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WORKING PAPER NO. 1

HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE LAOS INCIDENT
AUGUST 1960 TO MAY 1961

PART II, DECEMBER 1960 TO MAY 1961

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SUMMARY OF THE LAOS INCIDENT AND CONCLUDING
OBSERVATIONS PERTINENT TO CONTINUING
PROBLEMS OF COMMAND AND CONTROL

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SUMMARY OF THE LAOS INCIDENT AND CONCLUDING
OBSERVATIONS PERTINENT TO CONTINUING
PROBLEMS OF COMMAND AND CONTROL

The central purpose of this section is to present concluding observations on the U.S. experience in Laos that are pertinent to continuing problems of command and control. These concluding observations are based upon both parts of the Historical Analysis of the Laos Incident. Because the Historical Analysis is quite long and detailed, the concluding observations themselves are preceded by two short sections, "Summary of Main Highlights of the Laos Incident," and "Summary Characterization of the Laos Incident." These are intended to provide an overall perspective which the detailed account in the main parts of the Historical Analysis may fail to supply. They are also intended to emphasize the nature of the experience from which they derive, and the type of possible future circumstance to which they have the greatest presumptive application.

SUMMARY OF MAIN HIGHLIGHTS OF THE LAOS INCIDENT

On 9 August 1960 Kong Le, a young Lao paratroop captain, staged a military coup in which he seized Vientiane, the administrative capital of Laos, while most of the high officials of the pro-western Royal Laotian Government were in Luang Prabang, the royal and ceremonial capital of the little kingdom. Kong Le vaguely proclaimed himself a neutralist, but his objectives, possible backing, and co-conspirators, if any, were not clear.

Defense Minister Phoumi, the strongest personality in the government, who was in control of most of the Laotian military units outside of the city of Vientiane, flew to the southern Laotian city of Savannakhet on the first day of the coup to confirm his control of the troops stationed in that area and to organize a resistance to Kong Le.

Within a few days Kong Le was joined by the veteran neutralist politician Souvanna Phouma, and maneuvering began to get National Assembly approval of Kong Le's overturn of the government by military coup. General Phoumi, in Savannakhet, set up a High Revolutionary Committee dedicated to the overthrow of the Kong Le/Souvanna government.

The situation immediately following the coup was very confused, and because it was not clear just what was going on, the U.S. took no strong steps. Our objective in Laos had been to make it independent, pro-western, and strongly anti-Communist. To that end, the government of Laos was largely supported by the U.S. The troops of both Kong Le and of General Phoumi were equipped, fed, and paid by the United States in hopes that they would defend Laos from the Communist-infiltrated Pathet Lao and from possible incursions by Viet Minh from North Vietnam. We re-affirmed recognition of the pre-Kong Le coup government, but remained in touch with both sides, hoping for an accommodation between them.

]

Suddenly and unexpectedly the hitherto fluid situation was solidified in a shape that made the U.S. political problem much more difficult. Partially persuaded by a demonstration held in its chambers, the National Assembly declared the previous government dissolved and voted to invest Souvanna Phouma as Prime Minister. This act of the National Assembly, although apparently accomplished under some duress, gave the Souvanna government the presumption of legality needing only the final confirmation of a royal rescript to make it constitutionally binding. This presumption of legality was given political support by the fact that Souvanna was favored by France, by the United Kingdom, and by most Asian neutrals.

However, the Souvanna/Kong Le combination controlled little of the countryside, little of the Laotian army that we had built as a bulwark against Communism, and seemed much too ready to make concessions to Pathet Lao and other left-wing demands. It was Phoumi who controlled more of the U.S.-supported military forces and who generally followed the straight anti-Communist line that was favored by the United States at that time.

The U.S. then sought to resolve the dilemma in Laos by seeking to force an accommodation upon the two contending factions before the Souvanna government was confirmed by royal edict. Political pressures [

] and manipulation of the flow of U.S. aid, upon which both factions were dependent for continued existence

and strength, were employed in an effort to effect the compromise. When finally this policy was recognized to have failed, the U.S. gave [] support to Phoumi's attempt to overthrow the Kong Le/Souvanna government by force. It was about this time, in November, that a Laos Battle Staff was activated in the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

After initial failures, General Phoumi finally succeeded in mid-December in retaking Vientiane. []

Souvanna Phouma fled abroad and Kong Le retreated north.]

At the beginning of December, a fortnight before the final fall of his government, Souvanna Phouma abandoned hope of getting the U.S. to end support of his enemies, and in desperation accepted the Russian offer of aid. Immediately a Russian airlift from North Vietnam began to bring supplies into Vientiane, for the Souvanna government and for Kong Le's troops. After the fall of Vientiane, the U.S. was faced with the problem of what to do, militarily, with the Kong Le forces which had escaped and continued to receive Russian airlift assistance, and what to do, politically, with Souvanna Phouma's claims of still being the legitimate head of the government of Laos.

In the period after the fall of Vientiane, the most important immediate fact was the Russian airlift to Kong Le, which had begun early in December as an overt measure of aid by the Russian government to the legally constituted government of Laos. If General Phoumi had achieved some momentum by the capture of Vientiane, it was soon lost. If Kong Le lost momentum in being driven from Vientiane, he soon began to regain it with the aid of the Russian airlift and of other forms of assistance provided by the Viet Minh. Kong Le moved from the area north of Vientiane eastward into the strategic Plaine Des Jarres area, and there he consolidated his position, joined by elements of the Pathet Lao.

From mid-December to mid-January, U.S. reaction to events in Laos may have been slowed, and rendered more cautious, by the fact that these were the last weeks of the departing administration. With the advent of the new administration, an attempt was made to reappraise the situation and fix upon

[a course of action. Out of the interagency group that did the staff work for one reappraisal, a Laos Task Force was established, the Chairman being the chief State Department representative. A political goal of a neutral Laos was accepted as the somewhat altered U.S. objective in Laos, but in the face of the deteriorating situation in Laos, it was judged necessary to develop a stronger bargaining position before this could be accomplished. The stronger bargaining position required that General Phoumi and his forces be placed in a position where they could more effectively resist further aggressions by Kong Le and the Pathet Lao.]

]

This policy and program were followed until early March. But Phoumi's forces, after some initial success in moving into areas previously vacated by Kong Le, soon suffered major setbacks. The Russian airlift and Viet Minh aid continued to build up the Kong Le forces, and it became evident that the situation was getting worse, not better, in terms of the comparative strength of Phoumi and Kong Le.]

]

Souvanna Phouma was circulating, meanwhile, in Communist Bloc capitals; and at the same time the foreign offices of the U.S., U.K., France, and the USSR were in communication on terms of a possible settlement. In these matters the U.K. and the USSR acted ostensibly in their role as co-chairmen of the Geneva Conference of 1954.

In the period from mid-March to mid-April 1961,]

] Phoumi's forces continued to give up one place after another, and the military superiority of the Kong Le/Pathet Lao forces became constantly more evident and more decisive. There was little real combat, but it became increasingly evident that the Kong Le and Pathet Lao forces

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could occupy almost any area that they set out to take. All of the great powers, including the USSR, expressed themselves in favor of a cease fire and of a negotiated peace which would result in a neutral Laos. The desirability of such undeniably good things was not arguable. The practical and immediate issue was soon recognized to be, however, whether or not the Kong Le and Pathet Lao forces would, in fact, honor a cease fire while the final settlement was being negotiated.

Although everyone agreed in principle with cease-fire and negotiated peace, the Kong Le/Pathet Lao kept up the same pressure, and the Phoumi forces gradually withdrew first from one place and then another. By mid-April it seemed that soon all of Laos, including the two capitals and all other points of consequence in the Mekong Valley, would be in Pathet Lao or Kong Le hands. Faced with this imminent prospect of complete loss of Laos to the Communists, the U.S. at high levels considered intervention, but repeatedly deferred making a binding decision upon this. [

] a gesture intended to impress both friend and foe as a symbol of U.S. aid and resolution to defend Laos against a complete Communist takeover -- while holding open the possibility of intervention a little later. Preliminary preparations were made for deploying PACOM units into the area, and the pace of negotiations with Russia, with the U.K. acting as the broker, was speeded up.

Through the last half of April, the conditions in Laos continued to worsen. At the same time, the U.S. was humiliated by the Bay of Pigs fiasco in Cuba. As developments in Laos appeared headed toward a climax at the end of April, PACOM elements moved into forward positions, anticipating possible intervention orders. Official publicity was given to some of these moves. [

]

Near the end of April the U.K. and the USSR agreed upon a negotiating formula. That formula did not meet all of the U.S. requirements, but the U.S. gradually came to believe that

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it offered the only alternative to the risks of seeking to attain U.S. goals in Laos by intervention. And intervention would probably have had to be unilateral, and, by our own calculations stood little chance to succeed against determined Chinese and Viet Minh opposition unless we were prepared to accept the risks of expanding the war [

]

Thus, at the beginning of May, although the question of intervention itself was left pending, a decision was taken to send a U.S. delegation to the Geneva Conference that had been arranged by the USSR and the U.K. A little while later, and uneasy cease-fire agreement was reached between the Phoumi and the Kong Le/Pathet Lao forces. The Laos incident was by no means closed at this point, but it had definitely moved, for the time being at least, out of the crisis stage.

SUMMARY CHARACTERIZATION OF THE LAOS INCIDENT

The U.S. involvement in Laos was a continuing, low-key crisis, dominated by political considerations, [

]

There was serious consideration of intervention, and in anticipation of that possibility advance deployments were made. At the climax it appeared we might be in direct confrontation with major powers of the Communist Bloc. The tension eased off, rather than ended.

Laos had been a subject of nagging national concern ever since the end of the Indo-China war in 1954. The Laos problem had reached the minor crisis stage at least once before, in 1959. During the nine months covered by this study, Laos was continuously a major preoccupation of CINCPAC. It was a perpetual agenda item at NCS meetings; in 29 meetings of the NSC from 12 August 1960 to 1 May 1961, it was on the agenda 24 times. At the national level, however, although Laos was always an inescapable as well as worrisome burden, it was always overshadowed by other issues. Never, for more than a moment, was Laos accorded full-time, first priority attention by the highest echelons of national decision making.

Although the national level did not accord sufficient priority to Laos -- except possibly very briefly, for a couple of days, in the last week of April 1961 -- to give prompt or full attention to issues arising in Laos, not enough authority was delegated to any lower echelon to insure effective resolution of issues on which there were significant differences of opinion below the national level. Referral of policy differences from subordinate echelons

to the Presidential level was apparently accomplished only twice or three times within the period August 1960 to mid-January 1961. With the new administration such referral to the President was much more frequent, but issues on Laos were always overshadowed at that level by other issues and problems, and consequently received comparatively little attention.

The U.S. operations that were operations, as distinct from deployment for possible intervention, were quasi-military rather than military. Twice during this period PACOM units were placed on DEFCON-II, and overt military intervention was considered with apparent seriousness at the national level for about six weeks in the spring of 1961. Many deployments were made, including some forward positioning to facilitate and expedite intervention if a decision to intervene were made [

]

Because the Kong Le coup was originally appraised as a political event calling for a political reaction, the initial response of the Joint Staff did not deviate from established routines. These involved mainly the SEA Branch of the Pacific Division of J-3 and the Subsidiary Activities Division of J-5, acting without formalized special arrangements to assure

coordination. The first organizational recognition of a contingency was the formation, on 11 October 1960, of a part-time Working Group on Laos, consisting of 3 colonels from J-3 and one from each of the other J's. In mid-November, a Battle Staff headed by a Deputy Director of J-3 was activated, and the Battle Staff continued as the central focus of Joint Staff activities on Laos from then to the end of the period studied.

In general, the JCS (and the Laos Battle Staff acting in their behalf) served to advise policy-making echelons on military aspects and "political-military" aspects of the Laos problem. In doing so, the JCS functioned much of the time as a Washington representative of CINCPAC. The JCS regularly depended upon CINCPAC for specific knowledge of the situation in his area, including matters of political-military policy, and for ideas concerning courses of action to be recommended at high levels in Washington. The JCS rarely failed to concur in CINCPAC's appraisals or proposals; more than once, however, military suggestions originating in the Joint Staff were found politically not feasible by CINCPAC, and were withdrawn.

The circumstances surrounding this study, and the nature of the events themselves, have facilitated development of an overall description of strategic decision making, from the field to the national level, in a continuing low-key crisis in which operations consisted more often of intrigue and quasi-military adventuring than of overt military combat. In an affair of this kind, the role of the JCS and of the Defense Establishment as a whole, within the national command structure, emerges reasonably clearly. But data were not available, nor was the affair sufficiently current, for a close study of the internal procedures of the Joint Staff.

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Formal lines of administrative subordination remained the same throughout the period of this study. (See Figure 1.) There were some changes, however, after the new administration came in, in formal assignment of responsibilities to agencies, and there were shifts in the individuals most trusted by those in positions of power.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS ON THE CHARACTER AND ENVIRONMENT OF THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS 1/

THE COMPLEXITY OF THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

The decision-making process was extremely complex and was conducted in an environment of ambiguity. This was true throughout the period of this study.

Decisions of consequence on operational matters were seldom rendered solely or even largely on the basis of operational considerations. They were seldom rendered on the basis of Laotian considerations alone. Political considerations were always present, and generally they were the determining factor. These political considerations were numerous, changing, and concerned a diversity of factors in Laos, Thailand, Southeast Asia generally, the Asian neutrals, France, the UK, and other SEATO allies. They related to possible UN actions, to UK-USSR negotiations, to cease-fire negotiations between Phoumi and the Pathet Lao, and to possible escalation of minor actions into major conflict. Almost always the determining factors related to concerns in other areas, and to other considerations foreign to the assigned responsibilities of the Laos Battle Staff or the Laos Task Force. (With decisions based on these other factors and rendered by officials whose attentions were concentrated largely on other matters, factors important to local considerations and to operations were sometimes needlessly or unwittingly disregarded.)

1/ At intervals throughout the concluding observations there are parenthetical references to paragraphs in the main parts of the study that illustrate, support, or are otherwise pertinent to the points that have been made.

The extent and diversity of extraneous considerations entering into decisions concerning Laos involved use of information on a correspondingly wider variety of subjects, from a correspondingly greater range of places, and channeled through a correspondingly greater number of organizations.

In the area of concerns above the purely routine matters that were unquestioned SOP, and for that reason handled without challenge at lower field echelons, there was scarcely an issue that was purely military. Every military action had political implications, either in terms of its possible side effects, or in terms of the judgments that it involved concerning the feasibility of particular goals, or in terms of a judgment of the political character and reliability of some Lao individual or faction. Above all, there was a judgment concerning the likely reaction of the enemy or of neutrals to moves that we might take. (See Part I, paragraphs 97, 99, 116, 126, 127, 139, 143, 194-197, 200, 245, 257, 261, 262, 267, 268, 270; and Part II, paragraphs 17, 20, 21, 36, 40-43, 49, 56, 77, 78, 84, 93, 109, 111, 114, 115, 127, 133, 136, 150, 162, 179, 180, 182, 200, 227, 245, 257, 261, 262, 267, 268, 270, 272-276, 278-280, 284-287, 299, 310, 312, 314-316, 349, 350, 351, 360, 361, 363, 375, 376, 378, 380, 383, 391, 393, 395, 396, 402, 403, 406, 410-412, 416, 417, 421-424, 428, 429, 432, 437-445, 452, 453, 460, 467, 469, 474, 475, 477.)

Operations actually engaged in were always at a very low point on the scale of the violence that could have been brought to bear. Because of this, determination of what to do and how to do it was always circumscribed by a judgment of what we could get away with. This became, without explicit recognition, the determining factor in most cases. Such a judgment, if conducted rationally, involved appraisal of the governing intangibles which would permit us to get away with one thing, but not with another. This was not a technical judgment of the physical magnitude of the task and of the physical characteristics of what would be required to do the job. It was essentially an appraisal of psychological, social, and political factors. The basic circumstances of a war of such limited proportions, therefore, undermined the classic basis for judgment of effectiveness of weapons and of tactics, and involved that judgment in an appraisal of intangibles. Such appraisal of intangibles was indeed inescapable.

But concern for this dimension appears to have obscured the fact that technical evaluation of the operational effectiveness of a given system against known enemy systems and readily available responses was still an interesting and important consideration. (See Part II, paragraphs 31, 52-56, 60, 63-68, 105-125, 126, 127, 134-141, 144, 151-153, 239, 241, 284, 290, 320-327, 337-346, 357-361, 372, 378, 380, 408, 409, 413, 414, 434, 438-440, 446, 448, 449.)

5 Coordination of their actions was, of course, supposed to be effected by the Country Team under the leadership of the Ambassador. [

] Special problems developed because efficiency of operations sometimes suggested the joint use of facilities, but differential security levels made this difficult or impossible. [

Finally, the problem was rendered more complex by the fact of differential delegation of responsibility to field representatives by different agencies. In matters of mutual concern, Defense, [

] generally delegated much more authority to the field than State did. As a result, where Defense [] had full authority to act on a matter, that action might be held up by the State representative who lacked comparable authority. (See Part I, paragraphs 56, 64, 75, 93-94, 180-185, 203, 204; and Part II, paragraphs 155, 177, 251-257, 441.)

When the crisis moved into the phase at which overt military intervention was seriously considered, the phasing of military moves to accord with political moves assumed high importance. Preliminary deployments, staging plans, and

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scheduling of arrival into the intervention area were changed from previous plans in order to accommodate political requirements for rapid action, to synchronize with diplomatic negotiations with friend or foe, or both, to avoid unwanted appearances, and to reduce the possibility of embarrassing political actions in the UN or elsewhere. (See Part II, paragraphs 273, 278, 280, 281, 299, 304, 306-308, 411, 412.)

PERSISTENT AMBIGUITY OF THE DECISION-MAKING ENVIRONMENT

Whether or not the Laos incident deserved to be called a war, the fog of war prevailed. Intelligence was generally incomplete, often conflicting or in serious error, and commonly dependent upon sources with an ax to grind. Many decisions that we had to make were made on the basis of judgment of the personal characteristics of Lao individuals, or of the political inclination, or power, of a group or faction. This involved indirectly a social or political appraisal of the forces at work within the land -- a subject upon which there were evident and probably inescapable differences between honest and ordinarily competent U.S. officials.

In addition to the inherent slipperiness of the subject matter, lack of solid information created a situation in which proprietary or emotional interests, either of those providing intelligence or of those acting upon it, often made it quite impossible to escape the influence of the wish upon the thought. The circumstances in which events were interpreted and decisions made were generally so ambiguous that reactions to intelligence and to events were more predictable on the basis of established viewpoints as much as upon the basis of the event itself.

Critical factors upon which judgment had to be based were appraisals of intentions, of personal capabilities, and of possible future response to still hypothetical events: judgment of these intangibles was generally the linchpin upon which decision depended. (Part I, paragraphs 35, 37-42, 44-51, 136-138, 144-157, 204-242, 252-256; and Part II, paragraphs 46, 47, 66-68, 73-75, 78-85, 110, 117, 120, 136, 214, 215, 219, 243, 245, 246, 251-253, 258, 260, 261, 264, 266-269, 369, 411, 412, 451, 476.)

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CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS ON CENTRAL PROBLEMS OF POLICY
THAT AFFECTED COMMAND AND CONTROL DECISION-MAKING

CHANGE IN ADMINISTRATIVE STYLE DID NOT ELIMINATE AMBIGUITIES
IN POLICY

In the period from August 1960 to January 1961, the problem overwhelming all others was lack of clearly defined, clearly felt national policy and purpose. We were unable, as a nation, to pursue with consistency and firmness any single policy leading clearly and resolutely in one unequivocal direction. This was a problem beyond the power of the JCS to resolve, and was resolvable only at a national level, if resolvable at all. Each agency involved [] had by its charter a legitimate interest in Laos. Without clear-cut resolution of national policy, each agency was predisposed to favor policies based on its own 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 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 Part I, paragraphs 34, 35, 55, 65, 85, 100, 128, 180-185, 200-202, 205, 218-219.)

In the period January to May 1961, there was a new administration with a different administrative style. The President took a more active and more frequent role in resolving issues of policy and program, the State Department was given a greater role in the formulation of policy recommendations for Presidential consideration, the Ambassador was accorded greater authority in the exercise of the authority that was delegated to the field, [

] But issues of policy affecting operations were not always promptly resolved by these changes, nor was the tendency to ambivalence in American policy eliminated.

White House assumption of responsibility for the resolution of operational issues did not assure that there would always be prompt and clear-cut resolution of them. Prompt

resolution at the national level required that those at echelons just below the White House level perceived the issues, and judged them important enough to place before the President for resolution.

There were cases when this was not done, and no decisions were made, and operations stalled. If officials at echelons directly serving the Commander-in-Chief did not see fit to refer issues upward, resolution was deferred, and it was these officials who were, in effect, rendering a decision not to decide the issue. If they formulated the problem, the alternatives might be, for better or for worse, different from the alternatives another echelon would have presented, and the final decision influenced, if not determined, by the shape given to the problem by those who presented it. (See Part II, paragraphs 150-151, 155, 197-206, 251-257, 264-266, 350-351, 361, 380, 421.)

POLICY AMBIVALENCE REFLECTED BASIC DIFFICULTIES

The continuing ambivalence probably reflected the inherent difficulty of the situation. These difficulties, which were extremely complex and many-sided, may be usefully considered in terms of difficulties that were primarily political, and difficulties that were primarily military.

Politically, we were involved in a situation not to our liking, and it was far from clear that we could induce or compel the Laotians, and other interested parties, to adopt a political solution to our liking, whatever we did. We had committed ourselves, over the years, often with no real choice in the matter, and principally by a long series of expedients, each of which was intended to meet an immediate problem only. Our major European allies with experience in the area made it unmistakably clear that they considered we pursued unrealizable goals. Such support as they gave us they gave only as an indulgence, and not because they favored our policies. There was far from agreement on Laos among informed Americans: honest and uninhibited discussion of Laos was bound to produce widely divergent views of what could and should be done. In the policies we acted upon, we continued to compromise at the national level between opposed extremes, not so much because the compromise promised success as because there were always arguments, very difficult to answer, to be made against either extreme. (See Part I, paragraphs 28, 34, 35, 65, 81, 85, 88,

94, 95, 100, 108, 126, 127, 128, 133, 157, 160-163, 169, 180, 198, Appendix A, pages 205, 206; and Part II, paragraphs 46, 47, 49, 136, 145, 155, 214, 215, 219, 245, 246, 253, 261, 369.)

Another very important aspect of political difficulty was that in Laos the U.S. was attempting to conduct a counter-insurgency operation largely by proxy. Our proxies in this case were men of different race, language, and culture, whose customs, systems of value, and social and political outlook were radically different from our own. Repeatedly we developed plans and appraisals, and repeatedly we found that our Lao proxies behaved in a way that made our appraisals look wrong, and defeated the plans we had drawn for them. One reason for this seems to be that much of the time in our appraisals and plans we unwittingly extrapolated into the Laotian scene our own values and judgment of issues and ways of doing things only to find, later, that when it came time for them to perform, the Lao judged and acted as Lao, not as Americans. And another reason -- or another way of saying much the same thing -- seems to be that we emphasized provision of means to our proxies, hoping against hope that they had the motivation to use the means in the manner we intended, only to find later that that motivation was lacking. Since successful use of the means we provided depended upon Laotian will and capacity to use them, an understanding of their values and motivation was a prerequisite, which we never filled, both for fixing our goals in Laos and for formulating realistic plans. Instead of making such an appraisal the basis for our policies and plans, we continued to develop and to embark on plans that ignored the cultural constraints of Laotian life. (See Part I, paragraphs 31, 33, 35, 37-42, 49-59, 88, 105, 122, 125, 126, 136-138, 144-157, 172, 177, 188, 228, 237, 240-242, 252-256; and Part II, paragraphs 46, 47, 78, 79, 110, 117, 118, 120, 136, 144, 145, 214, 215, 219, 243-248, 259-261, 270-271, 364, 369.)

