col. Kham Khong's reports to the PEO representatives as well. In summary, he described the situation as serious, but not yet critical <u>if</u> Kham Khong troops would fight and were resupplied.[2] This was a big "if." The State Department in Washington reacted to the New York Times stories -- not citing the USARMA report, which was available to State -- and in two DepTel's to Vientiane requested an urgent assessment of the situation and suggestions concerning how the local FAL commanders might be supplied.[3]

1/ NYT, 27 Sep 60, p. 4, dispatch dateline Sam Neua 26 Sep 60.
2/ USARMA/Vientiane to DA/Washington, CX 170, DTG 271030Z, Sept 60, SECRET.
3/ DepTel to Vientiane 347, 5:13 PM, 27 Sep 60, SECRET; DepTel to Vientiane 350, 9:15 PM, 27 Sep 60, UNCLASSIFIED.

146. On the morning of the 28th, two reports were filed from Vientiane suggesting a rapidly worsening situation in Sam Neua. The first of these was another and later USARMA report, this one based on direct word from the PEO Advisor to the Third Military Region, who asked that, because Sam Neua had fallen, the rice lift to Sam Neua be diverted to the Plaine des Jarres. (The PEO Advisor was not in Sam Neua, but in the latter area.) The USARMA also related that a few hours earlier, Phoumi had said that the Pathet Lao were attacking near the edge of the town and that, "although the city had not fallen, their commander had been advised to fall back upon Muong Puen if Sam Neua fell." Finally, he added that the Region 3 headquarters reported it had lost communication contact with Sam Neua.[1/] Later that evening, the Embassy reported to State that the Sam Neua situation was worsening, and specified that the airstrip had been lost. The message mentioned the continuing possibility of supplying the town by airlift, and the prospect was raised of reinforcement by the new paratroop group [ ] This suggests the situation was not yet viewed as completely hopeless.

147. The next day (29 September) Kong Le made an astonishing statement to the press, saying that Sam Neua had fallen to the Lao Army. The same day the British Military Attaché furnished the USARMA with a copy of a report which he had submitted to London, stating that Kong Le had told him he had dropped 20 paratroopers near Sam Neua on 26 September

1/ USARMA/Vientiane to DA/Washington, CX 176, DTG 281430Z, Sep 60, SECRET.
2/ Vientiane/EmbTel 636, 10:00 PM, 28 Sep 60, SECRET.

and that they had taken over the village in cooperation with townsmen.[1] CINCPAC was incognito in Vientiane at the time and filed a special summary of the Laos situation, as of 292200Z September, based on all available sources of intelligence locally available, which included a statement that Sam Neua and adjacent airfield had fallen to Pathet Lao. He added a comment that a Vientiane spokesman charged that the Sam Neua defenses had not been conducted with spirit or good sense.[2] Kong Le continued to boast that "my troops" were in command at Sam Neua, and endeavored later to use this to increase further the growth of his prestige that had begun with the defeat of Phoumi forces at Paksane.[3]

148. On 2 October it was still not clear what had happened at Sam Neua, although by then it was accepted in Vientiane that about 20 paratroopers from Kong Le's 2nd Paratrooper Battalion had indeed been dropped somewhere in the vicinity of Sam Neua about 26 September. There was a conflict, however, in the stories available in Vientiane, about further details. The Kong Le version, already given, was that his 20 paratroopers plus villagers took the town. The other (Souvanna faction) version was that most of the Sam Neua troops had from the beginning been loyal to the Souvanna government, and that these, plus the Kong Le paratroopers, united to expel the few in the garrison who were loyal to Phoumi. According to this version, the Pathet Lao in the area had stopped their attack when the loyal RLG troops took over. There was also a Savannakhet version, to the effect that

1/ USARMA/Vientiane to DA/Washington, CX 179, DTG 291320Z, Sep 60, SECRET.
2/ CINCPAC to JCS (UNN), 300250Z, Sep 60, SECRET.
3/ USARMA/Vientiane to DA/Washington, DTG 300445Z, Sep 60, UNCLASSIFIED.

Kong Le's paratroopers joined with Pathet Lao and Viet Minh, and these in a combined action drove out the Phoumi garrison. In reporting these, the USARMA suggested that there might be some truth present in each of the stories, but that the second Vientiane story came closest to being true.[1/]

149. Later the same day (2 October), a first-hand account was made available to the USARMA. Col. Kham Khong, who had commanded the troops in the region and had been at Sam Neua, had come out and was interviewed by "a qualified Western military man" -- apparently either an Australian or a Frenchman -- who passed the story to the British Military Attache, who in turn relayed it to the USARMA. In spite of its credentials as a first-hand account, the story seemed almost too neat to be true. Kham Khong was reported to have begun by telling quite wild stories of a great melee of a battle; but when pressed concerning obvious discrepancies, he was said to have admitted that he saw six paratroopers jump from a plane, and immediately decided that all was lost. He left town with only one company of the 1st Paratroop Battalion, and had no idea of what had happened to the others. There had been no attack on Sam Neua town at all, and only normal skirmishing in the entire area. Over a period of time there had been a few wounded, but none killed.[2/]

150. The next explanation of events at Sam Neua was provided on 5 October by a refugee Catholic priest, who had escaped from Sam Neua town before the city fell, but who was apparently in the general area at the time of the events. Local persons who may actually have observed some of the happenings

1/ USARMA/Vientiane to DA/Washington, DTG 020745Z, Oct 60, SECRET.
2/ USARMA to DA/Washington, CZ 182, DTG 021405Z, Oct 60, SECRET.

presumably had passed their observations on to him. (The same man was also interviewed by the New York Times correspondent in the area, Jacques Nevard.) The priest's story was that some 800 Pathet Lao, but no Vietnamese, had surrounded the town for several weeks, and finally, on the morning of the 26th, occupied a hill overlooking the airfield. That same afternoon they fired on the town. The priest's account continued that there had been two days of fighting after that, until on the 28th Col. Kham Khong and Lieutenant Colonel Vingnarath decided the situation was hopeless and evacuated their forces, which were estimated at 1500 men. The story had it that about 30 Pathet Lao had been killed in action and one FAL man was killed. Big guns had been brought up by the Pathet Lao, but were not used. The USARMA was inclined to discount the story because of the extreme bitterness of the priest toward the Pathet Lao, which he judged prejudicial, combined with internal inconsistencies of detail which made the story difficult to believe -- especially such matters as the justification of 1500 soldiers retreating in response to a threat from only 800.[1/]

1/ USARMA/Vientiane to DA/Washington, CX 168, DTG 061201Z, Oct 60, CONFIDENTIAL.

PROBLEMS OF INTELLIGENCE

151. Throughout this period the difficulties of policy formulation and operational decision-making were exacerbated by inadequacies of intelligence. Dependable factual information was often impossible to get. Dependable appraisals of the facts were perhaps even harder to get. A further problem was that events moved rapidly, and even when information could be confidently trusted, the situation might have changed so rapidly by the time an operational decision was reached that it would no longer be appropriate, having meanwhile been overtaken by events. Ambassador Brown repeatedly warned Washington that the pace in the local political situation was often so fast that before Washington could respond to one situation, the nature of that situation had changed so much that quite another policy or action seemed called for. ChPEO on 31 August stated that "since /the/ revolution started we have had almost hourly changes in situation."[1] This was a problem at both ends of the communication line. In passing guidance to the American Ambassador in Vientiane on 31 August, and describing representations being made in Washington to the British, French and Australian Ambassadors, a DepTel apologized for not informing the Ambassador in advance of these representations, but commented "Events /are/ moving so rapidly /in Washington and elsewhere/ it /is/ impossible /to/ obtain your recommendations prior /to/ consultation with allies here...."[2]

152. [

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1/ ChPEO to OSD/ISA, DTG 312500Z, Aug 60, SECRET.
2/ DepTel to Vientiane, No. 258, 4:57 PM, 31 Aug 60, SECRET.

[redacted]

[redacted]

The most noteworthy of the lesser violences was the repeated firing of mortar shells and occasional machine guns into the Vientiane area, either from an island in the Mekong or from its farther bank. On 18 September, the USARMA/Vientiane reported that there had been four instances in eight nights of firing directed at Chinaimo and other installations in the Vientiane area, and that the heaviest firing of all occurred on the night of 17-18 September. He believed that the firing did not come from the Thai side of the river. He did say, however, that although there was no definite proof, evidence (which he did not specify) indicated strongly that groups under the command of Captain Siho were responsible [redacted]

153. The repeated attacks on the border town of Vientiane were associated with frequent accusations of Thai intervention. Thai sympathies with Phoumi were much advertised. Thailand had enforced an almost complete embargo on Laos beginning immediately after the coup, making exception mainly to the movement of goods to Savannakhet for Phoumi, just as North Vietnam was a haven and a point of resupply to the Pathet Lao. Phoumi was widely known as a nephew of the Thai Prime Minister Sarit, and publicly known to be supported by the latter to an unspecified extent. Thailand was the main port of entry to Laos; it was the larger, more powerful, more developed neighboring country, with an obvious intimate interest in all that went on in the

1/ USARMA/Vientiane to DA/Wash., No. CX 152, 180540Z, Sep 60, SECRET.

[redacted]

Laos hinterland. There was open knowledge of the use of the Mekong for the advance elements of Phoumi's forces in the vicinity of Paksane. There were many reasons to suspect Thailand was used to transit troops and materiel to Phoumi.

154.

1/ Reported by Vientiane EmbTel 556, 18 Sep 60, UNCLASSIFIED.
2/ USARMA/Bangkok to DA/Wash., C75, DTG 210315Z, Sep 60, SECRET.

155. The Vientiane radio throughout this period carried many quite strong charges of large-scale overt Thai intervention. The American Ambassador in Bangkok responded to the more sweeping charges. For instance, on 20 September he protested to the Secretary of State against a VOA broadcast on 20 September which, he said, contained a report of Vientiane allegation that Thai troops were massed in Thailand for an attack on Vientiane and led by Captain Siho, whereas the VOA did not carry a report of Sarit's allegations that Souvanna was a Commie.[2] Later, in response to a more specific Kong Le allegation that 105 mm shells had come into his tank position at Paksane on 28 September from Thai artillery, the American Ambassador in Bangkok reported that, at his order, a JUSMAG check had revealed that all Thai mortars and artillery had been in their accustomed positions at the time, far from Paksane action.[3]

156. As an illustration of this problem of intelligence, on 27 September 1960, the USARMA Vientiane forwarded a report received from the chief PEO representative in Savannakhet, which in colorful language described the difficulties he faced in appraising the situation there. In his report on the week of 16-25 September, the PEO representative had called it the week of "the big bluff, dealer's choice and final realization." The big bluff consisted of the many extravagant and erroneous statements which he said Phoumi put out as a smoke screen. He was even bluffing his own commanders. He had to bluff, the report

1/ USARMA/Vientiane to DA/Wash., CX 161, DTG 211140Z, CONFIDENTIAL.
2/ USARMA/Bangkok to DA/Wash., C75, DTG 210315Z, Sep 60, SECRET.
3/ USARMA/Vientiane to DA/Wash., CX 161, DTG 211140Z, CONFIDENTIAL.

went on, because he was operating on a shoe string. He exaggerated dangers and threats on one side, his own capabilities and the prospects of aid from Sarit and the United States on the other side. Dealer's choice was the term he employed to describe the problem of evaluating reports. There was 180 degree variance, he said, in reports from Phoumi and Souvanna concerning Sam Neua, concerning means of dealing with the Pathet Lao, and concerning everything else. "It is a problem difficult at best to evaluate, and on our considered evaluation lies the fate of Laos." Final realization resulted from the stunning blow dealt to Phoumi at Paksane. As a result of the defeat at Paksane Phoumi was at the end of his rope, having moved from the extreme of the big bluff to an extreme of deep despondency. Phoumi finally realized as a result of Paksane that the United States could not support him unless he cooperated with Souvanna. Partly reverting in his thoughts to the repeated idea of creating a separate kingdom of Southern Laos, at other times he was grasping desperately for some means of accommodation with Souvanna.[1/]

157. [

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1/ USARMA/Vientiane to DA/Washington, CX 172, DTG 271100Z, September 1960, CONFIDENTIAL.

CINCPAC VISIT TO VIENTIANE

158. At the end of his two-day incognito visit to Bangkok and Vientiane at the end of September, CINCPAC dispatched an exclusive to the Joint Chiefs setting forth political and military appraisals and recommendations for U.S. policy in Laos, along with an intelligence summary (from which the quotation above was taken), which was intended to serve as a basis for the policy recommendations. These carried his recommendations of 10 September a short step further. He concluded:

a. Kong Le has become a major power factor, neither Souvanna nor Ouane was able to control him, and he would have to be eliminated,

b. Souvanna was not to be counted upon, and his reputed popular support was pure conjecture, and probably not important anyway in Laos,

c. Phoumi had lost stature and was difficult to manage but was still America's best bet in Laos,

d. Boun Oum or either of the Abhays would be acceptable Prime Ministers although Phoumi would be better.

THE CONFUSING WORD OF A CUTOFF OF MAP

159. At the beginning of October, just as another major effort to resolve policy problems was about to get underway, the Laos affair was enlivened by remarks made in Saigon by Gen. Palmer, Chief of the U.S. Military Assistance Program, who was making a tour of Southeast Asia at that time. As early as 25 September Gen. Palmer, then in Bangkok, had given to the Press a statement that there would be a slow-down in military aid to Laos until the current crisis was settled. He was quoted as saying, "We must wait for

1/ CINCPAC to JCS exclusive for Generals Twining, Lemnitzer, White, Shoup and Admiral Burke from Felt, 5849, DTG 300310Z, September 1960, TOP SECRET.

the situation to clear before we know what the U.S. policy will be."[1]

160. The real excitement came a few days later at the time of Gen. Palmer's visit to Saigon. In a press conference in the Vietnamese capital on 1 October, Gen. Palmer was represented in news accounts as having told a press conference that U.S. military aid to Laos had been cut off pending the achievement of political stability. The statement was at first greeted with great consternation, both in Vientiane and in official circles in Washington. The American Ambassador in Vientiane wired State that the Voice of America and the ABC and NBC had carried an announcement attributed to General Palmer that all U.S. military aid to Laos was suspended and this announcement was followed by a comment that the Army would not be paid. The Ambassador requested clarification as soon as possible stating that, if this was in fact a fait accompli, it would handicap greatly the negotiations that were then in progress; and he asked guidance on what explanation should be given to the RLG.[2]

161. A prompt reply came back from State which quoted the press release that had been put out in Washington as the guidance to be followed. The press release completely disowned General Palmer's statement on suspension of military aid, saying that it was made without instructions from or knowledge of Washington and that U.S. military aid to Laos had not been suspended.[3] The American Ambassador in Saigon then provided the Department of State Washington with some background on the Palmer statement. This said that the General had been warned before the conference of possible questions on Laos and of being drawn into the political arena. Responsive to these warnings in introductory remarks, he said he was not competent to discuss political questions, and during the conference he refused several times to answer questions

1/ NYT, 26 September 1960, p. 7.
2/ Vientiane EmbTel, 661, 11:00 PM, 2 October 1960, CONFIDENTIAL
3/ DepTel to Vientiane 366, 9:29 PM, 2 October 1960, CONFIDENTIAL.

on grounds that they were political. However, U.S. wire service reporters in their questions bore in on the subject of U.S. military aid to Laos. The tape recording of the conference revealed that Palmer had reported that military aid to Laos was suspended because "the situation in unclear, and until there is stability I might say it is very difficult to send anything anywhere and know what is going to happen to it." The U.S. had stopped making deliveries for the time being because "we have not been sure who was responsible for anything."[1]

162. On 3 October the ASD/ISA sent a message to General Palmer marked "Personal," in which he cited that the remarks made in Saigon were being interpreted in Vientiane as an indication of a change in U.S. policy, and this was making it difficult to achieve U.S. objectives for judicious application of pressure. He suggested that General Palmer issue a clarification of his remarks to the effect that there had been no change in policy, although current difficulties had made expeditious delivery to Laos difficult to achieve.[2] No messages or news accounts have been found that indicate what response, if any, was made to this request.

163. But suddenly the publicly disowned statement of Gen. Palmer was declared to be true after all. On 7 October a State Department release announced that military aid funds for Laos, including salaries for the Laotian Army for September, were being held up because of a split between the forces supporting Souvanna and elements backing Phoumi. The statement emphasized that the U.S. had not cancelled its aid program for Laos, but had only suspended it pending a review of the situation. The statement explained that the decision to halt the aid had been reached early in the week,

1/ Saigon EmbTel 731, 6:00 p.m., 2 Oct 60, OUO.
2/ OSD/ISA to CINCPAC DEF 983746, 3 Oct 60, SECRET.

after consultations between top level State Department officials and representatives of British, French, Australian and other governments allied with SEATO.[1] It is known that there was an OCB meeting on 5 October which dealt with the problems of Laos and that there was another meeting on Laos in the office of the Secretary of Defense on 7 October at which representatives of CIA and probably of State were present. The decisions of these meetings, so far as records reveal, will be discussed below. The available information does not unmistakably indicate that a decision was taken at either one which would have been the basis for the State Department statement of 7 October. It is, in fact, not clear whether the meeting in Secretary Gates' office of 7 October was held early enough to have preceded the State Department announcement.[2] But the inference seems clear, in spite of explicitly confirming evidence, that the decision to announce a curtailment of military aid to Laos was taken on an interdepartmental basis, either as an OCB action, or as an action at the level of the Secretary of Defense. The motivation for the decision is clearer than the exact timing and circumstances. It was to endow the Parsons' mission to Vientiane, which is discussed below, with as powerful an element of pressure as appeared immediately available, in hope of inducing Souvanna and the King to follow desired courses of action. There may well have been some consultation with SEATO allies, as stated in the press release put out by the State Department; it is scarcely to be believed, however, that in this case such consultation with SEATO allies was the determining factor.

1/ NYT, 8 Oct 60, p. 5.
2/ The source concerning the 5 Oct meeting is JCS 1992/853, 7 Oct 60, containing as enclosure, OASD/ISA I-16120/60, 7 Oct 60, Memo to SecDef from ASD/ISA, SECRET; concerning the 7 Oct meeting, the source is "Informal Notes on 7 Oct Meeting" in ISA-FER File, SECRET.

THE MEETINGS OF 5, 7 AND 8 OCTOBER

164. The deteriorating situation during the second half of September, with resultant disillusion in policies and persons previously depended upon, led to reconsideration of many aspects of our Lao program, and to active revival of the old proposal to use the King as an instrument to restore order and unity among the non-Communist elements and to reinvigorate the resistance to the Pathet Lao. Phoumi was more tractable than before the defeat at Paksane and the loss of Sam Neua; if he was to be salvaged as a force to be used against the PL he might need to be protected from a possible Kong Le-PL follow-up of the Kong Le victory at Paksane. On 28 September, Phoumi met with Ouane at Luang Prabang under the King's auspices and the King got an apparent agreement in principle that the elements of FAL represented by these two would reunite to fight the Pathet Lao. An informal agreement was reached (apparently at cocktails following the business session) on a truce line at Nam Ca Dinh River, south of Paksane. Both Phoumi and Vientiane elements of FAL were to remain in their current positions, taking no offensive actions, while political problems were being solved. At the same time Boun Oum met privately with the King to work for a Boun Oum government and it was reported that the King promised to call Souvanna to Luang Prabang to extract a resignation from him. The understanding was that Boun Oum would be the Prime Minister, Souvanna a Vice Prime Minister, Phoumi and Ouane were to take their places in the Defense set-up. These were major elements in the situation as known at the end of September when CINCPAC made his incognito visit to Vientiane.[1/]

1/ CINCPAC to JCS, UNN 30 Sep 60 (DTG 300250Z written in by hand), SECRET, was a part of the special summary of the Laos situation prepared by or in the direction of CINCPAC while in Vientiane, outlining all available sources and applicable to the situation up to 292200Z September).

165. Kong Le had the upper hand militarily as a result of the developments at Paksane and Sam Neua. Souvanna was suspicious of U.S. motives as well as of Phoumi and Sarit. Kong Le's strengthened position made him harder to deal with. It was therefore a problem to induce Souvanna to prevail upon Kong Le to observe the truce that had been agreed upon in Luang Prabang between Ouane and Phoumi. There had been a public airing of differences, on 30 September, between Souvanna and Kong Le which resulted from Kong Le's earlier boasts of having been the victor of Sam Neua and from his repeated declarations that he would continue his military campaign against Phoumi in the South. In response to this situation, State instructed the Ambassador to tell Souvanna that if these reports were indeed true, his only logical course was to issue a direct command to Kong Le to obey a cease fire or else be relieved of command and subjected to the strongest discipline; and that the U.S. was ready to lend all appropriate aid to the RLG to enforce a cease fire.[1/]

166. Two days after the departure of CINCPAC on 30 September, the Ambassador submitted a summary appraisal and recommendations of himself and the Country Team. This statement began by noting that unity was the greatest need and that the fragile beginning of a military reunification made at the Luang Prabang meetings was subject to damage from divisive political moves by Souvanna or Phoumi, or from irresponsible actions of Kong Le. A political solution was not considered hopeful. Phoumi was weaker but still somewhat separatist in sympathies. Souvanna was stronger by comparison with Phoumi, but less tractable than before. Kong Le was stronger, and so were the Pathet Lao. The recommendations were that the U.S. should support the reunification of FAL, by

1/ DepTel to Vientiane 360, 7:30 PM, 30 Sep 60, SECRET.

support in the form of pay, airlift, munitions, etc., provided requests were made on a united basis. (This was the crucial proviso.) U.S. pressures should be devised to foster interfactional compromises that would be necessary to political reunification and to introduce necessary anti-Communists into government. Souvanna should be retained somewhere in the government.[1/] These recommendations, agreed to by the Country Team, avoided those specifics which generally became essential for operational needs, and which were generally the source of division of opinion among American officials and agencies.

167. On 4 October 1960, State sent guidance on Laos to the Bangkok Embassy, in anticipation of a meeting of the political council of SEATO, which indicated much increased distaste for Souvanna -- described as more intent on getting rid of Phoumi than in preserving FAL -- and observed that Laos could be saved only by immediate action to make the cease fire effective together with formation of a new government which would reunite non-Communist elements. The U.S. government was anxious, the message went on to say, to improve the FAL capability to fight the Pathet Lao and would not desire to finance both sides of a civil war between two opposing anti-Communist factions, while the Communists themselves looked on in glee.[2/] This message suggests some hardening of the State Department line, although there is no evidence that this resulted from any specific development in Laos or any formal meetings or decision processes in Washington. The message to Bangkok did follow receipt of word from Vientiane that Souvanna had addressed a Leftist-Neutralist rally, along with Kong Le,

1/ Vientiane EmbTel 660, 8:00 PM, 2 Oct 60, SECRET.
2/ DepTel to Bangkok 460, 9:57 PM, 3 Oct 60, SECRET.

and had promised establishment of a Russian Embassy in Vientiane, reopening of PL negotiations, no compromise with Savanmakhet, and added expressions of brotherhood to Souphanouvong.[1] This would provide a presumptive explanation, under the circumstances.

168. A period of decisions in Washington was entered into about 5 October. On that date was held the first of a series of important meetings of record, which attempted again to come to grips with the recurrent difficulties in Laos. The meeting on 5 October was an OCB affair. ASD/ISA is known to have attended for DOD, the Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs L.T. Merchant and Deputy Assistant Secretary for Far Eastern Affairs John Steeves, are known to have attended for State. A surviving aide-memoire indicates that the DOD representative considered the following points should be brought up in the meeting:

a. Proposal to employ U.S. advisory teams with Phoumi units,

b. Possibility of a single U.S. military advisory team going with Phoumi if a Phoumi coup should start,

c. [ ]

d. Possibility of using special Thai units with U.S. support and possibly 2 U.S. officers,

e. The basic policy question of whether the situation in Laos was indeed retrievable and at what cost, and with consideration of effects of alternative courses of action not only upon Thailand and other S.E. and East Asian countries.

169. Undersecretary of State Merchant opposed any plans of military intervention as suggested in a. and b. above, covert or otherwise, that would involve danger of exposure. Concerning

1/ Vientiane EmbTel 672, 10:00 PM, 4 Oct 60, SECRET.

c., he agreed without argument. [

] With respect to proposal d., the State representation claimed insufficient knowledge to express an opinion. In the discussion of e., Undersecretary of State Merchant was credited in the notes with the following far-reaching and revelatory statement:

> "Mr. Merchant broke in to say that there had been a cleavage between State and Defense from the very beginning in this matter and that they had chosen the policy which they hoped would unify the country and the Army; that Defense had wished to back Phoumi, who, Mr. Merchant said, had well-known weaknesses and, if a winner, could not . . . unify the country. Mr. Merchant cited Phoumi's separatist tendencies. Mr. Merchant went on to say that it was increasingly clear that their policy was not successful. However, this did not mean that if the Defense-recommended course had been followed that it would have been successful." 1/

The final point in the remarks attributed here to Mr. Merchant raise the critical problem of the generally implicit assumption that it was indeed within the power of the U.S. to achieve a desired political outcome by an activist program, that an immediate activist program was necessary and that the risks involved in waiting until we could proceed with more confidence were much greater than the risks of proceeding with an activist program in the face of grave and acknowledged uncertainties. There is no record of this assumption ever being seriously and critically examined.

170. On the same day that the OCB met on Laos in Washington, the PEO adviser in the Second Region was reporting to Vientiane that the Region 2, pro-Phoumi group led by Major Vang Phao was preparing a coup against the pro-Kong Le leadership under Gen. Amkha, who had become dominant in the region since the fall of Sam Neua. The PEO advisers had been asked to join the coup leaders in the bush when the trick came off. 2/

1/ JCS 1992/653, 7 Oct 60, SECRET.
2/ Vientiane EmbTel 677, 2:00 PM, 5 Oct 60, SECRET.

171. The endeavors of the Phoumi group in Region 2 to involve the regional adviser and the LTAG team there in their coup continued.[1] At the same time the cooperation between Phoumi in Savannakhet and Gen. Ouane in Vientiane began to increase in ways that were not apparently participated in by Souvanna, and which were assisted by the use of the PEO communication channel between Vientiane and Savannakhet. When the Acting ChPEO (AChPEO) visited Savannakhet briefly on 6 October, he carried with him a special message from Gen. Ouane.[2] The available evidence does not indicate to what extent the collaboration at this moment reflected the U.S.-sponsored agreement reached at Luang Prabang with the King's approval, and to what extent it represented an understanding that was later to underlie Gen. Ouane's complete defection from the Souvanna government, at the time he moved to Region 1 to bring the military forces there into the Phoumi camp.

172. On 6 October Ambassador Brown went to Luang Prabang, acting on instructions to make special representations to the King. He informed the King, emphasizing that he was acting under explicit instructions from Washington, that the USG felt the situation required drastic action by the King to take power in his own hands and to appoint a Prime Minister and a Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces who would be capable of dealing with the deteriorated situation. Souvanna had shown himself incapable. The King was informed that the suspension of aid resulted from the fact that it was not being used effectively, and, on the contrary, was being used to support two contending parties. In reporting the interview the Ambassador said that the King had seemed so disconsolate, judging the situation perhaps already beyond redemption, that at one point the King seemed about to weep. The Ambassador

1/ ChPEO to CINCPAC, PEO 2635, DTG 060330Z, Oct 60, TOP SECRET.
2/ ChPEO to CINCPAC, PEO 2640, DTG 060545Z, Oct 60, TOP SECRET.

had promised that American aid would be resumed, however, if the King would follow the U.S. desires. But the King seemed indecisive and the Ambassador left without having any confident feeling that the King would respond positively to the suggestions.[1]

173. The Ambassador's démarche at Luang Prabang on the 6th was followed by important meetings in Washington on the 7th and 8th. The meeting on the 7th was in the office of the Secretary of Defense and the meeting on the 8th was held in the office of Under Secretary of State. In preparation for the meeting of the 7th, the JCS asked CINCPAC for information and comment, on an urgent basis, on a course of action being considered for recommendation at the meeting by the JCS. [

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174. CINCPAC replied promptly, recommending against the active participation of Thai forces, however attractive otherwise, on grounds that such Thai intervention would constitute an open invitation to intervention by the DRVN and the PRC. He listed the PEO representatives and teams by region and appraised the loyalty of the FAL units region by region, observing that loyalty depended very much on judgment of who would win and who supplied support. CINCPAC estimated further that it would take more than supply of airlift and troop pay to Phoumi forces, while at the

1/ Vientiane EmbTel 683, 11:00 PM, 6 Oct 60, SECRET.
2/ JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 983946, DTG 062244Z, Oct 60, TOP SECRET.

same time denying all aid to Kong Le, to eliminate the resistance of Kong Le and of pro-Communist neutralists. Such a program would serve only to delay an eventual unavoidable defeat. The vital necessity was leadership, and the U.S. should supply this by providing advisers at the battalion level. It was agreed that while even this could not guarantee success unless it were done immediately there was no real chance of salvaging the situation in Laos. Accordingly, it was recommended that:

a. Ambassador Brown be instructed immediately to tell the King again, and most forcefully, that the U.S. would support the Savannakhet group and that the King should proclaim a new government to conform to and include this endeavor.

b. If the King accedes and the first experience with FAL is encouraging, we should then proceed vigorously. [ ] and the U.S. should support Savannakhet group with advisors at the battalion level.

c. If the King is unwilling he should be told we would proceed anyway; if under these circumstances we proceed, and the first experience with FAL is not encouraging, we should then pull out, leaving Laos to the French, British and the Indians.[1/]

175. On 7 October, there was a policy meeting in the office of Secretary of Defense Gates which was interdepartmental in character although from records available it is not specifically known who was in attendance nor precisely what decisions were reached. The available evidence does indicate, however, that following the meeting on 7 October a message to Vientiane was dispatched by State and that this message was supposed to have reference to the decisions of the meeting in Mr. Gates office.

1/ CINCPAC to JCS 8352, DTG 070405Z, Oct 60, TOP SECRET.

yet was considered by representatives of CIA and Defense to be unrepresentative of the decisions and sentiments of that meeting. On the following day, which was a Saturday, another interdepartmental policy meeting on Laos was held. This one was in the office of Undersecretary of State Dillon. There is more detailed information available concerning this second meeting. After the second meeting another State message of instructions was dispatched to Vientiane which contained additional instructions, which was not immediately made available to DOD, and which was suspected by people in DOD of suggesting "keeping Phoumi under wraps" in a way that was understood to be contrary to the sense of the understandings reached in the interdepartmental meeting.[1/]

176. The policy guidance to Vientiane that was under consideration in the first meeting and which was transmitted to the Ambassador in Vientiane on either the 7th or 8th -- the evidence is not clear on this point -- was in the form of DEPTEL to Vientiane No. 384, no copy of which is available, but which apparently formed the basis for American actions during the next several days, and these days were important. The terms of the DEPTEL No. 384 guidance apparently included the following major provisions:

a. To earn the confidence and support of the USG, it was necessary for Souvanna:

(1) To move the government to Luang Prabang,

(2) To guarantee that Kong Le initiates no actions against FAL units loyal to Phoumi,

(3) To desist for the time being from negotiations with the Pathet Lao,

(4) To preserve government assets, preferably moving them to Luang Prabang.

1/ Informal notes in ISA-FER File on subject of 7 Oct meeting and development of policy in DepTel to Vientiane 384, SECRET.

b. Phoumi must cooperate fully with the government if Souvanna meets these conditions.

c. Military forces in Laos will meanwhile be supplied as necessary directly by and under the direction of CINCPAC, ChPEO and CHJUSMAG.[1/]

177. Even while the policy process was going in Washington concerning the stringent terms that were to be offered Souvanna, the latter was announcing intended steps that the USG was certain to oppose. On the 8th, Ambassador Brown advised the Department that in a press conference on that day (this would have been midway between the Washington meetings of the 7th and of the 8th), Souvanna had announced that RLG-PL negotiations would begin on 11 October; and in reply to a question by a newsman concerning what Laos might do if the United States suspension of military aid continued, Souvanna replied that he would have to take steps.[2/] The reference to the necessity of taking other steps was, under the circumstances, transparently a threat to turn to Russia.

178. The 8 October meeting in the office of the Undersecretary of State was attended by the Undersecretary of State, by the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs and his Deputy, by ASD/ISA, and Chief of OASD/ISA-FER, and by the CJCS, and ChSAD/J-5. Others may have been present but are not named in the available notes of the meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to outline the objectives of the forthcoming trip of Mr. Parsons and Mr. Irwin and CS/CINCPAC to Southeast Asia. The

1/ ISA-FER notes of DepTel 384 to Vientiane, in ISA-FER files, SECRET. Although it has been impossible to get a copy of this DepTel for the purposes of this study, a following message to Vientiane (DepTel No. 389) informed the Ambassador in Vientiane that the substance of DepTel No. 384 had been given to the British and the Australians, who were reported to have commented that they saw a conflict between the requirements placed upon Souvanna to move to Luang Prabang and at the same time to control Kong Le.

2/ Vientiane EmbTel 699, DTG 081116Z, Oct 60, UNCLASSIFIED.