On the military side, the main cause of ambivalence in American policy resided in a combination of our weakness in conventional land forces [] and failure to adjust political commitments to the military capabilities we possessed and were ready to use. Lacking military means of dealing effectively, on a localized basis, with possible enemy responses to actions we might initiate, we made a partial but significant commitment of U.S. prestige

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to Southeast Asia before facing up fully to the issue of what we would do if North Vietnam and Communist China countered a localized U.S. interventionary move by their own localized means. This issue had for several years been in the background of every consideration of possible conflict with Communist China, but it had never been brought up for forthright decision. The immediate possibilities of the situation, as it developed in April 1961, made the prospect [] sufficiently immediate and concrete to elicit a decision for that particular situation, if not for more lasting or more general policy. Faced by a choice between a political solution that entailed minor defeat and a military solution that would force us to choose between accepting local military defeat or extending the war [] China and Vietnam, if North Vietnam and Communist China opposed it, high political authority rejected the military solution and accepted the diplomatic setback. This was presumably because an attempted military solution might have increased immediate political problems, and military hazards as well, out of all proportion to the U.S. stake in Laos. (See Part II, paragraphs 127, 165-166, 171, 174, 175, 297, 430, 457-458, 461, 478-496.)

NATIONAL AMBIVALENCE AND AGENCY PARTISANSHIP

The basic differences in understanding of the problem and in approaches to it that resulted from its inherent difficulty tended to become institutionalized in the different U.S. agencies having responsibilities in Laos. Consideration of specific measures was frequently conducted not as a dispassionate appraisal of the comparative effectiveness or probability of success of these measures, but rather as an argument for or against the proposed measure because it seemed representative of the type of approach that was favored or opposed. Thus, State characteristically favored purely political solutions and generally opposed application of military pressures. This attitude was even carried to the extreme that the classic use of military pressure to extract political concessions was forgotten, and State Department counsel was characterized generally by fear of the rare possibility that military pressure would intensify resistance rather than accomplish the more common result of inducing compliance; or it would be argued, from the same point of view, that pressure would hamper or interrupt negotiations, rather than strengthen our bargaining position.

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] Defense, on the other hand, seemed often to favor any activist proposal simply because it was activist, without carefully weighing its chances of success. Even when the military merits of a proposal were dubious at best, and when all that could be claimed for the measure was that it might boost morale, it would often be advocated ardently, apparently because it seemed a step in the right direction. There is remarkably little evidence of systematic effort to answer the questions "will it succeed?" or "What countermeasures does the enemy have available and how might we counter those countermeasures?" In addition, some proposals for military actions originating in the Joint Staff were judged politically unrealistic or premature, by either CINCPAC or ISA, or both, without reference to State. (See Part I, paragraphs 43, 54, 55, 100, 168, 179, 201, 202; and Part II, paragraphs 48, 53, 66, 109, 114-116, 119, 126, 127, 129, 130, 132, 133, 144, 145, 151, 153, 155, 162, 177, 217, 264-266, 284, 361, 413, 452, 453.)

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In this atmosphere, interagency communication was difficult and interagency consultation lost much of its potential value. It was commonly assumed, in Defense, that State would oppose almost any forceful measure, regardless of merit, and would interpret events and intelligence, regardless of content, to support its standing views. Evidently State commonly attributed comparable intransigence to Defense. Just as Defense had no confidence in the political proposals advanced by State, State had no confidence in the military proposals and judgments of Defense. Defense officials thought some State policies and officials defeatist; and State seemed at times to suspect that proposals for military actions were advanced, by Defense, not on their own merits, but for the purpose of indirectly involving the U.S. in a more active military policy than we would knowingly choose.

There were both exceptions to and complications in this unhappy atmosphere. There were a few individuals in State friendly to at least some individuals in Defense. The Laos desk of OASD/ISA cooperated with and assisted, both formally and informally, the Laos Battle Staff and the other parts of the Joint Staff that were at times involved. But some stations of ISA were regarded by many in the JCS with as much suspicion as the State Department itself. There was also a characteristic difference between Washington and the field. The field was always more aware of local complications than Washington, and sometimes differences between Washington and the field were more marked than differences between agencies. With only a few known exceptions, differences between agency representatives in the field were less bitter than in Washington; confronting the reality, there was generally a more tolerant understanding of the other's point of view. (See Part II, paragraphs 162, 264-266, 411-414, 438-441.)

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS CONCERNING PROBLEMS OF PROCEDURES AND ADMINISTRATIVE PRACTICE, AND COMMUNICATIONS PROBLEMS

PROBLEMS OF PROCEDURES AND ADMINISTRATION PRACTICE

Whenever the attention of the highest echelon of national authority was directed to the problem of Laos, it retained control of the smallest details of operations that were judged to effect those responsibilities. This included extremely small tactical details most of the time. Comparatively low level tactical or technical matters, such as making direct USAF logistic flights into Vientiane, or using 100 lb. HE bombs on planes already carrying rockets or machine guns, could not be firmly or dependably resolved below the national level. Presumably this was because these matters seemed to affect broad national interests that were the responsibility of the national political level.

The assumption of tactical control by the national level carried the danger that ignorance of technical, logistic, and operational problems could result in infeasible or otherwise mistaken decisions concerning tactical matters. Whereas in other incidents, problems were created by bypassing intermediate echelons between the national level and the tactical level in the issuance of orders; in Laos problems were created

because sources of realistic military information were bypassed. (See Part II, paragraphs 144, 164, 165, 166, 171, 173-175, 178, 297, 351, 407, 418, 419, 420, 426, 430, 439, 457, 458, 461, 464, 469-471, 478-497.)

Throughout the period of our study, CINCPAC was empowered by JCS and DOD to make all decisions which they had the power to make without inter-agency consultation or reference to higher authority. There was a manifest lack of comparable delegation of responsibility to the Ambassador. In the case of the Ambassador, this was true in the period from August to January, when the Ambassador appeared in effect to take his orders from the State Department, and in the period from January to May during which period the Ambassador appears to have taken his orders primarily from the White House. In the period from January to May, the Ambassador's position as Chief of the Country Team was much more strongly backed by Washington than previously. Nevertheless, the failure to delegate authority to the Ambassador comparable to that delegated to the military officials and agencies in Laos tended to impair or destroy the power to expedite action that was the intent of the delegation of power on the part of those agencies that did so delegate. Delegation of power to the field was a matter upon which there was continuing difference between State and Defense. State, the policy agency, consistently refrained from much delegation, while Defense, the action agency, consistently favored broad delegation of power.

Referral of local operational issues to Washington for resolution often created problems. The situation in the field frequently changed so fast that the bureaucratic procedures in use in Washington did not keep pace, and decisions were sometimes 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 in a message transmission sense, but rather was a result of the inherent time-consuming characteristics of inter-agency consultation and coordination. Without exception the operational issues referred to Washington from the field required inter-agency coordination at least, or otherwise the attention of the White House. To arrange inter-agency meetings to the convenience of officials at echelons high enough to have authority generally involved time; it likewise involved time to secure Presidential or other White House attention.

The twelve-hour time differential between Laos and Washington was also a complicating factor at times. It would have been less of a complicating factor had there been an around-the-clock watch by officials at levels high enough to make the decisions required. (See Part I, paragraphs 56, 61, 64, 75, 86, 93, 94, 110, 159-163, 180-185, 227, 245; and Part II, paragraphs 227, 228, 250-257, 404, 407, 419, 420, 426, 444, 464, 469-471.)

Formal meetings and procedures often constituted mere formalization of decisions already largely worked out, often on the basis of unrecorded contacts and communications. The informal was frequently more important than the formal. These informal exchanges included telephone and telecon conversations between points in Washington, Hawaii, Thailand, and Laos, personal and out-of-channel contacts in all places and between all stations. Individuals in all positions of authority tended to depend upon personalities whom they knew, by-passing intervening official stations in the process. The direction of inquiries and the assignment of responsibilities were often decided on the basis of individual personalities rather than formal station in the established chain of command. This reflected a universal preference for dealing with known individual capabilities, rather than relying upon official stations and formal procedures not personally known to the official exercising the choice. In a controversial situation such as Laos, wherein the prejudices of most officials were well established and known, the temptation to go out of channels to get a fresh viewpoint was perhaps even greater than it would have been if the element of controversy and of institutionalized views had not been as great. (See Part I, paragraphs 81, 82, 180-185, 225-227, 245, 249; and Part II, paragraphs 154, 291, 297, 354, 433, 435, 437, 454, 457, 468, 472.)

Authorizations to employ particular tactics, weapons, or other measures tended to lapse quickly if not used. Either passage of time, or change in key personnel, or presence of new political factors was generally sufficient to convince high political authority, in the circumstance of nonuse, that the altered circumstances required reexamination in order to ascertain the current appropriateness of that tactic or weapon or measure. (See Part II, paragraphs 33, 95, 99, 116, 192, 194, 199, 225, 325, 350, 351.)

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There was a striking lack of continuity of experience and specialized competence in the roster of persons participating in the groups officially considering, or making policy recommendations or rendering decisions upon, major issues of U.S. policy in Laos. There was bureaucratic dispersal of responsibility: policy recommendations on the same subject originated in quite different groups, and proceeded through quite different channels, to the point of ultimate decision. Individuals who participated in the discussion of policy or assisted in the determination of that policy were different upon different occasions.

In monitoring Laotian matters at the working level and in interagency contacts, State maintained a reasonable degree of continuity of special competence. There were some changes in responsible personnel, but generally those working with detail were brought in to meetings and coordinated messages. ISA retained the same Laos desk officer throughout, and the specialized competence of this individual was at times very helpful to the JCS, where continuity of experience was not the rule. When the Battle Staff was activated with a general officer as its chief, that general officer was apparently made privy to most -- perhaps all -- of the information concerning Laos available to the JCS. He was a participant in most, but not quite all, of the major discussions and meetings concerning Laos. This was an exception to the more generally prevailing situation in the JCS, however.

Generally, in the JCS especially, but to a lesser extent elsewhere as well, officers with specialized, continuing and detailed knowledge of Laos and of arrangements there were sloughed off from the consultative process as the importance of an issue raised it to higher echelons. By the time it reached the national level, at which authoritative decisions were made, these persons were completely out of the picture. In the JCS, moreover, the practice of rotation made it extremely difficult to match the continuity of specialized area competence that other agencies were able to place in their representation. If the issues had been purely military, rotation would have been less a handicap. But when determination of issues depended crucially upon other considerations, specialist knowledge of the Laos problem in general was prerequisite to effective performance. (See Part II, paragraphs 143, 146-150, 154, 177, 202, 203, 205, 206, 227, 277, 292, 354, 361, 380, 421, 472, and Appendix A.)

COMMUNICATION PROBLEMS

The major problems of communication consisted of inadequacies in mutual understanding, as distinct from inadequacies in message transmission or in mechanisms for storage or processing of data. The inadequacies occurred mainly between echelons or agencies in Washington, and between Washington and the field. The common causes of these misunderstandings were the different attitudes and perspectives characteristic of these different agencies, echelons, or stations, rather than mechanical difficulties or inadequacies. There is always some chance for misunderstanding between those with different perspectives and interests, but the prospect of misunderstanding was in this case greatly enlarged by the policy differences that existed between the agencies.

Instructions to the field intended to convey discretionary or contingent authority were on some occasions given different interpretations according to the policy predilections of those receiving them. Another source of confusion was the simplistic view of operational matters sometimes held by those whose thoughts concentrated on high policy. Instructions that seemed clear to policy officials in Washington were frequently not clear in the field, because operational complexities upon which the field focused its attention were not explicitly dealt with in the message. They were not dealt with explicitly in the message, evidently, because their very existence was ignored. Another recurring source of confusion in fast-moving situations was the inevitable question concerning applicability of an earlier directive to a recently changed situation. (It may be supposed that voice communications would in some cases have eliminated or at least reduced problems that existed when the messages were transmitted in a written form.) Another source of confusion was the contingent directive; more than once it turned up that the contingency upon which the directive was dependent was not clearly definable and hence subject to question or dispute, or else the effect of that contingency had not been correctly appraised when the directive was issued. (See Part I, paragraphs 74, 103, 111, 114, 159-163, 227, 232-235, 238-241; and Part II, paragraphs 57, 104, 109, 116, 162, 164, 173, 175, 192, 225, 361, 402, 411, 412, 418, 439, 441, 448, 449, 452, 464, 469-471.)

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CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS CONCERNING PROBLEMS
OF DOCTRINE AND PLANS

The issues of escalation was associated by political authorities with consideration of almost every proposed military measure, even very limited measures for very limited objectives. When the tension was not high, and consideration was at comparatively low echelons, possibilities of escalation were viewed principally in terms of escalation of tactical measures, at the local level. But when the consideration attained such importance it attracted national attention, even very minor operational proposals suggested possibilities of escalation to serious and high levels of violence, including enlargement of the conflict to general war. Such considerations evidently affected the nature of decisions rendered. The [

] were effective at lower levels of threat, so far as we were concerned, and at earlier stages in the escalation process, than most [

Political authority characteristically sought to localize as well as to limit the levels of violence. Military plans and proposals that involved either geographical extension, or intensification of the degree of violence, greatly strengthened the reluctance of political authority to employ military or other activist means to resolve the issue. However, throughout the entire period covered by this study, the one thing that was clear was that if we were to win this struggle, we had to employ greater means, of some kind, than we had been employing up to the date of that consideration.

The kind of military capability that high political authority seemed to want was a force that could be committed on a localized basis, with high probability of victory in a very short time against any imaginable localized response by the enemy. The enemy, in order to defeat that force, would be required to take steps which constituted overt and drastic escalation [

] and from which the enemy would evidently and surely be deterred. This was scarcely realistic. Escalation possibilities existed from the very bottom of the scale of violence until they ran out the top in nuclear warfare. The limits that were imposed, or that might be imposed at any point along the line, were imposed

solely by the answer, at that point, to the question of what we could get away with. There was no sure answer to what we could get away with without knowing what the enemy's judgment was of what he could get away with against us.

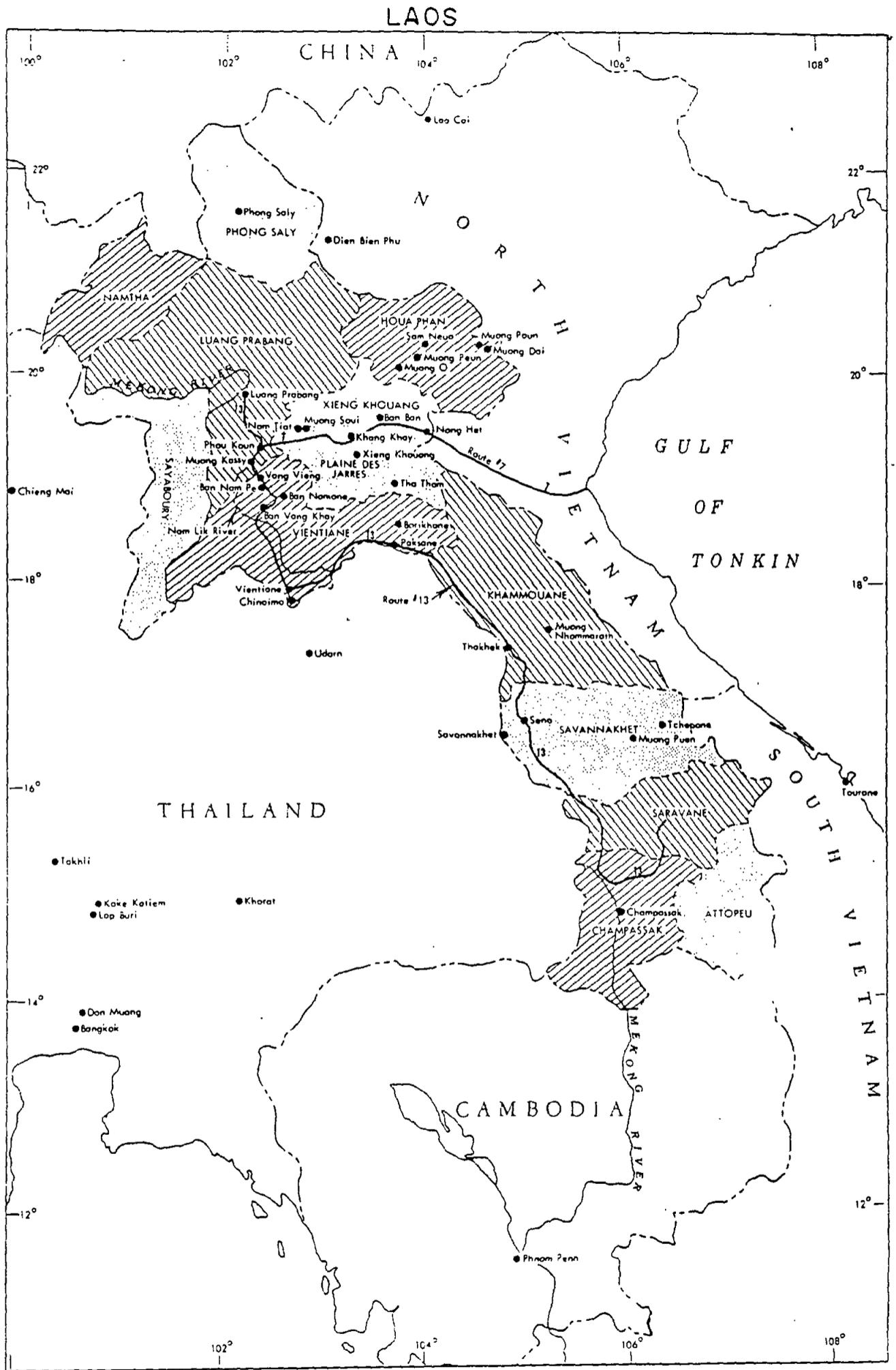
At the time that intervention was considered, the characteristic military view was that Communist China, and North Vietnam as well, would be deterred by the threat of U.S. nuclear retaliation from intervening in sufficient strength to be successful. In contrast to this, the characteristic political view seems to have been that Communist China, perhaps following the example of the Korean War, might insinuate enough conventional forces into the theater to bog us down in an attritionary jungle war, leaving us with the choice of accepting local defeat on this basis or attacking China outright. There is no present way of telling which view was right and there was no way at that time.

The potentially remediable difficulty was that the U.S. strategic dilemma [] had not been faced up to plainly on a national policy and military planning basis. Probably it was because the subject was so difficult, so controversial, and ultimately so hypothetical that it has been avoided. It is as if there were a conspiracy of silence. []

]

The military plans that were in existence oversimplified the political factors affecting operations. This became evident when intervention was seriously considered and the specifics of military deployments and other measures and of political steps or negotiations had to be jointly considered. On the other hand, political authorities tended vastly to oversimplify the complexities of military operations. The realistic problems of military operations, especially those of a logistic nature, were apparently not understood nor foreseen in the requirements that political authority sought to place upon the military at the time that operations were seriously considered.

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FIGURE 2

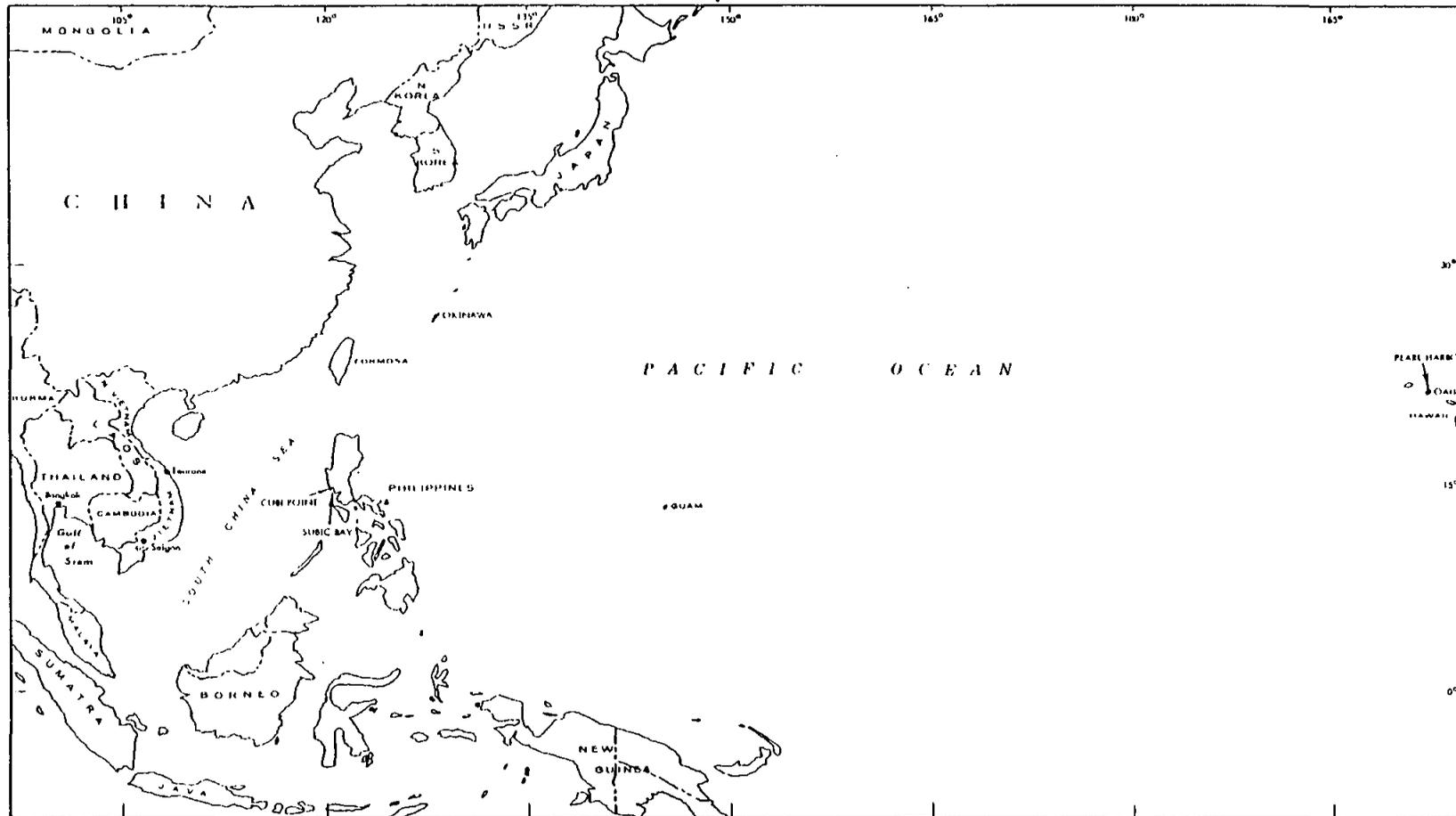
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FIGURE 2

PACOM DEPLOYMENT AREA, LAOS CRISIS, SPRING OF 1961



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CHRONOLOGY
(December 1960 to May 1961)

- 16 Dec 60 Kong Le forces retreat northward on Hwy 13, leaving Vientiane to Phoumi-Boun Oum coalition. Ambassador Brown receives formal notification of installation of new Govt and request for military aid.
- 17 Dec 60 Need for photo recce over Laos, and various means of providing it, discussed at State-Defense-JCS meeting, with no evident decision.
- 17 Dec 60 CINCPAC directed CJTF-116 to activate elements of his force located in Western Pacific, and directed ChPEO to assist Phoumi to develop aggressive plan to eliminate PL throughout Laos.
- 20-21 Dec 60 [
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- 22 Dec 60 Pursuit of Kong Le-PL forces along Route 13 begins.
- 23 Dec 60 Phoumi's plan to eliminate PL reported by PEO to CINCPAC. In 3 phases: 1st phase, to eliminate enemy between Vientiane and Luang Prabang by end of Jan 62; 2nd phase, clear up Xieng Khouang and Sam Neua provinces by end of Mar 62; 3rd phase, clear up Phong Saly by end of May 62.
- 23 Dec 60 CINCPAC suggests to JCS that providing armed T-6's to Laos, and training Lao pilots to use them, is an answer to threat of Soviet airlift to Kong Le forces.