Undersecretary of State is recorded as having said that, in the light of the problem created by Souvanna's public statement to the press that the U.S. was cutting off aid, the team should be prepared to make on-the-spot considerations and decisions concerning aid. He commented further that there was no intention to stop paying troops or supplying aid. He was aware of the difficulties of supplying aid through both regular and irregular channels, and said that the U.S. should be prepared to accommodate itself to both situations.

179. In this meeting, the ASD/ISA complained of "weak language in 384" concerning aid to Phoumi and the Undersecretary of State replied that he did not believe that language would endow the Ambassador with power to withhold needed supplies. The ASD/ISA complained further that the initial draft of 384, which had been shown to ASD/ISA-FER and to the Chief, Subsidiary Activities Division of J-5 (J-5/SAD), had continued the State Department habit of unduly downgrading Phoumi. The Undersecretary of State replied that he believed Phoumi would need to be controlled. The third objection of the ASD/ISA was that DepTel 384 did not specify anyone to tell Phoumi that the U.S. was supporting him (clearly it was understood to have been decided that Phoumi was to be told officially and unmistakably that the U.S. was behind him).

[redacted]

THE ISSUE OF PEO REPRESENTATION IN SAVANNAKHET

180. There was one other issue dealt with at this meeting, the issue of PEO representation to Phoumi. To understand the issue, it is necessary to go to events of a couple of days before. Shortly after the Acting ChPEO's (AChPEO) visit to Savannakhet on 6 October, he was directed by CINCPAC to change his station to Savannakhet for the purpose of providing maximum moral support and advice to Phoumi.[2] But the Ambassador refused to permit the AChPEO to change his station and directed him to remain in Vientiane and to make visits to Savannakhet only as required.[3] CINCPAC promptly referred this impasse to the JCS. He reported that in response to Telecon questions addressed to the PEO compound in the absence of the AChPEO, who was at the Embassy, he received the following reply from a junior officer then in charge:

> "I have just been informed by [the AChPEO] telephone from the Embassy that Ambassador has directed him to remain here rather than join Phoumi in Savannakhet. This is contrary to CINCPAC's direct orders issued three times. It probably also means that we will be forbidden to openly, directly, massively and immediately provide logistic support and operational advice."

The CINCPAC message went on to indicate that the Ambassador was reluctant to release AChPEO or to allow PEO to give overt support to Phoumi, was dragging his feet on actions, and acting as if things were still "in a talking stage rather than a doing stage." He said that the AChPEO was in a bind "with one boss telling him to execute and the other telling him not to do so."[4]

1/ "Memo for the Record of a Meeting at 12:45 PM on Saturday, 8 October 1960 in Mr. Dillon's Office," TOP SECRET, ISA-FER files.
2/ CINCPAC to ChPEO, DTG 062116Z, Oct 60, TOP SECRET.
3/ ChPEO to CINCPAC, PEO 2645, DTG 070543Z, Oct 60, TOP SECRET.
4/ CINCPAC to JCS 8389, DTG 070855Z, Oct 60, TOP SECRET.

[redacted]

181. A temporary resolution of the issue of PEO representation with Phoumi, as decided at the meeting on 8 October, was in essence a compromise. The Ambassador was sustained in that the Acting ChPEO was required to remain in Vientiane.

182. The JCS then directed CINCPAC to instruct the AChPEO to visit Phoumi as soon as possible to inform Phoumi that AChPEO had been personally instructed to say that he, as AChPEO, would provide Phoumi with the necessary support, directly, in order that he could continue to oppose Pathet Lao and other Communist forces. This message was intended in general as guidance to military personnel for the execution of operational implications of DepTel 384. The message continued that the Acting Chief of PEO would maintain the appearance and fact of his station in Vientiane, but it added that he would not only make the specified visit to Phoumi as directed, but also other visits which in his judgment were necessary to supervise the permanent PEO representatives who were established in Savannakhet. Finally, the AChPEO was authorized and directed to establish such permanent

representatives in Savannakhet, as, in his judgment, were necessary to afford effective support to Phoumi.[1]

183. Acting promptly on these instructions, the Acting ChPEO scheduled two additional PEO representatives to proceed to Savannakhet on 11 October and two more on the day after that. The JCS directive had authorized him to "establish such permanent representatives in Savannakhet or vicinity as in his judgment is necessary to afford effective support to Phoumi." But immediately the Ambassador directed ChPEO to hold in abeyance further increments (beyond those scheduled for the 10th and 11th) until the outcome of political discussions with Souvanna and the King was clear.[2]

184. On the 10th of October, CINCPAC felt it wise to amplify and clarify his instructions to ChPEO, [

[redacted]

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1/ JCS to CINCPAC 984040, DTG 081653Z, Oct 60, TOP SECRET.
2/ ChPEO to CINCPAC, PEO 2675, DTG 091540Z, Oct 60, TOP SECRET.
3/ CINCPAC to ChPEO 9877, DTG 110317Z, Oct 60, TOP SECRET.

[redacted]

185. [

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THE PARSONS' MISSION TO LAOS

186. On the night of 8 October, which was the day of the meeting in Undersecretary Dillon's office, the Assistant Secretary of State Parsons accompanied by the ASD/ISA left Washington on what was publicly stated to be a tour of Southeast Asia.[2/] En route to the Far East, they picked up CS/CINCPAC. Proceeding to Bangkok, they had what constituted a strategy meeting in the Embassy in Bangkok, which meeting was attended by Ambassadors Johnson (Bangkok) and Brown (Vientiane) [

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187. While the group was en route to the Far East there had been two events of some significance. First, on 10 October the British

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2/ NYT, 10 Oct 60, p. 16.
3/ Bangkok EmbTel from Irwin for SecDef 645, 1:00 PM, 12 Oct 60, SECRET.

Ambassador in Vientiane had called upon Souvanna to urge acceptance of U.S. proposals.[1] Second, at nine o'clock in the morning of the 11th, a one and one-half hour opening session of RLG-PL negotiations had begun, preceded and followed by considerable fanfare, and with the next session set for the 13th.

188. Moving from Bangkok to Vientiane, Assistant Secretary Parsons, who had previously been Ambassador to Vientiane, entered into two days of negotiations, the purpose of which was to convince Souvanna to accept the terms of the Washington policy proposals. Assistant Secretary Parsons' meetings with Souvanna took place on the evening of the 12th and the afternoon of the 13th, with an audience with the King sandwiched in between on the morning of the 13th. Meetings with Souvanna and the King did not bring the desired results. Souvanna did not reject the U.S. proposals, but he did not accept them either. The proposed move to Luang Prabang was being considered but no decision had been reached. Souvanna favored fully the cease-fire, but it was not apparent that he could enforce it. Souvanna was unwilling to commit himself to defer all negotiations with the Pathet Lao and finally he voiced very strong distrust of Phoumi and argued that Phoumi had some sort of secret agreement with Sarit.[2]

189. On Parsons' second and last day in Vientiane, the Russian Ambassador from Cambodia arrived for the first time in Vientiane amid some fanfare from left-wing elements.

190. In Bangkok once more before his return to the States, the Assistant Secretary of State sent a special message on the problems created by the suspension of aid to Laos. The situation was increasingly difficult because of the growing pressure for a formal statement of the U.S. position. There was difficulty in

1/ Vientiane EmbTel 716, 9:00 PM, 10 Oct 60, SECRET.
2/ Vientiane EmbTel 742.

justifying the suspension of aid to the RLG at the same time that we insisted upon military opposition to the Pathet Lao, whose activities were increasing. The arrival of the Soviet delegate and the prospect of an offer of aid from the USSR made the position even more difficult. To ease somewhat the public embarrassment of the apparent inconsistencies in the U.S. policy, and in accordance with authorization extended at the meeting in Secretary Dillon's office on 8 October, the Assistant Secretary had authorized the release of approximately $100,000 equivalent in Kip for economic aid projects. (This was apparently recognized then to appear as lame a pretext as is now evident.) In announcing this release, the press had been told that these projects were continuing and an attempt was made to leave the impression that aid had never been suspended. It was further reasoned, in the report to the Secretary of State, that the aid suspension might well boomerang: because the U.S. was paying 80 percent of the RLG local currency budget, at the end of the crisis the U.S. would have to pick up the tab for expenses in the interval, or else get out completely. Without U.S. aid, expenses would be met primarily by deficit financing, which meant problems of inflation and consequent greater difficulty in settling the situation when the time for settlement eventually came. Souvanna and his finance people were aware of this, and being aware of this, it gave them added reason to suspect the U.S. motives. Souvanna had warned the U.S. Ambassador that the U.S. moves to assure payment of Phoumi's troops constituted interference in the internal affairs of a sovereign nation. There had also been a hint on the part of Souvanna that he was aware that aid could be extended legally only to a legally constituted government, and that mutual security legislation would not authorize aid to factions opposing legally constituted governments.[1/]

1/ Bangkok EmbTel from Parsons 663, 10:00 PM, 14 Oct 60.

191. It is of some interest to note the press coverage of the mission. Attention had been given when the mission was planned to provide a cover story for it (a tour of Southeast Asia). Nevertheless, there was a special to the NYT from Washington datelined 13 October which outlined generally correctly and in some detail the main purposes of the mission and the major tactics and policy proposals the U.S. had in mind.[1/] From Vientiane the story came that there were three alternatives if the mission from Washington failed to bring about an agreement between Souvanna and Phoumi. There were:

a. Support of the Souvanna government,

b. Support of the Phoumi group, and

c. Complete withdrawal of U.S. support from Laos.

The consensus in Vientiane was that the third choice was the most unlikely, the second choice was almost equally unlikely, while even the first choice had great problems and would involve a reversal of previous U.S. policy.[2/]

WASHINGTON FOLLOW-UP ON SAVANNAKHET REPRESENTATION

192. Responsive to the decision to increase markedly the assistance to Phoumi [

] That same day, the Acting ASD/ISA (AASD/ISA) passed to CJCS a draft cable under cover of a memorandum, reporting the decision of that meeting and requested that a suitable officer be chosen and prepared for the assignment. Actual dispatch of the cable would be cleared with the Secretary of Defense.[3/] On

1/ NYT, 14 Oct 60, p. 6.
2/ NYT, 13 Oct 60, p. 4, Special to the NYT, datelined 12 Oct, Vientiane.
3/ JCS 1992/855, 14 Oct 60, Enclosure "B", ISA Memo I-16424/60, Memo for Acting ASD/ISA to CJCS, SECRET.

14 October, the CJCS sent a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense nominating Lt. Col. Wood and suggesting terms of reference for the assignment. This memorandum had been agreed to by the JCS in their meeting earlier that day.[1] The recommended message to CINCPAC authorizing assignment of a military adviser to Phoumi went out shortly.[2] By its terms, a personal military adviser to Phoumi was to be authorized and the names of Lt. Col. Wood and Col. Ryan were specified. The adviser was to be instructed to report directly to CINCPAC, but was to inform the Ambassador and ChPEO as appropriate. He should be guided by Paragraph 2 of DepTel to Vientiane 396, and should coordinate locally with Embassy representatives. The adviser's functions were:

a. To maintain closest possible continuing liaison with Phoumi,

b. To furnish CINCPAC information on Phoumi's plans, actions and needs,

c. To advise Phoumi on means to improve morale and combat effectiveness,

d. To assist in planning and directing military operations,

e. To assist in logistical planning and management.

In the fulfillment of these functions, civilian cover was to be maintained. It was explicitly stated in the message that State and Defense concurred in all of the arrangements set forth.

193. The message as sent out with Secretary of Defense approval differed from the JCS version originally proposed on these points:

a. The original version called for informing ChPEO but not the Ambassador; this provision was added by OSD

1/ JCSM-46860, Subject: "Personal Military Representative for Phoumi," SECRET.
2/ JCS to CINCPAC 984377, DTG 150046Z, Oct 60, SECRET.

b. The original specified that the functions as described were in addition to presently assigned duties; this provision was cut out by OSD

c. The original JCS version did not refer to DepTel 396 guidance; this provision was added by OSD

d. The JCS version did not call for maintaining civilian cover; this provision was added by OSD

e. The JCS originally suggested the name of Lt. Col. Wood only; OSD suggested adding a second (the position was later filled by a third -- Lt. Col. Brownfield).

194. [ ]

195. [ ]

[ ]

196. [ ]

197. [ ]

198.

[redacted]

[redacted]

199. [redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

INTERNAL CONFLICTS OF U.S. NATIONAL POLICY

200. For a period of about one month, from the first part of October until the first part of November there was a gradual erosion of the decisions that were believed to have been taken firmly around the time of the Parsons Group mission to Vientiane. But prospects of a negotiated settlement between Phoumi and Souvanna were not discarded. Two efforts were continued. One effort, pursued by the Ambassador, generally backed by State and almost always supported by our major western allies, Britain and France, was to seek a negotiated settlement. The second effort was to build up the Savannakhet faction lead by Phoumi and Boun Oum. The two efforts represented different appraisals of the underlying trouble, which appraisals led to different ideas of the best way to deal with it.

201. Regardless of the merits of the competing policies, it seems a fair observation that in each case the agencies and persons charged with the responsibility for pursuing operations implementing one objective tended to develop a proprietary interest in that policy. With one group there was a proprietary interest in a political solution based on negotiations. In the other group there was a proprietary interest in a military solution, based on a Phoumi build-up. Because of this generic difference

between agencies of equal stature within the national administration, the decisions that were believed to have been taken to aid Phoumi were no sooner reached than specific measures proposed to implement these decisions were held up, in order to facilitate negotiations aimed to pursue the alternative policy. And by the same token the measures taken to build up Phoumi inescapably made it much more difficult, possibly outright impossible, to induce Phoumi to be sufficiently conciliatory to give the policy of negotiated settlement its best chance to work. It was regularly and cogently argued that failure to give Phoumi open and unqualified U.S. support deprived him of a great and needed advantage. Many whose support he needed were hesitant to side with him without confidence in U.S. support because without assurance of U.S. support there was little assurance of victory. And on the other hand, it was argued strongly by some that aid to Phoumi -- Souvanna's constant enemy -- inescapably forced Souvanna to do exactly what U.S. policy intended to prevent, namely, to turn for support to the Pathet Lao and even to the Russians. The history of most of October and November is in large measure a sequence of incidents which illustrate and elaborate the unresolved dilemma of our national policy toward Laos.

202. Efficiency in the implementation of programs to carry out one national policy tended, in these circumstances, to be reflected largely in increasing the probability that the <u>other</u> national policy could not succeed. No doubt this was a problem basically resolvable only at a higher echelon than that of the competing agencies. It is an obvious contention that collateral and coordinate military and political planning might have been a method of making the problem more susceptible of solution by making its outlines clearer. Whether or not this method would have worked, it was apparently not tried. There is no evidence

of any detailed examination, or emphatic statement, of the minimum concomitant acts and circumstances necessary to give confidence that a proposed policy or program would be successful. If there was a political plan which attempted to come to grips with the basic political problem of Laos and to provide, explicitly, proposed political measures intended to resolve that problem, or to accompany a military plan, that political plan is neither known to this study nor reflected in the military plans that were developed and are available. Considerable effort was given to the development of military plans. For instance, in August, ChPEO submitted to CINCPAC, with info copies to ISA, a summary plan of a military solution to the anticipated military situation that was expected to follow the Souvanna-Phoumi accommodation that at that time was expected. The plan called for a 3-phase, 22-month military program to deal with the anticipated Pathet Lao reaction to this political move. It dwelled upon the training, logistics and operations believed necessary to assure internal public order and security essential to political stability. It even carried the calculation to the point of tentative cost estimates.[1/] There is no evidence, however, of a coordinate political plan. Although repeated attempts were made to spell out minimum military accomplishments necessary to political stability, there is no evidence of a comparable attempt to spell out minimum political accomplishments requisite to make military success lead to the kinds of political stability that was the ultimate objective.

SAVANNAKHET COMMUNICATIONS

203. One of the prominent requirements for effective aid to the Savannakhet faction was adequate secure communications between

1/ ChPEO to CINCPAC, PEO 2358, DTG 231630Z, Aug 60, SECRET; ChPEO to CINCPAC, PEO Opt 2389, DTG 281250Z, Aug 60, SECRET.

Savannakhet and high command echelons. This was one example of the effect the national policy dilemma had upon what would seem to be an operational, largely technical detail. [

] There was consequently a need not only to increase the communication capabilities within the 3rd and 4th Military Regions in order to bring the Chief Regional PEO Representative to Phoumi, who was headquartered in Savannakhet, in contact with the PEO representatives who were at Paksane and Pakse, and to increase the tactical communications facilities of the military forces in the area, but also to insure adequate communication out from the Chief PEO Representative to Phoumi to higher U.S. commands. [

] With the decision to be more resolute in support of Phoumi and the establishment of a larger PEO representation there, such communications seemed an imperative need. The terms of reference describing the assignment of the Chief PEO to Phoumi instructed him to report directly to CINCPAC.[1/]

204. When the subject of additional communications channels outward from Savannakhet was brought before the Ambassador, however, he opposed installation of communication channels [

] because of the low transmission capability of the only secure communications facilities.[2/]

1/ JCS to CINCPAC, 984377, DTG 150046Z, Oct 60, SECRET.
2/ CINCPAC to JCS, DTG 180230Z, Oct 60, TOP SECRET; ChPEO/LAOS to ChPEO Liaison/Bangkok, 2861, DTG 230648Z, Oct 60, SECRET.

THE EROSION OF EARLY OCTOBER POLICIES

205. As early as 16 October there was a significant split between State and Defense on matters that had presumably been resolved by DepTel 384. On that day, which was a Sunday, the director of ISA-FER met at 2000 hours with Mr. Steeves at State to go over a draft DepTel to Vientiane. The ISA-FER chief declined to concur on the proposed message, and the next day drew up a draft memo to Secretary Gates, subject "Policy with Respect to Laos," in which he outlined the three major issues on which divergencies between State and Defense already appeared to be acute:

a. Should the United States retreat from the position established in No. 384? In the light of recent word that Souvanna had ordered an attack on the Pathet Lao at Sop Nao, the issue had arisen concerning whether the United States should apply pressure to Phoumi to cooperate with Souvanna.

b. Whether at all times the overriding and determining considerations in our support of Phoumi should be avoidance of putting the U.S. in a bad light if the Laos situation came before the UN. (This apparently had been suggested in a message filed at the Bangkok Embassy by Assistant Secretary Parsons in Bangkok EmbTel 668.)

c. [

]

The memorandum closed by recommending that an effort be made to resolve the point at issue between the Department of State and the Department of Defense and to provide brief and unequivocal guidance to the field.[1/]

1/ Draft Memo to Secy Gates 17 Oct 60, SECRET, in ISA Notebook File.

206. The veerings of American policy at this time were principally a response to actual or apparent veerings in the policy of Souvanna. Word had come that Souvanna had directed the FAL commanding officer in Luang Prabang to attack Pathet Lao forces in Sop Nao, as mentioned above, and also was sending a representative to meet Phoumi's representative at a point in Thailand. Assistant Secretary Parsons, then in Bangkok, hoped that this was evidence that Souvanna was willing to follow policies satisfactory to the United States. Assistant Secretary Irwin and CS/CINCPAC, who were to see Phoumi in Ubon, were to urge Phoumi to accept a constructive reconciliation proposal from Souvanna, if indeed any such proposal were received.[1/] These hopeful signs were followed by Souvanna's announcement on the 18th that he had put Captain Kong Le under fifteen days of "technical" arrest for staging a reception last week for the Soviet Ambassador upon his arrival in Vientiane. Also, Souvanna announced a National Assembly resolution to the effect that Laos rejected and combated Communism as incompatible with its religion, its traditions and the basic feelings of the Lao people.[2/]

207. On 18 October ChPEO notified CINCPAC that all shipments into Laos, including shipments of hardware to Southern Laos, had been suspended pending the outcome of negotiations then in progress.[3/] A recent Vientiane EmbTel (No. 787) had indicated that the Ambassador was carrying out the current policy of negotiations to force Phoumi to come to heel. The available documents shed little direct light on the nature of these negotiations. However, on 20 October CINCPAC explained the situation

1/ Bangkok EmbTel from Parsons 676, 17 Oct 60, TOP SECRET.
2/ NYT, 19 Oct 60, pp. 1 and 3.
3/ ChPEO to CINCPAC PEO 2808, DTG 181453Z, Oct 60, TOP SECRET.

to JCS as follows: There had not yet been any deliveries to Savannakhet during October, anyway, although some light arms and ammunition had been sent to Pakse and to Luang Prabang. It was a question whether the material then available in Bangkok should be sent to Savannakhet immediately or withheld pending the outcome of negotiations. Everything for the present depended on the "United States political policy of the moment." Supplying Phoumi prior to an agreement would, of course, strengthen Phoumi's resolve not to join Souvanna, CINCPAC explained. Stiffening Phoumi's resistance at this time would tend to defeat the current political effort to force consolidation of FAL under the overall direction of Souvanna. CINCPAC commented that he felt such a policy, if it worked, would leave Laos weak, leaning to the left, and threatened by Kong Le. He did not believe the policy was wise, but so long as it was the policy, he was going along with it. The alternative to this policy would be to remove Souvanna and Kong Le by a coup de force brought off so quickly that Souvanna, as Prime Minister, would have no opportunity to appeal to the UN or to lodge charges of intervention. The principals who might accomplish such a coup might well exist in the persons of the King, Ouane, Phoumi and Houmphan. This was the alternative course that should be explored.[1/]

ISA-FER PROPOSES AN OPERATIONS PLAN TO JCS

208. On 24 October ISA-FER directed a memorandum to J-5/SAD and to OSD/OSO which transmitted a "Draft Operations Plan in Laos" for the consideration of JCS. The memorandum explained that the plan had been drawn up in ISA-FER and that the acting ASD/ISA wished to have a plan developed to present to the ASD/ISA on his return from the Far East; also that it was believed that the Joint Staff Ad Hoc Working Group on Laos was an

1/ CINCPAC to JCS 3395, DTG 200736Z, Oct 60, TOP SECRET.

appropriate agency to do this and to call to the attention of the JCS such elements of the plan as they considered appropriate. It was stated that the Far Eastern regional group of ISA would continue to work closely with the JCS Ad Hoc Group.[1/] The Draft Operations Plan began with a summary of the current situation and then proceeded to name seven objectives of U.S. policy and to specify the actions that were estimated to be necessary to accomplish these objectives. The objectives were:

a. Prevent further loss of territory to Pathet Lao

b. Eliminate Kong Le

c. Revitalize and reintegrate FAL

d. Prevent concessions to Pathet Lao

e. Assure continued presence of U.S. training teams

f. Assure maintenance of FAL commensurate with threat

g. Early replacement of Souvanna by broadly supported Prime Minister acceptable to the United States.

209. There was no formal reply to this proposal until 4 November at which time J-5/SAD addressed a memorandum to the Director of ISA-FER, subject: "Outline Plan for Laos," which said that the plan submitted for consideration was completely in accordance with JCS views as to objectives, and it was, therefore, not necessary to refer the statement of these objectives to the JCS. With a very few minor changes in detail, the plan was judged to be sufficient to assign appropriate missions to operating agencies in the field once decision had been reached actually to implement these decisions.

1/ I 16638/60, SECRET. Additional copies hand carried to the Chief of the General Operations Division. Copies also went to the Chief of the Commands Division, and to the interested offices in the Services.

THE NAM CA DINH FRONT

210. On 24 October Lt. Col. Brownfield, who had been established as the Chief PEO Representative in Savannakhet, reported to CINCPAC concerning his visit of the day before to the command of General Bounleut at Thakket. Because of the inadequate communications from Savannakhet, the report was carried by courier to Bangkok and transmitted therefrom to CINCPAC. Bounleut's forces confronted the Kong Le forces along the line at Nam Ca Dinh River, which had been informally accepted as the cease fire line. After reporting briefly on Bounleut's appraisal of the enemy situation, Brownfield went into some detail on the status and disposition of Bounleut's forces, and on Bounleut's operational plans, which he criticized as lacking in prepared and rehearsed counterattack plans, and without aggressive reserve gathered and prepared to strike on an instant's notice. Bounleut had committed units in an isolated, piecemeal fashion. Bounleut's logistics and communications were minimal and tenuous, the overall effectiveness of the forces was considered low, and Bounleut and his staff were described as lacking aggressive spirit. 1/

211. This drew immediate response from CINCPAC, who sent a joint message for "Heintges and Brownfield from FELT" which included the following:

> "Brownfield is hereby reminded that his job is not only to advise Phoumi and his commanders, but also to ensure that the advice is accepted and acted upon. Immediate steps should be taken to buck up Bounleut in respect to counterattack plans, aggressive spirit, communications and other needed equipment. Heintges is requested to take immediate actions and report to me if you have political complications." 2/

1/ CHJUSMAG to CINCPAC, Readdressed CINCPAC to JCS 5635, DTG 260415Z, Oct 60, TOP SECRET.
2/ CINCPAC to ChPEO, DTG 262017Z, Oct 60, SECRET.

212. CINCPAC continued to be worried about the situation of Bounleut's forces and the inadequacies of the command. On 28 October he followed up the previous exchange with a request that he be kept informed of Phoumi's activities; but stated that he was more interested in knowing what plans Brownfield had developed for the use of Phoumi's forces against the Pathet Lao and the Kong Le forces and how Phoumi had received these plans and what action he had committed himself to with respect to them. He repeated his fear that Brownfield did not fully grasp the aggressive nature of the mission CINCPAC intended for him.[1] Both ChPEO/Vientiane and the PEO Rep/Savannakhet, in the ensuing days, sent in reports on measures being taken to pressure Phoumi and Bounleut to regroup and reinforce the troops disposed in defense of the Thakket area. By the 29th, ChPEO repeated, for information to CINCPAC, a message he had just received from PEO representative in Savannakhet stating that Thakket defenses had been revised in response to their advice and venturing the judgment that another defeat like that at Paksane seemed highly unlikely for Thakket.[2] About the same time an Intelligence Report from Vientiane relating to the Kong Le forces facing the Bounleut positions indicated that no Kong Le troops had been found by Bounleut patrols, which had advanced to within 500 yards of the Nam Ca Dinh, and that the Vientiane forces, furthermore, had been observed digging in at positions north of the Nam Ca Dinh. This was interpreted to indicate that no Kong Le or Pathet Lao attack in that area was imminent.[3]

1/ CINCPAC to ChPEO - for Brownfield Info Heintges - 6445, DTG 282325Z, Oct 60, TOP SECRET.
2/ CHJUSMAG to CINCPAC 6764, DTG 290420Z, Oct 60, being PEO message from Brownfield, No. MAN 8184, completed Savannakhet 260415Z, Oct 60, TOP SECRET; ChPEO to CINCPAC, PEO 2913, DTG 290523Z, Oct 60, TOP SECRET; and ChPEO to CINCPAC PEO 2915, DTG 291125Z, Oct 60, SECRET.
3/ U.S. Army Vientiane to DA/Wash., CX210, DTG 291111Z, Oct 60, SECRET.

213. Meanwhile, on the 28th, Souvanna announced publicly that he had received notice of a U.S. deposit of funds to the credit of Laos for payment of the Laotian Army for September, and also that the Thai blockade of Vientiane had been relaxed permanently for the import into Vientiane of badly needed rice and fuel.[1] On 28 October ISA forwarded to the SecDef a memorandum urging strongly that:

a. Supplies to Phoumi in Regions 3 and 4 be speeded up, but more important, supplies to Ouane and Houmphan in Region 1 should be accelerated (a Region 1 coup was imminent).

b. U.S. assistance to Phoumi in reorganizing, regrouping and training his troops should be increased even at the cost of additional difficulties with the French.

c. [ ] Brownfield at Savannakhet should assume leadership in guiding Phoumi.

d. PEO advisors should be established at the battalion level, if possible, [ ]

214. By the end of the month, when Phoumi's plans and troop disposition were reported again, Brownfield was able to report that Phoumi had an offensive plan aimed at Paksane which was proposed to begin around 15 November. It was understood by the PEO adviser in the region and by Phoumi, however, that if by that time the political situation still prevented an attack upon Vientiane, Phoumi would shift his major efforts to the Sam Neua area.[3] In spite of Phoumi's offensive plans for the future and

1/ NYT, 29 Oct 60, p. 2.
2/ Memo from OASD to SecDef, 28 Oct 60, TOP SECRET, in ISA-FER Files.
3/ CHJUSMAG to CINCPAC, MAN 8201, DTG 010415Z, Nov 60, TOP SECRET, forwarded for CHJUSMAG for Brownfield after delivery from Savannakhet by courier. The ANGRC 26 had been installed in Savannakhet but permission to use it had not yet been granted by the Ambassador. The message had been completed in Savannakhet at DTG 291300Z, Oct 60.

the earlier reassurances on the present situation, CINCPAC felt it necessary to warn again against the danger that Bounleut and Phoumi might be falling into the old habit of overextended fixed defenses. He also reviewed the outline of Phoumi's offensive plan and commented that as a concept it appeared acceptable, provided that it was executed energetically and aggressively.[1/]

THE QUESTION OF RESTRAINTS ON PHOUMI

215. Along with concern for troop dispositions in the Thakket area, there was some confusion concerning the question of the restraints which were to be enforced upon Phoumi. On 6 November ChPEO sent a message to CINCPAC saying that his understanding, [ ] was that Phoumi's offensive operations were to be limited to actions versus the Pathet Lao. According to this understanding Phoumi was expected not to launch an offensive toward Vientiane unless such offensive action was required as a counterattack against Kong Le, or as a counterattack against Vientiane forces if these forces moved south of the informal truce line of the Nam Ca Dinh River. It was explained that the present distribution of support directly to the Regions had been agreed to by Souvanna, with the understanding that Phoumi's forces were not being built up to attack Vientiane, nor were Gen. Ouane's forces in Region 1 being built up to overthrow the government. (The complexities of this situation will be suggested by the fact that, as early as 1 November the Bangkok Embassy reported that Phoumi PEO Rep/Savannakhet and the PEO controller, during a dinner meeting in Savannakhet with Boun Oum, that he feared that if the Ouane coup in Luang Prabang came too soon, Kong Le would strike with a force the Savannakhet forces could not repel.)[2/]

1/ CINCPAC to CHJUSMAG for PEO Rep/Savannakhet, DTG 022200Z, Nov 60, TOP SECRET.
2/ Bangkok EmbTel 708, SECRET, as copied in file of Ch, SEA Branch, Pacific Division, J-3.

ChPEO's message continued that it was his understanding that it had been made clear to Phoumi by CS/CINCPAC and ASD/ISA that in order to get U.S. support he must not attack toward Vientiane until the entire FAL were unified and a new legal government established which the U.S. government could support. The latter had been a contingency considered likely at the time of the understanding, but was acknowledged to be pertinent no longer. ChPEO's next point was that it was now clear that Phoumi proposed to launch an offensive toward Paksane as soon as possible -- 10-15 November had been set as D-day, without reference to the political situation in Vientiane or without reference to the dispositions and operations of the Vientiane forces north of the truce line. This appeared confusing to ChPEO and he requested clarification.[1/]

216. The response to ChPEO came from Admino/CINCPAC in the absence of CINCPAC, who was then in the Philippines. The traffic on this point was all released to CINCPAC, who presumably approved of the response because there was no further clarification or correction of the point from CINCPAC himself. The reply to ChPEO was that the restraints upon Phoumi as originally established by CS/CINCPAC and ASD/ISA remained. [ ] should remind Phoumi of CS/CINCPAC's earlier admonition that if he (Phoumi) disregarded instructions "we would cut him off at the ankles." However, Phoumi was to be made to develop not only defensive capabilities but offensive capabilities, and in addition should take offensive actions against the Pathet Lao though against no other forces until we approved. But if he were attacked by Vientiane forces, he should not only defend

1/ ChPEO to CINCPAC repeated as Admino/CINCPAC, DTG 062229Z, Nov 60, TOP SECRET.

himself vigorously and counterattack, but should continue in hot pursuit.[1/]

217. The difficulties inherent in continuing to deal openly with the recognized government of Laos, while at the same time extending covert aid to the insurgent movement bent upon overrunning it, continued to result in frustrations for those who had responsibilities in the implementing of either policy. In Vientiane, the Ambassador continued to negotiate with Souvanna, coaxing him to continued acquiescence in the U.S. supply of arms to Phoumi in the south and to Ouane in Region 1. But Souvanna seemed to feel increasingly aware that not only was Phoumi intent upon overturning his government but also that Ouane was about to join forces with Phoumi. Souvanna denied publicly the reality of the persistent rumors of the impending coup in Luang Prabang, almost as if by denying it he could make it not true.[2/]

THE INTERAGENCY MEETING OF 10 NOVEMBER

218. The American Ambassador continued efforts in the direction of a political settlement. These efforts impressed high Washington officials as indicating the Ambassador was still convinced that the Souvanna government might yet be salvaged.[3/] But these negotiations called for restraints upon the build-up of Phoumi's strength and these were exasperating to many whose responsibilities were to foster the military build-up. The State-Defense-JCS meeting of 10 November, which reached quite

1/ Admino/CINCPAC to CINCPACPHIL (for Adm. Felt), DTG 062248Z, Nov 60, TOP SECRET.
2/ NYT, 7 Nov 60, p. 9, "[Souvanna] said that he would also visit the Royal Seat of Luang Prabang and confer with Gen. Ouane Rattikone. There have been persistent reports that the General had defected to a group of right wing rebels in the south but the Premier again denied them."
3/ Memo for Record of 10 Nov 60 Meeting of State-Defense-JCS, kept by ChSAD/J-5, TOP SECRET. Views attributed in notes Mr. Merchant, CJCS and others.

important decisions concerning Laos, was in fact intended to reduce the ambiguities and inconsistencies that appeared to make American policy ineffective. In one memorandum for the information of the Under Secretary of Defense, it was stated that

> "it is time for Secretary Gates to tell Secretary Herter that he plans to request a meeting with the President so that the two of them, plus Allen Dulles, could go over the whole problem and secure a clear-cut national policy decision. If such a meeting is held, and Presidential decisions are made, there should be established a specific mechanism to provide the command supervision necessary to see that the President's decisions are effectively implemented." 1/

In another memorandum from the same source drawn up to brief the Secretary of Defense on the issues and purposes of the 10 November meeting, the purpose was described in part as to secure a "Presidential directive" to insure clear-cut policies and incisive actions. 2/

219. The need for policy decisions that would have a clear-cut character to facilitate action was commonly felt within DOD. The ISA talking paper for Mr. Gates for the same meeting outlined the issues in the following terms:

a. The Defense position was that nothing less than a clearly pro-Western neutrality [sic] is acceptable and that it can be achieved.

b. Defense believes Souvanna type neutrality or even a "genuine neutrality" would inevitably lead to Communism without strong leadership.

c. Defense believes a neutral Laos would be fatal to U.S. prestige in Thailand and South Vietnam and would lead to the demoralization of SEATO.

1/ Memo to Mr. Douglas, Subject: "Laos," from Col. E. F. Black, 8 Nov 60, SECRET.
2/ Draft Memo for Secretary Gates by Col. E. F. Black, Subject: "Laos 10:30 AM Meeting with Mr. Herter," 10 Nov 60, SECRET.

d. Defense believes U.S. objectives should be pursued by all legal means available and that some risks should be accepted.

e. Defense believes U.S. influence and power was stultified by failure to assure prompt and vigorous implementation of these objectives, and that U.S. difficulties were possibly due to misunderstandings and confusion in directives and by hesitancy in the field traceable to these misunderstandings and confusions.

f. Defense should recommend vigorous prompt help for Phoumi, prompt elimination of Kong Le, defection of Region 1 from Souvanna to Phoumi, clear directives to effect these, and funds to PEO to pay for these.[1/]

220. The meeting on 10 November was attended by Secretary Herter, Undersecretary of State Merchant and Assistant Secretary of State Parsons, and Deputy Director of the Office of SEA Affairs for the State Department; by Secretary Gates, Under Secretary Douglas, Assistant Secretary Irwin, and Chief of ISA-FER for DOD; and by CJCS, the Special Assistant to the CJCS for Policy, and by J-5/SAD for the JCS. The available record of the meeting indicates that there was a consensus that a neutralist Laos was an unacceptable goal, that Souvanna would have to be replaced (although several pointed out that the American Ambassador in Laos apparently did not agree), and that, partly by assurances that the U.S. would back a coup to oust Souvanna, the King should be induced to form an alternative government with a claim to legality.

221. The notes on the meeting indicate that the main substance of the decisions had been previously agreed to in generalized

1/ Memo for Mr. Gates from Mr. Irwin, prepared in OASD/ISA-FER on 9 Nov 60, dated 10 Nov, "Talking paper for meeting with Mr. Herter re Laos," SECRET.

terms, and the central idea had been transmitted to Brown by DepTel 466, no copy of which has been available to this study. An additional message of amplification was presented to the meeting by Undersecretary Merchant, who assured the CJCS that it would be dispatched promptly to Vientiane substantially without change.

222. From the notes of the meeting and from following the subsequent actions, it may be inferred with considerable confidence that the participants in this meeting understood that they had reached a definite decision to support Phoumi unequivocably, to oust Souvanna by means of a Phoumi coup de force and by a political demarche which would draw the King into the deal to give a mantle of legality to the new government. This involved calling upon the King to give Royal recognition to a Phoumi/Boun Oum government which would include enough other Lao political leaders, and elements, and thus give basis to a claim of being a representative government embracing all of the right wing elements in Laos. But even in spite of the apparently clear understanding on these points, it will be seen later that the pursuit of the political portions of this plan led to the development of obstacles which delayed and perhaps weakened the military buildup of the group which we had decided should be established as the legal government in the country.

THE FOLLOW-UP OF THE 10 NOVEMBER MEETING

223. Definite word of the coup in Region 1 was available to the American public within two days. The New York Times on 12 November carried two stories, one from Vientiane and one from Washington, both datelined 11 November. The Vientiane story related that Maj. Boun Theng Insisiengmay, chief of an infantry battalion in Luang Prabang, had declared on the radio there that he no longer recognized the Vientiane governmental authority. Souvanna acknowledged reports that he had learned

a rebellion was about to start in Luang Prabang and apparently on that account hastened a return from there to Vientiane. Finally, Gen. Ouane, who had gone to Luang Prabang with Souvanna had not returned with Souvanna to Vientiane. The Washington story recited that official State Department spokesmen had revealed concern about reports from Laos which indicated that strongly anti-Communistic elements had seized control of Luang Prabang, commenting that this was taken as evidence of growing discontent among Royal Laotian Army units with the neutralist policy of Souvanna. The officials were also credited with saying that now that Phoumi's forces controlled both Savannakhet and Luang Prabang, the Souvanna government had effective control only of the administrative capitol of Vientiane.[1] On the 12th Souvanna was reported to have discussed with his cabinet the defection of troops in Luang Prabang. The defection of deputies to Savannakhet by this time had reduced the number of deputies in the national assembly in Vientiane from 59 to 30.[2]

224. With the coup in Region 1 effected, there was concern that Kong Le might undo it by a sudden airborne attack. Responsive to this fear, JCS on 11 November pointed out to CINCPAC that the most serious military possibility in the immediate future seemed to be a Kong Le airborne attack on Luang Prabang combined with Pathet Lao actions, and the JCS therefore advised close watch on possible developments along this line, including whatever actions might be feasible to deny to Kong Le resources in aircraft and avgas. It was further suggested that the PEO/Rep in Savannakhet should pass on to Phoumi the idea of making sure that airfields and possible drop zones at Luang Prabang were properly defended.[3] Here is a comparatively rare case in the

1/ NYT, 12 Nov 60, pp. 1 and 2.
2/ NYT, 13 Nov 60, p. 12.
3/ JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 985720, 11 Nov 60, TOP SECRET.

records of the Laos incident which discloses close concern at the JCS level with tactical details. In Vientiane there was evidently concern that the planned coups there and in Region 1 were premature. [ ] noted on 13 November that an Embassy official had gone to Luang Prabang to dissuade Ouane and Houmphan from proceeding with their coup plans, and that an Embassy officer also was working through Phoui to dissuade Kouprasith from declaring for Phoumi, [ ]

225. Now that decisions had been taken which were to call for some test of Phoumi's military capabilities, there followed a flurry of inquiries concerning Phoumi's military strength. On the 12th of November CINCPAC took note of a Vientiane EmbTel (No. 912) which belittled Phoumi's strength and said he had little support among his junior officers; CINCPAC accordingly directed an inquiry to the field asking for independent assessment of Phoumi's strength as soon as possible, specifying he wanted the judgment of the PEO Rep at Phoumi's headquarters (Lt. Col. Brownfield). CINCPAC drew a first comment from ChPEO to the effect that the derogation of Phoumi in the EmbTel had come from a Leftist member of the Souvanna cabinet, Quinim Pholsena, and that it was not the PEO estimate. The requested Brownfield estimate came through shortly. It summarily reported Phoumi's strength in Region 1 as unknown; doubtful in Region 2 -- able to defend Xieng Khouang but not to retake Sam Neua; probably able to defeat the Pathet Lao and Kong Le forces in

[ ]

Region 3; and with a marginal advantage over the Pathet Lao in Region 4.[1]

226. At the same time that CINCPAC was asking for estimates of Phoumi's strength, the ASD/ISA sent out a request for the estimates of PEO regional advisers, with comments of ChPEO and CINCPAC, concerning the status of supply, and the efficiency of the RLG and the Phoumi forces, specifying especially a desire for Brownfield's estimate for Phoumi's abilities and capabilities as well as particular needs of his forces.[2]

227. The diplomatic activity in Vientiane was a holding action to gain time for Phoumi, or, alternatively, was genuinely intended to lead to a coalition government via negotiation, depending upon who looked at it, and when. There was indeed an effort of a political nature to induce the King to take the necessary political steps to support our plans for Phoumi. But in addition to this, it was desirable to avoid, or at least to delay, precipitate acts by Souvanna which might have brought things to a head before we were fully ready to deal with them. This called for some soft pedalling. It was always a question how long Souvanna could be kept turning the grindstone on which the axe intended for his own neck was being sharpened. The build-up of Phoumi was not yet complete; the situation seemed precarious in Luang Prabang and far from certain in the Thakket area. It was feared in Vientiane at least that actions taken to strengthen Phoumi in the north or the Ouane group in Region 1 might induce the kind of precipitate political reaction, or even a military action, that would increase our difficulties. The

1/ CINCPAC to CHJUSMAG for Brownfield, DTG 130619Z, Nov 60, SECRET; ChPEO to CHJUSMAG, PEO 3075, DTG 141408Z, Nov 60, SECRET; CINCPAC to ChPEO, DTG 150227Z, Nov 60, SECRET; PEO/Savannakhet to CINCPAC, DTG 17033z, Nov 60, TOP SECRET.
2/ ASD/ISA to CINCPAC for Felt from Irwin, 985732, 14 Nov 60, SECRET.

delicacy of the operation as viewed by ChPEO was expressed on 13 November in a message which related to certain action messages which had been passed directly to Brownfield through CHJUSMAG, by-passing Vientiane:

> "All military actions we take are very closely allied to the political climate existing at time of such actions and must be closely coordinated with Ambassador. Political and military climate changes continuously and quickly. I am in only position to coordinate implementing actions with Ambassador and direct operations of Brownfield and other regional advisors. Impossible and many times unwise keep my advisors in field informed of the many ramifications ... which directly affect U.S. mission operations. Any directives in military matters must be addressed to me ... I have given specific instructions to Brownfield not rpt not to take any action without my sanction. This only way I can keep control and prevent possible upset of delicate changing problems we are confronted with. Also Brownfield not on distribution of DepTels, EmbTels, FOVs and ARMA SitRep some of which are limited distribution..." 1/

228. The middle of the month brought increasing evidence that Souvanna was turning to the Pathet Lao and to Communist Bloc states, either as a desperate make-weight against U.S. support of Phoumi, or else as the only remaining recourse open. He announced on 14 November that he had ordered the recapture of Luang Prabang.[2] On 17 November he announced that it had been decided to establish "good neighbor relations" with Communist China and that good will messages would be dispatched both to Peiping and to Hanoi.[3] The same day, he accused the United States of illegally supporting the right-wing rebels, and said that this support was making Phoumi less willing than otherwise to join in a compromise government.[4] There was a flood of reports from Vientiane for the next several days of cease-fire

1/ ChPEO to CINCPAC, PEO 3059, DTG 131011Z, Nov 60, TOP SECRET.
2/ NYT, 15 Nov 60, p. 2.
3/ NYT, 18 Nov 60, pp. 1 and 9.
4/ NYT, 17 Nov 60, p. 6.

agreements between the Souvanna government and the Pathet Lao,[1] and on the 22nd Souvanna announced that he would ask the Soviet Union for all the aid, both military and economic, that it was willing to give. A few hours later the Soviet Ambassador arrived by air in Vientiane and said that he would be "only too happy to oblige."[2]

229. A SEATO military advisers' meeting was held in Bangkok 16-18 November, which CINCPAC attended and it was accompanied by the usual press releases, but there is no evidence of any developments of significance.

230. From the scene of the SEATO meeting, the Vice Director of the Joint Staff (VDJS) sent in his personal appraisal of the situation in Laos in the form of an Exclusive to the DJS. According to this message, the ChPEO had predicted that the most to be hoped for was a military solution in the sense of military operations -- operations not large but sufficient to permit political leaders to change sides without losing face. The problems currently most pressing to the PEO Rep/Savannakhet were the upcoming 25 November payday, which the Ambassador regarded less seriously, and maintenance of Phoumi's 5 C-47's. The VDJS appraised the Ambassador as a scholarly and sincere individual working under handicap because State imposed minute details of instructions upon him rather than stating an objective and permitting him to work out the details. The VDJS also expressed the opinions that he was convinced of the need for closer cooperation between agencies in Washington, and that the current efforts to get Phoui, Phoumi and the King to act together

1/ NYT, 19 Nov 60, p. 1; 21 Nov 60, p. 6; 22 Nov 60, p. 3.
2/ NYT, 23 Nov 60.

would probably fail.[1] Substantially the same judgments were included in an Exclusive from CINCPAC to CJCS and to the Assistant Deputy Secretary of Defense (ADSecDef). The only added point of consequence was that in the CINCPAC message Ambassador Brown was reported to have been won over to the ideas that Souvanna must go, that a strongman replacement was needed, and that the strongman should be Phoumi. The Ambassador's only reported qualification was uncertainty as to how and when Souvanna should go.[2]

PROBLEMS OF CONSTRAINTS ON PHOUMI AND DIPLOMATIC NEGOTIATIONS

231. The last half of November was a period in which the Phoumi forces, held in their positions south of the Nam Ca Dinh truce line, were being readied for possible offensive action at a time when the political climate was ripe, and when their own military posture justified taking to the offensive. It was also a period in which the Phoumi adherents who had established themselves in the Luang Prabang area were attempting to consolidate their position against a possible move by Souvanna and Kong Le. Major issues that confronted the American command during this time concerned the form and degree of constraints upon the Phoumi forces along the Nam Ca Dinh truce line and the constraints to be placed upon efforts to strengthen the pro-Phoumi group at Luang Prabang. The problems of supplying Phoumi's forces both north and south and permitting the forces in the south to take the measures that seemed militarily advantageous

1/ From notes on the message in the file of the Chief of the SEA Branch, Pacific Division, J-3, TOP SECRET, as supplement to CINCPAC's DTG 190823Z, Nov 60.
2/ From notes on CINCPAC's Exclusive to Lemnitzer and Knight, DTG 201250Z, Nov 60, TOP SECRET, in file of Chief of SEA Branch, Pacific Division, J-3.

were, as before, complicated by the concurrent political efforts carried on at times by the Ambassador. One motive for these negotiations was to buy time to make possible the Phoumi military buildup. But the restraints requested to facilitate the negotiations hampered the buildup. The other motive was to induce the King to take the political steps toward formation of a new government that it was hoped would confer a mantle of legality upon the successor government to the Souvanna regime.

232. Ever since the Region 1 coup, there had been reports of movements by Kong Le forces or Pathet Lao groups which were interpreted as movements that might upset the rather fragile hold upon Luang Prabang of the Ouane-Houm Phan group. Washington first responded actively to this threat by decisions reached at a State-Defense meeting on 21 November. According to informally received information, the decision at this meeting was set on paper in the form of a message to Vientiane by an AASD/ISA and one of the Joint Chiefs, and after the message was agreed upon within the meeting, the Secretary of State called the President, who was in Augusta, read the message to him, and received approval of it then and there, as written. The message embodying the decision went out as follows:

> "Following was decided at State-Defense meeting today as instructions to you. On assumption reports of movements of forces to attack Luang Prabang are correct, support Phoumi if his forces will fight. [

]

1/ JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 986140, DTG 220052Z, Nov 60, TOP SECRET.

PROBLEMS OF A CONTINGENT DIRECTIVE

233. The final sentence of this message seems clear and unambiguous. It was especially intended to break the log jam of restraint, and this was the reason for the emphatic vernacular of the last sentence. The contingent nature of this guidance, which was to cause later difficulty, arose from the fact that it was based upon an assumption that intelligence reports concerning a reported attack on Luang Prabang were correct. Apparently because there had previously been restraints upon Phoumi forces in the Thakket area that were not explicitly mentioned in this message, the field did not know for sure what was intended. Almost immediately ChPEO asked CINCPAC whether the removal of restraints on Phoumi meant that Phoumi was to be authorized to carry out offensive actions against the Vientiane forces. CINCPAC's reply is proof that ChPEO's caution was appropriate. CINCPAC replied that

> "The answer to your question is, 'Not at this time.' Lifting all restrictions means that Phoumi is expected to attack from the south to force Vientiane units to fight a two-front action. This does not mean an immediate attack on Vientiane. It does mean movement to the north and ... that Phoumi be allowed to counterattack at Paksane. It also means that there are no restraints on support of Luang Prabang forces by Phoumi, to improve defenses there against anticipated attack by Vientiane/Pathet Lao forces ... The removal of restraints permits you to embark on a campaign planned around the capabilities of Phoumi and his forces. It does not mean that you should permit Phoumi to unduly risk his assets." 1/

234. In this case the complexities of the situation, as they were apparent in Laos and at CINCPAC, were such that

1/ ChPEO to CINCPAC, PEO 3214, DTG 221613Z, Nov 60, TOP SECRET; CINCPAC to CHJUSMAAG for Brownfield, Info ChPEO.

a high level directive which evidently meant to be direct, emphatic and clear, failed in its purpose because the complications that preoccupied the operational commanders were not fully visualized and explictly taken to account in the framing of the directive. The problem of which options to delegate and which to reserve had apparently not been resolved. The difficulties of this directive were not ended by ChPEO's query and CINCPAC's reply.

235. The dependence of operational directives upon what the enemy did gave prominence to intelligence concerning possible Kong Le and Pathet Lao operations against Luang Prabang. On 22 November a Vientiane EmbTel and a ChPEO report to CINCPAC, [ ] summarized and evaluated the current reports. Both reports said that there was clear evidence of a movement of at least four and possibly six companies northward from Vientiane reportedly for the purpose of attacking Luang Prabang. There was no evidence yet of a decision really to attack Luang Prabang, however. The assembly point was believed to be Muong Kassy. It was clear that some units ordered to Muong Kassy were commanded by officers known to be anti-Pathet Lao, which factor complicated the appraisal. Finally, it was judged that the purpose of the movement might be other than to attack Luang Prabang. It was speculated, for instance, that it could be intended to reduce the anti-Pathet Lao elements within Vientiane.[1/] It was to be reported later that some elements even intended to join the Luang Prabang coup group.

1/ Vientiane EmbTel 970, 10:00 PM, 22 Nov 60, SECRET; ChPEO to CINCPAC, DTG 221725Z, Nov 60, TOP SECRET.

THE "GO-NO-GO" SITUATION AND REVIVED PROBLEMS OF THE CONTINGENT DIRECTIVE

236. One cause of hesitation at this time appears to have been an effort to coordinate the development of the Kouprasith coup group in Vientiane with military operations in the south. On 23 November the Ambassador reported that he had relayed a message from Kouprasith to Phoumi asking the latter to delay his attack until Kouprasith could unite the anti-PL forces within Vientiane. For this reason, and also to shift onus of resumption of hostilities upon PL and Souvanna if possible, the Ambassador had directed ChPEO to instruct PEO Rep/Savannakhet not to allow Phoumi to attack north of the Nam Ca Dinh [1]

237. The central political complication during this period that led to uncertainties and delays in military decisions, however, was the problem of getting the desired Royal approval and support of a new government to succeed the Souvanna government. Part of the proposal was that the Ambassador should first go to Luang Prabang to get Royal acceptance of the idea, and once this approval had been granted the King would call a meeting of the principals and establish the government within Luang Prabang. The evident risk was that once such a group was gathered in Luang Prabang, the group called together there to form a new government under the King might suddenly find themselves victims of military pressure exerted by Kong Le and the Pathet Lao. There was also a problem in getting Souvanna to hold still while these measures to overthrow him were being prepared. In approving the plan and authorizing the Ambassador to go ahead, it was specified that he should first get Souvanna's assurance not to

1/ From an abstract of Vientiane EmbTel 976, 23 Nov 60, TOP SECRET, in files of Chief of SEA Branch, Pacific Division, J-3.

attack Luang Prabang. The exchange of messages concerning this proposal took place on 23 November (on which day Ambassador Brown also received a formal RLG request that U.S. aid to Phoumi cease immediately). On 24 November the American delegation left the Embassy and flew by U.S. Embassy plane to Luang Prabang to make their representations to the King.[1]

238. As soon as approval was received from Washington of the démarche with the King at Luang Prabang, the Ambassador instructed ChPEO to direct Brownfield not to allow Phoumi to attack Vientiane forces north of Nam Ca Dinh and not to [ ] either troops or supplies direct to Luang Prabang. These prohibitions were intended to facilitate the negotiations the Ambassador was about to undertake. ChPEO advised that, following instructions from the Ambassador, he had directed Brownfield:

> "In view of new instructions -- received from Washington you are instructed:
>
> a. Not allow Phoumi attack Vientiane forces north of Nam Ca Dinh;
>
> b. Not allow [ ]
>
> This supersedes all previous instructions to you including those from JCS." [2]

239. ChPEO then said that Brownfield had discussed in general terms the contents of JCS 986140 -- the "Let Phoumi fight" message -- and then commented that this was the "third go-no-go situation we have been forced to relay to Phoumi."[3] CINCPAC took note of this and immediately responded that Ambassador Brown's new instructions had in fact already been superseded by

1/ ISA draft copy of a DepTel to Vientiane apparently constituting a second draft response to the Brown proposal for the Luang Prabang meeting, SECRET, in ISA-FER files; JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 986279, DTG 240106Z, Nov 60, SECRET. (This is the copy of the DepTel authorizing the démarche as proposed by the Ambassador in EmbTel 964. CINCPAC had not received a copy and J-3 supplied the need.)
2/ ChPEO to CINCPAC, PEO 3228, DTG 231440Z, Nov 60, SECRET.
3/ ChPEO to CINCPAC, PEO 3241, DTG 251315Z, Nov 60, TOP SECRET.

more recent instructions in a State message to him cleared with Defense [ ] The message referred to by CINCPAC is not available to this study. CINCPAC argued that, since the original instructions in JCS 986140 were based upon the assumption that an attack upon Luang Prabang was impending [ ] appeared to confirm that an attack upon Luang Prabang was indeed still impending,

> "Therefore, in accordance with latest report latest State-Defense directive to Ambassador Brown, CINCPAC opinion is that Ambassador Brown directives [directing] PEO Rep/Savannakhet [to restrain Phoumi] should be cancelled and that Phoumi should be encouraged to support defense Luang Prabang [ ] Further, CINCPAC believes Phoumi should be encouraged prepare for counterattack Paksane . . ." 1/

240. On 27 November the Ambassador complained that parts of CINCPAC's directive DTG 222010Z encouraged Phoumi to attack north of the Nam Ca Dinh and that this undermined political negotiations that were under way, and at the same time he protested that CINCPAC was giving orders directly to Savannakhet without channeling them through Vientiane. 2/ The Ambassador complained that CINCPAC might be misreading intelligence: that three companies of troops alleged to be advancing to attack the Phoumi forces in Luang Prabang were in fact forces under Southep that were collaborating with Bounleut and Phoumi, and that in consequence the justification for relaxing restraints upon Phoumi on the assumption that Luang Prabang was threatened by an impending attack were false. In this message, the Ambassador protested again against by-passing Vientiane in instructions to Savannakhet claiming that this incident:

1/ CINCPAC to ChPEO, DTG 252201Z Nov 60, TOP SECRET.
2/ Vientiane/EmbTel 1005, 7:00 PM, 27 Nov 60, SECRET.

"Illustrates extreme importance of routing important command decisions through the Ambassador who is responsible in the last analysis for U.S. policy and action in Laos subject Washington's direction and who is necessarily more currently informed than persons at greater distances . . ." 1/

241. On the 27th, ChPEO reported back to CINCPAC that on that day the Ambassador had lifted the restrictions imposed upon Brownfield and had instructed that the directions contained in CINCPAC DTG 222010Z, November 1960, were again in effect. 2/ Presumably this was in response to the DepTel of the 26th. However, on the 28th, Brownfield reported that he had again been directed by the Ambassador to hold up [ ] until further notice. He said he was informed that the Ambassador also was querying Washington on this step. 3/ There is much in this period that is far from clear, and this is one unresolved point. One explanation may be that this was an Ambassadorial reaction to a judgment that intelligence concerning Kong Le attacks upon Luang Prabang, upon which the orders to unleash Phoumi had been based, was in error. It may be that the Ambassador was reacting not only to contradictory intelligence upon which the crux of the contingent directive 986140 depended, but also to the suspicion that he was being purposely by-passed by direct orders to Savannakhet that did not go through Vientiane.

242. Available records do not make clear precisely why there were so many apparent misunderstandings of policy, so many apparently false starts and stops. It is clear that there were misunderstandings, even mistrust; and there was multiplicity of channels of communication that may have confused matters.

1/ Vientiane/EmbTel 1014, 1:00 PM, 29 Nov 60, SECRET.
2/ ChPEO to CINCPAC, PEO 3252 DTG 271340Z, Nov 60, SECRET.
3/ PEO Rep/Savannakhet to CINCPAC, Alt PEO 164, DTG 290415Z, Nov 60, TOP SECRET.

The message referred to by CINCPAC in his DTG 252201Z (paragraph 239 above) is probably one sent out by State [ ] on 23 November. This and a follow-up message may be the keys to the misunderstandings. [ ]

Between these two messages, a DepTel to Vientiane was sent out at 1300 hours local time, 26 November, previously cleared by Undersecretary of State Merchant and Undersecretary of Defense Douglas, which specified that regardless of the outcome of negotiations with Souvanna there should be no further restrictions upon Phoumi except as sanctioned by CINCPAC.[1] Finally, three days later, as if in response to misunderstandings and to make sure no further slippage occurred, the second of the State messages [ ] was sent to the Ambassador, to wit:

> "Regardless outcome exchanges with Souvanna . . . it is essential that there be no interference with supplies, [ ] or military operations . . . Your instructions imposing limitations on Phoumi beyond those sanctioned by CINCPAC should be rescinded if you have not already done so pursuant to our instruction [ ]

243. Soon after this came word that the Ambassador had again approved flights into Luang Prabang from the Plaine des Jarres, where a considerable accumulation of supplies had developed.[3] The efforts were continuing to bring about a meeting of the Lao assembly in Luang Prabang to establish a government that could have the desired claim to legality. But measures were resumed to assure the strength of the Phoumi group in general, not emphasizing a military threat to Luang Prabang,

1/ Unnumbered DepTel in ISA-FER files, TOP SECRET.

[ ]

3/ Admino CINCPAC to SAC Offutt AFB for Adm. Felt, DTG 301933Z, Nov 60, SECRET.

and explicitly as preparation for the possible event that a purely political solution would fail to solve all the problems, and to maintain an Army that would be useful against the Pathet Lao.[1/]

244. The relaxation of restraints upon Phoumi was soon evident. On the 28th Brownfield notified CINCPAC that Phoumi had that day started a general attack with the objective of clearing the areas at the north of the Nam Ca Dinh. He said that if the momentum of the attack carried through, Phoumi's intention was to seize and hold certain positions presently held by the enemy. He also said that [

] He further expressed the hope that if the coup materialized they should be able to airlift support for it from the south within five or six days.[2/]

HOW ONE DECISION WAS MADE

245. During this period, the process by which one decision was made, in Washington, was recorded in handwritten notes by one of the participants. This account appears to refer to JCS to CINCPAC 986730, which was sent out from Washington late on the night of 2 December. But it is not the message that eventuated, but the process of deciding upon it, as seen by one participant, that is of interest here. The account follows:

> 1. Usher [State Dept.] phoned Gen. Gray and said Dillon agreed with State position (require Washington clearance for any attack north).
>
> 2. Adm. Wellings said "major thrust to North" meant "to Vientiane" in Merchant's mind. The phrase should be changed to one we could buy. Adm. Wellings also said Gen. Lem objected to tagging "political incompatibility" sentence of Merchant's into 3rd paragraph which is basically military paragraph -- should go in 2nd paragraph.

1/ CINCPAC to JCS, DTG 300645Z, Nov 60, SECRET.
2/ PEO Rep/Savannakhet to CINCPAC, DTG 280535Z, Nov 60, TOP SECRET.

3. Usher agreed to try "to Vientiane" on Parsons and Merchant, but doubted they would buy it.

4. McCrea told Gray Mr. Irwin favored compromise temporarily requiring JCS approval for a major attack North of Nam Ca Dinh (e.g., on Paksane). At end of temporary period, this requirement for JCS approval would be reconsidered in light of situation then existing.

5. Mr. Irwin then cleared above position with Gen. Bonesteel who agreed subject to adding a phrase "unless overriding operational emergency arises and time does not permit an exchange of cables. In such case notify immediately."

6. Mr. Irwin then called Mr. Parsons to propose the above compromise. Mr. Parsons declined to accept until Mr. Merchant cleared. Mr. Parsons agreed to send up to Merchant for decision.

7. Bonesteel to Wellings to Omaha for JCS. JCS returned to Wellings to Irwin to McCrea to Usher for Parsons and Merchant. 1/

THE PHOUMI VICTORY AT NAM CA DINH

246. The intelligence filtering in during the first few days of December first suggested, then gradually made it clear in the course of about 2 days, that the Phoumi forces had been victorious in their attack on Nam Ca Dinh positions of the Vientiane group. On 2 December, the USARMA forwarded unconfirmed reports of action in the Nam Ca Dinh area which he interpreted to mean that the Vientiane forces were falling back and the Phoumi forces advancing. He commented that the Phoumi forces may have crossed the Nam Ca Dinh River. 2/ The following day the same observer reported that although information was still too fragmentary for detailed judgment, he was convinced that the Vientiane forces had suffered defeat and that Phoumi forces had attained a victory of importance, sufficient perhaps to reverse the effect of the earlier Paksane battle. 3/ By 4 December,

1/ Handwritten notes of Col. W. S. McCrea in ISA-FER files, dated 1 Dec 60, TOP SECRET.
2/ USARMA/Vientiane to DA/Wash., CX229, DTG 021145Z, Dec 60, CONFIDENTIAL.
3/ USARMA/Vientiane to 13 TAF, Clark AFB, CX232, DTG 031322Z, Dec 60, SECRET.

Vientiane was reporting with apparent confidence that the battle at Nam Ca Dinh had in fact been a victory of significant proportions and that the prospects of further events toward Vientiane now seemed favorable. ChPEO in his special SitRep as of 041600G, December 1960 reported that although he could not confirm that Phoumi forces had crossed the Nam Ca Dinh, the Vientiane forces had probably suffered "a shocking defeat" and almost certainly were withdrawing northwestward from Paksane. Shortly afterward he had a report from Brownfield that the battle the day before near the Mekong riverbank had been "a real melee" from which Phoumi forces emerged clearly victorious and the prospects were high of sending the Vientiane forces back home "with their tails between their legs." The magnitude of the battle may be inferred from the casualty estimate of 10 killed and 31 wounded on the losing side.[1/]

247. In Washington, meanwhile, the question of the degree of freedom to bestow upon Phoumi was hotly debated and a decision was reached between State and Defense which led to the dispatch on the evening of 2 December of crucial guidance in the form of JCS 986730. This is probably the message which resulted from the process described in paragraph 245 above. Because this guidance was crucial in the events of the next several days, because the exact wording had apparently been considered and debated, and finally because the interpretation of this wording later became an issue in the field, the text of the message is given here in full:

> 1. [ ] reaffirmed by State 564 to Vientiane repeated info CINCPAC.
>
> 2. In the interest of attaining an acceptable political solution in Laos JCS desire that, until they issue further instructions, Phoumi military operations be limited to:
>
> a. Defending and consolidating any positions he may now occupy north of river,

1/ ChPEO to CINCPAC, PEO 3342, DTG 041040Z, Dec 60, SECRET; ChPEO to CINCPAC, PEO 3343, DTG 041705Z, Dec 60, SECRET.

b. Clearing enemy from positions they may hold south of river,

c. Preparations to attack north promptly in order to thwart an attack on Luang Prabang by RLG/PL forces.

3. Should an attack against Luang Prabang be mounted by RLG/PL forces, restrictions set forth in 2a. are automatically rescinded.

4. State and Defense concur. 1/

248. This guidance had gone out from Washington following a policy debate at a time when the military success of Phoumi at Nam Ca Dinh was not yet fully apparent. In addition to this inhibiting factor, arrangements had still not been completed which would insure an ostensibly legal government in which Phoumi and his group would be dominant. Finally, there was hesitation in many quarters over proceeding too openly and too rapidly. It was feared on the one hand that actions too open might backfire by inducing unfavorable reactions from our Allies or even from the Communist Bloc, and on the other hand that Phoumi lacked the strength as yet to act with sufficient decisiveness and speed.