27 Dec 60

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27 Dec 60

State-Defense meeting decides U.S. will consider favorably a Phoumi request for armed T-6's, provided political basis is supplied by official protest of Soviet violation of Lao air space.

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31 Dec 60

Climax of reports of Vietminh attacks in Sam Neua and Xieng Khouang Provinces, coincident with evidence of movement of Kong Le forces into Plaine des Jarres area.

31 Dec 60

CINCPAC orders DEFCON 2 for JTF-116 and supporting forces.

1 Jan 61 &
after

Most of Kong Le's forces found to have moved east from Vang Vieng, along Route 7 to Plaine des Jarres-Xieng Khouang area in apparent link-up with Pathet Lao and begin to consolidate position, aided by Soviet airlifts and overland movements from North Vietnam.

2 Jan 61

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7 Jan 61

DEFCON status of JTF-116 reduced from DEFCON-2 to DEFCON-3 and task groups withdrawn from forward standby positions off Vietnam.

7 Jan 61

State-Defense meeting approves armed T-6 program, but armament limited to machine guns and rockets.

- 11 Jan 61 First armed T-6 combat mission; ammo expended on 2 bridge sites with unknown results.
- 16 Jan 61 Vang Vieng captured by FAL unit moving north from Vientiane, but town of Phou Khoun and junction of Routes 7 and 13 lost to enemy.
- 18 Jan 61 Armed T-6's conceded to be failure against IL-14's.
- 19, 20 & 21 Jan 61 Interdepartmental group reviews situation in Laos, and develops unified proposal to be presented to SecState and Special Assistant to President for National Security Affairs.
- 22 Jan 61 Interdepartmental working group on Laos presents results of its deliberations to SecState and Special Assistant to President for National Security Affairs.
- 23 Jan 61 In White House Meeting, President approves program of immediate military actions [
-]
- 27 Jan 61 FAL advance on Hwy junction from North begins.
- 3 Feb 61 FAL units capture junction of Routes 7 and 13, and turn eastward on Route 7, but meet increased resistance, and thus progress halts. Ambassador Brown briefs the President on situation in Laos.
- 3 Feb 61 JCS 1992/912 gives favorable estimates of unilateral U.S. capabilities in Laos with special

emphasis upon air and sealift factors in a 30-day period under assumptions of (a) no overt CommBloc intervention, (b) overt intervention by DRV only, (c) overt intervention by both DRV and PRC.

- 10 Feb 61 Neutral Nations Commission proposal, seeking a new group centering in Burma and Cambodia to replace ICC as an international group to police a cease-fire, advocated to U.K. and to RLG.
- 19 Feb 61 King Savang Vathana issues proclamation of Laotian neutrality and asks Burma, Cambodia, and Malaya to form a commission to attest its neutrality and to denounce foreign intervention in Laotian affairs.
- 23 Feb 61 USSR rejects King Savang Vathana's proposal.
- 24 Feb 61 Burma and Cambodia reject King Savang Vathana's proposal.
- 3 Mar 61 White House meeting on Laos decides: (1) to ask JCS to prepare plan [

] (2) to attempt to harmonize U.S.-French policy through new approaches to de Gaulle, (3) to bring CINCPAC and ChPEO to Washington for conference, (4) to publicize Russian arms build-up in Laos, (5) to continue efforts to attain broader political base for RLG.

- 6 Mar 61 FAL defenses east of junction of Routes 7 and 13 (Phou Khoun) collapse in response to light PL attack and highway junction abandoned in disorder, the FAL forces split some retreating north, some south.

- 7 Mar 61 PL seize Muong Kassy and pursue FAL elements retreating toward Luang Prabang.
- 9 Mar 61 [
- 19 Mar 61 PACOM forces earmarked for, or in, direct support of JTF-116 placed on DEFCON 3.
- 20 Mar 61 CINCPAC directs CO, JTF-116 to assemble and activate his staff; CINCPAC directs CINCPACFLT to move afloat Marine BLT into position nearer Bangkok.
- 21 Mar 61 First version of CINCPAC's unilateral OPLAN (X-61) forwarded to JCS.
- 21 Mar 61 CINCPAC places all PACOM elements earmarked for, or in direct support of, JTF-116 in DEFCON 2.
- 21 Mar 61 White House meeting confirms policies already adopted of seeking diplomatic solution based on British mediation with USSR to attain effective cease-fire as prerequisite to conference to develop political solution; [
- 22-24 Mar 61 SEATO Milads meet in Bangkok.
- 23 Mar 61 President makes nationally televised statement of U.S. concern over trend of events in Laos.
- 23 Mar 61 C-47 with U.S. Army Major aboard shot down over Plaine des Jarres.

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- 23 Mar 61 U.K. delivers to USSR note proposing solution of Laos crisis by appeal to cease-fire, re-activation of ICC to police cease-fire, and convocation of 14-nation conference to provide long-term solution.
- 25 Mar 61 President sends personal note on Laos to de Gaulle.
- 26 Mar 61 President sees MacMillan on Laos at Key West and receives response from de Gaulle to his note of 25th.
- 27 Mar 61 President receives Gromyko for talks on Laos at White House.
- 27 Mar 61 SEATO Council of Ministers opens Bangkok meeting.
- 28 Mar 61 President briefs Congressional leaders on situation in Laos.
- 29 Mar 61 SEATO meeting ends without approving any actions.
- 30 Mar 61 Rusk meets with Nehru on Laos in New Delhi; Souvanna Phoumi meets with de Gaulle in Paris.
- 31 Mar 61 Tha Thom (at southern entrance to Plaine des Jarres) falls to PL as FAL falls back in disorder, abandoning intact its crew-served weapons.
- 5 Apr 61 ISA refers to the JCS a question posed by the SecState: Does the U.S. have, at present, capability to engage in full-scale nonnuclear war in Laos, and possibly in North Vietnam and Red China, and to include the capture of Hainan Island?

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5 Apr 61 FAL offensive intended to retake Muoung Kassy and junction of Highways 7 and 13 gets under way with well-executed vertical envelopment with assistance of U.S. [] technicians, but the ground attack part of the offensive plan does not materialize.

5 Apr 61 []

6 Apr 61 CINCPAC directs that JTF-116 commander and staff (for U.S. unilateral or non-SEATO multinational intervention in Laos) revert from active to planning status, being supplanted by commander designate and staff of SEATO field forces (for possible implementation of SEATO OPLAN 5/61).

7 Apr 61 CINCPAC orders DEFCON 2 for all U.S. forces earmarked for, or in direct support of, SFF OPLAN 5/61 (Laos); DEFCON 3 for all forces earmarked for, or in direct support of, CINCPAC OPLAN 32-59 (Phase II - Vietnam) unless already in DEFCON 2 for SFF OPLAN 5; and DEFCON 4 for remainder PACOM forces.

8 Apr 61 President and MacMillan confer in Washington on Laos and other subjects.

10 Apr 61 FAL elements, involved in the vertical envelopment phase of Muong Kassy operation, begin withdrawal.

12 Apr 61 FAL offensive against Muong Kassy obviously collapsed, and PL strengthen positions north and south of junction of Routes 13 and 7.

13 Apr 61 President approves Laos Task Force recommendation to place PEO in uniform, but proposals to use B-26's and to undertake limited implementation of SEATO OPLAN 5/60 held in abeyance.

15 Apr 61 FAL units evacuate Muong Nhommarath in disorder and, as a result, Thakket appears imperiled.

16 Apr 61 USSR replies to British proposals of 23 Mar on cease-fire, 14-Nation Conference, and reactivation of ICC.

(17 Apr 61 The Cuban debacle -- initiation and collapse of Bay of Pigs invasion attempt.)

17 Apr 61 U.S. receives copy of Russian reply to British proposals and finds it does not provide guarantees of a cease-fire.

18 Apr 61

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19 Apr 61 RLG announces formally it has asked U.S. to supply military assistance, and PEO personnel break out in uniform.

20 Apr 61

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- 21 Apr 61 U.K.-USSR announce general agreement on plan for ending war in Laos based on convocation of international conference, reactivation of ICC, and cease-fire, with details of plan to come later.
- 23 Apr 61 State Dept. public statement of U.S. policy not to engage in international conference on Laos before cease-fire is effective.
- 23 Apr 61 Loss of Vang Vieng adds new threat to Vientiane.
- 24 Apr 61 U.K. and USSR as cochairman of 1954 Geneva Conference, formally call for cease-fire for reconvoation of international conference on Laos and of the ICC.
- 25 Apr 61 RLG formally accepts cochairman's appeal for cease-fire.
- 26 Apr 61 The President approves movement of naval forces into South China Sea and Gulf of Siam, approves alerting of forces earmarked for air movement into Laos under SEATO OPLAN 5, authorizes exploration of possible UN measures, disapproves use of B-26's, defers decision on Harriman mission to Laos, and makes representations to U.K. and France seeking their cooperation in strong measures.
- 26 Apr 61 CINCPAC orders prepositioning of U.S. elements of SFF for rapid execution of SEATO OPLAN 5/61, including moving amphibious forces within 12 hours steaming of Bangkok and preparations to move into Laos and South Vietnam and Thailand to save Thailand and Southern Laos from

being overrun; JCS directs that carrier task groups move into position to support amphibious forces in Gulf of Siam.

- 29 Apr 61 NSC meeting deferred decision on intervention in Laos until May 1.
- 30 Apr 61 Pathet Lao name a site for proposed cease-fire talks; Nehru asks U.S. not to support Thai intervention in Laos; Senator Fulbright makes public statement opposing sending U.S. troops to Laos. Further meetings at State and White House, but no decision on intervention taken.
- 1 May 61 President entertains proposal to explore possibility of combined U.N.-SEATO actions in case cease-fire not effective. No decisions on this or on intervention.
- 2 May 61 NSC meeting again does not reach any decision to intervene. U.K. reputed to object that SEATO OPLAN would extend operations, in fact beyond Mekong Valley.
- 3 May 61 Pathet Lao proclaim verbal agreement with cease-fire. (But haggling over meeting place, as well as some violence, continue for some time.) Phoumi agrees to cease-fire effective 031200 local time.
- 5 May 61 DJS presents to JCS draft report in response to SecState's question of 5 Apr, acted upon by JCS 12 May.
- 8 May 61 ICC arrives in Laos.

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9 May 61 White House meeting approves instructions to U.S. delegation to Geneva. President says idea of intervention not wholly abandoned.

12 May 61

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14 May 61 CINCPAC notifies commander designate of SEATO field forces that he may anticipate an order to inactivate his command and turn over watch to Commander, JTF-116.

16 May 61 Geneva talks on Laos begin.

26 May 61 With Geneva Conference going on, but making very little progress, CINCPAC directs CSFF to begin moving elements of SFF to home stations, and CJTF-116 to report when he has resumed responsibility. However, to avoid moves to alter U.S. military position before or during meeting of President with Khrushchev in Vienna, JCS on 27 May directs CINCPAC to hold orders in abeyance, and as result of this not until 10 June that CINCPAC definitely directs that his 26 May orders be carried out.

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GLOSSARY OF SELECTED ABBREVIATIONS AND UNUSUAL TERMS

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GLOSSARY OF SELECTED ABBREVIATIONS AND UNUSUAL TERMS

ABG	Airborne Battle Group
ACHPEO/Laos	Acting Chief of the PEO for Laos
ADC	Auto Defense Corps (a Laotian Home Guard)
AIRA	Air Attache
ARMA	Army Attache
ASAP	As Soon as Possible
ASD/ISA	Assistant Secretary of Defense for Internal Security Affairs
ASecStateSEA	Assistant Secretary of State for Southeast Asian Affairs
A/USAIRA	Assistant U.S. Air Attache
A/USARMA	Assistant U.S. Army Attache
AVGAS	Aviation Gasoline
BG	Battle Group
BLT	Battalion Landing Team
[]
CASF	Composite Air Strike Force
[]
ChiCom	Chinese Communist
ChJUSMAAG	Chief, Joint U.S. Military Assistance Advisory Group
ChMAAG/Vientiane	Chief, Military Assistance Advisory Group/Vientiane
ChPEO	Chief of PEO
CINC	Commander-in-Chief
CINCPAC	Commander-in-Chief, Pacific
CINCPACAF	Commander-in-Chief, Pacific Air Force

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CINCPACFLT	Commander-in-Chief, Pacific Fleet
CINCUSARPAC	Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Army, Pacific
CJCS	Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff
CommBloc	Communist Bloc
CONUS	Continental U.S.
CS/AF	Chief of Staff, Air Force
DCM	Deputy Chief of Mission
DEFCON	Defense Readiness Condition
DepASD/ISA	Deputy Assistant SecDef-ISA
DepSecDef	Deputy Secretary of Defense
DepUSecState	Deputy Undersecretary of State
DepTel	State Department Telegram
DJS	Director, Joint Staff
DRV	Democratic Republic of Vietnam, also known as 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 January 1961; 0045 hours Greenwich Time, of 2 January 1961).
EmbTel	Embassy Telegram
ETA	Estimated Time of Arrival
Eyeball	Eyesight observation as distinct from photographic observation
FAL	Forces Armees Laotiennes, the National Army of Laos
FMFPAC	Fleet Marine Forces, Pacific
FMM	French Military Mission
GCA	Ground Controlled Approach
GM	Groupe Mobile, a French military cadre approximately like a mechanized, reinforced infantry battalion
HE	High Explosive
HRC	High Revolutionary Committee
how	Howitzer
ICC	International Control Commission

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ISA	International Security Affairs
JS	Joint Staff
JSCP	Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan
JTF	Joint Task Force
JUWTF	Joint Unconventional Warfare Task Force
JWR	Joint War Room
Kip	Laotian currency unit
LOC's	Lines of Communication
LTAG	Liaison Technical and Advisory Group
MAAG	Military Assistance Advisory Group
MAP	Military Assistance Program
Mar/Div W/T	Marine Division/Wing Team
MATS	Military Air Transport Service
Milad	Military Adviser
MOGAS	Motor Gas
MSF	Mobile Strike Force
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
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 Vietminh, 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.
NSA	National Security Agency
NSC	National Security Council
NYT	New York Times

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OASD/ISA-FER

Far East Region of the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs

OPLAN

Operations Plan

OSD

Office of the Secretary of Defense

PACOM

Pacific Command



PAVN

People's Army of (North) Vietnam

PEO

Program Evaluation Office

PEO/Rep/Svkt

PEO Representative in Savannakhet

PHIBRON

Amphibious Squadron

PL

Pathet Lao. 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 Vietminh. 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 about 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 Kat, which replaced the insurgent Pathet Lao military group as a legal party. However, the Pathet Lao, many of whom joined the Neo Lao Hak Kat still remained dissident militant force; thus, the Neo Lao Hak Kat is often identified as the Pathet Lao in the popular mind. The Neo Lao Hak Kat 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.

Polad

Political Adviser

POW

Prisoner of War

PRC	People's Republic of China (Communist China)
RCT	Regimental Combat Teams
RLG	Royal Laotian Government
RVN	Republic of Vietnam (also known as South Vietnam or SVN)
SCPEL	Summary of CINCPAC Participation in Events in Laos
SEA	Southeast Asia
SEATO	Southeast Asia Treaty Organization
SecDef	Secretary of Defense
SFF	SEATO Field Forces
[]
SITREP	Situation Report
SITSUM	Situation Summary
STRAC	U.S. Strategic Army Corps
TAC	Tactical Air Command
UN	United Nations
UPI	United Press International
USAF	United States Air Force
USAIRA	U.S. Air Attache
USARMA	U.S. Army Attache
USARPAC	U.S. Army, Pacific
USG	U.S. Government
USIA	United States Information Agency
USNAVA	U.S. Naval Attache
USOM	U.S. Operations, Mission, AID mission (formerly ICA, before that FOA, and originally ECA)
VNAF	(South) Vietnamese Air Force
WESTPAC	Western Pacific

HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE LAOS INCIDENT
AUGUST 1960 TO MAY 1961

PART II, DECEMBER 1960 TO MAY 1961

PROBLEM

1. To develop from examination of American experience in Laos, December 1960 to May 1961, observations and data useful to the development of improved command and control systems applicable to crisis situations.

INTRODUCTION

THE PLACE OF PART II WITHIN THE WHOLE

2. This is the second half of a study of the U.S. experience in Laos. The first half -- Part I -- covered the period from 9 August to 16 December 1960, and was published as a WSEG Enclosure dated 17 October 1962. The distribution of the second part will be the same as the first. It is assumed the reader will have at least summary acquaintance with the first half. The purpose and method are the same as those of Part I.

3. The narrative of Part II begins where Part I left off -- with the entry into Vientiane of the Phoumi ^{1/}/Boun Oum ^{2/} group, and the northward retreat along Route 13 of the Kong Le forces. The narrative ends in May 1961 when the absence of a definite

1/ General Phoumi Nosavan, nephew of Sarit, has been the principal Right Wing military and political leader of Laos since 1959. After the August 1960 Kong Le coup he became the principal leader of the group opposed to the Kong Le/Souvanna government, although Boun Oum was titular head of the government they set up after they recaptured Vientiane in December.

2/ Boun Oum, 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, of the High Revolutionary Committee in Savannakhet on 11 September 1960, and headed the 12 December 1960 cabinet, which endured during the period under study.

decision to intervene militarily gradually became recognizable as a definite decision not to intervene militarily, and to depend instead upon a purely political solution, to be rendered largely, it was hoped, in the 14-Nation Conference in Geneva.

4. Some of the concluding observations presented at the beginning of Part II have partial basis in detail presented in Part I. During the period from August 1960 to May 1961, there were several circumstances which it would be reasonable to suppose would influence the command and control process.

a. From August 1960 to May 1961, there were changes in the situation in Laos and Southeast Asia, in our relationships with our Allies, and in the policies and activities pursued by our Communist Bloc enemies.

b. [

During the period covered [

] the DOD effort was enlarged, overt U.S. military intervention became a real possibility, and U.S. forces were deployed in anticipation of overt intervention, either within or outside of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) framework.

c. In the period covered by the two Parts there was a change in administration which involved major changes in the method and philosophy of executive management of such matters, as well as changes in national policies.

d. Finally, the available evidence suggests that the abortive Bay of Pigs adventure, which immediately preceded the climax of the crisis in Laos, introduced a sense of caution that affected U.S. policies relating to the other side of the world, in Southeast Asia.

SCOPE

5. The boundaries of every history are fixed, and the nature of that history largely shaped, by the sources from which it is derived. This history is based upon sources that are unusually rich and illuminating concerning some aspects of events. However, the necessary information has not been available for some other aspects of events it would have been useful to study.

6. The primary documentary sources of this history are the J-3 files of incoming and outgoing message traffic relating to Laos, and materials remaining in the informal files of a few of the participants in the events that have been chronicled. In addition to documentary sources, the history has benefited greatly from the recollections of several participants in the events, both in Washington and in the field. It is unfortunate that these individuals were interviewed so long after the events that their memories of small factual details were often dimmed; nevertheless, their reminiscences have been invaluable in providing insights into many events and circumstances that the documentary material by itself could not fully explain.

7. Documentary materials not available which would have contributed to more detailed knowledge of the events include:

a. The internal working papers and records of the Laos Battle Staff. These were largely dispersed or destroyed before this study was undertaken. Lacking this material it has not been possible to describe and analyze the functioning of the Laos Battle Staff in any detail.

b. [

c. Official records of JCS, NSC and Cabinet meetings.

In many or most cases it is possible to determine at least the main outline of happenings at these meetings, either by inference from public revelations, from other official documentation, or from unofficial records of the meetings. However, understanding of the mechanisms of command decision making at the higher echelons would be fuller and surer if these sources could be utilized.

8. Important and basic information is lacking, however, to every history. In this case, despite the known lacunae, it has been possible to piece together for the Laos incident a more complete description of the command and control process, from the field operations level up to the national level, than is known to exist for any other comparable contemporary event. We are provided with a reasonably clear picture of the relationship of the major components of the command structure to the whole system and to each other: the field command, the country team, the pertinent CINC, the JCS, DOD, State and the White House. (In this particular case, the command and control problems of the individual Services do not in general come clear.) Since the incident itself, and the available sources, favor an analysis of the role of major defense establishment components within the structure of the total national process, it is upon this aspect of things that this history is focused.

SOME INHERENT LIMITATIONS OF HISTORY AS A REPRESENTATION OF PAST EVENTS

9. History selects from the infinite number of aspects of past events and presents to the reader the comparatively few that are pertinent to current preoccupations and problems. Ordinarily these preoccupations or problems are so simple or general that they can be adequately served by an account that,

by comparison with all the facts that might be ascertained, is summary in nature. Most history sets its focus much more upon outcome than upon the details of process. For those whose interest is highly specialized, it is important to take note of this, because concentration upon outcome, while satisfactory to common purposes, may actually promote by oversimplification a deceptive impression of the process that led to the outcome.

10. Our interest is, therefore, much less upon outcome -- upon what eventuated -- than upon mechanisms and processes. Because we are interested in the problems of the operator, we are interested in the form in which events presented themselves to those in the line of command responsibility at the time. This will be found to be very different from the customary historical distillation of events. These distillations may be ever so accurate as representatives of end results. But they are commonly devoid of the confusions, blind alleys, ambiguities, and unknowns that were a crucial part of the real world with which participants had to deal -- often, to those participants, they were the most important part of the reality. In the summary account, they are absent only because ex post facto reconstruction has removed them. It is important in trying to understand the problem of operators, not to endow them with ex post facto understanding. The participants dealt not with a world of neatly labeled abstractions useful to summary understanding and above all convenient to the theorist. Rather, they faced a mixed world of knowns, unknowns, voids and uncertainties; and these were, at that time, seldom identified as such or distinguishable from each other. History that is pertinent to the problems of the operator cannot supply simple formula or neat labels for the problems and phenomena of future

crises; hopefully, it can put him on notice, however, that the problems are complex, imperfectly sensed, and that events come without dependable labels.