249. The foremost spokesman for a policy of relaxing restraints upon Phoumi was CINCPAC, who on 4 December recommended to JCS that:

a. Ambassador Brown be instructed to convey strong objections to Souvanna's failure to carry out his agreement to meet in Luang Prabang.

b. Ambassador Brown should be told to inform Souvanna that the cease fire cannot be continued so long as he maneuvers to include the NLHX in his government and welches on his promise to support and attend the proposed Luang Prabang meeting.

c. The restrictions imposed by JCS 986730 should be relaxed and Phoumi should be encouraged to exploit his successes already gained.

d. Military pressure should be maintained in order to attain a satisfactory political solution. 2/

1/ JCS to CINCPAC 986730, DTG 030148Z, Dec 60, TOP SECRET.
2/ CINCPAC to JCS, DTG 041815Z, Dec 60, TOP SECRET.

THE RUSSIAN AIRLIFT

250. The Russian airlift into Laos was begun at this time. On 4 December, an IL-14 carrying 16 crewmen came into Vientiane on a familiarization flight. The following day IL-14's brought in 5 loads and in the following days the deliveries were generally higher, reaching a peak of 10 flights daily before the flights were terminated on 13 December as a result of the battle for Vientiane. Table II summarizes the Russian airlift into Laos throughout the month of December 1960.

TABLE II

RESUMÉ OF RUSSIAN AIRLIFT INTO LAOS TO 31 DECEMBER 1960 a/

4 Dec 60	1 IL-14	Crew + 16 passengers for familiarization	to Vientiane
5 Dec	5 loads)	Avgas, gas and diesel fuel	"
6 Dec	9 loads)	into Vientiane Air Field	"
7 Dec	10 loads)	On 8 Dec, near collision with	"
8 Dec	6 loads)	Air Laos plane	"
9-10 Dec	Airport closed because of near accident of 8 Dec.		
11 Dec	10 Flights)	Crane observed in use, is	
12 Dec	10 Flights)	believed that 4 105mm	
13 Dec	5 Flights)	howitzers & 6 120mm mortars off-loaded. Also probably ammo and rice	
14 Dec	Flights into Vientiane ended by battle for Vientiane. Russian airlift continued thereafter means of airdrops to Kong Le forces, at Ban Phong Hong, Vang Vieng, and later Plaine des Jarres.		
20 Dec	First airdrop observed.		
20-30 Dec	To Vang Vieng area, exact number unknown.		
31 Dec	In Xieng Khouang area to Kong Le forces attacking Plaine des Jarres.		

a/ As reported in USARMA/Vientiane to DA/Wash., CX03, DTG 040622Z, Jan 61, SECRET.

CONTINGENT CLAUSE OF U.S. DIRECTIVE INTERPRETED BY PHOUMI

251. On 6 December, the PEO Rep/Savannakhet reported an incident that illustrates in an extreme form the problems that may arise as a result of a contingent directive. Brownfield reported that

the contents of JCS 986730 were delivered to Phoumi on the evening of 5 December when Phoumi returned from the Nam Ca Dinh front. He reported that Phoumi immediately stated that the current RLG/PL moves against Luang Prabang automatically rescinded the restrictions imposed by paragraph 3 of the JCS directive. Brownfield went on to report that, acting upon this judgment, Phoumi had planned to press his Nam Ca Dinh attack to Paksane and had already so ordered.[1/] Thus the will of the U.S. government was interpreted by an ally, but a non-American, with an evident axe to grind.

THE KOUPRASITH COUP

252. On the morning of 6 December, Phoumi proposed to Brownfield that he wanted to go to the assistance of the Kouprasith group in Vientiane, who were on the verge of executing a coup. Kouprasith and Phoumi had been brought together some time before in Thailand by American officials stationed in Vientiane, with such a purpose generally in mind. Brownfield's first mention specified Boun Om and Kouprasith as the leaders and even indicated -- a matter that without further information seemed bewildering -- that an assist from Souvanna was expected.[2/] There is another message which suggests that Ambassador Brown was in some measure involved in the plan. A message from CINCPAC headquarters later in the day on 6 December refers to the message in which Brownfield mentioned Phoumi's expectation of a coup in Vientiane, and also to a message from Ambassador Brown [ ] that instructed Brownfield that "if action materializes as contemplated" he should provide support deemed necessary to issue military success of the operation from

1/ PEO/Rep/Savannakhet to CINCPAC, Alt PEO 198, DTG 060940Z, Dec 60, TOP SECRET.
2/ PEO/Rep/Savannakhet, to ChPEO, Alt PEO 199, DTG 062000Z, Dec 60, TOP SECRET.

the assets at his disposal.[1] The most reasonable supposition to explain the Ambassador's hand in this is that he, like Souvanna later, was drawn into the Kouprasith intrigue in expectation that it was aimed exclusively at Kong Le and other leftist elements.

253. Authorization for Phoumi to support an uprising against Kong Le and Pathet Lao elements in Vientiane was extended by JCS on 7 December. The guidance provided by JCS observed that Phoumi could provide such support to the uprising as was judged militarily practicable by PEO representatives with the proviso, however, [ ] This message was dispatched to ChPEO on the basis of consultation between State and Defense, and the Ambassador was being informed in advance.[2]

254. The Kouprasith coup began on the morning of 8 December and the course it took was originally somewhat bewildering to Americans in Vientiane, including those who had had some part in arranging it. Around 5:15 in the morning a brief outbreak of firing was heard in the direction of Camp Chinaimo. Shortly thereafter troops with white armbands took control of the President's Council building, the airport and the police station. Leaflets dropped from Army trucks during the night were found, and these expressed sentiments that were neutralist, pro-Souvanna, anti-Pathet Lao and anti-Leftist Youth Organization. About

1/ ADMINO/CINCPAC to PEO/Rep/Savannakhet, DTG 062150Z, Dec 60, SECRET.
2/ JCS to ADMINO/CINCPAC, JCS 986852, DTG 070157Z, Dec 60, TOP SECRET. Info copies of this message were sent to Embassies in both Vientiane and Bangkok as well as to PEO Reps in Vientiane and Savannakhet, and to CHJUSMAG/Bangkok.

9 o'clock that morning, Souvanna sent for Ambassador Brown and told him that Vientiane was formally under the control of troops that were loyal to him and opposed to both the Pathet Lao and the Savannakhet group. Souvanna urged the Ambassador to put pressure upon Phoumi to cease his pressure on Vientiane. He suggested negotiations with Phoumi, to which Tiao Somsanith (the President du Counseil since his resignation on 13 August as Premier) would be a party.[1] Leadership of the coup was still a matter of popular rumor and not clear, even in the official communications, although Kouprasith's name was prominent among those rumored as leaders.

255. Later in the day, ChPEO reported that the leaders of the coup, still not definitely identified, reported that they were acting in coordination with Phoumi, and that a parachute drop of Phoumi troops was definitely scheduled and it was planned that this would be followed by air landing operations. [ ] By evening of the 8th, the situation was becoming clearer. The Ambassador at 8 o'clock dispatched a message which indicated that Phoumi paratroopers had been dropped and these were in touch with Kouprasith forces. There were rumors that Souvanna would leave Vientiane. There was another rumor current (which was to be corrected the following day) that Kouprasith had been placed under arrest by Second Battalion paratroopers when they became aware of Kouprasith's anti-Pathet Lao orientation.[3]

256. On the 9th, ChPEO dispatched a message indicating serious fear that the Kouprasith coup had not panned out as expected.

1/ Vientiane EmbTel 1082, 11:00 AM, 8 Dec 60, SECRET; Vientiane EmbTel 1083, Noon, 8 Dec 60, CONFIDENTIAL.
2/ ChPEO to CINCPAC, PEO 3390, DTG 080533Z, Dec 60, being the special SitRep as of Noon local time, 8 Dec.
3/ Vientiane/EmbTel 1094, 8:00 PM, 8 Dec 60, CONFIDENTIAL.

The propaganda leaflets appeared to be as strongly anti-Phoumi as anti-Pathet Lao, and ChPEO was afraid that the affair might turn out to be a trap for Phoumi. He advised against the air landing operation which Phoumi had planned [

] ChPEO was afraid the planes might be ambushed as they landed. ChPEO advised strongly against depending on the coup making seizure of Vientiane easy, and consequently he opposed a piecemeal commitment of forces against the city. He had reminded Brownfield at Savannakhet that the original PEO plan of August had envisaged a substantial buildup of forces around the city and that an attack by these ground forces was to be coordinated with airborne operations. Something of the same sort still appeared necessary. ChPEO closed his message by saying that he had spent the day urging the Ambassador [

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257. On the 9th also, Souvanna confided to the British Ambassador that he had at first supported the Kouprasith coup because it seemed to support the government and was directed against the Pathet Lao. The arrival of Phoumi paratroopers had completely altered the situation, however, and had led to a counter coup the very first evening. As a result, Vientiane FAL and Kouprasith forces were facing each other on the Chinaimo road. Souvanna had told the British Ambassador that forces he was powerless to control had been loosed, and at the first sign of violence in Vientiane, he was going to leave for Phnom Penh.[2]

1/ ChPEO to CINCPAC, PEO 3432, DTG 100535Z, Dec 60, TOP SECRET.
2/ Vientiane/EmbTel 1098, 3:00 PM, 9 Dec 60, SECRET.

258. At the same time, CINCPAC judged that the decisive action appeared to be shaping up between these Kong Le forces and the Phoumi and Kouprasith forces then at Chinaimo. He accordingly advised the PEO representatives in Laos that it was essential at this point to defeat Kong Le, and this would require good organization and leadership. The PEO representatives were directed to assure competent leadership and organization and immediate development of an offensive plan against Kong Le for use if the expected battle were in fact joined.[1]

259. On the same day the CINCPAC was foreseeing a possible decisive battle for Vientiane, Souvanna and those closest to him also foresaw the impending crisis from their very different perspectives. On the evening of 9 December, Souvanna with his family and his Ministers of Finance, Education, Communications, and other lesser officials, departed by Air Laos for Phnom Penh.[2]

GUIDANCE TO PHOUMI

260. From inside of Vientiane, intelligence and advice for the guidance of the operation against Vientiane were being provided by the PEO office there. The moves of Kong Le troops were watched and, to the extent they could be observed, were reported with advice concerning how best to deploy the Phoumi forces in their approach to Vientiane. Mindful of the political ramifications of the military assistance being rendered to the Phoumi group, ChPEO called attention also to the current propaganda from Hanoi and Peking attacking U.S. intervention and even "naming dates and places." [ ] There was always the prospect

1/ CINCPAC to ChPEO/Laos and PEO/Rep/Savannakhet, DTG 092013Z, Dec 60, TOP SECRET.
2/ NYT, 10 Dec 60, pp. 1 and 6.

that U.S. intervention would be used as a pretext for Communist intervention. Finally, there was repetition of the previous advice to avoid piecemeal commitment that would facilitate Kong Le's problems of defense.[1/] There were reports forwarded of the materiel being brought in to the Kong Le forces by the Russian airlift and of reinforcements for Kong Le (about 400 to 500 troops) brought in from the North.[2/]

THE PROBLEM OF THE RUSSIAN AIRLIFT, AND THE RUSSIAN NOTE

261. The worries beginning to be felt about the Russian airlift to Kong Le's troops were first reflected in Washington about this time. On 12 December, the Director of the Joint Staff sent an exclusive to CINCPAC. After first remarking on the dangers of the continued Kong Le possession of Wattay (Vientiane) airfield, and of the necessity of bringing it soon under Phoumi control, [

] Finally, CINCPAC commented that

1/ ChPEO to CINCPAC, PEO 3449, DTG 111525Z, Dec 60, SECRET. This message forwarded to CINCPAC for info the text of two messages dispatched to PEO/Rep/Savannakhet, the first DTG 102100Z, the second 111500Z, Dec 60.
2/ ChPEO to CINCPAC, PEO Opt 3459, DTG 120637Z, Dec 60, SECRET; USARMA to DA/Wash., CX238, DTG 121145Z, Dec 60, SECRET.

Souvanna's sending of delegates from Phnom Penh to Hanoi, Moscow and Peiping might be motivated by a desire to publicize U.S. intervention and this would make even more doubtful the wisdom of providing additional evidence of the U.S. hand in Laos.[1/]

262. The Russians had a reasonably accurate knowledge of the U.S. operation in Laos, [ ] On 13 December the USSR sent a note to the U.S. Government protesting U.S. actions in Laos. After first recalling its earlier protest of 22 September, it began its recital of current American acts in Laos by saying that, "if two or three months ago the government of the U.S. made some effort to camouflage its unlawful actions in Laos, lately the U.S. has in effect become a party to military operations on the side of the rebels against the lawful government of Laos and the Laotian People." The note proceeded to specify that the U.S. was openly supporting Phoumi by supply of arms, military equipment, ammunition and money, naming 105mm howitzers, 120mm mortars, heavy tanks, military planes, helicopters, gun boats and other equipment. It said that the rebels were trained in handling these weapons by American advisers and that U.S. helicopters based in Thailand were used for the direction of artillery fire in battles between the forces of Phoumi and those of Vientiane. It accused the U.S. not only of training the Phoumi forces but also of supervising their military operations and making extensive use of Thailand and Thai bases as a means of doing this. The note went on to cite that such acts were in glaring violation of Article 12 of the Final Declaration of the 1954 Geneva Agreements, and while

1/ JCS to CINCPAC exclusive for Adm. Felt, 987102, DTG 121701Z, Dec 60, TOP SECRET; CINCPAC exclusive for Dir/JS, DTG 121943Z, Dec 60, TOP SECRET.

it ended up without specific threat, it concluded that the USSR could not ignore the threat to the peace of Southeast Asia that arose because of this "gross U.S. intervention in the domestic affairs of Laos."[1/]

JTF 116 READINESS

263. On 14 December, CINCPAC initiated readiness preparations for the possible activation of Joint Task Force 116, and the possible implementation of CINCPAC Oplan 32-59 (Laos) Phase 2. Naval units were directed to take up positions East of Tourane in the South China Sea and many other units throughout the Pacific Command were placed in more advanced stages of alert. There was a security problem involved, because it was desired not to create public fuss, and precautions all along the line were taken to avoid undue publicity. The threat of typhoon Phyllis, then in the Philippine Sea, was used as a pretext for the cancellation of scheduled exercises in the Western Pacific. The only participation in this at the JCS end that is evident from available message traffic was participation in the decision to use the threat of typhoon Phyllis as a cover for the abandonment of West Pacific exercises and increased readiness in Okinawa to protect property. In the discussion of using typhoon Phyllis as a cover, an interesting point is that whereas JCS suggested a Washington release to the effect that typhoon Phyllis was causing cancellation of scheduled exercises, CINCPAC recommended leaving all such announcement of postponements to local CO's because this would follow normal procedures and be less likely to arouse suspicion. The ARPAC forces earmarked for JTF 116 (Joint Task Force) were placed on DefCon 3 at this time.[2/]

1/ From the text of the Soviet note as provided by Tass and printed in the NYT on 14 Dec 60, p. 18.

2/ CINCPAC to CINCPACFLT, DTG 140029Z, Dec 60, TOP SECRET; Info copy to JCS, all PACOM Service components and to CG, Third Marine Division (CJTF 116); CINCPACFLT to Commander 7th Flt, DTG 140104Z, SECRET; CINCPAC to CINCUSARPAC and PACAF, DTG 140214Z, TOP SECRET; CINCUSARPAC to CG's of units in Korea, Okinawa, Japan and Hawaii, DTG 140420Z, TOP SECRET; CINCUSARPAC to DA/Wash., DTG 140427Z, SECRET; JCS to CINCPAC 987162, DTG 141515Z, Dec 60, TOP SECRET; CINCPAC to JCS, DTG 142350Z, Dec 60, TOP SECRET.

THE MEETINGS OF 14 DECEMBER

264. On 14 December, there were two important meetings in Washington. The first meeting occurred at 1600 R and constituted a meeting between high officials of State, Defense, and CIA. This meeting reached certain tentative decisions, which in the evening of that day were taken to the White House.

265. In anticipation of the State-Defense-CIA meeting at 1600 R, the JCS sent an urgent dispatch to CINCPAC early that morning requesting immediate comment and recommendations concerning three points which it was anticipated would be covered in the afternoon meeting. These points were:

a. [ ]

b. Further materiel needed by Phoumi from either Thai or U.S. source,

c. An estimate of Phoumi capabilities to stabilize the situation, including seizure or neutralization of Wattay Airfield.[1]

This request for info and comment by CINCPAC was prepared in J-3 for the Director of the Joint Staff.

266. The response from CINCPAC came back within about three hours. In brief, CINCPAC's comments were:

a. In the light of the existence of a government which the U.S. could support legally, there were no further reasons [ ]

b. A recent report from PEO indicated 4 105mm howitzers had just been received from Thailand, that Phoumi planned on a total of 19, and no other needs were known to exist at present,

c. Phoumi's ability to stabilize the situation and take Wattay Airfield was in serious doubt, but granted sufficient

1/ JCS to CINCPAC, 987164, DTG 141645Z, Dec 60, TOP SECRET.

artillery, Phoumi should be successful. [

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267. [

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1/ CINCPAC to JCS, DTG 141945Z, Dec 60, TOP SECRET.
2/ JCS to CINCPAC, 987200, DTG 142203Z, Dec 60, TOP SECRET; CINCPAC to JCS, DTG 142242Z, Dec 60, TOP SECRET.

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268. [

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1/ JCS to CINCPAC, exclusive for Adm. Felt, 987223, DTG 150021Z, Dec 60, TOP SECRET.
2/ Handwritten notes on the White House meeting on 14 Dec in ISA-FER files, entitled "Laos Situation," 15 Dec 60, TOP SECRET; JCS to CINCPAC, 987254, DTG 152010Z, Dec 60, TOP SECRET.

[redacted]

THE FALL OF VIENTIANE

269. In the battle for Vientiane such damage was done to the American Embassy and to PEO communications that the PEO Rep/ Savannakhet was delegated as the Acting ChPEO until ChPEO could move to Savannakhet or Bangkok, or could restore his communications in Vientiane. Events had attained such momentum and were moving so rapidly toward their climax that this had little effect upon the outcome. [redacted] About the same time a message

1/ JCS to CINCPAC 98725, DTG 152010Z, Dec 60, TOP SECRET; CINCPAC to JCS, DTG 170345Z, Dec 60, TOP SECRET; JCS to CINCPAC 987431, DTG 172009Z, Dec 60, TOP SECRET.
2/ CINCPAC to ChPEO and CHJUSMAG, DTG 150504Z, Dec 60, TOP SECRET.
3/ CHJUSMAG Thailand to CINCPAC, MAO-8458, DTG 160645Z, Dec 60, TOP SECRET; CINCPAC to JCS, DTG 160113Z, SECRET.
4/ CAS/Savannakhet, 083, passed from CIA Washington by the SSO/JCS and CIA/OCI, DTG 161855Z, Dec 60, SECRET; CHJUSMAG to CINCPAC, MAO-8466, 161210Z, Dec 60, SECRET.

was received from the Ambassador, which said he had a letter from Boun Oum announcing installation of his government and formally requesting relief for the people, and military and economic aid for the government of Laos.[1/]

270. Thus the immediate goal of the Phoumi-Boun Oum coup was attained. Vientiane as well as Luang Prabang was under control, Souvanna had been deposed, Kong Le and his forces were in flight, and a government was being established which could make some claim to legality and could make open requests to the U.S. for further aid to combat Kong Le, the Pathet Lao, and other elements now receiving undisguised support from Russia as well as more furtive aid from DRVN. This was an omen of the more serious problems of the ensuing months, to be dealt with in the second part of this study. At the moment there was a victory to celebrate. The first recorded message of congratulations of the fall of Vientiane to the Phoumi forces was in the form of a message from CINCPAC to the Acting ChPEO/Savannakhet, sent from Hawaii on the evening of the 16th and which began

> "The hard-fought battle waged by Gen. Phoumi and his forces for the control of their national Capitol and the Wattay Airfield deserved the highest praise. Please convey to Phoumi on my behalf . . ."

After many words of praise, the message went on:

> "Phoumi and company, with a forceful assist from PEO members must immediately develop an aggressive plan that will insure the methodical elimination of opposition forces throughout Laos . . ." [2/]

OBSERVATIONS ON COMMAND PROBLEMS EVIDENT IN PERIOD UNDER REVIEW

271. Table III lists in chronological order 22 definable decisions taken in the period from 9 August to 14 December with an indication of the agency and echelon responsible for each decision, and the section of the historical analysis that deals with the decision in more detail.

1/ Vientiane EmbTel, UNN, 16 Dec 60.
2/ CINCPAC to AChPEO/Savannakhet, DTG 170351Z, Dec 60, TOP SECRET.

TABLE III

TABLE OF DEFINABLE DECISIONS, CHRONOLOGICALLY ARRANGED, IN LAOS INCIDENT AUG-DEC 1960 TO INDICATE AGENCY AND ECHELON RENDERING THESE DECISIONS

Date	Agency and Echelon a/	Decision	Pertinent Paragraphs of Historical Analysis
Aug 9	Ambassador	Not to permit PEO to foster an accommodation between Phoumi and Kong Le.	43
Aug 9	Asst SecState	Instructions to U.S. Amb. (constituted short-range ad hoc policy) to exhort ministers to rally behind legal govt., [ ]	48
Aug 9	Ambassador and State Dept/Wash. State echelon unknown	Not to channel aid to RLG through Phoumi until Embassy representative got Royal confirmation of Phoumi authority.	56
Aug 11	Dep SecDef; representatives OASD/ISA-FER, Asst Sec State	[ ]	60
Aug 17	Under and Asst SecState;	Eliminate Kong Le; maintain Phoumi as a barrier against Communists but no overt support; seek compromise between Phoumi and Souvanna.	90-94
Aug 22	State; Defense; echelon unknown	[ ]	103
Aug 23	SecDef, JCS, OASD/ISA-FER; Under and Asst SecState	Inform Phoumi of U.S. support; [ ] inform Souvanna of U.S. support of Phoumi and FAL.	108-111

a/ Agency according to documentary records available; only the highest known echelons are usually given here.

TABLE III (Cont'd)

Date	Agency and Echelon[a/]	Decision	Pertinent Paragraphs of Historical Analysis
Aug 29	U.S. Amb/Laos	[redacted]	115
Aug 30	OASD/ISA, Asst SecState	Resume airlift.	115
Aug 31	Asst SecState	Ambassador to inform Souvanna U.S. would support new cabinet as composed only if it would deal strongly with Kong Le and restore authority of RLG; offer of aid in principle to deal with Kong Le if asked, [redacted]	121
Sept 28	CINCPAC	[redacted]	196
Oct 2-3	State-Defense; echelon unknown	[redacted]	197
Oct 7	State-Defense; echelon high but not known; consultation with U.K. and France	Suspend military aid to Laos.	163
Oct 7	SecDef, OASD/ISA-FER [redacted]	Require Souvanna: to move RLG to Luang Prabang, to prevent Kong Le acts against Phoumi, to cease negotiations with PL.	175-176
Oct 8	Under and Asst SecState; OASD/ISA and OASD/ISA-FER; CJCS; Ch SAD/J-5; [redacted]	Decide terms of reference of impending mission to Laos. See King and encourage him, see Phoumi and tell him U.S. support, agree on amount of supplies to Phoumi; [redacted]	178-179
Oct 8	AChPEO and Ambassador	[redacted]	199

TABLE III (Cont'd)

Date	Agency and Echelon[a/]	Decision	Pertinent Paragraphs of Historical Analysis
Nov 10	SecState and Asst Secs State; Under SecDef ; CJCS for Policy; Ch SAD/J-5 for JCS	Neutralist Laos unacceptable; support Phoumi unequivocably; oust Souvanna by Phoumi coup, using King to form new govt.	218-222
Nov 21	AASD/ISA; ACJCS; SecState; draft embodying decision by Pres. by telephone	Contingent directive to "let Phoumi fight" if Luang Prabang under attack.	232
Dec 2	Asst SecState; VDJS; Ch SAD/J-5; OASD/ISA; OASD/ISA-FER; Asst for Policy CJCS	Attempted clarification and up-dating of 21 Nov decision. Specified limits to Phoumi operations in order to facilitate political settlement. No restraints if RLG/PL attack Luang Prabang.	247
Dec 7	JCS, concur State and Defense probably OASD/ISA; OASD/ISA-FER and [redacted]	Authorization for Phoumi to support coup in Vientiane against Kong Le and PL elements.	253
Dec 14	CINCPAC	Initiated readiness for JTF 116.	263
Dec 14	State, Defense, [redacted] -- clearance by telephone of key provisions with President.	ChPEO to provide military advice directly to Phoumi. [redacted]	267-268

272. In the following paragraphs are some summary observations concerning problems of command and control and national decision making experienced in the Laos incident, August-December 1960, with a reference to paragraphs in the historical analysis that illustrate or elaborate upon the observation.

273. The problem overwhelming all others was lack of clearly defined, clearly felt national policy and purpose. This was a problem beyond the power of JCS to resolve, and was in fact resolvable only at a national level. Each agency involved [ ] had a legitimate interest in Laos. Without clear-cut resolution of policy, each agency was predisposed to favor policies based on its accepted mode of operations and to maintain a proprietary interest in them, even when they were in conflict with policies being attempted by other and competing U.S. agencies. So long as higher authority did not assert itself decisively to develop a unified U.S. policy, it was possible for peer agencies to appeal decisions and to delay actions or programs lacking unequivocal support of higher authority. No one policy ever had the best possible chance to work because no one policy was ever followed to the exclusion of others that lessened its chances of success (see paragraphs 34-35, 55, 65, 85, 100, 128, 180-185, 200-202, 205, 218-219).

274. The issues we faced in Laos were ambiguous. This ambiguity resulted partly from the fact that we lacked a clear-cut, consistent, national consensus concerning the basic nature of the U.S. problem in Laos and the wisest course for the U.S. to follow in dealing with it. But the ambiguity resulted also from the fact that intelligence was generally incomplete, often conflicting and in error, and commonly dependent upon sources with an axe to grind. Many of the decisions involved the commitment of the prestige of

the U.S. to a given policy within Laos on the basis of a judgment of the personal characteristics of a Lao individual or group. This also involved, indirectly, a sociological appraisal of the political forces at work in the land -- a subject upon which there were evident and probably inescapable differences of opinion as between honest and ordinarily competent U.S. officials. In addition to the slipperiness of the subject, lack of solid information created a situation in which the proprietary or emotional interests of those either dealing with intelligence, or acting upon it, often made it quite impossible to escape the influence of the wish upon the thought. Intelligence information was sometimes sought for the purpose of supporting a policy contention; and was often supplied, by our Lao sources, on an axe-grinding basis to cultivate or support the particular American viewpoint that it seemed most profitable to cultivate. Differences of opinion among Americans on U.S. policies in Laos were evident to the Laotians, who accepted this invitation to exploit American differences for their own partisan advantages. In place of coldly judicial and essentially technical analysis, the situation frequently produced polemics. The competitive atmosphere made it difficult to await dispassionate analysis or to defer commitment until a confident judgment would be rendered. (See paragraphs 35, 37-42, 49-51, 136-138, 144-157, 240-242, 252-256.)

275. CINCPAC was empowered by JCS and DOD to make all decisions which they could make without interagency consultation. There was a manifest lack of comparable delegation of responsibility, by the State Department, to the Ambassador. Because the Ambassador was Chief of the Country Team, the failure of State to delegate to the Ambassador had the effect of reducing the effectiveness of delegation by other agencies of operational responsibility

to their field representatives; the affairs of other agencies tended to become involved in the problem of delegation of political authority to the Ambassador, and thus to impair or destroy the power to expedite action that was the intent of the delegation of power. (See Table I and paragraphs 56, 64, 75, 93-94, 180-185.)

276. Referral of issues to Washington for resolution often created serious operational problems. Without passing judgment now on the necessity or wisdom of such referral, it is to be observed that the situation in the field frequently changed so fast that the bureaucratic procedures in use could not keep pace, and decisions were being made in response to conditions no longer in effect by the time the decisions could be implemented. This was not a result of inadequate communications, but rather a result of the inherent time-consuming characteristics of interagency consultation and coordination, as these functions were conducted at that time. (See paragraphs 56, 61, 75, 86, 110, 159-163, 227, 245.)

277. What appeared to be clear and binding decisions at higher echelons in Washington repeatedly turned out to be neither clear nor binding. In some cases this seems due to lack of incisive guidance from the national level to the competing federal agencies, in other cases the changed situation in the field by the time the Washington decision was made led to the decision being set aside by one or another device in deference to changed circumstances. These points have already been noted above. Another important factor was that higher echelon Washington decisions sometimes failed to be explicit concerning complications upon which operational personnel in the field were concentrating their attention, and for this reason the decisions failed to be understood in the field in the same way in which they were rendered in Washington, even on occasions when Washington tried to be most emphatic. This

was partly due to the loss of detailed acquaintance with local issues and operating conditions in proportion as decisions were referred upward. Upward referral tended to mean a wider basis of consideration, which was no doubt necessary as issues grew in importance. But it frequently happened that those in a position to judge issues from a broader base lacked continuity of knowledge of details of pressing importance to those engaged at the local level. Decisions based on broad principle, and communicated in broad terms, sometimes failed therefore to be understood as they were intended. (See Table I, paragraphs 232-244, 227, 74, 114, 103, 111.)

278. Determination of U.S. policy in Laos was by no means limited to those occasions when U.S. officials consciously addressed themselves to formal determinations of policy. Some important decisions were rendered inevitable by prior events or commitments, others were made without full realization that an option was being exercised, or else were taken as ad hoc, tactical decisions which, it is possible in retrospect to see, carried with them commitments or more long-range strategic consequences than were envisioned at the time. Perhaps the most important decision taken with respect to Laos was that it was a practical possibility for the U.S. to obtain a desired political outcome in Laos by an immediate, activist program, or, if not, that it was better to accept the consequence of failure in an immediate activist program than to defer action to a later and possibly more auspicious occasion. (It is arguable that this was less a free decision, as commonly understood, between readily available options, than it was an implicit acceptance of a judgment that U.S. involvement was already so great that to stand totally to one side was not a practical possibility.) This issue was apparently never debated; it was accepted, rather, as an item of faith. However, whenever issues

presented themselves in a form recognizably affording a choice in the actions open to us, there was a tendency to view even comparatively minor operational matters as possible threshold acts involving consequences far beyond the magnitude of the matter immediately at hand. For this reason, operational matters of comparatively minor immediate importance were frequently referred to very high echelons where decisions were rendered, not according to the criteria of efficient operations as such, but rather according to judgment of broad political consequences. (See paragraphs 48, 54-55, 84, 169, 194-199, 202, 115.)

279. Formal meetings and procedures often constituted a mere formalization of decisions already largely worked out, often on the basis of informal and unrecorded contacts and communications. These informal exchanges included telephone and telecon conversations between points in Washington, Hawaii, Thailand and Laos, personal and out-of-channel personal contacts in all places. The direction of inquiries and the assignment of responsibilities sometimes went to individuals rather than to formal stations or organizations in the established chain of command, reflecting a preference to deal with known individual capabilities and predilections, at times, rather than with official stations and formalized procedures. (See paragraphs 81-82, 180-185, 225-227, 245, 249.)

280. Alternative procedures that it seems in retrospect might have improved the effectiveness of U.S. performance during this period would have included:

a. Incisive decisions and necessary implementing actions at the national level requiring complete cooperation and coordination of U.S. efforts in the field.

b. Broad and deep investigation and definition of alternative courses of action open to the U.S., with attention to the practical prospects of success and the consequences of failure of each of these.

c. Assurance that agency specialists regularly responsible for monitoring local problems were specially qualified, were privy to all information and all considerations of issues directly related to their special responsibilities, and were present and invited to speak on all occasions when decisions were rendered.

APPENDIX "A"

CHRONOLOGICAL BACKGROUND OF THE LAOS INCIDENT

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CHRONOLOGICAL BACKGROUND OF THE LAOS INCIDENT

REMOTE BACKGROUND

1. Following migrations of Mongoloid peoples from Yunnan in the 12th Century which overran aboriginal peoples in the upper valley of the Mekong, the medieval Kingdom of Lan Xang (land of a million elephants) was established in 1353 with its capital at Luang Prabang, covering an area considerably greater than that of the present Laos. In 1563, the King moved the capital to Vientiane to seek closer relations with the Thai in order to thwart Burmese expansionism. During the next 144 years the country suffered repeated vicissitudes of invasion and internal division, being involved in struggles with and between the Burmese, the Thai, the Chinese, and the Annamese (Vietnamese). In the 18th Century, the country was divided into the kingdoms of Vientiane and Luang Prabang (1707) and the principality (sometimes called a kingdom) of Champassak (1713): its parts were subjected to different foreign influences and controls, and by the middle of the 19th Century were under Thai suzerainty.