11. This history of Laos, like any other such history, eliminates extraneous matter in order to avoid extreme confusion and to focus attention upon the subject. Concentration of attention upon Laos tends, of course, to obscure the fact that a great many other important things were going on at the same time. This involves no significant distortion of the appearance of things as faced by those command echelons whose responsibilities did not extend beyond Laos. But it does tend to conceal the highly important consideration that, while the Laos incident was unfolding, other things were happening that competed for the time and attention of those higher echelons of officials, both civilian and military, to whom almost all significant issues concerning Laos were referred for decision. These officials were dealing at the same time with problems in Berlin, the Middle East, the Congo, Vietnam, Cuba, other Latin American nations, the NATO Alliance, and many other issues both foreign and domestic. The priority accorded to the Laos affair for consideration at the highest national level does not appear to have been high except very briefly. It will be seen that this circumstance affected the manner in which the Laos incident was managed.

HOW THE HISTORICAL NARRATIVE IS ORGANIZED

12. Following common practice in historical writing, events are presented according to an organization scheme that is partly chronological, partly topical. The interval from mid-December 1960 to May 1961 is divided into four time periods: from the

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fall of Vientiane to the Inauguration of the new Administration (roughly mid-December 1960 to mid-January 1961), from the Inauguration [

] to the White House decisions of 13 April, and from 13 April to the deflation of the crisis at the beginning of May. For the first three of these time periods, the treatment is topical: first one topic is dealt with for an entire time period, then another, until the full story is told (there is some minor violation of these time periods, however, because discussion of a few topics could not be clearly fitted into the same periodic boundaries that were suitable to most others). For the fourth and final period, however, events are presented on a chronological basis, topical breakdown being restricted to events within a single day, except for the final discussion of JCS 1992/976, which brings the narrative to an end.

13. The effort of this history to reconstruct events in terms as faithful as possible to the way the events appeared to the participants requires such emphasis upon detail that the reader not already familiar with the story may sometimes become bogged down and find it difficult to orient the details to which he is currently devoting attention within the context of the whole. To ease this difficulty a chronology has been prepared which it is hoped will help the reader orient matters of detail into the larger framework of events. Most readers will find it helpful to glance through the chronology at this point. It is located at the beginning of this historical analysis. The chronology will provide an introduction to the detailed narrative of events that follow.

I. FROM THE FALL OF VIENTIANE TO THE INAUGURATION
OF THE NEW ADMINISTRATION IN WASHINGTON

THE END OF THE BATTLE FOR VIENTIANE

14. The 76-hour battle for Vientiane was brought to an end about 5 o'clock in the afternoon of Friday, 16 December 1960. The last of Kong Le's forces, until then holding out around the Wattay Airfield at the western end of the town, ceased their resistance about that time and moved northward to join the other elements that were slowly withdrawing along Route 13 toward Vang Vieng. On the previous day, Prince Boun Oum and General Phoumi had made a triumphant entrance into the other end of the town and announced its liberation. Soon thereafter, in Washington, the State Department issued a statement offering full U.S. Government support of the new anti-Communist government in Laos.

15. The city had been considerably shot up; among the places damaged were the U.S. Embassy, the Program Evaluation Office (PEO) Compound and the Constellation Hotel. For several hours, during the heaviest firing, American personnel in Vientiane had been pinned down. The PEO communications center was destroyed, which fact put the Chief of PEO (ChPEO) out of action, and led to the temporary designation by CINCPAC of the PEO representative in Savannakhet (PEO/Rep/Svkt) as Acting Chief of the PEO for Laos (AChPEO/Laos). Thus, from 15 December until the regular Chief of PEO was able to report, on the 22 of December, that he had re-located and reestablished his communication channel, the direction of U.S. military interest in Laos was from Savannakhet and in the hands of the PEO representative there.^{1/}

16. Although the regular ChPEO located in Vientiane was forcefully displaced by the breakdown of his communications, he nevertheless managed to send out some reports from Vientiane to Bangkok by courier, whence they were transmitted electronically to CINCPAC.^{2/} Communications from outside into both Savannakhet and Luang Prabang remained intact during this period.

17. The changed situation created by the capture of Vientiane presented the U.S. with a new set of problems, both of policy and of operations. If there had been any illusions that

^{1/} NYT, 16 December 1960, page 1; NYT, 17 December 1960, page 1; CINCPAC to JCS, DTG 151940Z December 1960, TOP SECRET; CINCPAC to Chief, Joint U.S. Military Assistance and Advisory Group (ChJUSMAAG), DTG 152025Z December 1960, TOP SECRET; ChPEO to CINCPAC, PEO-Opt 28, DTG 221124Z December 1960, SECRET.

^{2/} PEO-Opt 1, DTG 180200Z December 1960, SECRET, and PEO-Opt 3, DTG 200315Z December 1960, SECRET.

the capture of Vientiane would simplify our problems, events soon dispelled them. There was a flurry of appraisals of the situation, prognoses of probable future trends of events, and development of plans to exploit the success that had been attained. The major questions, problems and tasks that occupied U.S. officials during the last half of December and the first few days of the new year may be listed as follows:

- a. Estimate Kong Le's intentions, and develop plans to neutralize him and the Pathet Lao (PL).
- b. Counteract or neutralize the Soviet airlift.
- c. Avoid overt intervention by the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) or the Peoples' Republic of China (PRC); be prepared to deal with it if it occurred.
- d. Confer legitimacy and recognition upon Boun Oum/Phoumi government.
- e. Win British and French cooperation with U.S. support of Boun Oum/Phoumi government, and support or acquiescence of neutrals.
- f. Develop reconnaissance over Laos to provide essential intelligence.

FIRST REAPPRAISALS AFTER RECAPTURE OF VIENTIANE

18. On 16 December CINCPAC directed the Commander of Joint Task Force 116 (CJTTF-116) to activate those elements of his forces that were located in the Western Pacific, apparently as a routine precaution in the event of strong Communist Bloc reaction to events in Vientiane. At the same time, CINCPAC directed the AChPEO to support Phoumi in developing an aggressive plan to eliminate the Pathet Lao forces throughout Laos.^{1/}

1/ CINCPAC Command History 1961, Part II, Summary of CINCPAC Participation in Events in Laos, TOP SECRET (cited hereafter as SCPEL), page 55; CINCPAC's command message, DTG 162357Z December 1960, TOP SECRET.

19. From Washington, within the same hours that CINCPAC took these actions, the JCS sent to all CINC's, to the Services and major Service commands, and to the Director of the NSA, a JCS appraisal of the Laos situation with a prognosis of future developments and expected problems. After noting the success of the Phoumi forces, the message cited evidence of overt Soviet support to the anti-Western forces and suggested that increased support of the PL from the PRC and the DRV was to be feared. The prognosis estimated that CommBloc logistic support would probably continue, along with provision of military advisors and technicians, but that the USSR would probably not commit forces, and the PRC would probably not commit forces overtly. It was further estimated that a significant Thai commitment would prompt overt DRV support of the PL. Commitment of U.S. forces to support Phoumi, it was estimated, would probably lead PRC to promote full-scale DRV intervention; but this estimate was qualified by the judgment such intervention would probably not occur unless the Bloc believed they could quickly overrun U.S. and SEATO forces in Laos without serious risk of escalation to general war.^{1/}

20. The recapture of Vientiane had occurred at the time of the NATO Foreign Ministers Conference in Paris (16 to 18 December), and the Secretary of State (SecState), the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs (CJCS) and the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Affairs (ASD-ISA) were attending that meeting. The French were involved in Laos, especially in their base rights at Seno and in their position as the sole foreign power accorded rights by the Geneva Accords to station military personnel in Laos. Both France and Britain were members of SEATO. Finally, Britain held a special position with respect to Laos in her capacity as cochairman of the Geneva Conference.

1/ JCS 987423, DTG 170042Z December 1960, TOP SECRET.

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For these reasons, developments in Laos were expected to produce repercussions at the NATO meeting. As early as 6 December 1960, a draft position paper for the Secretary of Defense (SecDef) had been produced at the Laos desk of the Far East Region of the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs (OASD/ISA-FER-Laos). This led to a cable to the ASD/ISA from the Deputy Assistant SecDef-ISA (DepASD/ISA), which was sent out on 16 December to confirm Phoumi's capture of Vientiane and to provide policy guidelines for dealing with issues on Laos that might arise, in consequence of the Vientiane capture, along with the regular business of the NATO meeting.

21. With the special problems of the French most in view, the cable suggested that Phoumi might wish to oust the French from Laos and that although the U.S. might find it difficult to oppose such a move strongly, the desired outcome would be for French retention of some rights at Seno, especially for SEATO purposes, while the U.S. retained a de facto position as the primary military adviser. The telegram concluded by suggesting that this might be an appropriate occasion to remind the Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs (who was attending the NATO meeting and who was handling the Laos affair at the secretarial level most of the time) that if stability of any sort at Laos was to be achieved, it would require an increased U.S. investment in that country.^{1/} These items of policy guidance appear to represent a statement of agreed DOD policy. In view of the fact that it was being expounded to the State Department representative at the meeting, it was evidently not felt to be accepted fully, as yet, as national policy.

^{1/} From ISA to American Embassy Paris, Eyes Only, for Irwin from Knight, TOP SECRET, 16 December 1960.

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22. On 17 December, there was a State/Defense/JCS meeting. At this meeting there was a presentation of political factors by the Assistant Secretary of State for Southeast Asian Affairs (ASecStateSEA) which apparently was concerned principally with French and British apprehensions of a possibly increased U.S. involvement in Laos and the risk of escalation into large-scale conflict that such increased involvement might lead to. There were few, if any, decisions reached at the meeting, which according to the record available was concerned mainly with uncertainties concerning the actual state of affairs in Laos and the problems that various possible but unascertainable developments might bring about. It was unclear what Kong Le was doing. It was unclear also what was going on in Sam Neua and Phong Saly Provinces, and these were commonly the seat of new troubles. There was, as a result of the evident uncertainties, considerable discussion of the need for reconnaissance. Several means of obtaining reconnaissance were mentioned. These included: (1) Laotian aircraft, (2) [] (3) the U.S. Air Attache (USAIRA) from Saigon, and (4) some other Southeast Asia USAIRA accredited to Laos.^{1/} But exchange of views, not decisions, seems to have been the purpose of the meeting.

PHOUMI'S PLANS TO COMBAT THE PL

23. On 23 December, PEO/Rep/Svkt reported that, responding to CINCPAC's directive of 17 December, he had succeeded in inducing Phoumi to develop plans to reduce the Pathet Lao threat and that Phoumi had developed a three-phase operational plan, the first phase of which was already being embarked upon. The

^{1/} JCS to CINCPAC, 987432, DTG 180255Z December 1960, SECRET. This report on the meeting appears to be the personal work of the CNO, who attended the meeting as the Acting Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (ACJCS).

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first phase objective was to disperse and destroy enemy forces between Vientiane and Luang Prabang. The objectives of the second and third phases were to destroy enemy forces in Sam Neua and Phong Saly Provinces, respectively.

24. The first phase objective was to be sought by sending four infantry battalions with artillery and armor support north from Vientiane toward Luang Prabang, while a second column moved south from Luang Prabang down Route 13 and still a third column would move southwest from Xieng Khouang, toward the junction of Routes 7 and 13, to close the trap. Although U.S. advisers were reported to fear that the plan required better coordination than the Forces Armées Laotiennes (FAL -- the Laotian Army) could achieve, Phoumi was going ahead with it. There was apparently no time or opportunity for the U.S. advisers to change the plan, and they sought consolation in the fact that Phoumi's forces were not only better armed and supplied, but also far more numerous than Kong Le's 2000 men. Finally, because Phoumi's Vientiane success might provide momentum and will to fight, FAL should emerge victorious if Kong Le did not evade the trap, and if they engaged in combat. This at least was the expressed hope. But there was a misgiving that Kong Le would be given a chance to escape through ineffective coordination of the three columns.^{1/}

25. The first phase of the Phoumi plan got partially underway on the afternoon of 22 December 1960. Groupe Mobile (GM) 1 moved from a point 15 miles north of Vientiane in a northward direction along Route 13 following the retreat of Kong Le troops. The two other columns that were expected to participate in the attack from the north and the east never

^{1/} SCPEL, pages 60 and 61, TOP SECRET; PEO/Rep/Svkt 139 to CINCPAC, DTG 231615Z December 1960, SECRET; CINCUSARPAC to DA, DTG 220237 December 1960, SECRET.

made contact at all during this period, and it is not clear that they budged from their positions in Luang Prabang and Xieng Khouang. GM 1 continued its slow advance, meeting only very light resistance until 29 December. At that time the GM 1 advance stalled as it ran into Kong Le forces defending the southern approaches to the town of Vang Vieng, apparently because their northward retreat was slowed by a blown out bridge 10 miles north of the town. Such was the situation at the time that the high point of excitement developed concerning real or imagined Vietminh incursions in Sam Neua Province, which events are described in the later section entitled "Year-End Scare."^{1/}

DEVELOPMENT OF U.S. PLANS

26. There were two operational plans in existence in December 1960 intended to cope with problems of the defense of Laos, but neither was appropriate to the situation as it existed at that time. One was CINCPAC's Operations Plan 32-59. This was a unilateral capabilities plan in support of Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan (JSCP). It provided for the defense of mainland Southeast Asia (SEA) under conditions short of general war. The plan provided for action by Pacific Command (PACOM) in conjunction with indigenous and other allied forces to oppose different levels or types of CommBloc aggression or violence by different levels and types of U.S. and allied response. The plan assumed that either U.S. or SEATO military aid would be requested [

] The plan had four phases:

- a. Phase 1 included all conditions short of the violence or overtness of conflict required for Phase 2, 3, or 4.

^{1/} SCPEL, page 61, TOP SECRET; USARMA/Vientiane to DA, DTG 240542Z December 1960, SECRET; CINCUSARPAC IntelSum, DTG 242242Z December 1960, TOP SECRET.

Objectives under Phase 1 included deterring aggression, assisting free nations to control and combat Communism, and to achieve preparations necessary to reduce reaction time for more serious contingencies.

b. Phase 2 began with identification of insurgency or the request for U.S. or SEATO intervention. It covered military actions by U.S. and allies in support of friendly governments to control subversion, and it extended to that point at which conflict expanded into overt Communist aggression.

c. Phase 3 covered overt aggression by DRVN.

d. Phase 4 covered overt aggression by PRC.

27. SEATO MPO Plan 5/60 was a SEATO plan intended for a situation corresponding to the situation envisaged by Phase 2 of CINCPAC OPLAN 52-59. Its defined mission was to assist the RLG to counter Communist insurgency. Its operational concepts involved a rapid deployment of SEATO forces to secure Vientiane and other Mekong Valley cities, important river crossings and communication centers and other strategic points, and thus relieve FAL of the burden of defending these places so that it could give its full energies to combating the insurgents. FAL would also be provided with logistic and technical support.^{1/}

28. The problem facing the U.S. high command following the recapture of Vientiane was to find a transitional plan and policy to move from the kind of [] role that the U.S. had played during the preceding months to a more

^{1/} Working Paper for the CJCS for the State/Defense Meeting of 22 December 1961, Subject: "Logistic and Command Problems Associated with Unilateral or Bilateral Intervention in Laos," prepared by C.I. Phillips, International Policy Branch, J-5, TOP SECRET; CINCPAC Command History, Part I, pages 20 to 22, 141 to 143, TOP SECRET.

active role in which U.S. participation and aid would still be limited, but almost certainly enlarged, [

] Although many programs had been proposed at different times during the fall, there were no existing plans that had approved status that fitted the situation as it developed after the capture of Vientiane.

29. A first attempt to develop a concept to meet this situation came in the form of a JCS paper, drawn up in response to the request by the RLG for additional military and economic assistance transmitted by the U.S. ambassador in Vientiane to State on 16 December. This JCS paper was first considered on 21 December as a draft proposal which had been submitted by the Chief of Staff, Air Force (CS/AF). It was approved by the JCS and forwarded the following day to the SecDef (as JCSM 58-60). In this memorandum, the JCS recommended that the U.S. should continue to furnish the following military aid:

- a. Communications equipment.
- b. Medical aid.
- c. Engineer equipment and personnel.
- d. Airlift for personnel and equipment.
- e. Increased logistic support in arms, ammunition, tanks and mobile artillery.

The objective was conceived to be to support the RLG against the Kong Le forces which were currently being provisioned by the Communist airlift. Foreseeing that these measures (which constituted little more than continuance of current programs) might be inadequate, the memorandum added that additional measures would be required if the rebels received substantial support from CommBloc sources or if an actual intervention by the latter occurred. ^{1/}

^{1/} JCS 1992/882, 22 December 1960, TOP SECRET.

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31. On 24 December, JCS advised CINCPAC that they were considering actions to improve Pheumi's capabilities and to enable him to extend control over the country. CINCPAC was asked to comment upon a list of specific proposals, most of which had been up for consideration before, and not all of which were favorably viewed by JCS by any means. These proposals, along with details or comments where these are of interest, were as follows:

a. [

b. Intelligence Improvement.

c. FAL Pilot Training Lao Pilots in T-6's.

d. [

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1/ JCS 1992/888, 27 December 1960, TOP SECRET.

e. [

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f. [

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g. [

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h. [

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1. All of the foregoing measures would probably hamper the Bloc resupply effort but would also risk Bloc counteraction.^{1/}

32. These proposals, of course, did not constitute a coherent plan. Rather, they amounted to details of action to be considered as measures in support of a policy of limited and largely covert aid to the Boun Oum/Phoumi government. As such, they anticipated measures and programs to be adopted as national policy in the months to come.

1/ JCS to CINCPAC, 987779, DTG 241717Z December 1960, TOP SECRET.

33. The CINCPAC reply is not available, but it is evident that no immediate action came from these considerations. The specific proposals set forth by JCS did not constitute a plan. They did not constitute an estimate of what would be required to achieve a given result. Rather, they constituted a series of largely discrete ideas of measures that were available and that might be politically acceptable, [

] How successful they might be was a question that was neither asked nor answered. Most of these ideas of means to aid Phoumi will be found to continue or to recur as issues to be dealt with throughout the period of this study. As new problems and difficulties arose, they tended to result in resurgence of ideas previously deferred or rejected. This tendency was fostered by prevailing reluctance to engage in any agonizing reappraisals of pertinent national policies as a whole. There were many political factors, both domestic and interallied, that operated to discourage major changes in national policy. In the final weeks of the outgoing administration, these inhibitions were exceptionally strong. Although there was excitement, and many day-to-day operating decisions to be made in the weeks around the turn of the year, all policy decisions that could be postponed were postponed, awaiting the reappraisals that the incoming administration would make.

LEGITIMIZATION OF THE BOUN OUM/PHOUMI REGIME

34. The problem of the legality of a Royal Laotian Government (RLG) complicated U.S. efforts to support the Boun Oum/Phoumi regime. On 13 December, the USSR had transmitted to the U.S. a note wherein it accused the United States Government (USG) of unlawfully supporting a rebel group (the Boun Oum/Phoumi faction) that was endeavoring to overthrow the legal government of Laos (that of Prince Souvanna Phouma).^{1/}

35. Following the U.S. declaration on 15 December that it was backing the Boun Oum regime and the formal request by the
1/ NYT, 14 December 1960, page 12, and Part I of the Study, page 18:

Boun Oum government on 16 December for U.S. help,^{1/} Deputy Undersecretary of State (DepUSecState) Hare on 17 December handed to Soviet Ambassador Menshikov a response which rejected categorically the Soviet protest. The U.S. note argued that it was the Soviets who by their illegal airlift of weapons to the Pathet Lao rebels were perpetuating civil strife in Laos, and called upon the USSR to abandon its illegal acts.^{2/} The gist of the difference was that the U.S. recognized the de facto government of the Boun Oum/Phoumi group, whereas the USSR found its purposes best served by continuing to regard Souvanna as the head of the legal government of Laos.

36. International support for the U.S. policy in Laos required recognition by other nations of the government that the U.S. was supporting. Perhaps strong support was not seriously expected; but strong opposition from those ordinarily counted as allies or neutrals was certainly not wanted. Concern with political affairs inescapably involved attempts to develop a political basis for U.S. support of the Boun Oum/Phoumi group. However, the delay encountered in attaining a cloak of legality and de jure recognition constituted a hindrance to provision of aid so long as recognition was made a prerequisite to that aid. The Soviet airlift to Kong Le and the PL continued unabashed in IL-14's carrying Soviet markings. But the Boun Oum/Phoumi government was recognized only by the U.S., Thailand, the Philippines, South Vietnam (SVN) and the Republic of China; and it was denounced not only by nations of the CommBloc but also by many neutral Asian nations, while even such allies as Britain and France found it difficult to do more than await further

^{1/} NYT, 15 December 1960, page 1, and Vientiane EmbTel, unnumbered, 16 December 1960, UNCLASSIFIED.

^{2/} The text of the U.S. note is as published in NYT, 18 December 1960, page 3.

developments while urging a "broadly based government" -- which phrase meant inclusion of Souvanna Phouma, of many associated with him, and some PL, in the Boun Oum Cabinet.

37. The legal pretext for the Russian airlift was Souvanna's request for POL and other supplies, which request had been made at a time when the U.S. recognized the Souvanna government. Although Souvanna had fled from Vientiane to Phnom Penh just as the final battle for Vientiane began, he had refused to resign then, and continued to refuse to accept the invitations extended to him by Boun Oum to participate in the latter's government. The situation developed into a constitutional crisis for which there was no clear-cut solution.

38. One difficulty of establishing the legality of the Boun Oum government lay in the fact that, on 10 September, as the High Revolutionary Committee (HRC), it had declared the Laos constitution suspended and the Souvanna government replaced by martial law. On 22 December, Phoumi asked U.S. acceptance of the rationalization that the constitution remain suspended, the National Assembly dissolved, and that a Royal Ordinance of Investiture previously obtained from King Savang Vathana constituted sufficient legalization of his de facto government. However, this Royal Ordinance cited as authority a no-confidence vote in Souvanna by 40 members of the National Assembly. This was accepted to imply confirmation of the continuing power of the Assembly, and of the necessity for the National Assembly to vote its acceptance of the successor government. The U.S. policy was to urge Phoumi to seek a vote of confidence from the Assembly for his government, which would then be followed by a Royal Investiture. Although this was later done, for some time Phoumi objected on the grounds that there were some Communist sympathizers in the Assembly and that to permit them to

participate in such an action would be a contradiction of the principles of the HRC.^{1/}

39. The U.S. ambassador had urged Phoumi to ask the King to call a special session of the Assembly, but the King had failed to do this on the grounds that he had done nothing to dissolve the Assembly and he considered it still in existence. This was on 22 December in Laos. A few days later, on 26 December, the King responded to further prodding, but not by recalling the Assembly as asked. Rather, he issued a second decree, essentially like the first, expressing Royal approval of the Boun Oum government and announcing dissolution of the Souvanna Cabinet. However, he could not bring himself to ask Souvanna to resign, nor would Souvanna comply with a request which the King could not bring himself to make.^{2/} Prime Minister Prince Boun Oum contributed further to the confusion on 23 December by issuing a public statement saying that Western-style parliamentary democracy would not work in Laos, and that the modern democratic constitution was the source of Laotian woes.^{3/}

40. On the following day (the 24th) Prince Boun Oum publicly announced the key ministers of his new cabinet. But on the 25th, the problem of the legality of the Boun Oum government was again brought into question when Prime Minister Nehru of India, in a press interview, although failing to give full support to a Soviet proposal for a reconvening of the powers that had brought about the Geneva Agreements of 1954, pointed out that India still recognized the government of Prince Souvanna Phouma.^{4/}

^{1/} SCPEL, page 57, TOP SECRET, citing Vientiane EmbTel to CINCPAC, DTG 220400Z December 1960, SECRET.