2. When France extended its colonial empire into Southeast Asia in 1858, first concentrating on the coastal areas of what was to become French Indochina, it annexed Cochinchina and asserted a protectorate over Cambodia, by 1863. By 1883, the French were so obviously interested in Laos that the Thai in 1885 marched into Xieng Khouang and Houa Phans (Sam Neua), both considered tributaries by Annam (Vietnam), and carried away the viceroy of Luang Prabang as hostage to Bangkok. The French recognized Thai suzerainty claims, but secured the right to keep a vice-consul in Luang Prabang. Following a French move to blockade Bangkok in 1893,

Thailand ceded the portions of Luang Prabang and Champassak east of the Mekong to the French in 1896. In 1904, the west bank sections were ceded. By now, all of Luang Prabang and Xieng Khouang and about half of the former kingdoms of Champassak and Vientiane were under French control. Vientiane, Xieng Khouang, and Central Laos became French provinces; no effort was made to revive their former royal families. When the cessation of the west bank territory of Bassac (Champassak) was completed in 1905, one son of the late king of Champassak took an oath of loyalty to France and was made governor of Champassak, but was accorded no royal status. The King of Luang Prabang retained his royal title and prerogatives, under French protection; his realm, however, was indirectly but completely administered by French officials. Vientiane, the seat of the Resident Superior since 1899, became the administrative capital of French Laos. From here, the Resident exercised indirect rule of Luang Prabang and a much more direct administration of the territory outside Luang Prabang. Laos was administered within the constraints of the Indo-Chinese Union, a federation set up by the French at the end of the 19th Century.

WORLD WAR II -- 1954 GENEVA CONFERENCE

3. Following the fall of France in June 1940, the Vichy Regime accorded to Japan permission to move troops into Indochina. During the occupation, the Japanese left the Vichy French administration in place until March 1945, when the Japanese declared the Indo-chinese colonial regime at an end and dissolved the Vichy French administration, which had shown signs of rallying to General de Gaulle. When Japan surrendered in August 1945, the French assumed control of Champassak with British help, and prepared to retake all Indochina. However, nationalist movements of natives of Indochina had begun, including in Laos the Lao Issara (Free Laos), and France then began its long and futile efforts to regain control over all of Indochina.

4. The Constitution of the Fourth Republic of France established the French Union, in which Laos was to be one of the Associated States. But the open rebellion of the Viet Minh in Indochina in 1950 spurred the French to hasten Laos' progress toward full independence. In October 1953, a treaty was signed between Laos and France, which recognized Laos as a fully sovereign state within the French Union, and allowed Laos to establish its own diplomatic affairs. The only remaining concession of sovereignty to France was Laos' adherence to an article in the French Constitution in reference to the French Union whereby France was responsible for the coordination of the means and direction of policy pertaining to defense.

5. Laos, in the early 1950's, began to form its own army under French tutelage. The U.S. provided military supplies to the French for the training and supply of the Lao army. In 1953, the Viet Minh forces of Vietnamese Ho Chi Minh forced the evacuation of small French and Lao forces from Northern Laos. With the Viet Minh came the Pathet Lao (national state), led by Prince Souphanouvang. The Pathet Lao, a nationalist group which had broken off from the Lao Issara nationalist movement (dissolved in 1949) was financed and reinforced by the Viet Minh. Through 1953 and early 1954, the Viet Minh forces, accompanied by Pathet Lao troops, made increasingly deeper incursions into Laos. By 1954, they had penetrated Central Laos so deeply they had nearly severed the country. It was not until the fall of Dien Bien Phu, causing heavy French losses, in June 1954, that the U.S. became so gravely alarmed about the situation in Indochina that there was serious throught of intervention.

1954 GENEVA CONFERENCE

6. The Geneva Conference negotiated a cease-fire throughout Indochina and divided the former French Indochina, whose neutrality

and independence were guaranteed by the signatories of the pact, into 4 countries. The Geneva Agreements provided for: (a) the withdrawal of foreign military forces, except for specified French Forces; (b) the prohibition of any military reinforcements or the establishment of new military bases; (c) pending an internal RLG-PL political settlement, the concentration of PL in Phong Saly and Sam Neua; and (d) the creation of an International Control and Supervisory Commission to supervise the implementation of these Agreements. The Geneva Agreements left the solution of the PL problem to the RLG, specifying only that the civilian population and the armed forces of the PL should be integrated into the National Community. The failure of the RLG and PL to achieve an enduring settlement was in large measure responsible for the difficulties that plagued Laos from 1955 up to the Kong Le coup of 9 August 1960.

1954

18 Feb	U.S., U.K., France, and USSR agree to hold international conference to negotiate armistice in Indochina and deal with Korean problem.
26 Apr	Geneva Conference on Korea and Indochina convenes, with U.S., U.K., France, USSR, Communist China, DRVN (North Vietnam), Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia participating.
10 June	U.S. representative to the Geneva Conference (Under-secretary of State B. Smith), argues against USSR-Communist Chinese proposed amendment calling for withdrawal of foreign military personnel, on grounds that retention of French officers and noncoms was required to maintain efficiency of Forces Armées Laotiennes (FAL).
20 July	Geneva Agreements, including USSR-Communist Chinese amendments, are signed, with U.S. only participant abstaining.

21 July	U.S. announces it will not use force to upset Geneva Agreements.
8 Sept	Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), providing for mutual defense, is formed, with U.S., U.K., France, Australia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Philippines, and Thailand signatories; Laos is covered by its protective mantle.

1955

2 Jan	United States Operations Mission (USOM) in Laos (Carter de Paul, Director) is activated; function of USOM, as field office of U.S. Foreign Operations Administration, is to provide technical aid and advice in administering U.S. aid funds given to Royal Government of Laos (RGL).
7 Jan	Lao Defense Minister indicates to the U.S. that, despite the Geneva Agreements, Laos desires U.S. military officers to help train FAL, and also indicates willingness to send FAL officers to Thailand for training.
24 Feb	Chief of French Military Mission (FMM) in Laos requests U.S. to persuade RLG to request French assistance in training FAL.
27 Feb	Secretary of State Dulles, visiting Laos, states U.S. is prepared to defend Laos with air and sea power against any Communist invasion.
30 Apr	U.S. Police Survey Team recommends Lao police and gendarmerie be combined and increased from 1000 to 4000 over a 2-year period.
30 Apr	MAAG Survey Team recommends that 19-man U.S. military assistance mission be installed in Laos.
8 July	RLG charges first Pathet Lao (PL) violation of the Geneva Agreements, with fighting breaking out between FAL and PL in Phong Saly and Sam Neua provinces.

19 July	SEATO Council meets to review the Lao situation; decides to take no action.
2 Sept	U.S. agrees to addition of 1000 recruits to RLG police and promises financial support.
9 Nov	RLG informs International Supervisory and Control Commission (ICC) that, because of failure to reach agreement with PL in Phong Saly and Sam Neua, general elections called for by the Geneva Agreements would be held without PL participation.
14 Nov	RLG Defense Minister informs U.S. Ambassador part of police force and gendarmerie will be combined, as U.S. suggested, despite French objections.
15 Dec	Laos is admitted to UN.
25 Dec	Lao National Assembly elections take place without PL participation.
31 Dec	(C) Program Evaluation Office (PEO) is established in Laos. 1954 Geneva Agreements forbid foreign military aid (other than French). PEO, consisting of 6 civilians, is placed under USOM as a legal technicality. PEO supervises utilization of U.S. funds given to FAL and procures military supplies and equipment for FAL.

1956

8 Jan	Conservative Lao National Progressive Party wins majority of seats in 25 Dec 55 National Assembly elections.
20 Feb	U.S. promises to support 25,000-man FAL.
5 Aug	RLG and PL reach nominal agreement, in compliance with provisions of the Geneva Agreements, on: (a) cessation of RLG-PL hostilities; (b) placement of the administration of Phong Saly and Sam Neua and the control of the PL under the RLG; and (c) the establishment of two joint political and military commissions to study procedures for integrating PL troops and civilians into the Royal Administration of Laos.

6 Aug	U.S. requests RLG to consult it before making promises to PL regarding inclusion in FAL. RLG Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma heads 30-man delegation in goodwill visit to Hanoi and Peiping.
1 Oct	During meeting of RLG-PL joint military and political commissions to discuss integrating PL into National Community and FAL, RLG requests PEO activities be subdued.
2 Nov	RLG and PL sign armistice.
1 Dec	U.S. tells RLG U.S. is unequivocally opposed to inclusion of PL elements in RLG cabinet.
22 Dec	France turns down RLG request for aid should U.S. aid be withdrawn because of RLG inclusion of PL in RLG cabinet.
31 Dec	RLG communiqué announces creation of government of national unity, with participation of PL in RLG cabinet, before new elections, and before return of Sam Neua and Phong Saly to RLG authority.

1957

12 Jan	U.S. continues objection to PL inclusion in RLG cabinet, without support of other Western representatives in Laos.
4 Feb	U.K. supports U.S. objection to PL inclusion in RLG cabinet; France supports RLG policy.
4 Feb	France informs U.S. it favors French leaving Seno, a step which U.S. opposes.
16 Feb	New French Ambassador reveals himself as pro-Souvanna Phouma.
24 Apr	U.S., Britain, and France reaffirm Western support for RLG against PL forces in Phong Saly and Sam Neua.
30 May	Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma resigns when National Assembly votes against continuing negotiations with PL.

9 Aug	Lao National Assembly, which has rejected all Prime Minister candidates suggested since 30 May 57 Souvanna Phouma resignation, reinstates Souvanna Phouma.
2 Nov - 12 Nov	"The 1957 Agreements": Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma announces agreement with PL. Terms: return of RLG administration in provinces of Phong Saly and Sam Neua; integration into FAL of 2 PL Bns, 1500 men, accompanied by disbanding of remaining 5500 PL; cabinet representation of legalized political party Neo Lao Hak Xat (NLHX) ex-PL.
18 Nov	Prince Souphanouvong formally transfers to RLG Phong Saly and Sam Neua provinces, together with their administration and all the troops, civil servants and military equipment of the PL fighting units.
19 Nov	Lao National Assembly approves 16-member coalition government, including 2 NLHX. Prince Souphanouvong becomes Minister of Planning, Reconstruction and Town Planning (a post giving him some control over dispersing U.S. aid funds); Prince Phoumi Vongvichit becomes Minister of Religious Cults and Fine Arts.
20 Nov	State Department Press Officer says Washington regards coalition with Communists "as perilous course," about which the U.S. Government is "seriously concerned."
8 Dec	RLG ceremoniously takes over Sam Neua.
9 Dec	Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma requests withdrawal of South and Central Lao ICC teams, but retention of Northern ICC teams to supervise PL integration and elections.

1958

4 May	Lao National Assembly supplementary elections, provided for in Nov 1957 Agreements, to permit PL representation

	in National Community of Laos by expanding seats in National Assembly from 39 to 59, take place.
12 May	NLHX and Santiphab parties win a majority (13) of the 21[1/] seats contested in the National Assembly supplementary elections.
Jun	National Progressive and Independent Parties merge into anti-PL Rally of the Lao People (RLP). Younger RLP members form Committee for Defense of the National Interests (CDNI), also anti-PL, with U.S. backing.
22 Jul	Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma resigns from post saying he has lost faith in ex-PL who joined government.
24 Jul	Souvanna Phouma named to form new government without help of NLHX.
28 Jul	ICC holds last meeting in Laos.
4 Aug	Souvanna Phouma is unable to form new government because CDNI blocks his proposed cabinets. King then asks Phoui Sananikone to form cabinet.
16 Aug	Phoui Sananikone's cabinet is approved by the National Assembly.
6 Oct	Laos and U.S. reach a monetary reform agreement, significant because the kip had been overvalued, which had not only been an obstacle to normal trading but, combined with way in which import licensing system had been operated, had led to serious abuses of American aid funds.
15 Dec	U.S. and French missions in Vientiane agree on plan, now to be sent to Washington, for expanding FAL training and support with marked increase in U.S. material aid and U.S. participation in training.

1/ One more seat was contested because of a deputy's illness.

1959

5 Jan	RLG informs U.S. that Viet Minh (VM) invade Laos near Tchepone.
15 Jan	Prime Minister Phoui Sananikone is given special powers by Lao National Assembly to reorganize his cabinet and rule for 1 year without National Assembly control, to counter Communist threat.
21 Jan	U.S. suggests RLG play down DRVN - Laos border dispute at Tchepone.
21 Jan	Special ceremony scheduled in Vientiane to award first FAL commission to ex-PL Commander Col. Singkapo is not held because Col. Singkapo does not appear.
26 Jan	U.S., French, and British agree Laos should not complain about DRVN incursions in Tchepone to UN, lest ICC be reconvened.
11 Feb	Prime Minister Phoui Sananikone renounces 1954 Geneva Agreements, saying his government has lived up to Agreements, and that it will accept only the UN as arbiter for disputes in the area.
9 Mar	Hammarskjold visits Laos, dodges involvement in Tchepone dispute.
15 Apr	RLG sends note (without French knowledge) to U.S., requesting supplementary assistance in military training, hitherto entirely in French hands.
28 Apr	India informs U.S. that it sees no reason for ICC-Laos reconvention if RLG does not press Lao-DRVN border dispute.
11 May	Two ex-PL battalions refuse to attend ceremonies for formal FAL integration.
13-17 May	NLHX and Santiphab leaders are placed under house arrest so they will not aid ex-PL battalions.

14 May	Ex-PL battalions are told they will be disarmed and demobilized if they refuse integration into FAL.
17 May	Prince Souphanouvong orders ex-PL to lay down arms; first ex-PL battalion surrenders (accepts integration) at Xieng Ngeun.
18 May	Second ex-PL battalion, after saying it will accept integration, flees Xieng Khouang Camp near the Plaine des Jarres to area around Ban Mai.
25 May	DRVN requests India to reconvene ICC-Laos and writes U.K. and USSR to take measures in Laos.
29 May	U.S.-French talks in Paris close with agreement reached on joint U.S.-France training of FAL troops.
3 June	The 2nd ex-PL Bn is reported to have escaped. RLG announces operations against ex-PL battalions are finished. NLHX house arrest is terminated.
10 Jun	U.K. informs USSR that ICC-Laos should not be reconvened.
22 Jun	U.K. replies to DRVN charge of 25 May (saying Laos permitted U.S. military intervention), telling DRVN its charges are unsubstantiated by fact.
7 Jul	U.S., French, and RLG exchange notes in Vientiane, signifying acceptance of U.S.-French joint training plan.
23 Jul	France and RLG announce agreement to joint U.S.-French training of FAL.
Jun-Jul	FAL reports DRVN-PL incursions and fighting in Sam Neua and Phong Saly.

4 Aug	State of emergency proclaimed in threatened areas of Laos.
4 Aug	RLG requests Hammarskjold to inform other UN members that DRVN is arming and supplying insurgents in Laos.
8 Aug	100 men of the ex-PL battalion integrated into FAL on 17 May escape from camp, fleeing to northeast.
17 Aug	USSR accuses Laos of violating Geneva Agreements by delaying integration of PL and by evading obligation for control by ICC over Geneva Agreements prohibition of foreign armies and military personnel.
19 Aug	U.S. refutes USSR statement.
25 Aug	Washington supports 40 additional 100-men volunteer corps and 4000 additional members of the auto-defense corps (a sort of Home Guard, or militia) as temporary measure to restore order in Laos.
27 Aug	Hammarskjold declines to send UN observer team to Laos unless UN Security Council or both DRVN and RLG request such action.
4 Sept	RLG requests UN send force to halt DRVN intervention in Laos.
5 Sept	Laos declares total state of emergency.
5 Sept	CINCPAC is put on partial alert, with PACOM being alerted and Joint Task Force 116 activated. State Department officials say U.S. supports appeal of Laos for UN emergency force if such action were found necessary.
8 Sept	Overriding USSR's negative vote, 10 Security Council members establish subcommittee to inquire into Laos' charge that DRVN had committed aggression against it.
11 Sept	Thailand requests SEATO to aid Laos.
14 Sept	Insurgent activity dies down in Laos.

14 Sept	USSR calls for international conference to consider situation in Laos.
15 Sept	U.S. rejects USSR proposal for international conference on Laos.
15 Sept	UN Fact-Finding Subcommittee arrives in Laos.
23 Sept	103 contract Filipino technician positions are created to replace 65 French advisers in Laos.
24 Sept	SEATO reports it is ready to defend Southeast Asia if need arises.
15 - 30 Sept	Insurgent fighting in Laos dies down.
30 Sept	Lao Foreign Minister informs UN General Assembly of DRVN aggression against Laos.

[ ] [

6 Oct	CINCPAC partial alert begun 5 Sept is relaxed.

] [ ]

25 Oct	Laos says it will welcome a permanent UN watchdog committee to prevent future Communist aggression.
27 Oct	King Sisavang Vong dies.
4 Nov	Savang Vathana becomes King.
5 Nov	UN Security Council Subcommittee reports it found no clear proof to support charges by Laos of "flagrant aggression" by DRVN forces, but found evidence of DRVN material aid.
15 Nov	Hammarskjold requests his personal representative to remain in Laos for month.
16 Nov	USSR accuses Hammarskjold of using his office to advance Western designs in Laos.

2 Dec	UN presence leaves Laos.
15 Dec	Prime Minister Phoui Sananikone announces cabinet reshuffle eliminating all CDNI members.
18 Dec	Lao National Assembly, under RLP influence, despite CDNI protests, extends mandate from 25 Dec 59 to 3 Apr 60 when National Assemble elections will be held.
15-24 Dec	Crescendo of rumors that coup impends.
25 Dec	First stages of CDNI coup begin.
30 Dec	CDNI coup succeeds; Prime Minister Phoui Sananikone resigns.
31 Dec	Laos is placed under CDNI-FAL rule until caretaker cabinet is formed.

1960

2 Jan	The CDNI-FAL Command announces it assumes charge of government affairs, until appointment of new cabinet, and that all acts of National Assembly since 25 Dec 59 are invalidated.
7 Jan	King Savang Vathana names elder statesman Kou Abhay to head provisional government to organize early National Assembly elections.
7 Jan	30 more ex-PL integrated into FAL flee toward DRVN.
5 Mar	DRVN, in note to Geneva Conference Cochairmen U.K. and USSR, charges U.S. imperialists scheme to make Laos U.S. military base.
24 Apr	Lao National Assembly elections take place.
2 May	Pro-government candidates win 53 seats in National Assembly elections.
24 May	NLHX leader Prince Souphanouvong and 15 other NLHX escape from jail.

30 May	Caretaker government headed by Kou Abhay resigns.
31 May	King Savang Vathana requests right-wing Tiao Somsanith to form new government.
2 Jun	New RLG cabinet headed by Prince Tiao Somsanith (mostly Democratic Party for Social Progress members) is accepted by National Assembly.
[ ]	[ ]
28 Jun	With French concurrence, OSD/ISA authorizes 1-year extension of 12 U.S. military adviser positions and 103 contract Filipino technical positions.
9 Aug	Kong Le coup takes place.

APPENDIX "B"

SOME OFFICIAL STATEMENTS AND DOCUMENTS BASIC TO THE HISTORY OF THE LAOS INCIDENT

APPENDIX "B"

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page No.
INTRODUCTION	217
GENEVA AGREEMENTS	217
SEATO AGREEMENTS	224
ROYAL LAO GOVERNMENT - PATHET LAO 2 NOVEMBER 1957 AGREEMENTS	227
[ ]	244
USSR STATEMENT OF U.S. INVOLVEMENT IN LAOS	247
U.S. REFUTATION OF USSR STATEMENT OF U.S. INVOLVEMENT IN LAOS	247
U.S. ANNOUNCEMENT OF INCREASED FAL SUPPORT	250
LAO NOTE TO U.N. SECRETARY GENERAL	251
U.S. STATEMENT SUPPORTING LAOS	252
DRVN MESSAGE TO SECURITY COUNCIL PRESIDENT	254
LAO MESSAGE TO SECURITY COUNCIL PRESIDENT	257
USSR REQUEST FOR GENEVA CONFERENCE	260
U.S. REJECTION OF USSR PROPOSED GENEVA CONFERENCE	263
LAO ADDRESS TO GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON DRVN AGGRESSION	264
U.N. SECURITY COUNCIL SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT	275
OCB-NSC GUIDANCE PERTAINING TO LAOS AT TIME OF KONG LE COUP	281
USSR CHARGE OF U.S. SUPPORT FOR SAVANNAKHET REGIME	282
U.S. REFUTATION OF USSR CHARGE OF U.S. INTERVENTION IN LAOS	285

APPENDIX "B"

SOME OFFICIAL STATEMENTS AND DOCUMENTS BASIC TO THE HISTORY OF THE LAOS INCIDENT

INTRODUCTION

Included in this Appendix are official statements and excerpts from documents particularly relevant to an understanding of the Laos Incident. In many instances these data are prefaced by introductions relating the circumstances under which the official statements and documents occurred.

GENEVA AGREEMENTS (U)

The Geneva Agreements of 20 July 1954 were the result of an Indochina Conference called on 26 April 1954, participated in by the representatives of Cambodia, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, France, Laos, the People's Republic of China, the State of Vietnam, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the United Kingdom, and the United States to negotiate an armistice in Indochina. Of the participants, only the U.S. desisted from signing the Agreements; Undersecretary of State B. Smith made a unilateral declaration of the U.S. position on the Geneva Agreements.

The Geneva Agreements included:

a. Agreement on the cessation of hostilities in Vietnam,

b. Agreement on the cessation of hostilities in Cambodia,

c. Agreement on the cessation of hostilities in Laos,

d. Final Declaration of the Geneva Conference on the problem of restoring peace in Indochina,

e. Statement by the Undersecretary of State at the Concluding Plenary Session of the Geneva Conference, July 21, 1954.

The Statement by the Undersecretary of State at the Concluding Plenary Session of the Geneva Conference is given in full. Also given in full is the Declaration by the Royal Government of Laos at the end of the Cessation of Hostilities in Laos Agreement.

Selected portions are given of Document 2, "The Final Declaration of the Geneva Conference on the Problem of Restoring Peace in Indochina," including Items 3 and 12.

Selected portions are also given of "The Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities in Laos," including from Chapter II, "Prohibition of the Introduction of Fresh Troops, Military Personnel, Armaments, and Munitions," Articles 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10; from Chapter III, "Disengagement of the Forces - Assembly Areas - Concentrated Areas," part of Article 12, all of Article 13, and part of Article 14; from Chapter VI, "Joint Commission and International Commission for Supervision and Control in Laos," Articles 25 and 35; and all of Document No. 7, "Declaration by the Royal Government of Laos."

Document No. 2

PORTIONS OF 20 JULY 1954 GENEVA AGREEMENTS[1/]

Final Declaration of the Geneva Conference on the problem of restoring peace in Indo-China, in which the representatives of Cambodia, the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam, France, Laos, the People's Republic of China, the State of Viet Nam, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the United Kingdom and the United States of America took part.

* * *

3. The Conference takes note of the declarations made by the Governments of Cambodia and of Laos of their intention to adopt measures permitting all citizens to take their place in the national community, in particular by participating in the next general elections, which, in conformity with the constitution of each of these countries, shall take place in the course of the

1/ "The Final Declaration of the Geneva Conference on the Problem of Restoring Peace in Indochina." (U)

year 1955, by secret ballot and in conditions of respect for fundamental freedoms.

* * *

12. In their relations with Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam, each member of the Geneva Conference undertakes to respect the sovereignty, the independence, the unity and territorial integrity of the abovementioned States, and to refrain from any interference in their internal affairs.

* * *

Document No. 4

AGREEMENT ON THE CESSATION OF HOSTILITIES IN LAOS

Chapter II

Prohibition of the Introduction of Fresh Troops, Military Personnel, Armaments, and Munitions

* * *

Article 6.

Effective with the proclamation of the cease-fire the introduction into Laos of any reinforcements of troops or military personnel from outside Laotian territory is prohibited.

Nevertheless, the French High Command may leave a specified number of French military personnel required for the training of the Laotian National Army in the territory of Laos; the strength of such personnel shall not exceed 1500 officers and noncommissioned officers.

Article 7.

Upon entry into force of the present agreement, the establishment of new military bases is prohibited throughout the territory of Laos.

Article 8.

The High Command of the French Forces shall maintain in the territory of Laos the personnel required for the maintenance of

the two French military establishments, the first at Seno and the second in the Mekong Valley, either in the province of Vientiane or downstream from Vientiane.

The effectives maintained in these military establishments shall not exceed a total of 3,500 men.

Article 9.

Upon the entry into force of the present agreement and in accordance with the declaration made at the Geneva Conference by the Royal Government of Laos on 20 July 1954, the introduction into Laos of armaments, munitions and military equipment of all kinds is prohibited, with the exception of a specified quantity of armaments in categories specified as necessary for the defense of Laos.

Article 10.

The new armaments and military personnel permitted to enter Laos in accordance with the terms of Article 9 above shall enter Laos at the following points only: Luang Prabang, Xieng Khouang, Vientiane, Seno, Pakse, Savannakhet, and Tchepone.

Chapter III

Disengagement of Forces - Assembly Areas - Concentrated Areas

* * *

Article 12.

The Joint Commission in Laos shall fix the site and areas:

Of the 5 provisional assembly areas for the reception of the Vietnamese people's volunteer forces -- of the 5 provisional assembly areas for the reception of the French forces in Laos -- of the 12 provisional assembly areas, one to each province, for the reception of the fighting units of "Pathet Lao".

* * *

Article 13.

The foreign forces shall be transferred outside Laotian territory as follows:

(1) French forces:

The French forces will be moved out of Laos by road (along routes laid down by the Joint Commission in Laos) and also by air and inland waterways;

(2) Vietnamese people's volunteer forces:

These forces will be moved out of Laos by land, along routes and in accordance with a schedule to be determined by the Joint Commission in Laos on the basis of the simultaneous withdrawal of foreign forces.

Article 14.

Pending a political settlement, the fighting units of "Pathet Lao," concentrated in the provisional assembly areas, will move into the provinces of Phong Saly and Sam Neua except for any military personnel who wish to be demobilized where they are. They will be free to move between these two provinces in a corridor along the frontier between Laos and Vietnam bound on the south by the line Sop-Kin, Na-Mi, Sop-Sang, Muong-Son.

* * *

Chapter VI

Joint Commission and International Commission for Supervision and Control in Laos

* * *

Article 25.

An International Commission shall be entrusted with control and supervision over the application of the agreement on the cessation of hostilities in Laos. It shall be composed of representatives of the following states: Canada, India, and Poland.

It shall be presided over by the representative of India. Its headquarters shall be at Vientiane.

* * *

Article 27.

The International Commission shall be responsible for supervising the proper execution by the parties of the provisions of the agreement. For this purpose it shall fulfill the tasks of control, observation, inspection and investigation connected with the implementation of the provisions of the agreement on the cessation of hostilities, and shall in particular:

(a) Control the withdrawal of foreign forces in accordance with the provisions of the agreement on the cessation of hostilities and see that frontiers are respected.

(b) Control the release of prisoners of war and civilian internees.

(c) Supervise, at ports and airfields and along the frontiers of Laos, the implementation of the provisions regulating the introduction into Laos of military personnel and war materials.

(d) Supervise the implementation of the clauses of the agreement on the cessation of hostilities relating to rotation of personnel and to supplies for French Union security forces maintained in Laos.

* * *

Article 35.

When dealing with questions concerning violations, or threats of violations, which might lead to a resumption of hostilities, and in particular:

(a) Refusal by foreign armed forces to effect the movements provided for in the withdrawal plan;

(b) Violation or threat of violation by foreign armed forces of the country's integrity,

the decisions of the International Commission must be unanimous.

Document No. 7

Declaration by the Royal Government of Laos[1/]

July 21, 1954

(Reference: Article 3 of the Final Declaration)

The Royal Government of Laos,

In the desire to ensure harmony and agreement among the peoples of the kingdom,

Declares itself resolved to take the necessary measures to integrate all citizens, without discrimination, into the national community and to guarantee them the enjoyment of the rights and freedoms for which the Constitution of the Kingdom provides;

Affirms that all Laotian citizens may freely participate as electors or candidates in general elections by secret ballot;

Announces, furthermore, that it will promulgate measures to provide for special representation in the Royal Administration of the provinces of Phang Saly and Sam Neua during the interval between the cessation of hostilities and the general elections of the interests of Laotian nationals who did not support the Royal forces during hostilities.

U.S. 21 July 1954 UNILATERAL DECLARATION ON THE GENEVA AGREEMENTS, By Undersecretary of State B. Smith [2/]

". . . As I stated on 18 July, my government is not prepared to join in a declaration by the conference such as is submitted. However, the U.S. makes this unilateral declaration of its position in these matters. The Government of the U.S. being resolved to devote its efforts to the strengthening of peace in accordance

1/ Further documents relating to the discussion of Indochina at the Geneva Conference June 16, July 21, 1954, presented by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to Parliament by command of Her Majesty, Indo-China Miscellaneous No. 20 (1954), August 1954, London, Her Majesty's Stationery Office, Reprinted 1959, Cmd 9239. (U)

2/ "21 July 1954 Unilateral U.S. Declaration on the Geneva Agreements," Dept. of State Bulletin, Vol. XXXI, No. 788, Pub. 5555, 2 August 1954, p. 163. (U)

with the principles and purposes of the UN, takes note of the agreements concluded at Geneva on 20 July and 21 July 1954, between (a) the Franco-Lao Command and the Command of the Peoples Army of Vietnam, (b) the Royal Khmer Army Command, and the Command of the Peoples Army of Vietnam, (c) Franco-Vietnamese Command and the Command of the People's Army of Vietnam, and of Paragraphs 1 to 12 inclusive of the declaration presented to the Geneva Conference on 21 July 1954, which declares with regard to the aforesaid agreements and paragraphs that (i) it will refrain from the threat or the use of force to disturb them, in accordance with Article 2(4) of the Charter of the UN dealing with the obligation of members to refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force; and (ii) it would view any renewal of the aggression in violation of the aforesaid agreements with grave concern and as seriously threatening international peace and security. We share the hope that the agreements will permit Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam to play their part, in full independence and sovereignty, in the peaceful community of nations, and will enable the peoples of that area to determine their own future."

SEATO AGREEMENTS (U)

On 8 September 1954, Australia, France, New Zealand, Pakistan, the Philippines, Thailand, the U.K., and the U.S. signed the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), a mutual defense pact which sought to preserve the security of Southeast Asia. Following are excerpts from the treaty:

PORTIONS OF 8 SEPT 1954 SEATO AGREEMENTS[1/]

* * *

ARTICLE IV

1. Each Party recognizes that aggression by means of armed attack in the treaty area against any of the Parties or against any State or territory which the Parties by unanimous agreement may hereafter designate, would endanger its own peace and safety, and agrees that it will in that event act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional processes. Measures taken under this paragraph shall be immediately reported to the Security Council of the United Nations.

2. If, in the opinion of any of the Parties, the inviolability or the integrity of the territory or the sovereignty or political independence of any Party in the treaty area or of any other State or territory to which the provisions of paragraph 1 of this Article from time to time apply is threatened by any fact or situation which might endanger the peace of the area, the Parties shall consult immediately in order to agree on the measures which should be taken for the common defense.

3. It is understood that no action on the territory of any State designated by unanimous agreement under paragraph 1 of this Article or on any territory so designated shall be taken except at the invitation or with the consent of the government concerned.

* * *

The Parties to the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty unanimously designate for the purposes of Article IV of the Treaty the States of Cambodia and Laos and the free territory under the jurisdiction of the State of Vietnam.

1/ Dept of State Bulletin, Vol. XXXI, No. 795, Pub. 5586, 20 Sept 1954. (U)

U.S. STATEMENT OF SUPPORT FOR LAOS

In April 1957, Laos requested the governments of the U.K., France, and the U.S. for a statement of their policy toward Laos. On 24 April 1957, the U.S. replied with the following statement:

U.S. STATE DEPARTMENT 24 APRIL 1957 STATEMENT OF SUPPORT FOR THE ROYAL GOVERNMENT OF LAOS 1/

"In response to the request of the Royal Government of Laos to the governments of the UK, France, and the U.S. for a statement of their policy towards Laos, the Government of the U.S. confirms its interest in the peace, sovereignty, independence, unity, and territorial integrity of the Kingdom of Laos. The Government of the U.S. therefore continues fully to support the principle of the complete authority of the Royal Government of Laos over all its territory. It maintains the hope that a political settlement and the reunification of Laos will be effected in accordance with the principles of the complete authority of the Royal Government of Laos over all its territory. It maintains the hope that a political settlement for the reunification of Laos will be effected in accordance with the principles of the Geneva Agreements on Laos of July 1954 and the Resolution of the International Control Commission of January 7, 1956. The Government of the U.S. regrets that these objectives have so far been made impossible because the PL forces, in spite of these Agreements and of the Resolution of the ICC, have sought to place extraneous conditions upon their acceptance of the authority of the Royal Government and upon their reintegration into the national community." (In commenting upon the note in answer to queries from news correspondents, a Department spokesman on April 24 gave as examples of the PL condition considered extraneous to the fundamental problem of reunification the following:

1/ Dept of State Bulletin, Vol. XXXVI, No. 933, Pub. 6492, 13 May 1957, page 571. (U)

(1) a neutrality involving the exchange of diplomatic representatives with the Communists; (2) acceptance of economic and technical assistance from the Communist bloc, particularly Communist China; and (3) establishment of a coalition government which would include Communists.) "The Government of the U.S. welcomes the firmness with which the Kingdom of Laos has resisted this maneuver and is confident that the Royal Government will continue in its determination that the political future of the Kingdom of Laos shall not be dictated by dissident groups enjoying no constitutional status."