^{2/} SCPEL, page 58, TOP SECRET; Vientiane to CINCPAC, DTG 221810Z December 1960, SECRET; CINCPAC Daily Intelligence Briefing, 27 December 1960, SECRET.

^{3/} NYT, 24 December 1960, page 1.

^{4/} NYT, 26 December 1960, page 27.

41. [

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42. On 28 December in Peiping, Foreign Minister Chen Yi of the PRC handed notes to the British and Soviet representatives in Peiping expressing strong Chinese Communist (ChiCom) concern over the activities in Laos of Thailand and the U.S., and leaving an impression of vague threats to do something about it. The British and French governments meanwhile maintained their position that no government in Laos could promise any lasting stability without including representation from both the neutralist and the pro-Communist PL elements. Finally, Senator Mansfield made public a "personal" statement, which pessimistically recounted that the U.S. had spent \$300,000,000 in Laos with no gain to show for it, and that following the most recent four months of struggle, things seemed to be going from bad to worse.^{2/}

43. These difficulties led to two kinds of actions in Washington. The measures adopted were apparently decided in the course of State/Defense consultations that occurred on

1/ ChJUSMAAG to CINCPAC, MAO-8603, DTG 271010Z December 1960, TOP SECRET.

2/ NYT, 29 December 1960, pages 1 and 2.

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27 and 28 December. The actions decided upon concerned first, the overall problem of legality of the RLG, which necessarily affected all forms of U.S. efforts to bolster and assist the Phoumi government. The second line of action included measures specifically intended to facilitate transfer to Phoumi of armed T-6's to be used against the Soviet airlift.

44. With respect to this latter and more narrow concern, in the late afternoon or evening of 27 December, a message to CINCPAC written by the Laos Battle Staff was cleared out of the Joint War Room (JWR). This message constituted an advance copy of a State/Defense message, which was to be transmitted later through other channels to CINCPAC Political Adviser (Polad) and to Vientiane and Bangkok. This message specified that in order to proceed with the program to provide armed T-6's to combat the Soviet violation of Lao air space, a political basis must first be established. This could be done by: (1) making a formal protest to the USSR; (2) having the Laos delegation in the UN circularize other UN delegations concerning facts of Soviet air violation of Laos; and (3) issuing a statement that if the violations continued, the RLG would be forced to take defensive measures (this last step was to be judged tactically unwise by CINCPAC). Along with this, Phoumi was to be informed that we would favorably consider a request for armed T-6's upon fulfillment of the necessary political conditions; [

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1/ JCS to CINCPAC, 987823, DTG 280225Z December 1960, TOP SECRET.

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45. The broad policy guide which the foregoing message anticipated did not go out until late the following day. It began by reciting the problems created by Phoumi's failure to provide a basis for widespread recognition, and in doing so expressed concern for the fact that neutral governments were unwilling to recognize the Phoumi government and that U.S. domestic circles were becoming critical of U.S. policies in Laos (this was probably a reference to the Mansfield statement). Ambassador Brown was instructed to make clear to Prince Boun Oum and Phoumi that their failure to take certain steps necessary to establish legitimacy of government undermined the U.S. desire to assist them. Specifically, local currency that had been removed from the Vientiane Bank by Phoumi should be returned.^{1/} Phoumi was to take all steps necessary to give the cloak of legality to his government: he was to cease agitation for the removal of the French Military Mission (FMM); he must give an unqualified pledge that his government was working for a unified Laos (giving up his suspected hopes of a separate Southern Laos under his personal dominion); the RLG should formally protest the Soviet violation of Laotian air space; there should be an end to unwarranted and uncoordinated changes in the logistical structure of FAL that embarrassed the administration of aid funds in their requests to Congress for funds; and finally, there should be an end to gratuitous, impolitic attacks upon the Geneva Accords.^{2/}

^{1/} It has been explained orally by a reliable source who had specific, on-the-spot knowledge of this matter, that during the period of the HRC in Savannakhet, General Phoumi borrowed from bankers in Savannakhet to keep his forces and the revolutionary group in being, and that his withdrawal of RLG credits in the Vientiane bank after his arrival in Vientiane was for the purpose of repaying this indebtedness.

^{2/} DepTel 698 to Vientiane, 29 December 1960, 9:44 PM, SECRET.

46. Some of the difficulties at this time reflected the factionalism within the right wing Laotian group we were supporting. The American ambassador in Vientiane reported that General Phoumi was devoting all of his time to the military matters associated with his post as Minister of Defense, and was, therefore, not using his own personal prestige to push the actions necessary to assure legitimization of his government. Information to this effect came from Nhouy Abhay^{1/} and Ngon Sananikone.^{2/} In the absence of strong Phoumi leadership, Leuam^{3/} and Boun Oum were assuming political leadership and were considered to be anxious to perpetuate the suspension of the Constitution. Ambassador Brown reported they seemed not to fear a three-way division of the country and might even prefer it, since Boun Oum's claim to the South as Prince of Champassak was strong.^{4/}

47. There were times that the American ambassador appeared to judge that the government we had placed in power in Vientiane was out of control. General Phoumi was fulminating against the French, and threatening to oust them from their base Seno, as well as to oust all of the FMM from Laos. Phoumi had told ChPEO he would not abide by the Geneva Accords. In direct contradiction of the advice of the ChPEO, Phoumi was instituting logistic changes that would add to the costs of U.S. support. The U.S. advice to seek Assembly approval of the new government was apparently being ignored, and large sums of Kip had been moved out of the National Bank without consultation with U.S. financial advisers.^{5/}

- ^{1/} Nhouy Abhay, an experienced Lao politician, attempted to mediate between the Phoumi Nosavan and Kong Le/Souvanna Phouma forces. He served as Minister in Souvanna Phouma's 31 August 1960 cabinet, accompanying Souvanna Phouma on his flight to Phnom Penh on 9 December 1960. On 12 December 1960, he became a Minister in Boun Oum's Cabinet and was on Phoumi Nosavan's delegation to the Geneva Conference of May 1961.
- ^{2/} Ngon Sananikone, a well-known Lao politician, was inactive after the 9 August 1960 coup, but was requested by the government to be an observer at the PL talks of mid-October 1960, and was a member of the Vientiane National Assembly delegation sent to Savannakhet to arrange a settlement between Vientiane and Savannakhet during November 1960. He became a Minister in the 12 December 1960 Boun Oum Cabinet, continuing in this role during the period under study.
- ^{3/} Leuam Insisiengmay, a Lao politician who strongly supported Phoumi after the August coup, became head of Phoumi's Interior Committee in Savannakhet and accepted a post in the August compromise cabinet headed by Souvanna, but never went to Vientiane to be sworn in. He became a Minister in Boun Oum's cabinet of December 1960, which post he continued to hold during the period under study.
- ^{4/} Vientiane EmbTel 1197, 29 December 1960, SECRET.
- ^{5/} Vientiane EmbTel 1200, 29 December 1960, SECRET. On the last point, see the first footnote on page 25.

48. As military urgency increased during the last two days of the year, the preoccupation of the ambassador (and probably also of State) with the matter of providing a political foundation for military aid became increasingly irksome for those charged with the responsibility for administering and directing the provision of military assistance. Commenting upon the flow of diplomatic messages, CINCPAC expressed to JCS on 30 December 1960, his concern that the American ambassador in Vientiane had misinterpreted his guidance and had taken the position that Assembly approval of the Boun Oum government was prerequisite to all other actions. As a means of persuading Fhoumi to accede to American terms, the airlift into Laos apparently had been stopped temporarily, an act which looked like a suspension of U.S. aid just at a time when it was most needed, so far as immediate military requirements were concerned. CINCPAC was afraid that delaying military buildup until political conditions were satisfied would result in giving a big advantage to the Kong Le forces, because the buildup of the Kong Le forces from the CommBloc side was continuing and could soon become dangerously large.^{1/}

49. The end of the year found this political problem still unresolved. Furthermore, the general situation then was rendered still more tense by reports of the Vietminh excursion into Phong Saly and Sam Neua Provinces. But the disagreements between the United States, Britain and France over Western policies in Laos continued, were made more difficult by the Boun Oum group intransigence, and were well advertised in the press. Denis W. Healey, the foremost Labor Party spokesman on Foreign Affairs in the House of Commons, on 1 January accused the American Republican Party of being mostly to blame for the

1/ CINCPAC to JCS, DTG 300131Z December 1960, TOP SECRET.

conflict in Laos and protested against the lame-duck administration committing the USG to actions that threatened world peace.^{1/} The Neo Lao Hak Xat (NLHX) publicly invited Prince Souvanna Phouma to Laos as its legal and accepted ruler on 2 January, just as the Boun Oum government information agency in Vientiane announced that ChiCom troops had participated in a week-end attack against Phong Saly.^{2/} Britain and France gave public attention to the story of CommBloc intervention in Laos but withheld judgment and suggested no action stronger than a British mention of possible consideration of reconvening the International Control Commission (ICC).^{3/}

50. Then suddenly, the Boun Oum Government began to act in a less obstreperous manner. It seems a most reasonable presumption that this was in response to U.S. diplomatic pressure, but the immediate representations that led to it are not evident at this writing. The reports of Vietminh invasion may have helped overcome the earlier reluctance of some of the Lao leaders to take the steps the U.S. desired. On 3 January, King Savang Vathana complied with the long-standing suggestion of the USG to open the Lao National Assembly in extraordinary session, for the purpose of endowing Prince Boun Oum's government with the desired cloak of legitimacy. The following day the 41 assemblymen who were present voted unanimously to install the Boun Oum government.^{4/}

51. The ritual of constitutional legitimization of the Boun Oum regime was thus completed as fully as was possible so long as the dissident Souvanna Phouma remained unrepentant and unresigned. How necessary the legalizing ritual may have been is not presently clear. The fact that diplomatic delegations

^{1/} NYT, 2 January 1961, page 3.

^{2/} NYT, 3 January 1961, page 10.

^{3/} NYT, 3 January 1961, page 11.

^{4/} NYT, 4 January 1961, page 8, 5 January, page 61.

to Laos were accredited to the King, yet dealt with the Prime Minister, endowed the situation with ambiguity when the King remained constant but 2 Prime Ministers claimed legitimacy. As a matter of fact, all diplomatic delegations already in Vientiane remained, and they dealt, de facto, with the Boun Oum government, even if, de jure, they denied its legitimacy. A sidelight that suggests both the temper and tempo of events of this nature in Laos is that Laos sends out its diplomatic lists by slow steamer, and the last one received by the State Department was dated November 1960 and arrived in Washington near the end of 1962.

PROBLEMS OF RECONNAISSANCE

52. Reconnaissance was a major and continuing problem throughout the entire period of this study. Reconnaissance was necessary for all of the usual reasons. The need for it was more than usually critical in Laos because of the inadequacy and obvious undependability of most other means of gathering intelligence. There was no other available means of getting dependable information on the disposition and movements of Kong Le's forces, of the PL, and of the Vietminh along the Laos-DRV border. The extent and location of airlift activities and of the PL logistic buildup could only be ascertained through reconnaissance.

53. The problem was peculiarly difficult because the United States was reluctant to make its own activities too glaring, yet good reconnaissance was clearly far beyond the capabilities of the Lao Air Force. [

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of the RLG to perform reconnaissance within Laos. However, the C-47's were vulnerable even to unsophisticated ground fire if they attempted low verticals, as was later proved. Their photographic equipment was far from the best, and there was generally some hesitancy to place them too much at risk, because of the political implications. Finally, photographic coverage was impossible much of the time because of heavy overcast, and dense forests and infrequent coverage added to the problems of dependable interpretation.

54. During the battle for Vientiane, the JCS was concerned with the need to explore the possibility of enemy buildup in the border provinces of Phong Saly and Sam Neua. On the 15th, in a message originating in J-2, the JCS queried CINCPAC on the adequacy and availability of three RT-33's [

]. He recommended that reliance be placed, instead, upon U.S. capabilities already in the area. These he cited as: F8U-1P's based on the LEXINGTON, then in the South China Sea; A3D-2P's currently at Guam but quickly transferable to base at Cubi Point; RF-101's that could be moved from Okinawa [

] He judged that visible evidence that the U.S. meant business in SEA would have a salutary political effect and that, therefore, a request from Laos for recce should be responded to by one of these means.^{2/}

55. The JCS continued the colloquy saying the need for recce was recognized but that authority for such flights was not yet

^{1/} JCS to CINCPAC, 987261, DTG 152049Z December 1960, TOP SECRET.
^{2/} CINCPAC to JCS, DTG 160233Z December 1960, TOP SECRET.

granted. CINCPAC was advised, nonetheless, to plan for such flights if and when they were authorized.^{1/} To this CINCPAC replied, saying that plans had been drawn up for F8U-1P reconnaissance flights from the LEXINGTON, which flights were planned to go in over Tourane to Seno, thence to the target area, and return by the same route. The plan called for getting pictures also of Lao Cai in Northern Vietnam near the PRC border. The planes and the plan were waiting, and all that was needed was authority.^{2/}

56. Upon receipt of the CINCPAC plan, the proposal was checked with General Goodpaster, the President's military aide. The understanding received from General Goodpaster was that no flights of U.S. military aircraft were to be permitted except in response to Laos requests and that such flights must be restricted to the territory of Laos itself. [

1/ JCS to CINCPAC, 987254, DTG 152010Z December 1960, TOP SECRET. The sequence of events during this exchange of messages seems clear from the content and cross-reference indication of the messages. The fact that the DTG indications are not in the same sequence is believed due to some non-chronological method of assigning DTG notations.

2/ CINCPAC to JCS, DTG 170345Z December 1960, TOP SECRET.

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57. That evening (17 December) there was a State/DOD/JCS meeting in which much discussion centered upon the need of resolving uncertainties in Laos by photo reconnaissance.

Although, as previously indicated, no decisions were taken, prominent consideration was given to the use of the [

USA1

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was again a statement that pictures over the border to Dien Bien Phu were desired and again the policy statement was repeated that use of carrier aircraft for reconnaissance was not authorized, but such authorization would be sought if other means failed.^{2/}

58. Apparently acting promptly upon receipt of word from the JCS on the State/Defense meeting, CINCPAC directed the AChPEO/Svkt to arrange air reconnaissance of northern Laos, being sure to take a peek over the border at Dien Bien Phu, by means that were locally available. The locally available means that were specified were FAL, [

] It was noted explicitly that

this was not to be confused with other plans that were being made for high-altitude recce.^{3/} A few minutes later a second

directive to AChPEO/Svkt followed from CINCPAC. [

] This was the sort of suggestion that Phoumi

1/ JCS to CINCPAC, 987431, DTG 172009Z December 1960, TOP SECRET.
2/ JCS to CINCPAC, 987432, DTG 180255Z December 1960, TOP SECRET.
3/ CINCPAC to AChPEO/Svkt, DTG 172359Z December 1960, TOP SECRET.

generally yielded to without hesitation, and on this occasion he complied promptly as expected. [

59. On 20 December, PEO/Rep/Svkt informed CINCPAC that he had arranged daily visual reconnaissance [] which was to begin the following day, and that he was also considering the possibility of enlisting the aid of the []^{2/}

The much desired reconnaissance actually began on the same day, [

[] in Vientiane and flew from Vientiane to the Plaine des Jarres, where they observed the drop zone, with eighteen parachutes and a Soviet aircraft visible on the ground. The following day, the same observers saw a Russian-marked IL-14 making low passes over the drop zone.^{3/}

60. [

[] On 26 December, the C-47 took a long series of vertical and oblique photos, not only of critical areas in Laos, but also of interesting points just over the border of northern Vietnam, including Dien Bien Phu. The next morning, continuing their recce nearer home, they found and photographed a Soviet IL-14 which was at the time conducting air drop operations at Vang Vieng. While photographing this operation,

1/ CINCPAC to AChPEO/Svkt, DTG 180045Z December 1960, TOP SECRET; PEO/Rep/Svkt to CINCPAC, Alt PEO 54, DTG 190545Z December 1960, TOP SECRET.
2/ PEO/Rep/Saigon to CINCPAC, Alt PEO 79, DTG 200745Z December 1960.
3/ U.S. ARMA/Vientiane to DA/Washington, CX-A2, DTG 220856Z December 1960.

~~TOP SECRET~~

they encountered small caliber fire, some of which damaged the oil system of one engine and produced visible damage to the fuselage. The plane then limped back to Wattay Airfield at Vientiane for repairs. Here it was greeted by the press, hungry for news. Ambassador Brown made a public statement that this was an observation flight conducted by an unmarked but accredited U.S. diplomatic aircraft on a mission undertaken at the request of the Laotian government.^{1/} The copilots promptly dispatched a report to the CS/USAF; and the film was sent for developing and printing to Bangkok thence to the 67th Recce-Tech Squadron for photo interpretation and distribution.

61. On 29 December, a more detailed account of the photo coverage accomplished on the 26-27th December mission was submitted from Saigon. The conclusions and recommendations included in this report were based in part upon visual observations and in part upon inspection of the photos which had meanwhile been developed in Bangkok on the 28th. This account^{2/} was also transmitted in info copies to CS/USAF/ Washington, D.C., CINCPAC, CINCUSARPAC, and other points in the U.S. and Japan, but no copies were addressed back to Laos or Thailand. In the part of the message dealing with Kong Le's Vang Vieng position, the position was described as highly defensible, with steep jungle-covered mountains to the east and west, a narrow valley to the north and a broad valley to the south, and the entire area accessible only via Route 13. Ten miles north of the Vang Vieng position a bridge was out, and the ford being used to replace the bridge had one vehicle

^{1/} Vientiane EmbTel, Unnumbered, 271017Z December 1960, SECRET; U.S. ARMA Vientiane, 2 DA, CX-A9, DTG 271254Z December 1960.

^{2/} [

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~~TOP SECRET~~

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mired in it and was judged unpassible for heavy equipment. It was judged that if Kong Le were forced to move farther north he could not take heavy equipment past the ford. Finally, the report declared there was no sign of Phoumi forces within twenty miles of Kong Le's Vang Vieng stronghold.

62. This intelligence stimulated a rather strong message from CINCPAC to ChPEO^{1/} labeled "personal for Mr. Heintges from Felt," the main purpose of which seems to have been to spur ChPEO into prodding Phoumi into more aggressive operations against Kong Le. CINCPAC began by recalling that he expected ChPEO to exert maximum influence to see that Phoumi's operations were conducted in a professional manner. CINCPAC advised that the attack upon Vang Vieng should come off as soon as it could be initiated with good prospects of success. When Heintges reported on a meeting in midafternoon of the next day, with Phoumi, Ouane,^{2/} Bounleut,^{3/} Touby Lyfong,^{4/} and Boun Oum,^{5/} he said he had pointed out to Phoumi the urgency of moving aggressively against Vang Vieng, with the Kouprasith^{6/} forces earmarked for the operation. The

^{1/} CINCPAC to ChPEO, DTG 302302Z December 1960.

^{2/} General Ouane Ratrikoun, senior FAL officer, who was appointed Commander of FAL in early August 1960, resigned under pressure during the Kong Le coup of 9 Aug. 1960. He was reinstated as Commander of FAL on 20 Aug. 1960, but established liaison with Phoumi Nosavan in Oct. 1960, helped swing the first military region to Phoumi and was appointed Chief of Staff of FAL by Boun Oum on 23 Dec. 1960, continuing in this role during the period under study.

^{3/} General Bounleut Sanichanh, Phoumi Nosavan's legman, joined Phoumi in Savannakhet, becoming Supreme Commander of the Forces of the Revolutionary Committee on 18 Aug. 1960. He was appointed Military Chief of Savannakhet Revolutionary Committee in Sept. 1960 and then served briefly as Secretary of State for National Security Affairs in the Boun Oum 12 Dec 1960 cabinet. On 27 Dec. 1960, he was made Commanding General of FAL. He served as Phoumi's substitute whenever Phoumi left town, and evacuated Americans from Muong Sai during Apr. 1961.

^{4/} Touby Lyfong, the leading Meo politician. After the Kong Le coup in early August first joined Phoumi Nosavan forces in counterresistance and then in late August accepted a position in Souvanna's compromise cabinet, but at the same time helped place Xieng Khouang Province under jurisdiction of the Phoumi/Boun Oum group. In mid-October he left Souvanna completely and became an active figure in Phoumi's Revolutionary Committee in Savannakhet. In mid-December, after Vientiane was retaken, he became a Minister in Boun Oum's cabinet, continuing in this position during the period under study.

^{5/} PEO 134, DTG 311130Z December 1960, TOP SECRET.

^{6/} General Kouprasith Abhay, Chief of Plans and Studies in FAL in 1960, was arrested by Kong Le forces on 9 Aug. 1960, then professed to join them, but on 8 Dec. 1960 the somewhat mystifying "Kouprasith" coup; when Kong Le fled Vientiane, Kouprasith joined forces with Phoumi, remaining in this alliance during the period under study.

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problem was complicated, however, as viewed that that time in Vientiane, by developments in the first and second military regions and, most alarming, in the Plaine des Jarres. Over the previous 24-hour period there had been a flood of reports of PL attacks and Vietminh invasions in force all along the DRV border of the 2nd Military Region. PEO Region Representative Brabson, in the 2nd Region, had reported the situation there critical at noon of 30 December,^{1/} and plans were made to evacuate PEO personnel. Several major towns including Ban Ban and Xieng Khouang were considered about to fall to the PL and/or Vietminh.^{2/} These events were to divert attention entirely away from Vang Vieng in the year-end scare, which is described in detail in the following section, beginning with page 79.

63. For some time, [] were the principal means of reconnaissance. They were inadequate on several counts. The number of planes was limited; their photo capabilities were not the best; and when they got down low as they had to, to be effective, they were slow and very vulnerable to the increasing ground fire that was encountered.

64. []

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65. Meanwhile, the possibility of increasing reconnaissance capability by providing additional C-47's with photo capability to be diplomatically accredited to SEA nations, had been suggested on 3 January 1961 by AFCIN-1. U.S. Ambassador Durbrow in Saigon concurred in the proposal but suggested that a C-47 might not be the best type of plane in view of the recent damage done to this type by ground fire. He also suggested that there might be ICC complications if an added C-47 were stationed in

^{1/} ChPEO to CINCPAC, PEO 130, DTG 310725Z December 1960.

^{2/} ChPEO to CINCPAC, PEO 134, DTG 311130Z December 1960.

^{3/} 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 most energetic, forward-looking regime Thailand has had in modern history.

^{4/} SCPEL, page 70, TOP SECRET; ChJUSMAAG to CINCPAC, DTG 140620Z January 1961, TOP SECRET.

~~TOP SECRET~~

Saigon. He felt the plane should be stationed in Vientiane although accredited also to Vietnam and Cambodia.^{1/}

66. Ambassador Brown in Vientiane concurred with the suggestion of Ambassador Durbrow that something was needed less vulnerable than a C-47, but he found no objections to the basing of the plane in Vientiane on the understanding that the plane and crew would be given diplomatic cover and would remain under the operational control of ChPEO. The ambassador also emphasized that information from the reconnaissance missions was needed in Vientiane.^{2/} The latter representation suggests that photo recce reports were not at the time being fully or promptly distributed to the American mission in Vientiane. On the next day, there followed a State/Defense message to all SEA embassies notifying them that one reconnaissance C-47 with K-38 cameras, two pilots, one navigator, radio operator, and flight engineer and photographer would be sent as soon as possible (ASAP) to Saigon to be stationed in Vientiane for about thirty days.^{3/}

67. The American ambassador in Phnom Penh promptly reported that it seemed to him doubtful that Cambodia would accredit a C-47 based in Vientiane with the same status as an []^{4/} but this was not critical and it is not evident that this objection influenced later developments.

68. CINCPAC next commented upon the judgments of the ambassadors in Saigon and Vientiane concerning the adequacy of the C-47. On 7 January he advised the JCS that although he concurred that the C-47 was far from optimum for the purposes, until and

^{1/} Saigon EmbTel to SecState, 1247, 4 January 1961, 5:00 PM, SECRET.

^{2/} Vientiane EmbTel 1260, Noon, 5 January 1961, SECRET.

^{3/} SecState to Phnom Penh, 586, Saigon 979, Vientiane 927, Joint State/Defense message, 6 January 1961, 3:19 PM, SECRET.

^{4/} Phnom Penh EmbTel to SecState, 811, 7 January 1961, 9:00 PM, SECRET.

unless the currently imposed restrictions on the use of U.S. military reconnaissance aircraft were lifted, the risk involved in the continued use of C-47's was acceptable. (The less vulnerable reconnaissance aircraft which the ambassadors were suggesting were in fact the military reconnaissance aircraft which political policy forbade using). CINCPAC also noted and approved instructions currently being issued through AF channels, and which had been initiated by CINCPACAF, that the [] should cease trying to get verticals and should be content with obliques.^{1/}

69. Before turning from the problems of reconnaissance during this period to bring another subject up to date, it is appropriate to recount an experience with reconnaissance at this time because it illustrates the possibility of confusion that may obscure temporarily the details of a situation even when good basic intelligence information is in hand.

70. A photo of the Sam Neua airfield taken on 26 December 1960 by one of the flights of the [] was developed and printed in Bangkok and one of the prints then forwarded [] Vientiane. On 2 January 1961, the [] had the photo studied by a French priest who had lived in Sam Neua for several years and had left there on 28 September. The priest was greatly amazed at the new developments evident in the photography. All but one of the roads were new, all or most of the buildings, especially warehouses, were new. Thirty-five trucks were visible in the photo, yet the priest recalled that there were only two jeeps and two trucks in the entire area at the time that he left. The change was so great that he even expressed doubt that the photo was indeed of the area he knew.

^{1/} CINCPAC to JCS, DTG 070401Z January 1961, TOP SECRET.

71. In filing his report on what the priest said, the [] felt it necessary to caution against the possibility of exaggeration in the priest's comments. He commented they were probably not correct in detail, but he conjectured that they probably did suggest correctly the magnitude of recent changes. He ended his comments by promising to find some older photos to compare, so that he could check closely on the priest's observations.^{1/}

72. Two days later the mystery was cleared up by the same [] when he advised that since filing the earlier report he had made positive identification of the photo, which was not of the Sam Neua airfield but rather of the airfield at Luang Prabang.^{2/}

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THE YEAR-END SCARE

73. At the end of December there occurred a series of reports of PL and Vietminh activities in Sam Neua, Xieng Khouang and Phong Saly Provinces which built up a level of excitement finally resulting in the establishment of DEFCON-2 for JTF-116 forces in the Western Pacific, evacuation of about one-third of U.S.-hired personnel in Laos, and many other emergency actions from Vientiane to Washington. Shortly after that climax had been reached, it became apparent that rumored Vietminh invasion had not occurred, at least not in the threatened proportions. And with this realization the scare came to an end. But events at the time were confusing in the field, in Washington and in intermediate headquarters; and a careful recapitulation of the existing record still leaves an unclear picture of exactly what happened. The worst of the fears never materialized, but the concern that developed over the reports of activities along the DRV border served for a time to distract U.S. attention from the major move that Kong Le was making at the time, from Vang Vieng to the Plaine des Jarres. The possibility that the excitement was in fact a diversion was suggested by American military officers in Laos, but this interpretation was largely ignored at the time. Ascertainable events underlying the rumors were of no great consequence, but the level of excitement was high and many of the moves we made were the moves we would have made had the threat been real in the form we suspected. For this reason it is instructive to follow the sequence of events as the present record reveals them, even though it is still not clear how much real activity underlay the reports that caused the excitement.

First Reports

74. At 8 o'clock each morning during this period a joint ARMA-ChPEO Situation Report (SITREP) was issued from Vientiane. The SITREP's of 28 and 29 December were routine, and paid no unusual attention to events on the DRV border.^{1/} Up through this time there was no indication of anything unusual in the way of PL or Vietminh activities in official U.S. intelligence reports. There had been a few news reports originating in Vientiane, mostly based on press releases of the Lao Information Ministry, which proclaimed extraordinary PL and Vietminh activities. For instance, a UPI dispatch, date-lined 29 December, from Vientiane carried a story that over a hundred North Vietnamese troops had been flown into Van Vieng [sic] by Soviet airlift.^{2/} Most such reports, however, ranged from obvious exaggeration to patent absurdity and ordinarily excited no more than a yawn from responsible U.S. officials.

75. The daily joint USARMA-PEO SITREP for the morning of 30 December, however, contained most of the raw intelligence that was later to evoke such a strong reaction in many official quarters. But the intelligence was passed up the command chain without evaluation and without excitement at the reporting level. In a casual and entirely unexcited manner, the SITREP related that a Major Vang Phao^{3/} had told a PEO representative visiting the 2nd Military Region on 23 December that, in addition to the usual number of PL in and around Sam Neua, there had been 4 Vietminh battalions in the area of Nong Het. In another section of the SITREP it was reported, on the authority

1/ ChPEO to CINCPAC, PEO 86, DTG 280620Z December 1960, SECRET;
ChPEO to CINCPAC, PEO-103, DTG 290826Z December 1960, SECRET.

2/ NYT, 30 December 1960, page 5.

3/ Major Vang Phao, Laos's leading military representative of the Meo, was arrested in August 1960 by Phoumi's men because he swore loyalty to Souvanna Phouma, at Touby Lyfong's (leading political representative to the Meo) request. However, he was released and when the Boun Oum 12 December 1960 cabinet was formed, became more pro-Phoumi. He is known to be jealous of Touby Lyfong's political prestige, thinking himself the true representative of Meo interests.

TOP SECRET

of Colonel Sourith, that as of 26 December there was one Vietminh battalion at Sam Neua, 2 Vietminh battalions at Nong Het, one Vietminh battalion at Muong Dai, in addition to Vietminh paratroopers in smaller numbers at Muong Poun and at Moug O. These were, of course, in addition to the customary numbers of Pathet Lao. Colonel Sourith^{1/} had also indicated 2 more Vietminh companies and one Vietminh platoon in other border areas. Concerning these reports, the SITREP commented that FAL headquarters proposed to follow up on these Sourith and Vang Pao reports and that this, plus other information previously received from General Ouane, indicated enemy strength but it was believed that there was much duplication and also much that was plainly spurious in these reports.^{2/}

The Lao Information Ministry and the Lao Delegation to the United Nations

76. It appears to have been the RLG, especially its information ministry, that gave an air of excitement to the reports that were filtering in of accelerated Communist activity. About midnight, local time, of 30 December, the American ambassador in Vientiane sent in to Washington the text of an RLG communique that was to be issued in the Lao Presse on 31 December. This report made the official statement that "from reports reaching us from 2nd Military Region Command, we learned that on 30 December 5 battalions, well-armed and equipped with artillery coming from NVN, have attacked our position at Nong Het forward post east of Xieng Khouang Province."^{3/}

77. In the United Nations (UN) meeting of 30 December in New York (this was early on 31 December in Laos) the Lao delegation to the UN reported that an invasion of Laos had occurred by troops from DRV and possibly Communist China and

^{1/} Colonel Sourith Sasorith, joined Phoumi forces in Savannakhet as Commander of Paratroops and was also a member of the Revolutionary Committee's Military Subcommittee on 11 Sept. 1960. He disappointed Phoumi during military action during the Fall of 1960, but was allowed to participate in Phoumi's military maneuvers during the period under study.

^{2/} ChPEO to CINCPAC, PEO-115, DTG 300900Z December 1960, SECRET.

^{3/} EmbTel 1212, DTG 310530Z December 1960, UNCLASSIFIED.

UN aid against this alleged invasion was requested.^{1/} It is not known whether or not the Lao delegation was acting upon instructions from Vientiane, which would have had to originate as early as 29 December, or whether it was acting on the basis of newspaper reports and delegate initiative.

78. The public announcements of the RLG in Vientiane of North Vietnamese aggression and the appeals of the Lao delegation at the UN for assistance to repel the aggression were by now making headlines around the world.^{2/} Meanwhile, Ambassador Brown was endeavoring to keep the actions of the RLG under control. He reported at 11 o'clock, local time, on the 31st, that he was advising Boun Oum not to appeal to SEATO or the UN without first consulting the U.S. Brown added that he was seeking further information on the numbers and positions of the enemy, and of the FAL capabilities to contain or counter them.^{3/} Four hours later the ambassador reported that the Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM) had called upon Lao Foreign Affairs Minister Sopsaisana. Sopsaisana had told the DCM that in fact the RLG had no plans to request aid of any international organization (sic). Instead, the RLG would consult with the U.S. representatives before doing anything of the kind. Finally, Sopsaisana said that he did not consider the situation at Nong Het particularly serious, and that the broadcast put out by the RLG had added an appeal to friendly nations for aid purely for purposes of psychological warfare.^{4/}

79. Very soon after this revealing interview, some quite different remarks made by Bouavan Norasing, Minister of

^{1/} NYT, 31 December 1960, page 1.

^{2/} NYT, 31 December 1960, pages 1 and 2.

^{3/} Vientiane EmbTel 1211, 31 December 1960, 11:00 AM, SECRET.

^{4/} Vientiane EmbTel 1213, 31 December 1960, 3:00 PM, CONFIDENTIAL.

TOP SECRET

TOP SECRET

Information, at a press conference were passed without critical comment to Washington by the Vientiane Embassy. The Lao Minister of Information was far from being in agreement, in his public statements, with the confidential remarks of the Foreign Affairs Minister. In his press conference he described the situation in Laos as very grave. He said the battle for the Plaine des Jarres between Phoumi forces and Pathet Lao reinforced with Vietminh had already begun. Five battalions of Vietminh troops, totaling 2500 or more, had advanced along Route 7 from Vietnam to Nong Het and were approaching the Plaine des Jarres. In addition, there were approximately 1000 Vietminh at Ban Ban, north of the Plaine des Jarres. If the Plaine des Jarres fell, Luang Prabang and later Vientiane would be threatened. Two Vietminh prisoners had been captured, but no identification of them had been made.^{1/}

Attempts in the Field to Clarify Situation

80. At almost the same hour that Minister of Information Bouavan Norasing's press conference was being held, ChPEO reported to CINCPAC on the latest developments as evident to him. The message is especially interesting because as it was being composed, new information was coming in and was simply added to what had already been written. ChPEO began his report by recounting that the radio broadcast of 29 December that had announced 5 Vietminh battalions attacking Nong Het, while two additional battalions were advancing on Ban Ban, had come from a Lao source in Region 2. ChPEO had asked the PEO representative (PEO/Rep) in the region to comment on the report, and he had received the following reply from PEO Representative Brabson at 301245G:

1/ Vientiane EmbTel 1215, 31 December 1960, UNCLASSIFIED.

TOP SECRET

TOP SECRET

"This Region presently under 3-pronged attack. Sourith claims 5 battalions Vietminh attacking Nong Het have nearly encircled the town and 10th infantry battalion there may be withdrawn. The commanding officer there (Bounnoi) is very weak. Attack started yesterday. A column of PL attacking Ban Ban now 15 kilometers NW on road from Sam Neua. Two companies of 23rd BV (sic) plus engineer company there under Capt. Katxpon who is not too strong. Third column Muong Sai from direction Nantiat reported Kong Le's forces with heavy weapons. Two companies of 23rd BV and one autodefense at Muong Sai. Sourith in a complete sweat at Plaine des Jarres; critically needs avgas immediately and has asked for reinforcements from Phoumi. Two platoons of the 6th battalion infantry arrived last night...."

ChPEO went on to say he took up the matter immediately with General Ouane, Phoumi being in Savannakhet at the time. ChPEO pointed out that there was no confirmation that the attacking forces were in fact Vietminh. He commented further that the Plaine des Jarres area had been reinforced the day before with 3 companies from the 6th battalion infantry. In the early morning of the 30th, Brabson had reported the situation critical and said he could hear firing in the vicinity of Khang Khay.

81. When ChPEO reached this point in composing the message, a new report from Brabson came in which ChPEO added to the foregoing. This said that Brabson and the Liaison and Technical Advisory Group (LTAG) team were evacuating Khang Khay in a big hurry, Brabson's last words being "can't wait, got to go, going Plaine des Jarres, out." ChPEO then recounted that 2 C-46's and a C-45 with aviation gas (avgas) had been dispatched at 11:00 o'clock that morning, but that he could not be sure whether these planes had arrived in time to evacuate U.S. personnel as instructed. Apparently as soon as this was written, word came that one C-46 had just returned from the Plaine des Jarres. Among the refugees was the Meo leader, Touby Lyfong, who stated the attacking forces were Vietminh and that when he left the enemy were 22 kilometers from Plaine des Jarres, which he expected to fall with 24 hours. ChPEO then

THE YEAR-END SCARE

73. At the end of December there occurred a series of reports of PL and Vietminh activities in Sam Neua, Xieng Khouang and Phong Saly Provinces which built up a level of excitement finally resulting in the establishment of DEFCON-2 for JTF-116 forces in the Western Pacific, evacuation of about one-third of U.S.-hired personnel in Laos, and many other emergency actions from Vientiane to Washington. Shortly after that climax had been reached, it became apparent that rumored Vietminh invasion had not occurred, at least not in the threatened proportions. And with this realization the scare came to an end. But events at the time were confusing in the field, in Washington and in intermediate headquarters; and a careful recapitulation of the existing record still leaves an unclear picture of exactly what happened. The worst of the fears never materialized, but the concern that developed over the reports of activities along the DRV border served for a time to distract U.S. attention from the major move that Kong Le was making at the time, from Vang Vieng to the Plaine des Jarres. The possibility that the excitement was in fact a diversion was suggested by American military officers in Laos, but this interpretation was largely ignored at the time. Ascertainable events underlying the rumors were of no great consequence, but the level of excitement was high and many of the moves we made were the moves we would have made had the threat been real in the form we suspected. For this reason it is instructive to follow the sequence of events as the present record reveals them, even though it is still not clear how much real activity underlay the reports that caused the excitement.

First Reports

74. At 8 o'clock each morning during this period a joint ARMA-ChPEO Situation Report (SITREP) was issued from Vientiane. The SITREP's of 28 and 29 December were routine, and paid no unusual attention to events on the DRV border.^{1/} Up through this time there was no indication of anything unusual in the way of PL or Vietminh activities in official U.S. intelligence reports. There had been a few news reports originating in Vientiane, mostly based on press releases of the Lao Information Ministry, which proclaimed extraordinary PL and Vietminh activities. For instance, a UPI dispatch, date-lined 29 December, from Vientiane carried a story that over a hundred North Vietnamese troops had been flown into Van Vieng [sic] by Soviet airlift.^{2/} Most such reports, however, ranged from obvious exaggeration to patent absurdity and ordinarily excited no more than a yawn from responsible U.S. officials.

75. The daily joint USARMA-PEO SITREP for the morning of 30 December, however, contained most of the raw intelligence that was later to evoke such a strong reaction in many official quarters. But the intelligence was passed up the command chain without evaluation and without excitement at the reporting level. In a casual and entirely unexcited manner, the SITREP related that a Major Vang Phao^{3/} had told a PEO representative visiting the 2nd Military Region on 23 December that, in addition to the usual number of PL in and around Sam Neua, there had been 4 Vietminh battalions in the area of Nong Het. In another section of the SITREP it was reported, on the authority

^{1/} ChPEO to CINCPAC, PEO 86, DTG 280620Z December 1960, SECRET; ChPEO to CINCPAC, PEO-103, DTG 290826Z December 1960, SECRET.

^{2/} NYT, 30 December 1960, page 5.

^{3/} Major Vang Phao, Laos's leading military representative of the Meo, was arrested in August 1960 by Phoumi's men because he swore loyalty to Souvanna Phouma, at Touby Lyfong's (leading political representative to the Meo) request. However, he was released and when the Boun Oum 12 December 1960 cabinet was formed, became more pro-Phoumi. He is known to be jealous of Touby Lyfong's political prestige, thinking himself the true representative of Meo interests.

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~TOP SECRET~~

of Colonel Sourith, that as of 26 December there was one Vietminh battalion at Sam Neua, 2 Vietminh battalions at Nong Het, one Vietminh battalion at Muong Dai, in addition to Vietminh paratroopers in smaller numbers at Muong Poun and at Mouno O. These were, of course, in addition to the customary numbers of Pathet Lao. Colonel Sourith^{1/} had also indicated 2 more Vietminh companies and one Vietminh platoon in other border areas. Concerning these reports, the SITREP commented that FAL headquarters proposed to follow up on these Sourith and Vang Pao reports and that this, plus other information previously received from General Ouane, indicated enemy strength but it was believed that there was much duplication and also much that was plainly spurious in these reports.^{2/}

The Lao Information Ministry and the Lao Delegation to the United Nations

76. It appears to have been the RIG, especially its information ministry, that gave an air of excitement to the reports that were filtering in of accelerated Communist activity. About midnight, local time, of 30 December, the American ambassador in Vientiane sent in to Washington the text of an RIG communique that was to be issued in the Lao Presse on 31 December. This report made the official statement that "from reports reaching us from 2nd Military Region Command, we learned that on 30 December 5 battalions, well-armed and equipped with artillery coming from NVN, have attacked our position at Nong Het forward post east of Xieng Khouang Province."^{3/}

77. In the United Nations (UN) meeting of 30 December in New York (this was early on 31 December in Laos) the Lao delegation to the UN reported that an invasion of Laos had occurred by troops from DRV and possibly Communist China and

^{1/} Colonel Sourith Sasorith, joined Phoumi forces in Savannakhet as Commander of Paratroops and was also a member of the Revolutionary Committee's Military Subcommittee on 11 Sept. 1960. He disappointed Phoumi during military action during the Fall of 1960, but was allowed to participate in Phoumi's military maneuvers during the period under study.

^{2/} ChPEO to CINCPAC, PEO-115, DTG 300900Z December 1960, SECRET.

^{3/} EmbTel 1212, DTG 310530Z December 1960, UNCLASSIFIED.

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~TOP SECRET~~

UN aid against this alleged invasion was requested.^{1/} It is not known whether or not the Lao delegation was acting upon instructions from Vientiane, which would have had to originate as early as 29 December, or whether it was acting on the basis of newspaper reports and delegate initiative.

78. The public announcements of the RLG in Vientiane of North Vietnamese aggression and the appeals of the Lao delegation at the UN for assistance to repel the aggression were by now making headlines around the world.^{2/} Meanwhile, Ambassador Brown was endeavoring to keep the actions of the RLG under control. He reported at 11 o'clock, local time, on the 31st, that he was advising Boun Oum not to appeal to SEATO or the UN without first consulting the U.S. Brown added that he was seeking further information on the numbers and positions of the enemy, and of the FAL capabilities to contain or counter them.^{3/} Four hours later the ambassador reported that the Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM) had called upon Lao Foreign Affairs Minister Sopsaisana. Sopsaisana had told the DCM that in fact the RLG had no plans to request aid of any international organization (sic). Instead, the RLG would consult with the U.S. representatives before doing anything of the kind. Finally, Sopsaisana said that he did not consider the situation at Nong Het particularly serious, and that the broadcast put out by the RLG had added an appeal to friendly nations for aid purely for purposes of psychological warfare.^{4/}

79. Very soon after this revealing interview, some quite different remarks made by Bouavan Norasing, Minister of

^{1/} NYT, 31 December 1960, page 1.

^{2/} NYT, 31 December 1960, pages 1 and 2.

^{3/} Vientiane EmbTel 1211, 31 December 1960, 11:00 AM, SECRET.

^{4/} Vientiane EmbTel 1213, 31 December 1960, 3:00 PM, CONFIDENTIAL.

~~TOP SECRET~~ ~~TOP SECRET~~

Information, at a press conference were passed without critical comment to Washington by the Vientiane Embassy. The Lao Minister of Information was far from being in agreement, in his public statements, with the confidential remarks of the Foreign Affairs Minister. In his press conference he described the situation in Laos as very grave. He said the battle for the Plaine des Jarres between Phoumi forces and Pathet Lao reinforced with Vietminh had already begun. Five battalions of Vietminh troops, totaling 2500 or more, had advanced along Route 7 from Vietnam to Nong Het and were approaching the Plaine des Jarres. In addition, there were approximately 1000 Vietminh at Ban Ban, north of the Plaine des Jarres. If the Plaine des Jarres fell, Luang Prabang and later Vientiane would be threatened. Two Vietminh prisoners had been captured, but no identification of them had been made.^{1/}

Attempts in the Field to Clarify Situation

80. At almost the same hour that Minister of Information Bouavan Norasing's press conference was being held, ChPEO reported to CINCPAC on the latest developments as evident to him. The message is especially interesting because as it was being composed, new information was coming in and was simply added to what had already been written. ChPEO began his report by recounting that the radio broadcast of 29 December that had announced 5 Vietminh battalions attacking Nong Het, while two additional battalions were advancing on Ban Ban, had come from a Lao source in Region 2. ChPEO had asked the PEO representative (PEO/Rep) in the region to comment on the report, and he had received the following reply from PEO Representative Brabson at 301245G:

1/ Vientiane EmbTel 1215, 31 December 1960, UNCLASSIFIED.

"This Region presently under 3-pronged attack. Sourith claims 5 battalions Vietminh attacking Nong Het have nearly encircled the town and 10th infantry battalion there may be withdrawn. The commanding officer there (Bounnoi) is very weak. Attack started yesterday. A column of PL attacking Ban Ban now 15 kilometers NW on road from Sam Neua. Two companies of 23rd BV (sic) plus engineer company there under Capt. Katxpon who is not too strong. Third column Muong Sai from direction Nantiat reported Kong Le's forces with heavy weapons. Two companies of 23rd BV and one autodefense at Muong Sai. Sourith in a complete sweat at Plaine des Jarres; critically needs avgas immediately and has asked for reinforcements from Phoumi. Two platoons of the 6th battalion infantry arrived last night...."