1957 VIENTIANE AGREEMENTS

Preface to settlement on November 2, 1957 the Royal Lao Government (RLG) and Pathet Lao (PL), who had been attempting to reach an agreement, since the Geneva Agreements, over integrating the PL into the Lao national community and Forces Armees Laotiennes (FAL), negotiated the following settlement, sometimes called the Vientiane Agreements.

ROYAL LAO GOVERNMENT - PATHET LAO 2 NOVEMBER 1957 AGREEMENTS[1/] (U)

ANNEXURE 14

Joint Communique

by H.H. Prince SOUVANNA PHOUMA, Prime Minister of the Royal Government and H.H. Prince SOUPHANOUVONG, Representative of the Fighting Units of the Pathet Lao Forces:

In the higher interest of the nation, in order to comply with the deep aspirations of the people, for the peace and for the general reconciliation between all the Laotians, in conformity with the recommendations of the Geneva Agreement and in implementation of the joint declarations of 5 and 10 August 1956, the joint communique of 28 December 1956 and various agreements reached.

1/ Fourth Interim Report of the International Commission for Supervision and Control in Laos, May 17, 1957 to May 31, 1958, Her Majesty's Stationery Office, London, Oct 1958, pp. 57-67. (U)

H.H. Prince SOUVANNA PHOUMA, Prime Minister of the Royal Government and H.H. Prince SOUPHANOUVONG, Representative of the Fighting Units of Pathet Lao, exchanged views during the talks which were marked with cordiality.

The Prime Minister of the Royal Government and the Representative of the Fighting Units of the Pathet Lao agree on the fromation, by enlarging the present Cabinet, of a Government of a large National Union comprising of previous members of Pathet Lao. The presentation of the new Government will be preceded by the official handing over to the Royal Government of the Provinces of Phongsaly and Sam Neua and the Fighting Units of the Pathet Lao.

As regards the political programme of the new Government of National Union, the Prime Minister of the Royal Government and the Representative of the Fighting Units of the Pathet Lao agree to adopt the policy of the present Government as contained in the speech made by H.H. Prince SOUVANNA PHOUMA on 9th August 1957.

The Prime Minister of the Royal Government and the Representative of the Fighting Units of the Pathet Lao agree to admit the Neo Lao Haksat as a political party which will enjoy the same rights and which will be subject to the same obligations as the other political parties legally formed in the Kingdom, as soon as the formalities of its creation are completed in conforming with the laws and regulations in force.

The Prime Minister of the Royal Government and the Representative of the Fighting Units of the Pathet Lao agree to re-establish effectively the Royal administration in the provinces of Phongsaly and Sam Neua and to integrate the officials and the combatants of the Fighting Units of the Pathet Lao in conformity with the modalities to be determined by the political and military committees; this integration will entail the de facto and de jure disappearance of the Fighting Units of the Pathet Lao.

Regarding the combatants of the Fighting Units of the Pathet Lao, the Royal Government undertakes to integrate them all in the National Army. Within the limits of the budget provisions, those who wish to continue their services in the Army will enroll themselves in the active service of the National Army, in accordance with the conditions determined by the regulations in force. Those who would wish to leave the service in order to return to their homes will be integrated in the reserves of the National Army. The Royal Government agrees to provide them, as well as their families, with necessary means of transport so that they would return to their villages, as well as all facilities in order to enable them to earn their livelihood.

The Representative of the Fighting Units of the Pathet Lao agrees to hand over to the Royal Government the totality of the war equipment, more particularly the arms and ammunition held by the Fighting Units of the Pathet Lao.

Regarding the civil employees of the Fighting Units of the Pathet Lao who fulfil the conditions required by the rules pertaining to Public Service, the Royal Government agrees to appoint them to suitable posts in the various administrative and technical services of the Kingdom according to the modalities of implementation which will be determined by the Political Committee.

The Prime Minister of the Royal Government and the Representative of the Fighting Units of the Pathet Lao admit by common consent that the agreement on the cessation of hostile acts signed on 31 October 1956, no longer fulfils the needs of the changed situation. The present situation demands that the cessation of hostile acts be more effective. With this aim, the Military Committee will determine urgent measures aiming to realise immediately the absolute cease-fire and will increase the number and the means of the mobile sub-committees.

The Prime Minister of the Royal Government and the Representative of the Fighting Units of the Pathet Lao recognise that the difficulties of implementation still exist and the general reconciliation yet remains a complex task. As there is complete agreement on principles they consider that the time has come to settle in every small detail through settlement under negotiation the practical methods of implementation. Substantial progress has been already made by the political and military committees since the recent resumption of talks. The agreement at present under discussion deals more specially with the steps of a practical nature to be adopted for the de facto re-establishment of the royal administration in the provinces of Phongsaly and Sam Neua and for the integration of the officials and combatants of the Fighting Units of the Pathet Lao. These texts will bring the talks to an end. The Prime Minister of the Royal Government and the Representative of the Fighting Units of the Pathet Lao recommend therefore to the two committees to continue actively and resolutely their task and expect from them that the settlement under negotiations be terminated in the earliest possible time.

The Prime Minister of the Royal Government and the Representative of the Fighting Units of the Pathet Lao are satisfied with the results of their present talks which seem to augur the complete and early success of the general reconciliation.

The Prime Minister of the Royal Government and the Representative of the Fighting Units of the Pathet Lao are firmly confident of the goodwill, sincerity and the efforts of the two Parties and hope that the talks will end very soon in final agreements.

Done at Vientiane, 2 November, 1957.

In the name of the Royal Government.
Sd/H.H. Prince SOUVANNA PHOUMA

In the name of the Fighting Units of the Pathet Lao.
Sd/H.H. Prince SOUPHANOUVONG.

ANNEXURE 15

(Unofficial Translation)

AGREEMENT

on the re-establishment of the Royal Administration in the Prov- of Sam Neua and Phongsaly

Preliminary Note

In the spirit of this agreement, the term "Government" means the Government of His Majesty the King.

The expression "Former officials of the Fighting Units of the Pathet Lao" means the officials formerly employed by the Fighting Units of the Pathet Lao.

AGREEMENT

reached between the Political Delegation of the Royal Government and the Political Delegation of the Fighting Units of the Pathet Lao

In conformity with the provisions of the Joint Declaration, dated 28 December 1956, of H.H. Prince SOUVANNA PHOUMA, Prime Minister of the Royal Government and H.H. Prince SOUPHANOUVONG, Head of the Delegation of the Fighting Units of the Pathet Lao, declaration which follows the talks between the two parties and which concerns the integration of all Lao citizens into the National Community.

The Political Delegation of the Royal Government and the Political Delegation of the Fighting Units of the Pathet Lao, with the following membership:

For the Royal Government

Mr. Thao Tan CHOULAMONTRI	President
Mr. Inpeng SOURYADHAY	Member
Mr. Thao Van TANOUAN	Member
Mr. Thao Bouavan NORASING	Member
Mr. Anon VIMONPHAN	Secretary

For the Fighting Units of the Pathet Lao

Mr. Phoumy VONGVICHIT	President
Mr. Nouhak PHOUM SAVAN	Vice President
Mr. Singkapo CHOUNLAMALY	Member
Mr. Haha Khamphanh VIRACHIT ...	Member
Mr. Apheuy CHANDAVONG	Secretary
Mr. Khamphay BOUPHA	Observer

met at Vientiane from 16 September 1957 to 22 October 1957 in an atmosphere marked with cordiality and mutual understanding.

The two delegations affirm that the formation of a Government of National Union, the settlement of the administrative and military problem and the integration of the members of the Fighting Units of the Pathet Lao into the National Community are to be considered as necessary phases for the reestablishment of the National Unity, and constitute at the same time the implementation of the clauses of the Geneva Agreement, the Joint Declaration of 28 December 1956 and the previous agreements approved by the National Assembly in its session of 29 May 1957.

The two Delegations affirm, besides, that the national reconciliation constitutes the basis for peace, for the safeguard of Democracy, Independence and progress. Imbued with this idea, the two Delegations have agreed on the following:

CHAPTER ONE

Administrative reorganisation of the Provinces of Sam Neua and Phongsaly

A) ADMINISTRATION

Article 1: From the date of publication of the Declaration of handing over of the two Provinces to the Royal Government, the two Provinces shall effectively be placed under the dependence of the Kingdom. All the laws in force in the Kingdom shall be applied there. They shall be governed by the Constitution and the laws of the Kingdom.

Article 2: In order to show the good faith of the two Parties, the administration of the Provinces of Sam Neua and Phongsaly shall be ensured by officials of the Royal Government and former officials of the Fighting Units of the Pathet Lao in the conditions determined as under:

- The province of Sam Neua shall be headed by a Chaokhoueng of the Royal Government; the province of Phongsaly shall

be headed by a former official of the Fighting Units of the Pathet Lao.

- The Chaokhoueng of Sam Neua shall be assisted by a former official of the Fighting Units of the Pathet Lao; the Chaokhoueng of Phongsaly shall be assisted by an official of the Royal Government.
- The Chaomuong, the officials of the Khoueng and Muong offices as well as the officials of the other services shall be nominated, for half of the strength, among the former officials of the Fighting Units of the Pathet Lao. Their posting shall be announced by the Royal Government on the proposals of a special commission.

The duties of chaomuong of the chief town of Sam Neua shall be ensured by a former official of the Fighting Units of the Pathet Lao. The functions of chaomuong of the chief town of Phongsaly shall be ensured by a functionary of the Royal Government.

The strength and ranks of the officials are those already fixed by the Government who is at liberty to modify them, by reduction or increase, according to the needs of the service.

Temporarily the tasseng and naibans shall continue to assure their duties till new regular elections. These shall take place within a maximum delay of three months with effect from the date of handing over of the two provinces to the Kingdom.

B) OFFICIALS

Article 3: In conformity with paragraph 3 of the above article 2, the two Delegations shall appoint a Special Commission which will receive the former officials of the Fighting Units of the Pathet Lao and distribute them in the various services according to a list, to be provided by the Delegation of the Fighting Units of the Pathet Lao.

Article 4: The officials who previously belonged to the cadres of the Kingdom, shall be reintegrated in their original

cadre. If they have changed their situation the Government shall endeavour to maintain them in their new position provided that they possess the required ability.

Their services done outside the cadres of the Kingdom shall be considered by the Royal Government as effective services in respect of their rights to pension.

Their promotion shall be subjected to the rules which govern presently the amelioration and revision of the Public Service regulation.

Within the cadre of the regulations on the Public Service in the Kingdom, the officials and the agents formed by the Fighting Units of the Pathet Lao shall be as far as possible maintained in the present duties.

Article 5: During the period of three months corresponding to the period of integration of the members of the Fighting Units of the Pathet Lao into the national community, the Government shall take into account their present situation. They shall not be transferred except for health reason or on their request.

Article 6: Prior to their joining duty the former officials of the Fighting Units of the Pathet Lao integrated into the cadres of the Kingdom shall take an oath of fidelity to the King and the Constitution.

Article 7: The former officials of the Fighting Units of the Pathet Lao who will not wish to be integrated in the cadres of the Kingdom and who want to return home as free citizens shall receive as well as their families aid and assistance from the Government so that they can rejoin their native village. The Government shall help them in the first instance, in finding means of existence.

CHAPTER TWO

SECTION I

Article 8: Prior to the Government of National Union being presented to the National Assembly for a vote of investiture, the head of the Fighting Units of the Pathet Lao shall make a declaration of handing over to His Majesty the King the provinces of Phongsaly and Samneua as well as the military units and officials.

Article 9: The Prime Minister of the Royal Government gives its accord for the functioning of the patriotic front called Neo Lao Haksat with all the rights, freedoms and responsibilities enjoyed by the other political parties formed in the territory of the Kingdom on the condition that the statutes of the Neo Lao Haksat are in conformity with the laws at present in force.

Article 10: After the formation of the Government of National Union, the Government shall institute in each of the two provinces a commission charged with the handing over of the services to the Chaokhoueng, Chaomuong and head of the technical services as specified in Articles 2 and 3 of this Agreement.

The handing over of the services shall be carried out on the basis of the provisions of the article 8 above.

Article 11: After the handing over of the services, the commission shall proceed to the installation of the officials of the cadres of the Kingdom and the former officials of the Fighting Units of the Pathet Lao nominated and appointed by the Government, informing them that they shall henceforth exercise legally their duties pending the publication of the ordinance or decree sanctioning their new status.

After the installation of the officials an effective handing over of the services including all registers and records shall be done. The taking over of registers and records shall be recorded by administrative minutes.

The handing over of the services at the level of the Muong shall take place in similar conditions.

Article 12: Movable and real estates held by the Fighting Units of the Pathet Lao shall be handed over to the Government, compensations and subventions in favour of the populations of the two provinces will be the responsibility of the Government according to the rules at present in force.

Article 13: The transportation up to their place of origin of the persons assembled by the Fighting Units of the Pathet Lao in the province of Phongsaly and Sam Neua shall devolve upon the Government on proposal by an ad hoc commission.

Article 14: The Government shall ensure the publication of this agreement in the whole of the Kingdom so that everybody, officials, policemen, soldiers, populations, be informed of the integration of all the Laotians into the national community and the return to the peace through reconciliation.

Article 15: This agreement shall enter into force with effect from the date of its signature.

Article 16: The Government shall prepare supplementary elections which shall take place in the whole of the Kingdom within a period of four months.

Done at VIENTIANE on 1957.

Thao Tan CHOULAMONTRI The Head of the Fighting Units of the Pathet Lao	Phoumy VONGVICHIT The Prime Minister of the Royal Laotian Government
Prince SOUPHANOUVONG	Prince SOUVANNA PHOUMA

ANNEXURE 16

Military Agreement on the Integration of the Fighting Units of the Pathet Lao Forces into the National Army

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The Joint Military Committee, created as a result of the joint declaration of 5th August 1956 made by His Highness Prince

Souvanna Phouma, Prime Minister of the Royal Government and H.H. Prince Souphanouvong, President of the Fighting Units of the Pathet Lao Delegation, consisting of the following members:

Delegation of the Royal Government:

Colonel Ouan Rathikoun	President
Lt. Col. Lamnegeun Phrasavath	Member
Commandant Somly Manibod	Member

Delegation of the Fighting Units of the Pathet Lao:

Colonel Phoun Sipraseuth	President
Lt. Col. Phaophim Phrachanh	Member
Commandant Pradith Thiengtham	Member

The two Delegations having proceeded with the exhaustive and detailed exchange of views from 7th October to 1st November 1957, in an atmosphere marked with cordiality and mutual understanding,

Referring to the Agreements already reached between the Royal Government and the Representative of the Fighting Units of the Pathet Lao, more particularly to the Joint Declaration of 5th August 1956, the final Declaration of 10th August 1956, and the Agreement of 31st October 1956, on the implementation of the cease-fire

Prompted by the desire to put an end to fratricidal strifes and to contribute thus to the reconciliation of all the Laotians and the reunification of the Fatherland,

Have unanimously adopted the following Agreement:

ARTICLE 1

The Royal Government undertakes to integrate the Fighting Units of the Pathet Lao into the National Army by taking over the entire personnel of these units and the entire equipment held by them.

Within the limits of the budget provisions, the combatants of the Fighting Units of the Pathet Lao who wish to continue their service in the Army shall enrol themselves in the active service of the National Army in conformity with the clauses of the present

agreement. Those who wish to leave the service and return home shall be integrated into the Reserves of the National Army.

ARTICLE 2

The combatants of the Pathet Lao Fighting Units integrated into the National Army in conformity with the clauses of the present agreement shall be treated without discrimination. They shall enjoy the same moral and material rights as their colleagues in the National Army, within the limit of the rules in force in this army.

ARTICLE 3

(A) Taking into account the ceiling limit of the budgetary strength of the National Army in 1957 and 1958, the strength of the combatants of the Pathet Lao Fighting Units which can be integrated into the National Army cannot be more than 1,500 men (officers - NCOs - Rank and file).

The distribution of the strength which is to be integrated according to the ranks shall be worked out in conformity with the clauses of Article 9 below.

(B) The units newly formed from the Pathet Lao Fighting Units shall be organised according to the norms in force in the National Army.

During the transition period, pending a perfect understanding and collaboration between the various units, the combatants of the Pathet Lao Fighting Units shall remain grouped in units created at the time of the integration. Nevertheless, transfers in the National Army can be decided by the General Staff of the Armed Forces in order to obtain more control in the matter of administration and command.

(C) The units composed of Pathet Lao Fighting Units shall be posted in the Military area of their origin, that is if these units consist of a majority belonging to that region.

(D) The cadres and the specialists of the Pathet Lao Fighting Units integrated into the National Army shall be posted in the new units formed from the Pathet Lao Fighting Units in conformity with the strength rosters of the National Army and the budgetary strength of this army. The remaining shall be integrated in the National Army as far as possible.

(E) The General Staff of the Armed Forces shall appoint a certain number of cadres and specialists who shall collaborate with the integrated cadres and specialists as soon as the operations of the integration are carried out, in order to create harmony between the units of the National Army and those of the new formation in the matter of command and administration.

ARTICLE 4

The cadres and the troops of the Pathet Lao Fighting Units who shall not be integrated, shall be put in the position of the Reserves of the National Army, relieved from military service and sent to their homes in conformity with the clauses of the present agreement. During the releasing operation and till they reach their selected destination they shall be dependent on the National Army. They shall be in possession of an individual certificate of release, worked out on the model used in the National Army.

ARTICLE 5

The rightful claimants of the combatants of the Pathet Lao Fighting Units who sacrificed their life shall be entitled for the assistance from the Royal Government and their widows to pensions, pensions to orphans or parents in the conditions determined by the rules in force regarding military pensions in the Kingdom. The combatants of the Pathet Lao Fighting Units disabled or wounded during the war shall be entitled to the same moral and material assistance as those disabled or wounded during the war in the National Army.

ARTICLE 6

In order to avoid any incident, all kinds of forces of the National Army stationed in the province of Phongsaly and Sam Neua shall remain in their positions until the end of the period fixed by the present agreement for the completion of the operations of integration of the Fighting Units of the Pathet Lao. After this period the responsibility for guarding the frontiers and for the security in the provinces of Phongsaly and Sam Neua shall devolve, on the high authority of the Royal Government, and upon the command of the National Army. This command will be empowered to take in these two provinces as in the other provinces of the Kingdom, measures in conformity with the law and fit to ensure the defence of the territory of the Fatherland, the safeguard of the National independence, the security of the properties and the life of the population and the respect of the Royal Government's authority.

ARTICLE 7

Modalities of handing over to the National Army of the Fighting Units of Pathet Lao which are to be integrated.

In order to facilitate the operations of integration and the transportation of the released personnel and their families to their selected destinations, the Fighting Units of the Pathet Lao shall assemble at the four following centres:

Province of Phongsaly	...	...	Ban Nam Saleng Muong Khoua
Province of Sam Neua	...	...	Sam Neua Saleui

ARTICLE 8

Periods:

The period for assembling and integration is fixed at 60 days with effect from the day of the formation of the Government of National Union.

The operations of assembling, of normal preparation, of integration, of handing over of arms and equipment, the moves of

the Fighting Units of the Pathet Lao shall be within the limit of 60 days, compulsory time limit. Serious incidents shall be settled by the Royal Government.

ARTICLE 9

(A) After the signature of the present agreement and the formation of the Government of National Union, the Joint Military Sub-Committees shall be posted in the four regroupment centres.

The International Commission will have access to these centres.

(B) 1. The handing over to the representatives of the High Command of the National Army of the list of the personnel, arms, equipment, registers, arms depots, ammunition, tools and other means shall be carried out by the representatives of the Fighting Units of the Pathet Lao on the same day on which the official handing over of the administration of the two provinces to the Royal Government will take place.

2. In order to organise the reception of the combatants of the Fighting Units of the Pathet Lao and the movement of the released personnel, a detailed list will be supplied to the Joint Military Sub-Committees in each of the four regroupment centres, basing on the above said overall list, and taking into account the strength of the Fighting Units of the Pathet Lao to be integrated in each centre.

(C) The actual handing over of the arms and equipment will be carried out in stages, in the presence of the members of the International Commission for Supervision and Control in Laos.

(D) The released personnel will be handed over to the Joint Military Sub-Committee. They shall benefit of the means of transport and will be in possession of individual certificate of release on the model in use in the National Army. The release shall take place in stages in accordance with the delays necessary to integration operations.

(E) The military personnel of the Fighting Units of the Pathet Lao who will be integrated in the active service of the National Army will be handed over to the Joint Military Sub-Committee on presentation by the Pathet Lao Command in conformity with the strength rosters of the National Army.

The formalities of integration fulfilled, the Joint Sub-Committee will inform the Joint Military Committee which will fix the date of the ceremony of the handing over of the integrated units to the National Army.

The ceremony of handing over will be held by corps and the oath taking will be held in the traditional way.

After the above mentioned ceremony, the movements of the integrated units will be decided by the General Staff of the National Army.

(F) Arms and equipment will be taken over by the Joint Military Sub-Committees of regroupment centres.

(G) All the integrated and released military personnel of the Fighting Units of the Pathet Lao will be dependent on the Pathet Lao from the day of signature of the present agreement to their arrival at the regroupment centres.

From the day of their arrival in the regroupment centres (Ban Nam Saleng - Muong Khoua - Sam Neua - Ban Saleui) they as well as their families will become the responsibility of the National Army until they reach their homes.

ARTICLE 10

Priorities will be given to the old people, ladies, children, to the disabled combatants, to the wounded or sick for their transport by plane, vehicles, boats or pirogues to their place of destination.

The Royal Government and the High Command of the National Army shall take all appropriate measures so that the movements of the detachments of the Fighting Units of the Pathet Lao directed

towards their homes are carried out in all security. The utilisation of the routes and the access to the quarters at the halting places put at the disposal of these detachments shall be prohibited to armed persons.

The Royal Government shall issue orders to the military and administrative authorities as well as to the National Police for the strict implementation of the present agreement so that the authorities give their help and accord facilities to the homebound combatants of the Fighting Units of the Pathet Lao as well as to their movement and the means of earning their livelihood, in conformity with the modalities implemented as regards the military men released from the National Army. The regional authorities, Khoueng and Muong shall give them all facilities and shall take appropriate steps for the reception, means of road transport so that the detachment of the released men and their families reach their homes with all facilities and in security.

ARTICLE 11

(A) Four military sub-committees shall be formed in order to implement the agreement reached and to ensure the security and to facilitate the operations of integration.

Besides, they shall ensure the transport and transfers of the military personnel and of the released Pathet Lao Fighting Units who are admitted in the Reserves as well as the transfer of their families until they reach their homes.

(B) The Joint Military Committee shall institute the teams which are deemed necessary for the help, protection and security during the travels and all facilities for the soldiers under transfer till they complete their journey.

ARTICLE 12

The implementation of the present agreement within the time limit determined in Article 8, realises entirely in a military

point of view, the settlement foreseen in the Article 14 of the Geneva Agreement on the cessation of hostilities in Laos.

ARTICLE 13

The present agreement shall be widely published in the Kingdom of Laos.

ARTICLE 14

The present agreement shall come into force on the date of the formation of the Government of National Union.

Done at Vientiane, the 2nd November, 1957.

Colonel Ouan Rathikoun President of the Military Delegation of the Royal Government
Sd. Ouan Rathikoun

The Head of the Delegation of the Fighting Units of the Pathet Lao,
Sd. Prince Souphanouvong

Colonel Phoum Sipraseuth President of the Military Delegation of the Fighting Units of the Pathet Lao,
Sd. Phoum Sipraseuth

Prime Minister/President of the Council of Ministers of the Royal Government.
Sd. Prince Souvanna Phouma
Chao Krom Manes

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USSR STATEMENT OF U.S. INVOLVEMENT IN LAOS (U)

Shortly after the 23 July 1959 Franco-Lao statement announcing that the U.S. and French were going to engage in joint training action in the Forces Armees Laotiennes, the USSR charged, in a statement released by Tass, that Laos was violating the Geneva Agreements. Following is the USSR statement.

USSR 17 AUGUST 1959 STATEMENT THAT LAOS WAS PERMITTING U.S. TO ENGAGE IN MILITARY ACTION 1/

* * *

The Government of Laos, despite its obligation under the Geneva Agreement, has concluded a treaty legalizing the presence of U.S. military personnel in Laos and handing over control of the Lao army to their control.

Various military preparations were being intensified, including the building of military airbases aimed at aggression against Communist North Vietnam, Communist China, and the rest of Southeast Asia.

It was hoped that negotiations between the Soviet Union and Britain will have a positive result.

Laos further violated her commitments to preserve her neutrality by sending military observers to meetings of SEATO and to military maneuvers and other activities conducted by this aggressive bloc.

U.S. REFUTATION OF USSR STATEMENT OF U.S. INVOLVEMENT IN LAOS (U)

On 17 August 1959, the USSR accused Laos of violating the Geneva Agreement of 1954 by delaying integration of the Pathet Lao; by evading obligation for control by the ICC over the introduction

1/ New York Times, 18 Aug 59, p. 1. (U)

of foreign armies and the military settlement with the PL; and by flooding Laos with U.S. servicemen. Following is the 19 August 1959 statement refuting the USSR's statement on U.S. activities in Laos.

U.S. 19 AUGUST 1959 REFUTATION OF USSR's STATEMENT CHARGING LAO VIOLATIONS OF THE GENEVA AGREEMENTS, RE U.S. ACTIVITIES IN LAOS 1/

The Soviet Foreign Ministry's August 17 statement on the situation in Laos is replete with false charges. (The Soviet Foreign Ministry's statement of 17 August charged that the Royal Lao Government had violated the Geneva Agreement of 1954 by delaying the integration of the Pathet Lao and by evading obligation for control by the International Control Commission over the introduction of foreign armies and military personnel settlement with the former Pathet Lao. The statement further charged that the Lao Government had flooded the country with U.S. servicemen "and that under their direction various war preparations have been stepped up on Lao territory, such as building of airfields and landing strips.") It distorts the facts regarding recent events in Laos and suggests Soviet complicity in the Communist interference in Laos' internal affairs. Contrary to implication in the Soviet statement, the Lao Army is controlled exclusively by the sovereign Government of Laos. It is not under the direction of U.S. military personnel. The few American technicians in Laos are there at the request of the French and Lao Governments. Their function is to help the French military mission by training the Lao national army in the use and maintenance of WWII type American equipment. We also have a few clerical and fiscal personnel assisting the Lao Army's administration. No American personnel are commanding, advising, or serving with Lao units. No American personnel are directing military operations. We have

1/ Dept of State Bulletin, Vol. XLI, No. 1054, publ. 6876, 7 September 1959, p. 344. (U)

no troops in Laos. We do not have in Laos, nor have we provided that country, any heavy or modern equipment. We have no bases in Laos, nor airstrips, as any of the dozen foreign correspondents who are in Laos will attest. The governments of Laos and the U.S. American personnel are in Laos. These are all on the public record. The Soviet charges the Royal Lao Government with responsibility for a threat of civil war hanging over Laos. This again is directly contradictory to the facts. Pursuant to the Agreement of November 1957, the Royal Lao Government integrated the former Pathet Lao provinces into its administration and the Pathet Lao battalions into the Lao Army. Subsequently, the Communist dominated NLHX Party, which was the successor to the Pathet Lao movement, was recognized as legal. The Royal Lao Government has abided by the 1957 Agreement. However, in May 1959 one of the former PL battalions revolted and part of it escaped to North Vietnam, thus providing further evidence of the link between the PL and North Vietnam. These communist organizations betrayed the trust of the Lao government and people.

In mid-July 1959 they perpetrated insurrection with outside help and direction. It is this Communist-directed action which has broken the peace in Laos. The dangerous tension in the area is of Communist origin.

The Department notes the expression of hope in the Soviet government's latest statement that talks of measures for the normalization of the situation in Laos now being held between the two co-chairmen of the Geneva Conference on Indochina will have a positive issue. The U.S. also hopes these discussions will have some beneficial result. However, there may be some disagreement on what constitutes a beneficial result. If by a "positive issue" the Soviet Union means some new measures which will promote further civil disturbances in Laos, then we are opposed to such

measures. On the other hand, the U.S. would welcome any measure which would help tranquilize the situation provided they fully recognize the legitimate sovereign desire of Laos to live peacefully within its border and to progress in its own way, free of outside intervention in the conduct of its internal affairs.

U.S. ANNOUNCEMENT OF INCREASED FAL SUPPORT (U)

Because of increased PL-DRVN aggression in Laos during the summer of 1959, the U.S. decided to increase military support to FAL. Following is the U.S. statement of its decision.

U.S. 26 AUGUST 1959 ANNOUNCEMENT OF INCREASED SUPPORT OF FAL[1/]

The U.S. strongly supports the determination of the Royal Lao Government to resist Communist efforts to undermine the security and stability of Laos. Contrary to repetitious allegation from Hanoi, Peiping and Moscow, the U.S. reiterates that it has no military bases, airstrips or other military installations in Laos. The few American technicians in Laos are there at the request of the French and Lao governments to help in the training of the Lao National Army in the use and maintenance of certain WWII-type equipment.

The U.S. will continue to support reasonable approaches to achieve a peaceful solution to the current situation in Laos. Unlike the Sino-Soviet bloc, the U.S. does not believe that there should be recourse to the use of force in resolving this matter. However, the Communists have posed their threat to Laos in terms that require adequate military and police countermeasures, if that nation's integrity is to be perserved. The U.S. has, therefore, responded to specific requests from the Lao government for improving its defense position by authorizing sufficient additional aid to permit temporary emergency increases in the Lao National Army and in the village militia which

1/ Dept of State Bulletin, Vol. XLI, No. 1055, Publ. 6880, p. 374. (U)

provides local police protection. The additional aid will permit the specific increases desired by the Government of Laos. The U.S. has also, in the course of the past week, taken steps to help improve the military position of the Royal Lao Army and to otherwise help give that small nation better means to withstand what appears even more clearly to be an extensive Communist design to disrupt and subvert Laos.

LAO NOTE TO U.N. SECRETARY GENERAL (U)

On 4 September 1959, the permanent mission of Laos presented a telegrammed appeal from the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Royal Government of Laos, to the Secretary General of the U.N., requesting the U.N. to take action to halt the DRVN aggression in Laos.

LAO 4 SEPTEMBER 1959 NOTE TO THE U.N. SECRETARY GENERAL[1/]

The Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Laos to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Secretary-General and has the honour to transmit to him a cable addressed to him by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Royal Government of Laos, the complete text of which is as follows:

> "Sir:
>
> Since 16 July 1959, foreign troops have been crossing the frontier and engaging in military action against garrison units of the Royal Army stationed along the north-eastern frontier of Laos. These garrison units have been obliged to evacuate several posts and to engage in numerous defensive actions. It is obvious that these attacks would not have taken place if the attackers had not come from outside the country and would not have continued if the attackers had not been receiving reinforcements and supplies of food and munitions from outside. As a result of these attacks, losses have been suffered by the Royal Army. On

1/ Security Council Official Records, 14th year, supplement for July, August, and September 1959, Document S/4212, New York, 1959, pp. 56,57. (U)

30 August a new attack, more violent than the previous ones, was launched against the post of Muong Het and Xieng Kho. Elements from the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam took part in the attack, which was supported by artillery fire from the other side of the frontier. In the face of this flagrant aggression, full responsibility for which rests with the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam, Laos requests the assistance of the United Nations, of which it is a Member; it is doing so under Article 1, paragraph 1, and Article 11, paragraph 2, of the Charter. In particular, the Royal Government requests that an emergency force should be dispatched at a very early date in order to halt the aggression and prevent it from spreading.

"I have the honour, Mr. Secretary-General, to ask you to take the appropriate procedural action on this request.

"I have the honour to be, etc.

(Signed) KHAMPHAN PANYA"

U.S. STATEMENT SUPPORTING LAOS (U)

On 5 September 1959 the U.S., after Laos had appealed to the U.N. Secretary General Dag Hammarskjold for help in stemming DRVN aggression, reaffirmed in a statement its support for Laos against Communist attack.

U.S. 5 SEPTEMBER 1959 (WHITE PAPER) STATEMENT SUPPORTING LAOS AGAINST COMMUNIST AGGRESSION 1/

The U.S., as a member of the U.N., will fulfill in good faith the obligations assumed by it under the charter. One of these obligations is to take appropriate measures in support of the charter. To this end the U.S. will support U.N. considerations of the RLG appeal.

The U.S. government has repeatedly announced its strong support of the Royal Lao Government in its determination to resist Communist efforts to undermine the security and stability of Laos. On 26 August 1959, the U.S. announced that, in response to specific and urgent request from the Lao Government for improving its defense position, additional

1/ Dept of State Bulletin, Vol. XLI, No. 1056, Publ. 6884, 21 September 1959, p. 414. (U)

aid was being authorized to permit emergency increases in the Lao Army and Militia to cope with the threat posed to that Government by the Communists. The U.S. announced at the same time that it would continue to support reasonable approaches to achieve a peaceful solution of the current situation in Laos.