ChPEO went on to say he took up the matter immediately with General Ouane, Phoumi being in Savannakhet at the time. ChPEO pointed out that there was no confirmation that the attacking forces were in fact Vietminh. He commented further that the Plaine des Jarres area had been reinforced the day before with 3 companies from the 6th battalion infantry. In the early morning of the 30th, Brabson had reported the situation critical and said he could hear firing in the vicinity of Khang Khay.

81. When ChPEO reached this point in composing the message, a new report from Brabson came in which ChPEO added to the foregoing. This said that Brabson and the Liaison and Technical Advisory Group (LTAG) team were evacuating Khang Khay in a big hurry, Brabson's last words being "can't wait, got to go, going Plaine des Jarres, out." ChPEO then recounted that 2 C-46's and a C-45 with aviation gas (avgas) had been dispatched at 11:00 o'clock that morning, but that he could not be sure whether these planes had arrived in time to evacuate U.S. personnel as instructed. Apparently as soon as this was written, word came that one C-46 had just returned from the Plaine des Jarres. Among the refugees was the Meo leader, Touby Lyfong, who stated the attacking forces were Vietminh and that when he left the enemy were 22 kilometers from Plaine des Jarres, which he expected to fall with 24 hours. ChPEO then

commented that, from fragmentary information available, the attacking force must be a "sizable Vietminh aggression." He ended the message with an added detail to the effect that the PEO representative in the first military region (Luang Prabang) had just reported that Bounleut had told him that Kham Ouane^{1/} was attacking the government troops in Phong Saly and had occupied the town.^{2/}

82. About three hours later, ChPEO sent in a special SITREP based largely on the report [] had been in radio contact with the []

[] to the Plaine des Jarres-Xieng Khouang area. This relayed the observation that 40 to 50 vehicles, possibly including armored personnel carriers, had been seen 7 to 10 miles W/NW of Plaine des Jarres and reported that the air attache plane had received some small arms fire. []

[] had observed some Soviet aircraft making air drops about 20 kilometers west of Plaine des Jarres at 2 o'clock in the afternoon. To these observations ChPEO added the comment that a C-47 was being dispatched to Phong Savan and Xieng Khouang to evacuate personnel, and that the airfield at Plaine des Jarres was now under fire.^{3/}

83. About an hour after this ChPEO dispatched a new report to CINCPAC, this one concerning a meeting he had just had with Phoumi, Ouane, Bounleut, Touby, Boun Oum, [] to discuss the threat to the Plaine des Jarres and ways to meet

^{1/} Colonel Kham Ouane, Military Commander of Phong Saly since 1959, was on Souvanna Phouma's side during the coup of Dec. 1960, then declared himself loyal to Boun Oum after the counter coup, finally rejoined Souvanna Phouma when he learned a coalition government was planned, and although in Kong Le's Army, is generally considered a neutralist, who is disliked by the PL.

^{2/} ChPEO to CINCPAC, PEO-130, Heintges sends, DTG 310725Z 31 December 1960, TOP SECRET.

^{3/} ChPEO to CINCPAC, PEO-133, being special SITREP as of 311600G, DTG 311019Z December 1960, SECRET.

[]

it. Although the reports of Vietminh aggression persisted and were not disputed, emphasis had now shifted to the 2000 Kong Le troops moving eastward on Route 7 that by now had reached a point about 10 kilometers from Plaine des Jarres. This shift of emphasis suggests a beginning suspicion that the activity along the DRV border may have been a diversion to screen Kong Le's eastward move. (The small, company-strength reinforcements sent, and contemplated to be sent, to Plaine des Jarres area were hardly consistent either, with belief that they were to face 5 to 7 battalions of Vietminh). It was not clear at that time what had happened to the FAL reinforcements that had been sent to the Plaine des Jarres; and the Plaine des Jarres airfield was reported under attack. It was conjectured that the FAL reinforcements already sent had been landed instead at Xieng Khouang.^{1/}

Reactions in Washington and PACOM

84. During the day of the 31st, Prime Minister Beun Oum in Vientiane issued another communique from his office announcing the invasion of Laos by 7 battalions from DRV, declaring that reinforcements were being rushed to meet them in Xieng Khouang Province and appealing to friendly countries for assistance in the defense of Lao territory.^{2/} In Washington, the State Department issued a press release declaring that the situation in Laos was being given the closest attention and that the U.S. Government (USG) would take a most serious view of any intervention in Laos by the PRC, the DRV, or any others. The prospect of a SEATO meeting and SEATO action was suggested, and it was indicated that there had been high-level conferences concerning the invasion reports which included participation by the President. The communique refrained, however, from

^{1/} ChPEO to CINCPAC, PEO-134, DTG 311130Z December 1960, TOP SECRET.

^{2/} NYT, 31 December 1960, page 2.

identifying the intruders and it indicated that matters were still awaiting clarification of facts concerning the reported invasion.

85. Reconnaissance conducted during the day (the 31st) [] confirmed the earlier reports of a major movement of the Kong Le forces eastward to the Plaine des Jarres and Xieng Khouang area from their previous positions in the Vang Vieng area. The reconnaissance was conducted in the early afternoon of that day and the preliminary report of observations was apparently sent in by the [] in the middle of the evening.^{1/}

86. At nearly the same time, CINCPAC ordered DEFCON 2 for all forces earmarked for JTF-116 and for all forces in its direct support for OPLAN 32-59. Commanders were directed to make every effort to avoid public notice and speculation. Very soon thereafter JCS advised all CINC's of the action taken by CINCPAC.^{2/}

87. That evening at 8 PM in Vientiane, Ambassador Brown notified State that he had decided to allow a gradual departure of about 20 U.S. Operations Mission (USOM) American and 30 third-country personnel who had little to do at present. He indicated his awareness of the adverse morale effects of an evacuation that was evident as such, and said that he hoped to get the people out without exciting unnecessary fears. The total of 50 people proposed for evacuation beginning the next

^{1/} []
^{2/} CINCPAC to JCS and all appropriate constituent commands, DTG 311436Z December 1960, TOP SECRET; JCS to all CINC's, 988037, DTG 311742Z December 1960, TOP SECRET.

~~TOP SECRET~~ ~~TOP SECRET~~
day would amount to about one-third of the personnel employed by, or under contract to, USOM.^{1/}

88. The next message of moment from Vientiane, originated with the [] and referred to the early reports based on the air observations that afternoon []

[] The 35mm exposures taken on the highway west of the Plaine des Jarres had been quickly processed in Vientiane. A quick study of them by [] led him to comment that, while the amount of detail they provided was admittedly inadequate for positive determination, he felt obliged to point out that he was unable, on the basis of these films, to identify vehicles or other materiel in the pictures not common to the FAL inventory, except possibly one truck which was towing what appeared to be a 120mm mortar. Furthermore, he was unable to identify any armor at all. He urged, therefore, that the other film taken by [] be processed on an urgent basis upon arrival in Saigon.^{2/} It was not until the next day that [] from Saigon were able to provide a more detailed and more considered account of their mission.

ChPEO's Reevaluation of the Situation in Xieng Khouang Province

89. At 10 PM, local time, of the 31st, ChPEO dispatched to CINCPAC a special SITREP as of 312200G, devoted mainly to a new evaluation of the situation in Xieng Khouang Province, which he emphasized was based on all of the knowledge of local conditions available to the Country Team, and all of the locally available intelligence at that date. There was the special advantage that the LTAG and the PEO representative to the 2nd Region (Brabson) had been evacuated late that afternoon, and

^{1/} Vientiane EmbTels 1219 and 1220, both dated 31 December 1960, 9 PM, both SECRET.

^{2/} []

ChPEO had had a chance to talk to them and get their firsthand impressions. The summary evaluation follows:

"Part 1. Eval sit Xieng Khouang Province:

1. Based on small amt info now aval op Xieng Khouang Province 31 Dec and other frag info assoc this op, there is no rpt no new info cfm appreciable intervention by DRVN.
2. Init rept 30 Dec citing atks Nong Het and Vic Ban Ban of 5 and 2 VM bn's resp and rapid degeneration sit 31 Dec gave reason believe VM playing definite role. After review info aval there nothing here other than init and cont info from Lao sources to spt VM participation. In actuality Lao state now force at Ban Ban is mixed PL and VM.
3. There is possibility Nong Het/Ban Ban atks were diversions W/O extensive commitment VM to cover mvmt Kong Le/PL forces fr W and set stage psycho for relatively easy defeat of frightened demoralized FAL forces. It cfmd KL/PL force was sptd by prcht drops fr USSR acft - Brabson II MI 1 Rgn advisor obsrd; an op which has cont since 10 Dec. Likewise, no sufficient info cfm VM are not present or have not directly or actively intervened.
4. From above there is no rpt no new cfmd info spt DRVN intervention (see ref msg above). These uncfm rept DRVN intervention reminiscent Sam Neua 1959.
5. Ambassador Brown cognizant of above." 1/

90. Shortly after the new year dawned, local time, in Vientiane, CINCPAC advised ChPEO that the ambassador had received orders to take immediate action to use napalm on military targets and suggested that suitable targets should be found at Vang Vieng, Nong Het, and approaches to Xieng Khouang. ^{2/}

91. [

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1/ ChPEO/Vientiane to CINCPAC, PEO-Opt 138, DTG 311815Z December 1960, SECRET, (Ref. PEO-134, DTG 311130Z December 1960).
2/ CINCPAC to ChPEO, DTG 312117Z December 1960, TOP SECRET.

92. Throughout the day of the 31st of December, the Lao press and Lao officials continued making statements of heavy attacks by the Vietminh and Pathet Lao forces in the Plaine des Jarres and Xieng Khouang areas. These were generally transmitted immediately by the Embassy to Washington, exactly as they were issued, and most often without comment.^{1/} Meanwhile, Ambassador Brown continued to develop and report plans to evacuate nonessential official personnel.^{2/}

Later Official Reactions

93. At 4:30 PM, local time, on 31 December (this was 4:30 AM of 1 January in Vientiane), the State Department in Washington issued a press release to the effect that "the Department is following with close attention the grave situation in Laos, including in particular reports of intervention from the outside. It is also consulting with allied governments. Mindful of its obligations under the SEATO Treaty, the U.S. Government would take the most serious view of any intervention in Laos by the Chinese Communists or Vietminh armed forces or others in support of the Pathet Lao, who are in rebellion against the Royal Laotian Government."^{3/}

94. No documentary record is available of special meetings in Washington responding to the crisis in Laos, although the implication of some news releases is that high-level meetings were held. One participant in these events in Washington, when specifically asked if he remembered events of that day, including the reports of Vietminh intervention, replied that he remembered the reports but that the disposition in Washington was to discount them and that the

^{1/} EmbTel 1212, UNCLASSIFIED, 604G; EmbTel 1215, UNCLASSIFIED, 1108G; EmbTel 1213, CONFIDENTIAL, 1300G.

^{2/} Vientiane EmbTel's 1219 and 1220, both dated 9:00 PM, 31 December, both SECRET.

^{3/} Sent out as Circular 931, 1960 December 31, 9:15 PM, UNCLASSIFIED.

reports occasioned no particular excitement in official circles in the American capital. The same man added the observation that, although everyone soon discounted almost completely the rumors of Vietminh invasion, the confirmed intelligence of substantial Vietminh presence in Laos at a later time -- meaning late 1961 and 1962 -- suggested to him that there may have been a substantial Vietminh force involved in the 1960 year-end scare after all. But this, of course, is only the conjecture of a well-informed participant. And the principal lesson it teaches may concern the uncertainties, ever long after the fact, of the exact nature of events we must react to.

95. At about the same time that ChPEO forwarded his 10 PM, 31 January, reevaluation of the situation in Xieng Khouang, CINCPAC sent out an alerting order. Because of both the closeness of time of the DTG indications and their undependability as time indications, it is not clear that CINCPAC received the ChPEO information before or after sending out the alerting order. In any event, under DTG of 312208Z, CINCPAC sent out the alerting order to CINCPACFLT and ChMAAG/Vietnam with information copies to subordinate commands in PACOM and SEA. The order was not to be executed until further directed but it was specified that, because of the threat to the RIG and the Plaine des Jarres, an urgent requirement existed for photo recce; the first priority being the Xieng Khouang area, the second being the approaches to Xieng Khouang from both DRV and Vang Vieng, and the third priority being Luang Prabang and north of Phong Saly. With these target areas in mind, the principal mission was to determine the extent of overt DRV intervention and the extent and location of PL insurgency. The alerting order called for readiness to launch F8U-1P

photo recce aircraft from the LEXINGTON to accomplish these missions, with augmentation as necessary to be ready by A3D/2P's and more F8U-1P's now enroute from Cubi Point. It was further specified that the flights from the LEXINGTON, which was off Tourane, should be at high altitude as far as Seno, thence medium altitude over targets.^{1/}

96. Shortly thereafter, CINCPAC sent a message to JCS conceding that it was true that the sources of intelligence concerning Vietminh intervention came from Lao military spokesmen, but arguing this was no reason to doubt the reliability of their reports. (It appears reasonable to infer that, by this time, ChPEO's 10 PM reappraisal had come in.) CINCPAC argued that, regardless of the nationality of Communist troops in Northern Laos, it was clear that their objective was to take over that part of the country. He forecast that if Luang Prabang fell to Kham Ouane, an all-out attack on Vientiane would ensue and the Communists would meanwhile consolidate their hold on the Plaine des Jarres/Xieng Khouang area, enveloping the FAL units there in the process. He said that the RLG would soon appeal to the UN or to SEATO but that the U.S. was the only nation that had the power to act with sufficient timeliness to save Laos. Therefore, he concluded, "with full realization of the seriousness of a decision to intervene, I believe strongly that we must intervene now or give up Northern Laos."^{2/}

97. Brigadier General Lansdale, Chief of Special Operations, was on that day visiting CINCPAC enroute to Washington from

^{1/} CINCPAC to CINCPACFLT, et al, DTG 312208Z December 1960, TOP SECRET.

^{2/} CINCPAC to JCS, DTG 312235Z December 1960, TOP SECRET.

~~TOP SECRET~~ ~~TOP SECRET~~

SEA. At the same time that CINCPAC offered his policy recommendations to JCS, General Lansdale forwarded his own to SecDef Gates and DepSecDef Douglas:

"Spent morning (with) CINCPAC mostly on situation. It is plain here that U.S. must make a decision and act soonest. Looking to Washington for final word. My personal opinion is that world press will report as Comm. invasion and we stand to lose our Asian allies plus respect uncommitted nations if we fail act firmly soon... Use of foreign Comm. troops makes it obvious that Lao people would not accept Comm. political rule except by force." 1/

98. Shortly after noon in Hawaii on 31 December (which was early evening in Washington and just before dawn of the following day in Vientiane), CINCPAC advised the CJTF-116 to retain an airborne assault capability for a more profitable target than Vientiane. Specifically, CJTF-116 was to be prepared to execute an airborne assault to regain control of either the Plaine des Jarres or Luang Prabang. He advised that, if he received an order to execute and if the situation justified it, he, CINCPAC, might direct CJTF-116 to airland a Marine Battalion Landing Team (BLT) at Vientiane instead of Seno, to land the afloat Marine BLT at Bangkok for overland movement to Vientiane, and to stage the Airborne Battle Group (ABG) plus essential aircraft to Clark Air Force Base for airborne assault. 2/

99. About four hours after this CINCPAC notified CINCPACFLT that it then appeared unlikely that an order would be given to fly recce from the LEXINGTON, as CINCPAC had directed him to be prepared to undertake just about 8 hours before. 3/ It would appear that it was during the interval between DTG 010130Z and

1/ CINCPAC to JCS, DTG 312212Z December 1960, SECRET.

2/ CINCPAC to CJTF-116, DTG 010129Z January 1961, TOP SECRET.

3/ CINCPAC to CINCPACFLT, DTG 010539Z January 1961, TOP SECRET.

~~TOP SECRET~~ ~~SECRET~~
010530Z that CINCPAC decided that strong actions in Laos were unlikely as an immediate prospect.

The Slow Evaporation of the Crisis Atmosphere

100. The publicity and newspaper excitement over Laos did not by any means abate quickly. Lao government officials continued for some time to make statements or give out press releases indicating that heavy attacks by Vietminh and Pathet Lao forces in the Plaine des Jarres and Xieng Khouang areas were continuing. The evacuation of Americans from Vientiane was initiated on 1 January. The capture of Phong Saly and the Plaine des Jarres by rebel forces was front-page news in Vientiane, Washington, and London. The USG announced that it was increasing its military preparedness in the Pacific in press releases that indicated a White House direction of the effort.^{1/}

101. In the first 3 or 4 days of the new year, there was a gradual dissipation of the sense of crisis over Laos, but the available records do not indicate any single sharp reversal of judgment. Rather, the balloon of excitement, instead of bursting suddenly, simply deflated gradually as if a small valve had been opened. In a special SITREP on 1 January, ChPEO forwarded the gist of a new report from the Region 1 military adviser, which contained little specific concrete information but indicated quite explicitly that there was no apparent immediate threat to Luang Prabang. In commenting upon the news from Region 1, ChPEO added that since sending out a previous report, in which Bounleut was quoted as saying they were in contact with 6400 Pathet Lao, Bounleut had

^{1/} NYT, 2 January 1961, pages 1 and 3; NYT, 3 January 1961, pages 1 and 10.

since explained that this did not mean contact with a concentrated force of 6400, but rather that 6400 was his estimate of all of the Pathet Lao in Region 1. Even in this form, ChPEO observed, it was a considerable exaggeration.^{1/}

102. On New Year's Day at 10 AM, local time, (010300Z January 1961) Ambassador Brown expressed his regrets at the tone of excitement that his messages of the previous day, dealing with evacuation plans, had conveyed. And at 6 PM, local time, of the 2nd (021100Z January 1961), he reported that pressures had lessened, that no further evacuations were contemplated; planes formerly standing by for evacuation had been released, and that the ban on travel of American newsmen and other private citizens had been lifted.^{2/} There was little or no mention of Vietminh intervention in the available traffic on 1 and 2 January. And the Naval Intelligence Summary on the Laos Situation drafted by the Flag Plot and sent out by the CNO under DTG 032333Z, spoke solely of "Kong Le/Pathet Lao forces" attacking Plaine des Jarres and Xieng Khouang from the east, and mentioned only PL -- no Vietminh -- in connection with attacks on Ban Ban and Nong Het. On 5 January 1961, the FAL Director of Plans and Studies of the Ministry of Defense announced that Ban Ban which had been reported occupied by the enemy, had in fact never been lost.^{3/}

103. With the excitement largely subsided, the ambassador in Vientiane sent to Washington at 9 PM, local time, on 3 January, an appraisal of what had happened in Laos in which all Country Team members concurred. The high points of this appraisal are as follows:

- 1/ ChPEO to CINCPAC, PEO-140, DTG 010558Z January 1961, SECRET.
- 2/ Vientiane EmbTels 1222, 1 January 1961, SECRET, and 1233, 2 January 1961, CONFIDENTIAL.
- 3/ ChPEO to CINCPAC, PEO-175, DTG 050850Z January 1961.

"PL/KL forces strengthened by numerous Vietminh cadres and technicians and well supplied with mortars and ammunition and other materiel by Soviet airlift now occupy the strategic area of Plaine des Jarres, including airfields at Phong Savong and Plaine des Jarres. They also hold Nong Het and Vang Vieng. Other PL troops are scattered as previously reported throughout the country.

"FAL has retaken Xieng Khouang town and its airport. Situation LP appears reasonably satisfactory. Position Phong Saly still unclear despite fact Kham Ouan has asked for rice from Phoumi which latter has directed be furnished.

"Dec 29/30 reports entry substantial Vietminh units in country are still unconfirmed and there is no present indication, inside Laos at least, of any substantial Vietminh invasion. There has undoubtedly been some movements into country near frontier to throw defenders off balance and to be basis for Psywar dissemination of terrifying rumors. Reports attacks on Thakhek have proven completely unfounded...

"(The) question of Communist intentions is of course crucial. They may be engaged in probing action to determine U.S. reactions... They may simply have seized opportunity provided by establishment USSR diplomatic relations (with Souvanna)... and doubt as to legality Boun Oum govt to expand drastically PL influence... They may be trying to establish buffer area in northern Laos... They may be planning to try to divide country by establishing a belt across the Sam Neua, Plaine des Jarres, Paksane axis. They may be trying to establish a territory for a rival Govt. They undoubtedly want to improve their bargaining position at any possible future conference table. Or they may be laying basis for actual invasion...

"To sum up, therefore, as of this evening we see materially strengthened PL/KL forces in improved strategic position, from which they can present constant threat to LP, Vientiane, Paksane or south...

"But we have no firm evidence of any major troop invasion from outside, although Vietminh and possibly Chinese and Russian experts and others are undoubtedly present in substantial numbers." 1/

104. During the critical phases of this episode, there was so much contradiction, confusion and ambiguity in the reports that came in that support could be found for almost any interpretation one chose, and no conclusive proof was available that any particular interpretation was completely wrong. This inescapable uncertainty and ambiguity in the situation forced everyone along the chain of command to depend as much or more upon his own background understanding of the factors involved than upon current intelligence, to appraise the significance of the events. It was inevitable, in these circumstances, that men should see in the confused outline of events what they expected to see. For as long as major doubt remained, judgment was generally rendered on

1/ Vientiane to SecState, NIACT 1249, Jan. 3, 9:00 PM, SECRET.

a seat-of-the-pants basis, because no more convincing basis existed. Interpretation of events among individuals and official stations differed predictably, therefore, according to their predilections, responsibilities and general background.

THE PROBLEM OF USING ARMED T-6's

Origins of the T-6 Program

105. Throughout the period from December to May, there was a recurring problem of possible use of armed T-6's. The problem varied in form: whether to use them at all, whether to man them exclusively with Lao pilot [] how to develop a satisfactory political basis for their use, what tactical ends to be sought by their use, and finally what forms of armaments to permit them to use. Most of the Lao pilots had been checked out in T-6's. There were over [] a few already equipped with wing-mounted 30-caliber machine guns equipment to handle 5-inch rockets, and racks for bombs up to 100 pounds. Here was a weapons system, certainly not very imposing, but one which appeared to be readily available and not too technically advanced to be used by at least some of the better trained Lao.

106. It was the search for means to combat both the Russian airlift and the logistic buildup made possible by the airlift that led to first consideration, in this period, of possible use of armed T-6's. On 20 December CINCPAC commented to JCS upon a suggestion that had apparently originated in Bangkok as follows:

"1. I imagine that Phoumi, Heintges and Brownfield would give their eyeteeth for some prop airplanes capable of shooting bullets, dropping bombs, firing rockets and spreading napalm. A few pilots on armed reconnaissance could find good hunting up Route 13 between Vientiane and Luang Prabang and in the vicinity of Xieng Khouang. I would not think of intervention but it seems to me

"2. Related subject: []

]"3. Bangkok to State 1033 and 1044 indicate that idea has already germinated, at least in part." 1/

1/ CINCPAC to JCS Washington, DTG 200322Z December 1960,
TOP SECRET.