On 30 August a strong attack from the northeast was launched against Royal Lao Army units in the northeastern border area of Sam Neua province. The small Lao forces in this province had been reinforced and had begun to push back an earlier Communist salient which had extended about 50 miles from North Vietnam border in an area northwest of the town of Sam Neua. The 30 August attack against the Northeast border area provides further evidence of the active support of Communist rebel forces within Laos from Communist North Vietnam. Attack could not have been supported and coordinated without such outside collaboration.

It is now clear that the Communist bloc does not intend to permit the sovereign Lao Government to remain at peace. The Communist bloc apparently intends to foment and direct a rebellion within Laos and to give extensive support to the attempt to seize important areas and otherwise to prevent the establishment of these peaceful conditions necessary to implement basic economic and social programs. In short, the Communist intervention is apparently aimed at preventing the Lao people from realizing their just hopes for a better life.

That outside Communist intervention exists is demonstrated by (1) the assistance evidently being received by the Communist forces within Laos, including supplies and military weapons that could be provided only from Communist territory; (2) the false, and ridiculous Communist propaganda emanating simultaneously from Hanoi, Peiping, and Moscow to the effect that

the Lao Government has been instigated by the U.S. to stir up a civil war within its boundaries; (3) the continuing flow from Moscow, Peiping, and Hanoi of propaganda and false information about the situation in Laos aimed at confusing world opinion and stating that the U.S. is using Laos as a military base; and (4) the fact that the military outbreak in Laos has followed conferences in Moscow and Peiping between Ho Chi Minh and Soviet and Chinese leaders and also conferences in Moscow between two members of the North Vietnam politburo and Deputy Prime Minister Anastas Mikoyan.

The latest attack upon the Lao Army in Sam Neua Province has resulted in an appeal by the Royal Lao Government for U.N. assistance. It is appropriate that this matter be thus brought to the world's attention. It is obvious that any further augmentation of the invading force or continued material support thereof by Communists in North Vietnam will require a major change in the nature and magnitude of RLG's need for support. The U.S. is confident that the free world would recognize such a new danger to peace and would take the necessary action. For its part, the U.S. supports that view.

DRVN MESSAGE TO SECURITY COUNCIL PRESIDENT

After Prime Minister Phoui Sananikone submitted a complaint to the UN.on 4 September 1959, charging that the DRVN has committed aggression against Laos, the DRVN Prime Minister addressed the following letter to the President of the Security Council.

DRVN 6 SEPTEMBER 1959 MESSAGE TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL 1/

I have been informed that the Phoui Sananikone Government of the Kingdom of Laos has submitted to the United Nations a complaint slanderously accusing the Democratic Republic of Vietnam of having intervened in the civil war now in progress in

1/ United Nations Security Council Official Records, 14th year, Supplement for October, November and December, 1959, New York, pp. 37, 38. (U)

Laos and has requested the United Nations to dispatch forthwith to Laos an emergency force with the purpose, as it stated, of halting the aggression of the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam.

I have the honour to inform you that the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam is highly indignant at these fabricated complaints and senseless requests put forward by the Phoui Sananikone Government. I think it my duty to tell you the truth concerning the serious situation in Laos at the present time and to state the views of our Government on this problem.

Immediately after the restoration of peace in Indo-China, the United States Government began to try in every way to sabotage the Geneva agreements concerning Laos. It intervened in Laos, insisted that that country should come under the protection of the South-East Asia aggressive military bloc, with the perfidious intention of transforming Laos into an American military base for the preparation of a new war. Since the adjournment sine die of the activities of the International Commission for Supervision and Control in Laos, and in particular since the Prime Minister, Phoui Sananikone, came to power, the American imperialists have been intensifying their intervention in Laos, especially in military matters. Thousands of tons of armaments and hundreds of American military advisers have been illegally introduced into Laos. The American imperialists have widened and constructed new strategic roads and established new military bases in Laos. In execution of the American and Indochinese plans, the Phoui Sananikone Government has stated that it repudiates the Geneva agreements concerning Laos, has betrayed the agreements which it had signed with the ex-Pathet Lao, arrested the leaders of the Neo Lao Haksat party, including Prince Souphanouvong, has been using force to liquidate the ex-Pathet Lao forces and has unleashed civil war in Laos.

At the instigation of the Americans, the Phoui Sananikone Government, in collusion with the Ngo Dinh Diem administration, has been intensifying sabotage actions against the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

The bilateral agreements between Laos and South Vietnam and between Laos and Thailand are simply stages in the manoeuvers of the Americans to prepare war in South-East Asia. In order to give official standing to the introduction into Laos of American military advisers and armaments, with a view to strengthening the military potential of the Kingdom of Laos, the French Government and the Royal Government of Laos, at the instigation of the Americans published a joint communiqué on 23 July 1959.

Still more serious is the fact that, on 26 August 1959, the United States Government openly decided to grant emergency military aid to Laos. At this moment there is an airlift between the American military bases in the Pacific and Laos for the conveyance to that country of large supplies of armaments, munitions, equipment, material and American military personnel. The above-mentioned acts of the Americans and of the Royal Government of Laos are a flagrant violation of the Geneva agreements concerning Laos and are contrary to the commitments assumed by the Royal Government of Laos at the Geneva Conference of 1954. The Geneva agreements of 1954 provided that the Kingdom of Laos should not become a member of aggressive military blocs, should not agree to the establishment of foreign military bases on its territory, and should not, except in the cases prescribed by the Geneva agreements, accept any reinforcements in foreign military personnel, or munitions and new armaments. Contrary to the agreements signed at Vientiane in 1956 and 1957 between the Royal Government of Laos and the ex-Pathet Lao forces, the Phoui Sananikone Government has completely abandoned the policy of peace and neutrality and has taken discriminatory measures and reprisals against the former members of Pathet Lao.

That is the truth concerning the situation in Laos. The fundamental causes and the immediate reasons for that situation lie in the intervention of the Americans in Laos with the intention of transforming that country into an American military base, thus directly and seriously threatening our country. But, in order to mislead public opinion and to evade their responsibilities, the Americans and the Phoui Sananikone Government continue to claim mendaciously that the Democratic Republic of Vietnam has intervened in Laos, and to distort the truth. The civil war now in progress in Laos was started by the Americans and the Phoui Sananikone Government, who are trying to spread it with a view to liquidating the ex-Pathet Lao forces, under the pretext of a tense situation which is being used as an excuse for increased American intervention in Laos.

LAO MESSAGE TO SECURITY COUNCIL PRESIDENT (U)

On 8 September 1959, the special Lao envoy to the U.N. Ngon Sananikone addressed a message to the President of the Security Council, because of PL-VM incursions in Laos.

PORTIONS OF LAO 8 SEPTEMBER 1959 MESSAGE TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL 1/

Here is a brief account of the origin of the events leading up to the present disorders in one of the regions of Laos.

The primary factor was the revolt of a battalion of former members of Pathet Lao, i.e. the rebels who fought during the Indo-China hostilities on the side of the Vietminh against the legal Government and were taken back into the Laotian army about a year ago in application of the Geneva agreement of 20 July 1954, article 14 of which provides for a "political settlement" with the rebels with due regard for the unity, sovereignty and independence of the Kingdom of Laos. Before reaching this "political settlement" the Royal Government negotiated with our

1/ United Nations Security Council Official Records, 14th year, Supplement for October, November and December, 1959, New York, pp. 35-37. (U)

enemy compatriots for three years, from 1954 to 1957, and finally two agreements were signed, one political and the other military (the Vientiane agreements). [i.e., the 1957 Vientiane Agreements.]

The implementation of the first of these agreements went forward without any difficulty, since the Government, in a broad spirit of conciliation and a real desire to accept the rebels back in the national community, adopted very liberal measures in respect of them.

Thus, those among them who had been former government officials were taken back in their posts, their seniority rights being restored as if their official activities had never been interrupted. Certain provisions of the Constitution itself were revised or modified. Special new legislative elections were arranged so that the rebels who had returned to the fold could have their own representatives in the National Assembly, while the Government itself was reorganized to bring two former Pathet Lao ministers into a new coalition Government.

The trouble came to a head in connexion with the granting of army ranks to former Pathet Lao members taken back a year ago into the Laotian army.

Under the military agreement between the Royal Government and the former Pathet Lao party, 1,500 former rebels were to be incorporated in the national army "in accordance with the current army regulations."

This meant that the number of officers in each battalion must be in conformity with the number fixed for our own regular units. The number of officers which the rebels claimed, on the basis of a variety of specious arguments, was excessive, and higher than the Royal Government felt it could reasonably grant. For 1,500 soldiers they wanted 1 colonel, 3 lieutenant-colonels, 9 majors, 29 captains, and 64 lieutenants and second-lieutenants, in other words, approximately 1 officer for every 15 other ranks.

Discussions on the subject went on interminably, and finally the present Government, in its anxiety to get rid of all traces of this painful episode and to go ahead with an economic and social policy based on sound and enlightened principles, once more gave the rebels their way. But in the meantime an incident took place: their Commander-in-Chief was dismissed from the army for flagrant insubordination towards a superior in disregarding his orders in favour of the political orders of Neo Lao Haksat (the political party set up recently by the former rebels). In sympathy with their Commander-in-Chief one of the two former Pathet Lao battalions refused the ranks offered by the Government and deserted across the frontier into Vietnam. This was the beginning of the present troubles in Laos.

At first sight the affair might appear to be a mere internal matter concerning only the Kingdom of Laos, to be settled locally. Unfortunately, this is not the case, for the 700 men or so who left the country - on a ludicrous pretext, incidentally - with practically no equipment, are now returning across the northern Vietnam frontier with reinforcements and the latest weapons and attacking posts and isolated units on Laotian territory. The assistance they are receiving in the form of men, arms and supplies is increasing every day. Where formerly skirmish, ambush and guerrilla warfare were the order of the day, there are now pitched battles; and for the last few days, from across the northern Vietnam frontier, large artillery units are beginning to pound our troops with a threat of total warfare in the literal sense of the word. Thus the general peace in this part of the world is in danger.

The crisis thus created in Laos, and complicated by foreign interference, is in our view something entirely new. It cannot in any way be linked, as certain Powers have suggested, with the

application of the Geneva agreement, which incidentally the Royal Government has implemented scrupulously. It is a new situation which needs a different approach from the re-establishment of the International Commission for Control and Supervision set up by the Geneva Conference in 1954. The Commission completed its mission in Laos in 1957, and the fact that it has left the country is indisputable evidence of this.

Laos, an independent, sovereign country which was recently admitted to the great family of the United Nations, considers that action should be taken by the United Nations to cope with the present situation. I am therefore instructed by my Government to bring to your notice its serious concern as already explained in the messages from our Minister of Foreign Affairs, and to ask you to consider the possibility of inviting the Sub-Committee set up to conduct inquiries into events in Laos to visit the country as soon as possible with a view to verifying the particulars given above in regard to Vietminh interference in the troubled affairs of Laos. We count on the will to peace and the peace-loving spirit of international fellowship of the great Powers, and on the responsibility they have undertaken for ensuring peace in our region, to induce our neighbour to respect the principles of non-interference and peaceful coexistence.

(Signed) NGON SANANIKONE
Special Envoy of the Government of Laos

USSR REQUEST FOR GENEVA CONFERENCE (U)

On 14 September 1959, the USSR issued a call for a conference to be convened to settle the problems in Laos. Following are portions of the text of the USSR request.

PORTIONS OF USSR 14 SEPTEMBER 1959 REQUEST (PUBLISHED IN TASS) THAT CONFERENCE BE CALLED TO DISCUSS THE LAO SITUATION 1/

One cannot fail to notice the unseemly role being played in this respect by the State Department of the United States, which has resorted to its habitual tactics of proclaiming the latest events in Laos to be a result of "foreign Communist intervention." There is nothing new about these tactics. The State Department uses them whenever it wants to cover up the United States' active interference in the internal affairs of other countries. With respect to Laos, this interference is being carried through by means of detailing American military advisers and instructors and by bringing arms and all kinds of military material and other things into that country.

But whatever concoctions the Phoui Sananikone government and its patrons may resort to, they will not get away from the fact that it is this Government that has gone back on the Geneva, and subsequently the Vietiane, agreements on Laos, that has used armed strength against the former military units of Pathet Lao, which were to be integrated in the regular army of Laos, arrested Prince Souphanouvong and other leaders of the patriotic party of Laos, and is carrying on a campaign of terror and reprisals against the former members of the Pathet Lao movement in the determination to supress the democratic forces which are pressing for Laos to pursue a policy of peace and neutrality and for members of the National Liberation Movement being drawn into the public life of Laos. And if today Laos is in a state of national disarray and resentment of the actions of the Phoui Sananikone Government, the responsibility for this lies fairly and squarely on the Phoui Sananikone Government and on those who are egging it on to violating the Geneva agreements.

1/ New York Times, 15 Nov 1959, p. 6. (U)

Is this not proved also by the fact that all that the patriotic forces of Laos want is, in fact, to see the Phoui Sananikone Government return to the policy of observing and further implementing the Geneva and Vientiane agreements.

It is the Soviet Government's conviction that the tension which has arisen in Laos can and must be removed only on the basis and within the framework of the Geneva agreements, which provide the foundations of peace and security in Indochina. It greatly regrets the fact that the Western powers have not stopped short of using the Security Council for wrecking these agreements and encouraging action aimed at scrapping them.

The Soviet Government considers it its imperative duty to come out in defense of the Geneva agreements on Indochina, since their annulment would mean destroying the only legal basis for the maintenance of peace in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.

In this context the Soviet Government fully understands and shares the concern and alarm expressed over the developments in Laos by the Governments of the democratic Republic of Vietnam, the Kingdom of Cambodia, the People's Republic of China, the Republic of India and other nations which want peace and security to be preserved and consolidated.

With a view to settling the Laotian question and normalizing the situation in that area, the Soviet Government believes it necessary for a conference to be called without delay by the countries which attended the 1954 Geneva conference on Indochina to consider the Laos situation. In the Soviet Government's opinion, the International Supervisory and Control Commission in Laos will have to report to this conference and on its recommendations regarding steps to be taken toward normalizing the situation in Laos.

The Soviet Government expresses the hope that this proposal will be supported by the governments of the countries which participated in the Geneva conference on Indochina.

U.S. REJECTION OF USSR PROPOSED GENEVA CONFERENCE (U)

On 14 September 1959, the USSR proposed that a conference be called by the countries which attended the 1954 Geneva Conference on Indochina, to consider the Lao situation. Following are portions of the 15 September 1959 U.S. rejection of the USSR proposal.

PORTIONS OF U.S. 15 SEPTEMBER 1959 REJECTION OF USSR 14 SEPTEMBER 1959 PROPOSAL FOR A CONFERENCE ON LAOS 1/

The Department of State's attention has been directed to a statement by the Soviet Government on the situation in Laos, as issued by TASS on September 14, 1959. The statement proposed a conference to be called without delay by the countries which attended the 1954 Geneva Conference on Indochina to consider the Laos situation.

The Geneva Conference of 1954 was called to deal with the means of ending hostilities in Indochina brought about, on the one hand, by the demands for the independence of the three former Indochinese states, and on the other, by a general Communist effort to extend control in Southeast Asia. Although the U.S. was not a party, it has respected the Geneva Agreements.

Laos would be a quiet spot today were it not for elements within the country and abroad which are trying to undermine its government. The solution of this situation is not to be found in international conferences, but in the cessation of intervention and subversion of the Kingdom of Laos.

The Government of Laos, as the Soviet Government is well aware, has strongly opposed the reconvening of the International Control Commission in Laos. The Royal Lao Government has consistently and justifiably held that it has fulfilled the provisions of the Geneva Agreements of 1954 and understandably resents any suggestion that it is not a fully

1/ Dept of State Bulletin, Vol. XLI, No. 1058, Publ. 6889, 5 October 1959, pp. 475, 476. (U)

sovereign government and that it is not entitled to the same rights of full independence and self protection that are the inherent rights of all nations. The holding of a new Geneva conference would inevitably suggest to the Royal Lao Government the imposition of new disabilities and new external interferences.

The fact that the Lao Communist and their outside supporters are today creating disorder in Laos is surely no reason why they should further profit through the disruptive influences of a new Geneva conference. We believe that the recent action of the Security Council opens the best avenue to tranquilizing the situation in Laos, and, though the Soviet Union opposed the Security Council's Action, we hope that all U.N. nations will come to see the merits of this approach; to peace in Laos. Since the U.N. has already taken action on the Laos issue, the proposal for a second Geneva conference would also seem to be unnecessary and disruptive. Moreover, it would ignore the authority of the United Nations.

LAO ADDRESS TO GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON DRVN AGGRESSION (U)

On 30 September 1959, Mr. Khamphan Panya, Royal Government of Laos U.N. representative, addressed the General Assembly on the problem of DRV aggression in Laos. The following material includes excerpts from Khamphan Panya's speech.

PORTIONS OF U.N. LAO REPRESENTATIVE KHAMPHAN PANYA'S ADDRESS TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON DRVN AGGRESSION AGAINST LAOS 1/

In 1954, the Geneva Agreements put an end to the long Indochina war which Laos did not instigate but whose heavy legacy it bore. As regards Laos, the provisions contained in the Agreements were of two kinds. There were military clauses and political clauses.

1/ United Nation's Official Records of the General Assembly Fourteen Session Plenary Meetings, Verbatim records of meetings 15 September - 13 December, New York, 1959, pp. 284-288. (U)

The military clauses provided for the evacuation of foreign armed forces, that is to say the French Expeditionary Force, on the one hand, and the forces of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam on the other, and subsequently the regrouping of the Pathet Lao fighting units in the two provinces of Phong Saly and Sam Neua pending their integration.

As regards the political clauses, there was the reestablishment of the Royal Administration in the provinces of Phong Saly and Sam Neua, where the Democratic Republic of Vietnam had assisted the fighting units of the Pathet Lao in organizing an administration of its own after taking advantage of the cease-fire to get rid of the government forces still there at the date of the signing of the Agreements.

Finally, there was the reintegration into the national community of the Lao citizens who were not on the side of the Royal forces during the hostilities and who were known as the fighting units of the Pathet Lao.

Those were the main aspects of the problem to be solved. For that purpose, six months would have been enough between negotiators of good will. In fact, it took more than three years during which the Royal Government was pressed to the very limit of its patience and indulgence, accepting every demand and granting every concession, refusing right up to the end to treat the Pathet Lao forces as anything other than the country's children, and cherishing to the last the hope that they might learn from their past mistakes and be ready to cooperate with the Royal Government in the work of rebuilding the country. The Vientiane Agreements signed on 2 November 1957 were the product of the patience, the good will and the tolerance of the Royal Government. They provided for the following:

a. The handing-over of the administration of the Provinces of Phong Saly and Sam Neua to the Royal Government, which took place in a solemn ceremony on 18 November 1957;

b. The inclusion in the Royal Government of two members of the Pathet Lao, which also took place on 18 November;

c. The holding of elections, which took place on 4 May 1958;

d. The integration into the national army of a contingent of 1,500 men from the former Pathet Lao forces and the handing-over to the Royal Government of all war materials;

e. The fixing of 19 January 1958 as the final date for the completion of these measures.

There is no doubt that the Vientiane Agreements brought some measure of relaxation. The International Commission for Supervision and Control, a body set up by the Geneva Conference of 1954, saw that there was no longer any need for its presence there and, deeming its task completed, withdrew from Laos in July 1958. With the return of calm and security, the people became reassured and returned to work.

This state of affairs was unfortunately not to last very long. Trouble broke out again in May 1959 when the second Pathet Lao battalion, instead of joining the national army as agreed, chose deliberately to rebel and flee. Supported in strength by Viet-Minh elements, that is to say, the forces of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, it subsequently returned to attack the national forces and so created a situation that my Government felt compelled to bring the matter to the attention of the United Nations and to call upon it for help in putting a stop to this open aggression.

Charges have been made by the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam against the Government of Laos. They are entirely without foundation. At the very time when it was giving its support to the Pathet Lao, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam was hurling at Laos accusations as violent as they were untrue. Naturally, that country's Communist friends and allies hastened to follow its example. Using all the means with which their propaganda arsenal is packed, they accused Laos of violating the Geneva and Vientiane Agreements, of maltreating the former members of the Pathet Lao forces and of turning its territory into a spring-board for aggression.

I should like briefly, but in the most categorical manner, to deny these allegations here and now. First of all, allow me one observation. Does not the very fact that the Democratic Republic of Vietnam has become the self-appointed spokesman of the Lao rebels, the fact that it presumes to tell the Royal Government what domestic decisions it should take and what international course it should follow, do not these facts themselves constitute sufficient proof of interference?

Laos did not violate the Geneva Agreements. On 11 February last, the Head of the Lao Government, H.E. Phoui Sananikone, stated that Laos had fulfilled its obligations under the Geneva Agreements. In fact, the military phase had been completed. As regards the political clauses, only some small details remained to be settled, and within a very short time they had been dealt with almost in their entirety. The International Commission for Supervision and Control recognized this by withdrawing. The Democratic Republic of Vietnam leapt upon that declaration as its war-horse. It maintained that the Lao Government had made the declaration in order to evade the clauses determining the size of its armed forces and prohibiting its participation in an agreement and its abandonment of neutrality. On behalf of the Royal Government, I deny these assertions.

The Geneva Agreements provided for the retention in Laos for its security and for the training of its army of French military personnel numbering 3,500 men and 1,500 instructors, to be stationed at two establishments. Today, despite the danger, the total number has been reduced to 300 men and 100 instructors. The second French military base has never been established.

The Geneva Agreements permit Laos to import a certain quantity of armaments and equipment specified as necessary for its defence and security needs. At no time has this quantity exceeded reasonable limits. Laos has not received strategic weapons and can not constitute a danger to its neighbours.

The Democratic Republic of Vietnam also accused Laos of becoming a United States military base. In fact, there have for some months been 100 American instructors in Laos. They are working there within and under the supervision of the French Military Mission. Their introduction, which was based on practical reasons, had been the subject of negotiations between France, the United States and Laos. Since there are so few of them, there is no justification for the anxiety the Democratic Republic of Vietnam claims to feel. Indeed, in its sincerity and honesty, Laos had announced the agreement with France and the United States some weeks in advance.

Finally, on 17 February, in order to cut short all such accusations, the Royal Government published a communiqué - something which it had not considered called for the preceding week - confirming its position of neutrality and its intention to refrain from joining any military pact. This clarification did not, of course, diminish the aggressive ardour of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, for "none is so deaf as he who will not hear."

The Royal Government has not violated the Vientiane Agreements. The leader of the rebels wrote to the Chairman of the International Commission for Supervision and Control in Vietnam that the Royal Government had shown discrimination against the members of the former Pathet Lao forces. That is not the case. Anyone call tell you that the former Pathet Lao members are at present occupying various posts and positions in the administrative and governmental offices on the same footing as other Lao citizens. The only condition for admission to regular government service was the passing of an examination which is also required of other civil servants in order to ascertain their educational and other qualifications. This is a normal procedure, and I do not think that it is any different from what is done in other civilized countries.

As to the integration of military units, about which we have been subjected to the most violent attacks, here is the simple truth. The Agreements provided in the first place for the integration of 1,500 former members of Pathet Lao; in the second place, that rules for that integration should be those used in the national army; and, thirdly, that any difficulties arising in this process of integration should be settled by the Royal Government.

In the Royal Army 1,500 men means two battalions with a complement of forty-one officers, including two battalion commanders. The Pathet Lao forces asked for the integration of 112 officers (equivalent to a staff of six battalions), including three colonels. Such claims naturally did not facilitate the operation. Nevertheless, in the interest of peace and reconciliation, the Royal Government acceded to all these demands. The officers' posts were to be designated by the High Command of the former Pathet Lao forces. Since the latter refused to do

this, the Royal Government decided in December 1958 to reintegrate a former Pathet Lao member as a colonel and to make him responsible, in cooperation with the headquarters staff of the Royal Army, for designating the other officers from the former Pathet Lao forces. Colonel Singkapo was the person thus appointed, and the appointment was embodied in a Royal Order. After accepting the Government's offer, he refused to take part in the ceremony confirming his reintegration, indicating the decision of his party.

Determined to settle the question once and for all, the Royal Government undertook to appoint the cadres itself and to set 11 May 1959 as the date for the integration. When that day came, the Second Pathet Lao Battalion, which was stationed at the Plaine des Jarres, refused to be integrated and took to the road in the direction of the North Vietnam borders. . .

Radio Hanoi plays an important part in these machinations. It has never ceased to pour out against Laos a flood of accusations, slanders and tendentious statements, with the object of provoking unrest among the people and inciting them to break with the Government. For a long time, the Government refrained from making any reply, so as to avoid futile arguments. Starting from last winter, in preparation for the armed attacks of July and August, Radio Hanoi tripled the time allotted to its broadcasts in the Lao language. I hope that the Security Council Sub-Committee will not fail to examine the monitorings of these broadcasts; it will see that their favourite theme is the claim that the Pathet Lao is engaged in a patriotic struggle to liberate the country, and that the Democratic Republic of Vietnam has the duty of helping it to achieve final victory. Radio Hanoi has placed its broadcasting services at the disposal of the rebels, and has observed no limits in its campaign of subversion

and sabotage; in order to make its broadcasts convincing, it quotes from a newspaper allegedly issued in the field by the fugitive battalion. No one has ever seen this newspaper. It is a product of Radio Hanoi's fertile imagination. But there is something more serious. For some weeks, Radio Hanoi has been making a daily thirty-minute broadcast in the Lao language called "The Voice of the Pathet Lao Forces Command."

Moreover, the supplying of arms to the Pathet Lao by the Democratic Republic of Vietnam is a fact which is quite obvious. The Pathet Lao turned over its own military equipment to the Royal Government on 2 November 1957, in accordance with the Vientiane Agreements. The equipment which it hid in the forest was afterwards recovered by the Royal Government. None of this equipment - whether turned over or hidden - has ever been a very important factor. It is known that, the day before the transfer of equipment to the Royal Government, fifty trucks from the Democratic Republic of Vietnam arrived at the village of Hai Xuan, on the road between Sam Neua and Thanh Hoa, to collect arms lent to the Pathet Lao. Eye witnesses who were with the Pathet Lao at the time, and who have now left it because of its anti-patriotic conduct, could provide confirmation of this for the Sub-Committee. Various weapons, particularly grenades, were seized during the recent fighting. The grenades were practically new, which rules out the theory that they could have been hidden in the forest.

Moreover, the outlying provinces of the North-East are among the poorest of all the provinces. Lack of communications and shortage of local supplies make it very difficult to station troops there. The province of Sam Neua generally lacks the means of subsistence between harvests, that is to say in the period before the rice harvest, and each year the Royal Government takes measures to remedy this deficiency. This is

tantamount to saying that the province could only ensure the subsistence of the rebels and their Viet-Minh allies for, at the most, two weeks. Whence, then, could supplies for the aggressors originate save from the Democratic Republic of Vietnam?

We know that mere subsistence is not the only requirement of an army in the field. It needs drugs, medical care, surgical services, etc. In monitoring radio broadcasts, we have intercepted messages, both in plain language and in code, concerning the dispatch to the Lao frontier of pharmaceutical products, doctors and aircraft to take the seriously wounded to hospitals in Hanoi, particularly after a major military engagement. The Royal Government has submitted to the Sub-Committee, for examination, the most typical of these messages.

In assisting the rebels, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam has not confined itself to the supply of weapons, munitions and stores. It has been training recruits as potential cadres, propagandists and political commissars. Two training centres have been operating, one at Moc Chau - eighty kilometres from Sam Neua - and the other at Thanh Hoa. As I said at the outset, it was a sinister plot which was being hatched against the life of Laos and its people.

In brief, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam is guilty of aggression against Laos. In face of the Royal Government's determination to restore order and discipline, and because the population was cooperating increasingly with the Government and was gradually escaping from the clutches of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the Pathet Lao, the two latter decided to make a decisive move for what they called liberation or final victory.

That is the correct explanation of the events which have occurred since 16 July 1959 and which reached their climax on 30 August last. There is therefore no truth in the argument, advanced by the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, that the present conflict was due to the American hold on our country for imperialist purposes.

American aid to Laos is granted in the interests of peace. In this way, the United States is helping us to place our economy on firm foundations. The amounts of money we are receiving, and the use to which they are put, are well known. We have never concealed anything in that connexion. Some of the American funds are being used for the creation of an army which is needed for the defence of the Kingdom; and the numbers of that army constitute no secret. This small defensive force, which is simply a symbol of our independence, can inspire no alarm in any country. The Royal Government is receiving military aid from the United States and France - in the form of material, personnel and instructors - only for the defence of its territory, in accordance with its statement made at Geneva.

This aid, therefore, is supplied on a legal, international basis. The Royal Government has always insisted that the forms which it takes should be officially made known. In any case, it amounts to very much less than that originally planned, as only one out of the two French bases authorized by the Geneva Agreements has been established and its strength is far below the 3,500 men authorized for the Seno base and the 1,500 instructors for the French Military Mission.

We knew that the Democratic Republic of Vietnam was aiding and taking part in the raids against Lao army posts. That caused no surprise, for the attacks were always launched from places where that Republic usually maintains frontier guards and military forces.

For the attack on the posts of Muong Het and Xieng Khô on 30 August 1959, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam did not confine itself to providing assistance and support. It openly participated in it. Here is an account, by eyewitnesses, of what happened. The attack began at dawn, in two successive waves - the first constituted by former members of the Pathet Lao, and the second by troops that could not speak the language of Laos, but only Vietnamese - along a three-kilometre front; it was supported by heavy mortar fire, which was so accurate that the command post and the communications equipment were wiped out at the fourth round. It was started by a red rocket signal and concluded by a green rocket signal. The attackers crossed the Nam Ma river, which ran alongside the posts, in rubber boats. At the same time, the posts of Sophao and Sopbao, within the perimeter, were attacked. This attack was prepared, co-ordinated and carried out with a refined technical skill of which only the Viet-Minh were capable.

In face of this flagrant aggression, the Royal Government approached the United Nations and requested its intervention. The Sub-Committee responsible for assembling all evidence and documents concerning the attack is now at work in the area.

Such is the whole origin of the present tension created in Laos by the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. That Republic, together with certain other countries, tells us that, in order to normalize the situation, it would suffice to revive the former International Commission for Supervision and Control set up under the Geneva Agreements. Allow me to express the Royal Government's views on this point.

The task of the International Commission for Supervision and Control was confined to the implementation of the military and political clauses of the Geneva Agreements. Today, the

country has already been reunified and reintegrated. The Pathet Lao no longer exists, since its forces have been legally dissolved; there remain only rebels against the Government and traitors to their country. The aggression committed by the Democratic Republic of Vietnam is a circumstance of quite another kind, which, like the occupation of our national territory by the Republic, falls outside the competence of the International Commission.

U.N. SECURITY COUNCIL SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT (U)

On 4 November 1959, the U.N. Security Council Subcommittee, which had gone to Laos to investigate reports of DRVN aggression in Laos, at the request of the Royal Lao Government, submitted its findings to the Security Council. The following excerpts are from the findings.

PORTIONS OF U.N. SECURITY COUNCIL SUBCOMMITTEE 4 NOVEMBER 1959 REPORT 1/

Prisoners. At Sam Neua military headquarters the Subcommittee was offered the opportunity to hear Pathet Lao prisoners. A total of 12 were questioned on 1 and 3 October 1959. All were Laotian nationals, a few of them belonging to the black and red Thai minorities. They were all peasants in civil life, all young, a few being very young. Most of them declared that they had served in the Pathet Lao units as forcibly recruited auxiliary elements (transport of supplies, kitchen duties). A few admitted having served long periods with the Pathet Lao (from 6 months to 3 years); others only a few days, even in one case a single day, before being captured by the Royal Army and considered prisoners of war. They appeared somewhat frightened but were in good physical condition. None of them had ever held a military rank above that of simple private. Ten out of twelve declared that the Pathet Lao units to which they belonged or were attached had included Vietminh armed men, recognized through their language (Vietnamese), their uniforms (green and with military caps), and their food

1/ "Report of the Security Council Subcommittee Established Under Resolution of 7 September 1959," United Nations Security Council Official Records, Fourteenth year, Supplement for October, November and December, New York, 1959, pp. 32, 34 and 36. (U)

(ordinary rice). They declared that these Vietnamese had been equipped with rifles, sub-machine-guns, light machine-guns, hand-grenades and mortars. A few had witnessed or taken part in military engagements in August and September 1959. No losses were reported. No questions were asked about the commanding officers. The proportion of Vietnamese armed men to Pathet Lao was variously estimated as from one-third to one-half...

Weapons and other items shown to the Subcommittee. In Vientiane, Sam Neua and Luang Prabang the Subcommittee was shown various weapons and other objects as evidence.

In Vientiane these consisted of rifles, sub-machine-guns, hand-grenades, ammunition, portions of uniforms and individual items of equipment, captured, the Subcommittee was told, in various parts of the northern and north-eastern provinces during the months of July, August and September 1959.

The rifles were of American, Chinese, Czechoslsovak and French types, made between 1917 and 1953. The sub-machine-guns were French ("Manufacture de Toul"), made between 1936 and 1953. The ammunition could not be identified. The hand grenades were almost all of the type with wooden handles, some appearing to be quite new. They seemed to have been made in China because inside the handles the safety-strips were secured with pieces of paper or newspaper on which there was writing in the Chinese language and script...

Generally speaking, the Subcommittee considers that although there were actions of different scope and magnitude, all of them - throughout the four periods (from 16 July to 11 October)-were of a guerrilla character.

From the statements of the Laotian authorities, and from those of some witnesses, it appears, however, that certain of these hostile operations must have had a centralized coordination.

Practically all witnesses (forty out of forty-one) stated that the hostile elements received support from the territory of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam consisting mainly of equipment, arms ammunition, supplies and the help of political cadres. The same emerges from the official Laotian documents submitted and from some of the material exhibits.

Hostile elements seemed centered around former members of the Unites combattantes du Pathet Lao previously integrated in 1957, the 2nd battalion of Pathet Lao, which deserted from the Plaine des Jarres on 11 May 1959, and sections of the frontier minorities (Thais, Meos and a few Khas). According to a document presented to the Subcommittee by the Laotion Government, participation of regular army units from the Democratic Republic of Vietnam were reported during the attacks of the river Ma area on 30 August. The Laotian Government states in another document presented to the Subcommittee on 15 October, that after 15 September, these units re-crossed the border into North Vietnam, excepting those who occupied the section of Laotian territory between the left bank of the river Ma and the frontier. Witnesses reported that in certain cases there had been participation of armed elements with ethnic Vietnamese characteristics, but they did not identify them as belonging to North Vietnamese regular army units. The body of information submitted to the Subcommittee did not clearly establish whether there were crossings of the frontier by regular troops of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

No information or witnesses were offered to the Subcommittee from the opposing side.

New York, 3 November 1959.

(Signed) Shinichi Shibusawa
Chairman (Japan)

Heriberto Ahrens
(Argentina)

L. Barattieri Di San Pietro
(Italy)

Mondher Ben Ammar
(Tunisia)

USSR 9 NOVEMBER 1959 STATEMENT ON SECRETARY GENERAL HAMMARSKJOLD'S PROPOSED VISIT TO LAOS 1/

In connection with your letter of November 7, 1959, (in which Secretary General Dag Hammarskjold informed Geneva Co-chairman USSR of his invitation to Laos and of his acceptance) I consider it my duty to remind you once again of the Soviet Government's position with regard to the attempts to use the United Nations for the annulment of the Geneva agreements on peaceful settlement in Laos and Indochina as a whole.

The Soviet Government has always held and continues to hold the view that the aggravation of the internal situation in Laos has resulted solely from the Laotian Government's refusal to implement the Geneva and the Vientiane agreements. The so-called Subcommittee on Laos of the Security Council in fact confirmed it by its report, having admitted the absence of proof of "aggression" on the part of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam against Laos.

In the opinion of the Soviet Government, it is only the unswerving implementation of the Geneva agreements and, in particular, the urgent resumption of the activities of the International Commission for Supervision and Control in Laos that is necessary for the normalization of the situation in Laos.

In these conditions the visit to Laos of the United Nations Secretary General and the proposed stationing of a personal representative of the Secretary General in Vientiane, as well as any other action on the part of the United Nations in this question, can only further complicate the situation obtained.

One cannot recognize as justifiable the assertions of the Secretary General regarding the existence of the legal basis for leaving a personal representative in Vientiane and, particularly, the references made in this connection to the administrative authority of the Secretary General under the Charter.

1/ New York Times, 10 November 1959, p. 7. (U)

All such steps cannot be considered otherwise than attempts to use the United Nations for covering the actions of certain powers, aimed at the complete liquidation of the Geneva agreements, which cannot but entail dangerous consequences for peace in Southeast Asia and in the whole world.

DRVN 3 MARCH 1960 NOTE OF PROTEST (TYPICAL) CONCERNING LAOS PERMITTING U.S. INFILTRATION OF ARMS AND ADVISORS 1/
(Addressed to USSR and U.K. as Co-Chairman of the 1954 Geneva Conference on Indochina)

Messrs. Co-chairman, I have the honor to draw your attention to the present grave situation in Laos. The U.S. imperialists are still employing every means to sabotage the Geneva agreements on Laos and the Vientiane agreements and carrying on their scheme of making Laos a U.S. military base to threaten the security of the DRV and peace in Indochina and Southeast Asia.

The U.S. imperialists are continuing to introduce into Laos large quantities of arms and ammunition and large numbers of military advisers and other military personnel, and to strengthen the equipment and training of the Laotian armed forces. At present, the civil war kindled by the Laotian authorities in May 1959 at the instigation of the U.S. imperialists has not yet come to an end.

The existing military airfields have been repaired and broadened and new ones have been built. It is common knowledge that the Wattay airfield (Vientiane--VNA), Ken Thao, Hong Sa, and Xieng Lom airfields (Sayaboury-VNA), Muong Khong (Pakse--VNA), and so forth have been recently inaugurated. General I.D. White, commander-in-chief of the U.S. Army in the Pacific area, on February 19, 1960, inspected the military bases in Laos before going to South Vietnam.

1/ FBIS Daily Report, Far East, 7 March 1960, pp. EEE6-EEE7. (Broadcast of note) (OUO)

On the other side, the Laotian authorities, carrying out the overall scheme of U.S. imperialism, have continued to allow the South Vietnam authorities to use Laotian territory as a base for espionage and sabotage activities agains the DRV. More Serious still, the Laotian authorities, incited by the U.S. imperialists, are waging an election campaign while illegally imprisoned leaders of the Neo Lao Hak Xat party are unable to take part in it as their freedom has not yet been restored. It is crystal clear that they are planning to exclude these leaders of the Neo Lao Hak Xat party from the general elections and prevent the legal political activities of the Neo Lao Hak Xat party, in serious violation of the Vientiane agreements and in contravention of the Geneva agreements.

Being a signatory to the Geneva agreements on Laos and a neighboring state of the Kingdom of Laos, the Government of the DRV cannot but be concerned over the present grave situation in this country.

The unswerving stand taken by the government of the DRV is always to pursue the policy of peaceful coexistence, to persist in its good-neighborly relations with the Kingdom of Laos, to respect the Geneva agreements, and to develop the friendship between the two nations.

In the interest of peace in Indochina and Southeast Asia, the government of the DRV urges that the two co-chairmen, in accordance with their capacity and duties, take appropriate and timely measures to check the penetration of the U.S. imperialists in Laos, revive the activities of the International Supervisory and Control Commission in Laos, insure respect for and strict implementation of the Geneva agreements on Laos and the Vientiane agreements, and in the immediate future restore freedom to Prince Souphanouvong and the other leaders of the Neo Lao Hak Xat party now in prison to enable them to take part in the general elections in keeping with the spirit of the constitution and the provisions of the Vientiane agreements.

OCB-NSC GUIDANCE PERTAINING TO LAOS AT TIME OF KONG LE COUP (TS)

On 21 July 1960, the NSC adopted changes in NSC 5809 ("Special Report on SE Asia"), which changes were approved by the President 25 July 1960, and the resultant amended document was redesignated NSC 6012, "U.S. Policy in Mainland Southeast Asia." In the prefatory note by the Executive Secretary to the NSC, it was specified that "The President.... directs the implementation of NSC 6012 by all appropriate Executive Departments and Agencies....and designates the Operations Coordinating Board as the coordinating agency."

OCB 25 JULY 1960 REVISIONS TO NSC 6012 (GUIDANCE IN EFFECT AT TIME OF KONG LE COUP 1/

Provide military assistance for the development and support of Lao armed forces capable of maintaining internal security against Communist subversion or other elements hostile to U.S. interests and providing limited initial resistance to Communist aggression. Encourage Laos to formulate and implement a broadly conceived security plan, including both internal and external security, which encompasses the services of all branches of the Royal Government, civil and military.

In the provision of U.S. assistance, direct our programs to the promotion of social and economic progress and unification of Laos, thus helping maintain the confidence of the Royal Government in its anti-Communist, pro-Free World "neutrality."

Continue to promote conditions engendering confidence by Lao leaders that the U.N. Charter, SEATO, and Free World support provide a favorable basis for Lao resistance to Communist pressure and inducements, and at the same time continue

1/ OCB, 25 July 1960 revisions to NSC 6012. (TS)

to impress upon the Lao the need for a sense of responsibility and recognition that too drastic actions may have adverse international implications.

Encourage the Lao to observe constitutional and legal processes as providing the soundest basis for the growth and vitality of democratic institutions; discourage resort to force in political affairs.

Encourage the Lao Government to give emphasis to programs tending to reorient disaffected elements of the population.

Encourage and support cooperation between Laos and other Southeast Asian countries, particularly Thailand, Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaya, and Burma, including such joint effort in the anti-subversion, economic, communications, and military fields as is feasible.

Develop greater mutual understanding and cooperation with the French in the furtherance of common Free World objectives.

Strongly support "the U.N. presence" and expanded U.N. technical assistance in Laos, and make a special intensified effort to encourage other friendly nations to assume a larger share of responsibility for the support of the country.

USSR CHARGE OF U.S. SUPPORT FOR SAVANNAKHET REGIME (U)

On 13 December 1960, the USSR accused the U.S. of openly violating the Geneva Agreements, and of arming and training the rebellious Savannakhet regime, aiding it in its operations against Souvanna Phouma's lawfully constituted regime. Following is the text of the USSR note assailing the U.S. role in Laos.

USSR 13 DECEMBER 1960 STATEMENT ACCUSING U.S. OF SUPPORTING THE SAVANNAKHET REGIME AGAINST THE VIENTIANE REGIME 1/

The Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics considers it necessary to state the following to the United States Government.

1/ U.S. State Dept Bulletin, Vol. XLIV, No. 1123, Publ. 7119, 2 January 1961, p. 17 (U)

In the declaration of September 22, 1960 concerning events in Laos, the Soviet Government already drew attention to the serious threat to peace in this area of Southeast Asia arising from the unceremonious intervention of the United States and several of its partners in the aggressive SEATO bloc in Laos internal affairs. However, if two or three months ago the United States Government somehow tried to camouflage its illegal action in Laos, recently the United States has in fact been a direct participant in military operations on the side of the rebels against the legal government of Laos and Laotian people.

Flouting the sovereign rights of the Laotian government headed by Prince Souvanna Phoumi, the United States now extends overt support to the rebel group of Nosavan, supplies it with arms, military equipment, military stores, and money. Rebel troops have proved to be supplied with such arms as have never, until the present, been in the Laotian Army: 105mm Howitzers, 120mm mortars, heavy tanks, military aircraft, helicopters, army launches, and other equipment.

The rebels have been trained in the use of these articles by numerous American advisers and instructors, whom the United States Government has sent and continues to send to their camp. Moreover, near the town of Pakadin there was shot down by government troops a reconnaissance aircraft No. 830 on board which were four American officers. During engagements between government troops and the rebels, American helicopters of "Sikorsky" type regularly fly over Thailand territory, directing the artillery fire of the rebels. From this it is evident that American military advisers and instructors not only advise the rebels, but also directly lead their military action against troops of the legal government of Laos. The

United States Government also widely uses its ally in the SEATO military pact, Thailand, which makes available the territory of the country for active military operations against government units and carries out economic blockade of Laos.

As the facts show, the United States Government completely ignores the repeated appeals and also the open demand of the legal government of Prince Souvanna Phoumi expressed in the December 5 declaration, that the United States cease delivery of weapons and military supplies to the rebels.

All this is a glaring violation on the part of the United States Government of Article 12 of the final declaration of the 1954 Geneva Conference on Indo China, in which was contained the obligation of each participant of the conferences, including the United States, to respect the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Laos, and refrain from any interference in its internal affairs.

With its overt actions against the legal Laotian Government of Prince Souvanna Phoumi, which has proclaimed as its program a policy of peace, neutrality, and national unity, the United States Government seeks to compel Laotian people to leave this path which it has chosen to put Laos again in the service of a policy of military pacts and aggressive preparations, foreign to the people of Laos.

However, it is appropriate to recall that once such a policy already suffered failure in Laos. The Lao people overthrew the government which carried out the policy of turning Laos into a United States military base and semi-colony. Realization of the legitimate strivings of the Laotian people for cessation at last of fratricidal war and for national unity in conditions excluding any foreign intervention must not be hindered.

Being one of the participants and chairmen of the Geneva Conference on Indochina, the Soviet Government strongly protests the United States intervention in the internal affairs of Laos and condemns this intervention. This undermines the Geneva agreements and is directed against the freedom and independence of the Laotian people against the inalienable right to conduct a policy of peace, neutrality, and friendship with all peoples.

The Soviet Government cannot ignore the threat to peace and security in Southeast Asia arising from the crude United States interference in the internal affairs of Laos and places on the United States Government all responsibility for the consequences which can arise as a result of the aggressive actions of the United States and some of its allies in the SEATO military bloc in relation to the Laotian people.

U.S. REFUTATION OF USSR CHARGE OF U.S. INTERVENTION IN LAOS (U)

U.S. 18 DECEMBER 1960 NOTE REFUTING USSR 13 DECEMBER 1960 NOTE CHARGING U.S. MILITARY INTERVENTION IN LAOS 1/

The Government of the United States acknowledges the receipt of the note of the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics dated December 13, 1960.

The Government of the United States categorically rejects the charges leveled against it in the Soviet Government's note. The United States condemns as a violation of every standard of legal conduct the recent Soviet action in airlifting weapons and ammunition in Soviet planes to rebel military forces fighting the loyal armed forces of the Royal Government in Vientiane. Thus the responsibility for the present fratricidal war in Laos, about which the Soviet Government claims to be concerned, rests squarely and solely upon the Soviet Government and its partners.

1/ U.S. State Dept. Bulletin, Vol. XLIV, No. 1123, Publ. 7119, 2 January 1961, p. 16. (U)

The United States has repeatedly made clear its consistent policy of supporting the Kingdom of Laos in its determination to maintain its independence and integrity. Such support will continue. The United States has warned against efforts to seize control of or to subvert that free nation.

The Soviet allegation that Lao Army Troops have been recently armed with weapons which they have not had before is completely false. Such supplies as have been furnished by the United States to the forces in Laos, in whatever region, have been provided pursuant to a long-standing agreement with Laos, and with the approval of the legal government of Laos. The Lao Army had been equipped with M-24 tanks and 105 millimeter howitzers long before the August 9, 1960 rebellion against the Royal Lao Government. The United States has not in fact supplied any equipment of this type to Laos since 1957. The United States has never supplied 120 millimeter mortars, armed aircraft, or armed or armored vessels to Laos. The United States has not brought any arms or ammunition into Laos since the end of November. No United States-supplied helicopters have been used to direct artillery fire. Furthermore, such American advisers as have been in the country either administering the American Military Aid Program or in the Franco-American training program are located at various training sites and supply depots and have not led any military actions.

It is communist and communist-fostered subversive activities, the guerrilla warfare of the Pathet Lao forces, and now the Soviet airlift of weapons which have led directly to the suffering and chaos which have befallen Laos. The Soviet Government and its agents have attempted to carry out this latest, grave action clandestinely, under the cover of delivering food and petroleum products. However, their haste to strengthen the

rebel forces in Laos has resulted in widespread knowledge of these Soviet arms deliveries, which have included the howitzers which the rebels are now using against loyal troops of the Lao Government, a government formed at Royal request pursuant to the National Assembly's action. The destruction which these Soviet weapons have brought to the capital city of Laos and the suffering and loss to its people is the direct result of this Soviet intervention.

At the same time, communist-controlled North Vietnam, which has long aided and furnished direction to the Pathet Lao guerrillas in Laos, had been making war-like preparations, calling up additional troops and moving military units westward toward the Lao border.

In the light of these facts, the Government of the United States, in rejecting the false charges of the Soviet Government in its note of December 13, places the responsibility for the current strife in Laos where the responsibility properly belongs - squarely upon the USSR and its agents. The Government of the United States, furthermore, condemns in strongest terms the illegal Russian delivery of military equipment to the rebels in Laos.

It has always been the objective of the United States to assist the people of Laos in developing their free political institutions, in improving their social and economic well being and in preserving their national integrity. The policy of the United States towards Laos remains the same today.

APPENDIX "C"

A WHO'S WHO OF LAOTIAN AND THAI PERSONALITIES IN THIS STUDY

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GENERAL AMKHA SOUKHAVONG

General Amkha Soukhavong, a former Deputy Commanding General of FAL, said to be an excellent troop commander, a strong supporter of Phoui Sananikone, disliked by the Committee for Defense of the National Interests, veiled his activities during the Kong Le coup sufficiently to make his sympathies unclear, but in early October 1960 was in Xieng Khouang as a liaison for the Souvanna Phouma Vientiane government, and was arrested in Savannakhet by the Phoumi Nosavan Revolutionary Committee.

BOUAVAN NORASING

Bouavan Norasing, a member of CDNI, studied law in France and has been a Director of Justice. He joined the Phoumi Nosavan forces in Savannakhet and was a member of the Central Committee of the Revolutionary Committee in September 1960.

BOUN OM

Boun Om, brother of Boun Oum, is a neutralist who served in the Souvanna Phouma cabinets of 16 August 1960 and 31 August 1960, and in the Boun Oum cabinet of 12 December 1960.

BOUN OUM

Boun Oum, strongly anti-Communist and pro-French, Inspector General of the Kingdom of Laos and head of the royal family of the former Kingdom of Champassak, joined Phoumi Nosavan in Savannakhet on 21 August 1960; became co-president, in conjunction with Phoumi Nosavan, of the Revolutionary Committee in Savannakhet, on 11 September 1960; headed the 12 December 1960 cabinet.

MAJ. BOUN THENG INSISIENGMAY

Maj. Boun, probably CDNI, worked with Phoumi in Savannakhet.

GEN. BOUNLEUTH SANICHANH (Sometimes Bounleut)

Returning from France, where he had been studying, in July 1960, Gen. Bounleuth Sanichanh was appointed Secretary General of the High Committee of National Defense and also appointed Head of the National Documentation Center (Lao Intelligence Organization) in late July 1960; joined Phoumi Nosavan in Savannakhet and was appointed Supreme Commander of the Forces of the Revolutionary Committee on 18 August 1960; was appointed Military Chief of Savannakhet Revolutionary Committee in September 1960; was in the Boun Oum 12 December 1960 cabinet, and on 27 December 1960 was appointed Commanding General of the FAL.

COL. BOUNPOUNE MAKTHEPHARAK

Col. Bounpoune Makthepharak, now general, an early CDNI member, was with Phoumi Nosavan forces as Commander of 3d Region Military Forces; also served as member of the Revolutionary Committee's Military Subcommittee on 11 September 1960.

COL. BOUNTHIENG VENEVONGSOS

Col. Bounthieng, now Brig. Gen., non-CDNI member, who in 1958 was Deputy Chief of Staff of FAL, worked with Kong Le during the coup period.

COL. BOUNTHONG VORAVONG

Col. Bounthong, a conservative wealthy businessman from Savannakhet Province, was endorsed by the CDNI in 1960, becoming a member of the anti-Communist Party of Democracy and Social Progress; after the Kong Le coup he joined the Phoumi Nosavan

forces in Savannakhet to organize anti-Kong Le measures, remaining in Savannakhet until after Phoumi forces captured Vientiane in late December 1960, when he joined the Boun Oum cabinet.

COL. HOUM PHAN NORASING (Sometimes Houmphan)

Col. Houm Phan (now Brig. Gen.) non-CDNI, first worked with Phoumi during the coup period, but gradually attempted to tread a middle line between the Souvanna Phouma and Phoumi Nosavan forces.

IMPENG SURYADHAY (Sometimes Inpeng)

Impeng Suryadhay, affiliated with the CDNI, supporter of Phoumi Nosavan, disliked by Kong Le, anti-French and pro-American, was in the Phoui Sananikone cabinets of 18 August 1958 and 24 January 1959; was in the Tiao Somsanith cabinet of 5 June 1960; and was in the Souvanna Phouma cabinet of 31 August 1960.

KATAY DON SASORITH

Katay Don Sasorith, a conservative Lao politician and former member of the Lao Issara, who helped form the Nationalist Party and its successor, the Rally of the Lao People, headed the Cabinet of 25 November 1954; was in the Souvanna Phouma cabinets of 21 March 1956, 10 August 1957, and 20 November 1957; was in the Phoui Sananikone cabinets of 18 August 1958, 24 January 1959, and 15 December 1959; and his death, on 29 December 1959, precipitated a crisis in the RLP and facilitated CDNI coup.

COL. KHAM KHONG

Col. Kham Khong (now Brig. Gen.), probably a CDNI member, Assistant Commander of the 2d Military Region in 1960, worked with Phoumi Nosavan during the coup period.

KHAMPHAN PANYA

Khamphan Panya, young Lao politician and CDNI member, was in the Phoui Sananikone cabinets of August 1958, and January 1959; was in the Tiao Somsanith cabinet of June 1960; opposed Somsanith decision to resign after Kong Le coup of August 1960; became member of the Central Committee of Phoumi Nosavan's Revolutionary Committee, on 11 September 1960, remaining in Luang Prabang and serving as liaison between Savannakhet and the King; was in the Boun Oum cabinet of 12 December 1960.

LT. COL. KHONG VONGNARATH

Col. Khong, probably non-CDNI member, who commanded the Sam Neua subdivision in 1959, seems to have vascillated in his loyalties between Kong Le and Phoumi Nosavan, during the coup period.

KONG LE

A junior FAL officer, who precipitated the 9 August 1960 coup in Vientiane, starting a civil war in Laos. Kong Le at the time of the coup was considered anti-Communist and pro-American, and the most effective officer in FAL. In late December 1960, after the Phoumi Nosavan forces recaptured Vientiane, he fled to the Northern Provinces of Laos, where he remained with PL troops.

KOU ABHAY

Kou Abhay, an unaffiliated retired politician, was asked to head the caretaker cabinet of 5 January 1960, charged with the task to prepare the country for the elections of April 1960.

COL. KOUPRASITH ABHAY

Col. Kouprasith (now Brig. Gen.), non-CDNI member, son of Kou Abhay, pro-Western, Chief of Plans and Studies in FAL in December 1960, was at first arrested by Kong Le forces on 9 August, then professed to join them, but on 8 December 1960 staged the somewhat mystifying "Kouprasith coup." When Kong Le fled, Kouprasith joined forces with Phoumi.

LEUAM INSISIENGMAY

Leuam Insisiengmay, who during the 1954 Viet Minh-Pathet Lao invasion of Laos served as commander of guerrilla troops in Central Laos, is anti-Communist, a former member of the RLP, and, since the Kong Le coup, has been a strong supporter of Phoumi Nosavan. He served in the Katay Don Sasorith cabinet of 25 November 1954; Souvanna Phouma cabinets of 21 March 1956, 10 August 1957, and 20 November 1957; was in the Phoui Sananikone cabinets of 18 August 1958, 24 January 1959, and 15 December 1959; and was in the Tiao Somsanith cabinet of 5 June 1960. On 10 August 1960, Leuam opposed, along with Phoumi Nosavan, the Somsanith decision to resign, went to Savannakhet, becoming head of the Interior Committee of the Phoumi Nosavan resistance group, was offered a post in the Souvanna Phouma compromise cabinet of 31 August 1960, but never accepted. Became member of the Central Committee of the Revolutionary Committee in Savannakhet, and joined the Boun Oum cabinet of 12 December 1960.

NHOUY ABHAY

Nhouy Abhay, former member of the Lao Issara, but thereafter not a member of any political party, was in the Katay Don Sasorith cabinet of 25 November 1954; was in the Souvanna Phouma cabinets of 21 March 1956, 10 August 1957, and

20 November 1957; was in the Kou Abhay cabinet of 7 January 1960; was in the Tiao Somsanith cabinet of 5 June 1960; after the Kong Le coup of 9 August 1960, he attempted to mediate between the Phoumi Nosavan and Kong Le-Souvanna Phouma forces; was in the Souvanna Phouma cabinet of 31 August 1960; accompanied Souvanna Phouma on his flight to Phnom Penh on 9 December 1960; was in the Boun Oum cabinet of 12 December 1960.

GEN. OUANE RATRIKOUN (Rattikoun)

Gen. Ouane Ratrikoun, senior FAL officer, who graduated second in a class of 700 in officers' school, an active member of CDNI, was appointed Commander of FAL in early August 1960; resigned under pressure during the Kong Le coup of 9 August 1960; was reinstated as Commander of FAL on 20 August 1960, joined the Souvanna Phouma cabinet of 31 August 1960; established liaison with Phoumi Nosavan in October 1960; went to Luang Prabang in November 1960 and helped swing 1st Military Region to Phoumi. Appointed Chief of Staff of FAL by Boun Oum on 23 December 1960.

COL. PHASOUK (PASOOK) SOMLY

Col. Phasouk (now Brig. Gen.) joined Phoumi Nosavan in Savannakhet, and was a member of the Savannakhet Committee formed against the Kong Le revolutionary group.

PHOUI SANANIKONE

Phoui Sananikone, one of the founding members of the Independent Party and the RLP, anti-Communist and pro-American, was in the Katay Don Sasorith cabinet of 27 November 1954; was in the Souvanna Phouma cabinets of 10 August 1957 and 20 November 1957; headed the cabinets of 18 August 1958, 24 January 1959, and 15 December 1959; was advisor to Kou Abhay cabinet of 7 January 1960; was in France during Kong Le coup of

9 August 1960, where he advised the U.S. to support Souvanna Phouma and to persuade Phoumi Nosavan and the King to support Souvanna Phouma; was appointed French ambassador by Souvanna Phouma in mid-October 1960, but refused to take position, instead going to Luang Prabang to attempt to arrange a political solution to the crisis, on 9 November 1960; went to Savannakhet, offering full support to Phoumi Nosavan on 28 November 1960.

PHOUMI NOSAVAN

Phoumi Nosavan, a founding member of CDNI, nephew of Sarit, firmly anti-Communist, was in 1954 appointed Director of Defense in the Ministry of Defense, simultaneously becoming Chief of Staff to the FAL. In late 1958 he was appointed Inspector General of the FAL; was in the Phoui Sananikone cabinet of January 1959; headed the 5-general military junta that initiated the December 1959 coup; was in the Kou Abhay cabinet of 7 January 1960; was in the Tiao Somsanith cabinet of June 1960.

PHOUMI VONGVICHIT

Phoumi Vongvichit is believed to be Secretary General of the pro-Communist Neo Lao Hak Xat (NLHX) Party - successor to the Pathet Lao. He is a former member of the Lao Issara (probably the Souphanouvong pro-Viet Minh faction); was in the Souvanna Phouma cabinet of 12 November 1957; was imprisoned, after the mutiny of the 2d PL Bn, in July 1959, escaping into the jungle in May 1960, and returned to Vientiane in October 1960, heading a PL delegation to negotiate with the Souvanna Phouma government.

QUINIM PHOLSENA

Quinim Pholsena, founder of the Santiphab Party and leftist protege of Souvanna Phouma, was from February 1953

to February 1956 Vice President of the National Assembly; after the Kong Le coup of 9 August 1960 he became Kong Le's close advisor; was in the Souvanna Phouma cabinets of 14 August 1960 and 31 August 1960; was appointed Chairman of the Vientiane government delegation to talk with the PL, in October 1960; after Souvanna Phouma's flight from Vientiane to Phnom Penh, Quinim briefly headed the pro-Kong Le government within the city, then when the city fell to Phoumi, Quinim escaped to the provinces, and in late December settled in Xieng Khouang province with the Kong Le forces.

COL. SANG

Col. Sang, a CDNI member, considered a capable officer, joined the Phoumi Nosavan forces.

SARIT THANARAT

Sarit Thanarat, presently Thai Prime Minister, Supreme Commander of the Thai Armed Forces, Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Thai Army, and Acting Director General of the Police Department, in early 1959 organized what many observers think is the most energetic, forward-looking regime Thailand has had in modern history.

KING SAVANG VATHANA

King of Laos since late 1959.

SISOUK NA CHAMPASSOK

Sisouk Na Champassok, conservative Lao diplomat and politician, was assigned to New York as Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN in late 1956; served as Lao representative to the 1957 General Assembly; became member of the Committee for Defense of the National Interests (CDNI) in 1958; was in the Phoui Sananikone cabinets of 1958 and 1959; and was Lao delegate to the General Assembly Session of September 1959; was excluded, as were all CDNI members, from the Phoui Sananikone cabinet of December 1959; was appointed advisor and spokesman for the Supreme Command of the Military Forces that precipitated the coup of December 1959; appointed permanent representative to the UN in 1960, until recalled home to serve as new minister attached to the Presidency of the Council of Ministers. Author of "Storm Over Laos."

PRINCE TIAO SOMSANITH

Prince Somsanith, anti-Communist and pro-Western, a former member of the Lao Issara, became director of National Police in 1954; was in the Souvanna Phouma cabinets of 21 March 1956 and 10 August 1957; was in the Phoui Sananikone cabinet of 15 December 1959; was in the Kou Abhay cabinet of 7 January 1960; headed the cabinet of 5 June 1960; resigned on 14 August 1960, after the Kong Le coup; returned to Vientiane to stiffen resistance of Souvanna Phouma to PL demands, working also for a compromise between Phoumi Nosavan and Souvanna Phouma; led a parliamentary delegation from Vientiane to Savannakhet, to negotiate with Savannakhet group in late November 1960.

SOPSAISANA

Sopsaisana, a member of the former royal family of Xieng Khouang province and an active CDNI member, was in the Boun Oum cabinet of 12 December 1960.

MAJ. GEN. SOUNTHONE PATHAMMAVONG

Maj. Gen. Sounthone Pathammavong, a senior FAL officer, with no assignment since late December 1960, was 1954 Commander-in-Chief of the FAL; was in the Phoui Sananikone cabinet of January 1959; was placed under house arrest during the Kong Le coup of August 1960; was reinstated as Chief of the General Staff of FAL in late August 1960; was appointed Advisor to the Ministry of Defense in October 1960; was appointed Commanding General of the FAL, when Gen. Ouane Ratrikoun defected to Savannakhet; was handed governmental authority by Prince Souvanna Phouma, when Souvanna fled to Phnom Penh in December 1960; relinquished this authority to Quinim Pholsena 2 days later; and flew to Bangkok when Phoumi forces captured Vientiane in late December 1960.

PRINCE SOUPHANOUVONG (Sometimes Souphannouvong)

Prince Souphanouvong, former Lao Issara member within group dominated by Viet Minh, and former PL and present NLHX leader, spent 1954-1957 negotiating on behalf of the PL for a settlement with the RLG; was in the Souvanna Phouma cabinet of 4 November 1957; was placed under house arrest in May 1959, as he was considered partially responsible for the defection of the 2d PL Bn; was released in June, but jailed in July 1959, when he was to undergo trial for attempting to endanger the internal and external security of the state. However, he escaped jail on 4 May 1960; after the Kong Le coup of 9 August 1960, when Souvanna Phouma was installed as Prime Minister, Souphanouvong issued statements calling for the support of Souvanna Phouma's government, negotiations between the RLG, and a return of the ICC; Souphanouvong signed an agreement with Souvanna Phouma on the future of Laos in November 1960; after Phoumi forces captured Vientiane, Souphanouvong and PL allied with Kong Le and the remains of Souvanna Phouma's cabinet.

COL. SOURITH SASORITH

Col. Sourith Sasorith, an early CDNI member, joined Phoumi Nosavan forces in Savannakhet, as Commander of Paratroops, and was also a member of the Revolutionary Committee's Military Subcommittee on 11 September 1960; later in the Fall, Phoumi Nosavan became discontented with his military performance in battle.

SOUVANNA PHOUMA

Souvanna Phouma, neutralist nationalist Lao politician, former Lao Issara member, founder of National Progressive and RLP parties, was in the Katay Don Sasorith cabinet of 25 November 1954; headed cabinets of 21 March 1956, 10 August 1957, and 20 November 1957; served as ambassador to France, Israel, Italy, Germany and Belgium between 1958 and 1960; after the Kong Le coup of 9 August 1960, headed the August 1960 cabinet; fled to Phnom Penh, after Phoumi Nosavan coup on 9 December 1960.

THANAT KHOMAN

Thanat Khoman, prominent Thai diplomat, friendly to the West, is Minister of Foreign Affairs in the Sarit cabinet.

MAJ. THANOM PRAKHIM

Maj. Thanom, a CDNI member, probably joined Phoumi Nosavan in August 1960.

TOUBY LYFOUNG

Touby Lyfoung, influential Meo leader, member of the RLP, was in the Tiao Somsanith cabinet of 5 June 1960; joined Phoumi Nosavan to organize resistance against Kong Le forces in August 1960; refused post in Souvanna Phouma cabinet of 17 August 1960; went to Savannakhet, urging assault upon Vientiane, on 13 October 1960; was in Boun Oum cabinet of 12 December 1960; was one of 6 mem

6 members of new cabinet sent to Vientiane to form provisional government prior to taking over administration of the city.

MAJ. VANG PHAO

Maj. Vang Phao (now Colonel), considered by U.S. observers the best soldier in Laos, member of CDNI, is a Meo. Kham Kong arrested him in August 1960, when Maj. Vang promised loyalty to the Souvanna Phouma regime, at the request of Meo Chief Touby Lyfoung. He was released later, and, after the Boun Oum 12 December 1960 cabinet, became more pro-Phoumi. He is considered staunchly anti-PL.