107. [

] This suggestion from CINCPAC contained the main features of the T-6 program as it later developed. Its quick adoption probably owed something to the fact that it coincided with JCS concern over the buildup of the rebel forces by the Russian airlift [

108. The JCS reply to the CINCPAC suggestion came in two parts. First, CINCPAC's comments were asked upon a variety of measures then under consideration in JCS to combat the Russian airlift. The measures listed for consideration included the armed T-6 program as outlined by CINCPAC and also variations on it, [

] F8F's, and quite different types of action such as RTA anti-aircraft crews stationed at key points to interdict the Soviet IL-14's.^{3/} Second, at the same time, JCS had authorized CINCPAC to seek immediate agreements from [] that would be necessary to implement the suggestion. [

] CINCPAC immediately directed ChPEO and ChJUSMAAG, in

1/ CINCPAC to JCS, DTG 232339Z December 1960, TOP SECRET.

2/ JCSM-599-60, 22 December 1960, TOP SECRET.

3/ JCS to CINCPAC 987779, DTG 241717Z December 1960, TOP SECRET.

consultation and coordination with their respective ambassadors, to seek agreement for a program of this kind.^{1/} Convincing Phoumi was of course no problem. [

7 3

Political Basis for the Armed T-6 Program

109. At this point the development of a political basis for using armed T-6's became a foremost concern, and a pre-requisite to actual operations. On the evening of 27 December a message was drawn up by a member of the Laos Battle Staff giving advance notification to CINCPAC of agreements that had been reached that day in an interdepartmental meeting for a joint State/Defense message to be transmitted later to CINCPAC Polad and to Vientiane and Bangkok. That message was to give contingent authorization for the armed T-6 program. However, their actual use should be preceded by establishment of the necessary political basis. This would be provided by:

(1) issuance of a formal protest to the USSR against the illegal Soviet airlift; (2) instruction to the Lao delegation in the UN to circulate a memorandum on Soviet air space violations to other UN delegations, and (3) issuance of a statement that if air space violations continued the RLG would be forced to take defensive measures. Phoumi should be informed that the USG would favorably consider a request for armed T-6's upon fulfillment of these necessary political conditions. [

] However, the actual delivery of aircraft to Phoumi

1/ JCS to CINCPAC, 987781, DTG 241822Z December 1960, TOP SECRET; CINCPAC to ChPEO and ChJUSMAAG, DTG 250224Z December 1960, TOP SECRET.
2/ ChJUSMAAG to CINCPAC, MAO-3604, DTG 271015Z December 1960, TOP SECRET.

would remain subject to final approval by Washington, which would depend upon the development of the political basis as specified.^{1/}

110. [

] There was discussion of arming some of the FAL C-47's to harass the Soviet airlift, but when ChPEO suggested this to Phoumi the latter rejected it on the grounds that it would merely provoke the Russians to bring more and better firepower. In reporting this, ChPEO observed that Phoumi was reluctant to risk his aircraft and had resisted pressure to base them at Vientiane or elsewhere close to combat areas.^{2/}

111. The reports of widespread Pathet Lao activity and possible Vietminh invasion at this time inspired CINCPAC on 31 December to ask JCS to initiate interagency authorization for the transfer of the armed T-6's without waiting for the time-consuming development of a political basis for action.^{3/} There is no evidence that this led to any positive developments. Before any action could be taken, in fact, either on an inter-agency basis in Washington [

] this particular basis for a special sense of urgency was gone.

^{1/} JCS to CINCPAC, 987823, DTG 280225Z December 1960, TOP SECRET.

^{2/} ChPEO to CINCPAC, PEO-134, DTG 311130Z December 1960, TOP SECRET.

^{3/} CINCPAC to JCS, DTG 312322Z December 1960, TOP SECRET.

112. [

]

113. In Washington on 3 January the Department of State contributed its bit to the development of a political basis for T-6 employment by issuing a press release listing a total of 184 illegal Soviet and North Vietnamese airlift flights into Laos from 15 December 1960 to 2 January 1961.^{3/}

Questions of Restrictions Upon Use of Armed T-6's

114. At 3 o'clock on 6 January there was a meeting in the office of Assistant SecState Parsons to consider the problems involved in the proposed T-6 operation. The available record of the meeting does not indicate any JCS participation. DOD was represented by ASD/ISA Irwin and the ISA/Laos desk officer. Apparently, the meeting was occasioned by a message from Ambassador Brown urging restrictions on targets and armaments of the T-6's. The Assistant SecState read the Vientiane EmbTel of 5 January, which said the Country Team recommended that bombs not be used initially. Mr. Irwin argued that the planes and pilots had very limited capabilities

1/ ChJUSMAAG to ChPEO, MAO-8654, DTG 020450Z January 1961, TOP SECRET.

2/ ChJUSMAAG to CINCPAC, MAO-8659, DTG 021410Z January 1961, TOP SECRET.

3/ NYT, 4 January 1961, pages 1 and 8.

at best and that to restrict them further would merely alert the enemy without achieving any desired effects. Mr. Parsons replied that he had drafted a message approving the ambassador's recommendations because he believed that this was the position of the SecState. He said that an intelligence estimate predicted that any T-6 action would evoke a Communist counteraction and that the incoming administration would be squeamish about being presented an air warfare problem upon inaugural. Mr. Irwin countered by suggesting the desirability of a special air operation employing 3 F8F's, and recommended that a conference be set up later that afternoon between the CJCS, the SecState, and the Director of CIA, which meeting should be followed by White House presentation the following day. As the meeting ended, Mr. Parsons agreed to attempt to set up the meeting as proposed.^{1/}

115. Before the planned meeting could occur, CINCPAC wired JCS his strong objection to the prospect of the limitations upon T-6 uses which had been proposed by Ambassador Brown.

"...I would suggest that the Amb leave the choice of weapons to the judgment of the military authorities who can better assess what it takes to do the job... The thought that killing Communist armed revolutionists with bombs is more provocative than killing them with bullets or rockets would never occur to me...

"Amb. Brown's message indicates that he has no confidence in the present leadership in Laos to fight for and preserve their freedom and that, therefore, U.S. diplomacy must be deprived of the freedom of action which military power can provide... I think, however, that they can and will fight if we stand up along side of them..."^{2/}

^{1/} ISA/PER-Laos Desk Memo for the Record, 7 January 1961, TOP SECRET.

^{2/} CINCPAC to JCS, DTG 070320Z January 1961, TOP SECRET.

116. CINCPAC's recommendations on this score were not accepted, however, by the meeting. Notification of the decisions of the meeting were transmitted to CINCPAC in a message written by the Director of the Joint Staff (DJS) and released by the duty officer. The message conveyed authorization, on the basis of that meeting, for the immediate use of T-6's within Laos with the qualification that no bombs were to be employed. It specified further that first priority use should be against the Communist airlift either on or off the ground using either machine guns or rockets. Second priority was specified as troops, dumps, or other comparable military targets.^{1/}

First Missions of Armed T-6's

117. The delivery of the planes was delayed one day, from the 8th to the 9th, and shifted from Vientiane to Savannakhet, partially to avoid the press at Vientiane but more to permit a reception ceremony which Phoumi desired to hold in his southern Laos stronghold.^{2/} The first T-6 combat mission was flown as armed reconnaissance over the area between the Nam Lik River and Vang Vieng. Earlier in the day, a Russian biplane had been reported in this area. That was the first priority target, while a second priority target of the mission was an artillery position. The plane returned from the mission having found no aircraft or other military target; ammo was expended on 2 bridge sites with unknown results.^{3/} This was a disappointing initial venture for a weapons system that had been sought with such fervor.

118. CINCPAC was not pleased with the report of the mission, and later directed ChPEO that he wanted strikes with T-6's against specific targets located on the basis of competent

^{1/} JCS to CINCPAC, 988338, DTG 072101Z January 1961, TOP SECRET.

^{2/} ChPEO to ChJUSMAAG, PEO-226, DTG 081525Z January 1961, TOP SECRET.

^{3/} ChPEO to CINCPAC, PEO-252, DTG 110620Z January 1961, TOP SECRET.

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intelligence rather than armed reconnaissance sorties. On 15 January, T-6's were credited with destroying 2 large trucks at Vang Vieng, but on 17 January a T-6 was lost to ground fire. This was attributed to lack of skill of pilots and to lack of speed of the T-6's. These factors were later judged to make it unlikely that they could damage Communist aircraft on the ground with machine guns and rockets.^{1/}

(Catching the IL-14's in the air was equally unlikely because the IL-14's were faster.)

No Technical Evaluation of Armed T-6 Effectiveness

119. Evaluation of whether or not armed T-6's would be an effective weapons system against the IL-14 airlift would normally be considered a subject of technical military judgment. It had rarely been treated as such, however. The consideration, instead, had tended commonly to resolve itself into an argument over whether, as a matter of political policy, we ought to do something to stop the Soviet airlift; the question of technical feasibility of a particular means receiving little or no attention. An apparent exception to this is that the ineffectiveness of armed T-6's against the Soviet airlift and the PL logistic buildup had been foreseen, evidently on intuitive grounds, by ASD/ISA Irwin. It was also colorfully voiced by the [] in an incidental comment included in reconnaissance report submitted on the same day that the Lao pilots made their first, unpromising sortie. Reporting his observation of 3 IL-14's on the ground in the Plaine des Jarres area, [] described the FAL T-6's as a step in the right direction but like "sending a boy to do a man's job" and suggested that, instead, we should be interested in

^{1/} SCPEL, page 68, TOP SECRET.

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accepting the offer of the Vietnamese Air Force (VNAF) Chief of Staff to run AD-6 missions against the Russian airlift.^{1/}

120. An officer familiar with the operations of the T-6's at that time told the author of this study that a factor contributing to the ineffectiveness of the T-6's, both at this time and in later employments, was the inability of the Lao pilots to make a quick decision for a sudden attack. Instead of sighting a target quickly and coming on it suddenly, before defenses could be set up, the Lao pilots characteristically circled their targets several times, thus permitting machine gun and other ground defense equipment to be alerted and set up. If the T-6's then dared press the attack, they made good targets themselves.

Disillusion with T-6's as Weapon Against the Airlift

121. On 13 January the USSR denied that it had any connection with the airlift of military supplies to the rebels in Laos. This came as a considerable surprise because the planes bore Russian markings and the USSR had previously defended its airlift on the ground that it was continuing its entirely legal support of the legal government of Souvanna Phouma.^{2/} Perhaps the explanation is that this was viewed by the Russians as a preparation for their protest, 2 days later, to the provision of the armed T-6's to the RIG,^{3/} or for later supply of AA and other means of countering T-6's (and recce planes).

122. On 14 January CINCPAC picked up the suggestion of [] and asked the JCS that serious consideration

1/ USARMA/Vientiane to Hq. USAF, CX-11, DTG 111646Z January 1961, [] SECRET.

2/ NYT, 14 January 1961, pages 2 and 4.

3/ NYT, 17 January 1961, page .

be given to the offer of Lt. Colonel Vinh, CC of the VNAF, to provide AD-6 strikes against the Soviet airlift in response to Phoumi's request to the government of Vietnam. In urging consideration of this suggestion, CINCPAC observed that the T-6's were probably not adequate for the job that was to be done.^{1/}

123. The suggestion received brief consideration at the JCS level. On 17 January a draft memorandum to the SecDef was prepared which recommended that high level authorization be given to exploit the offer of the C/S VNAF. However, on 26 January the proposed memorandum was withdrawn at the request of its originator. The reasons for the withdrawal are not given, but it may be presumed either that the Vietnamese airmen had been speaking with enthusiasm rather than authority, or that other political considerations rendered the proposal impracticable, or both.^{2/}

124. The shooting down of a T-6 resulted in an early and emphatic judgment that they were ineffective against the Communist airlift because of their slowness in pursuit and because of the difficulty of catching aircraft on the ground. It was then urged that the best targets for the T-6's, instead of the airlift, were troops, gun positions, dumps, etc., and that to operate against these, the restriction on bombing should be lifted.^{3/} The efforts to find and authorize some such use for them in the months that followed will be described in a later section.

^{1/} CINCPAC to JCS, DTG 142055Z January 1961, TOP SECRET.

^{2/} JCS 1992/898, 17 January 1961, and note by Secretaries to the holders of JCS 1992/898, 26 January 1961, TOP SECRET.

^{3/} ChPEO to CINCPAC, PEO-332, DTG 181011Z January 1961, TOP SECRET; CINCPAC to JCS, DTG 182058Z January 1961, TOP SECRET.

~~TOP SECRET~~REAPPRAISALS OF POLICIES AND STRATEGIES IN EARLY JANUARY IN THE FIELD AND AT THE JCS LEVEL

125. U.S. appraisal of what it was possible to accomplish in Laos, and what U.S. policies and strategy should be, underwent a series of changes in the two months or more following the capture of Vientiane. These changes resulted partly from changes in the situation and partly from the somewhat different approach to the problem by the new administration. This section will describe studies and proposals by JCS, CINCPAC and the U.S. Ambassador in Laos up to the inauguration of the new administration.

JCS and CINCPAC Assessment of the Military Problem

126. In an apparent effort to get a rough measure of the magnitude of the military problem that we faced in Laos, the JCS dispatched an inquiry to CINCPAC on 3 January 1961 asking for CINCPAC's appraisal of the order of magnitude of ground, naval, and air forces -- either SEATO or unilateral U.S. -- that would be required to clean out Laos and restore an unacceptable degree of order to the country. It was specified that the estimates should assume no overt DRV or PRC intervention but should use the current levels of DRV volunteers, although none from the PRC. The inquiry explained that the JCS understood that the elimination of all guerrilla activity would be a long, tedious affair. Because of this, it was suggested that a reasonable objective would be to reduce the Kong Le and Pathet Lao forces to disorganized bands within a period of 30 to 45 days. The inquiry also cited a J-2 estimate that the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) would be able to move the equivalent of 4 divisions, at 80 percent strength minus

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artillery, in small units back and forth across the borders for guerrilla actions in Laos, more or less at will, posing as PL and receiving airlifted supplies. Support in excess of this, it was judged, could not remain covert.^{1/}

127. CINCPAC's reply came in about 2 days later. He prefaced his estimates by stating that he assumed the U.S. aim included, as a primary objective, confinement of operations to Laos, adding that if U.S. intervention brought an increased CommBloc intervention then the estimates he provided would have to be revised. He also remarked that it seemed extremely doubtful, in the light of guerrilla warfare experience, that Laos could be cleaned out in 30 to 45 days although he conceded it would be possible to break the grip of the Kong Le/Pathet Lao/Vietminh hold on the Plaine des Jarres and Xieng Khouang areas in such a time frame. With these reservations, CINCPAC estimated the job could be done with a 2-brigade task force consisting of one ABG and 2 Battle Groups (BG's) from USARPAC, plus 3 BLT's from the Fleet Marine Forces, Pacific (FMFPAC), which with supporting air and ground elements would total approximately 24,000 personnel. In addition, there would be an attack carrier force plus other naval support. If SEATO supplied half, the U.S. would then need to supply only about 12,000 personnel. CINCPAC closed his reply by dissenting from the judgment that as many as 4 80-percent PAVN divisions could be called covert.^{2/}

128. The JCS inquiry originated in the Laos Battle Staff and apparently it was intended to elicit information that

^{1/} JCS to CINCPAC, 988094, DTG 032312Z January 1961, TOP SECRET.

^{2/} CINCPAC to JCS, DTG 060054Z January 1961, TOP SECRET.

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might be used for development of policy recommendations in the JS for consideration at higher echelons. There is no evidence of policy-making activity at the national level at that particular time, however much there was two weeks later. It was, in fact, a period when binding decisions were deliberately being delayed when possible to avoid committing the incoming administration. Operationally, this was the time when the climb-down from the DEFCON-2 status was being accomplished. On 5 January Minimize was cancelled, and on 7 January the readiness condition was reduced from DEFCON-2 to DEFCON-3, with Task Groups 70.4, 77.7 and 76.5 withdrawn from standby positions off Vietnam; and the transports off-loaded their troops in Okinawa.^{1/} The best present interpretation of the inquiry is that the Laos Battle Staff was anticipating the need for reconsideration of policies and programs that would be felt a few days later (11 January, see below) at the JCS echelon.

CINCPAC-JCS Relationships in Planning Functions, and Inadequacies in Political Assumptions

129. In these activities, as in many others, including some to follow very soon (see pages 74-78), the JCS, and the Laos Battle Staff acting on their behalf, were functioning as an intermediary between CINCPAC and policy-making echelons in Washington. The JCS commonly depended upon CINCPAC for specific knowledge of the situation in his area, including matters of politico-military policy, and for ideas concerning courses of action. The JCS rarely failed to concur in CINCPAC's policy proposals. It happened more than once in the Laos incident, however, that CINCPAC found military suggestions originating in the Joint Staff politically not feasible. The JCS

^{1/} Commander 7th Fleet to 7th Fleet, Weekly Summary 5-12 January 1961, DTG 120804Z January 1961, CONFIDENTIAL.

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inquiry to CINCPAC of 3 January, as one example, contained a statement of possible U.S. objectives that CINCPAC felt it necessary to qualify before he could respond to it.

130. Concerning the estimates of military requirements supplied by CINCPAC in response to the JCS inquiry, it should be noted that they were keyed to an assumption that there would be no CommBloc intervention, and were explicitly stated to be valid only so long as that assumption proved to be true. No estimates were provided of military requirements in the event of an increased CommBloc intervention. This is significant because the possibility of a larger scale CommBloc intervention was the contingency most feared by policy makers at the national level. Further, it is to be noted that CINCPAC was obliged to provide his own assumptions that a primary aim of U.S. policy was the confinement of U.S. operations to Laos.

131. This episode illustrates a frequently recurring difficulty in making application of political statements of national policy objectives to the planning of practical military measures to attain those objectives. The available guidance was NSC 6012, as last amended on 25 July 1960. (The semi-annual reappraisal of operations plans for Mainland Southeast Asia by the Operations Coordinating Board on 4 January 1961 was concurrently deferring changes in plans and guidance until the situation became clearer.) The full text of this guidance is given in Appendix "B" of Part I of this study (at page 281). The thread of the present argument may be sustained, it is believed, by citation of the most pertinent phrases from that document:

"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 Encourage Laos to formulate and implement a broadly conceived security plan

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"In the provision of U.S. assistance, direct our programs to the promotion of social and economic progress

"Continue to promote conditions engendering confidence by Lao leaders that the U.S. Charter, SEATO, and Free World Support provide a favorable basis for Lao resistance to Communist pressure and inducements"

132. The distance between such homiletics and a practical program to meet the situation of early January 1961 -- with Kong Le being built up rapidly in the Plaine des Jarres by the Soviet airlift -- was great. This existing guidance could be given relevance to immediate problems of military planning for the specific situation then confronting the U.S., only by moving from the plane of political generality in the NSC statement to a plane of political specificity as immediately and directly addressed to the problem itself as the military plan had to be. Since those presumably expert in political matters had not done this, the task was accomplished, for better or for worse, by the military.

The Ambassador's Reappraisals and Proposals

133. From another angle, at about the same time, there was a separate and considerably different approach to the problem of reappraising U.S. policy and plans. On 7 January, Ambassador Brown attempted a summary of the situation in which he listed 4 alternative lines of U.S. policy for Laos. One alternative would be an appeal by the RLG to SEATO for a military solution, with the U.S. carrying most of the burden. This, he argued, would probably split SEATO and would be labeled provocation by the CommBloc and by neutrals. A second alternative would be to have the RLG appeal to the UN. This would probably encounter a Soviet veto in the Security Council, thus throwing the issue into the General Assembly. A third alternative would be a reconvoation of the Geneva Conference. This step is what the CommBloc had been asking, and would require the U.S.

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to sit down with PRC and DRV. A variation would be a reactivation of the ICC without reconvoation of the Geneva Conference, which would constitute a victory for the Comm-Bloc, forcing the RLG to accept the return of the PL to a legal status. The fourth alternative, and the one most favored by the U.S. Ambassador, would be to induce the RLG to ask Cambodia or India to arrange a commission of Asian neutrals to supervise the neutrality of Laos.^{1/} This is the first reference we have to this idea, that later was to be major U.S. policy proposal under the name of a Neutral Nations Commission.

Policy Studies Within the Joint Staff

134. On 11 January the JCS approved JCS 1992/894, TOP SECRET, "Courses of Action in Laos" (U). This report was prepared by J-5 and had been completed 30 December 1960. It constituted a major effort to reconsider U.S. military and political policy toward Laos. The JCS recommendations of 1992/894 were forwarded to the SecDef on 14 January as JCSM 13-61 with a copy of CINCPAC. It included another effort to be specific enough about political aims to provide definite basis for specific military proposals. JCSM 13-61 recommended that the immediate U.S. objective in Laos should be to assure that the Boun Oun/Phoumi government would control the principal population and communication centers, and that we should take whatever steps were needed to attain this objective. The recommended ultimate objective was that all of Laos should be controlled by a unified, friendly, national government of Laos. As means to obtain these objectives, the JCS proposed that the U.S. should take immediate steps to establish a legitimate MAAG, to increase equipment and personnel support to FAL, to increase [] support of

^{1/} Vientiane EmTel, No. unknown, DTG 071250Z January 1961, cited in SCPEL, p. 74, TOP SECRET.

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the Boun Oum/Phoumi regime and to take over direct responsibility for the FAL training program. Finally, it was recommended that the U.S. should seek SEATO recognition of the Boun Oum/Phoumi regime and get SEATO approval of an intervention in Laos along the lines of MPO Plan 5/60, or, failing this, an intervention by individual SEATO nations with the U.S. bearing the major burden. These recommendations concerning national policy and objectives were, quite clearly, the product of the Joint Staff working alone.

135. On 11 January, the same day that JCS 1992/894 was approved, the CJCS initiated still another reconsideration of policies as a result of reactions of incoming SecDef McNamara and incoming SecState Rusk to a briefing on Laos that had been presented to them. (The reason for this apparent duplication, or repetition, of effort is not clear. It could have represented an effort by the CJCS to bring CINCPAC more fully into the act; or it could have reflected a judgment by the CJCS after his meeting with the incoming Secretaries, that they were looking for something that would not be satisfied by JCS 1992/894.) The CJCS explained that the JCS might soon be asked for comprehensive recommendations on Laos. He recommended therefore that CINCPAC be asked to review all actions under way and to make recommendations for new actions, assuming that the U.S. would fully and energetically support such a program. The CJCS recommended that, in the meantime and while CINCPAC was preparing his response, the Joint Staff should reexamine the situation in Laos and provide recommendations on "political-military actions" in support of the recommendations anticipated

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from CINCPAC. The Chairman's memorandum setting forth these views was referred on 13 January to J-5 for priority comments and recommendations.^{1/} The request for CINCPAC's recommendations went out on the afternoon of 13 January in a message written in J-5. The message asked CINCPAC to review all actions under way to improve the effectiveness of operations in Laos, and requested him to recommend additional actions that would contribute to the early achievement of a satisfactory situation, assuming U.S. readiness to provide required funds, resources, and energetic support.^{2/} It was on the following day that an information copy of JCS 1992/894 was transmitted to CINCPAC.

136. In this period, diplomatic sparring over possible reactivation of the ICC complicated the problems of policy planning. On 13 January there had been a State/JCS meeting devoted largely to discussion of U.S. policy toward the proposals being made for reactivation of the ICC. This meeting was occasioned by the fact that on 2 January the U.K. had responded to the RLG's appeal for aid against DRV invasion with a proposal to reconvene the ICC. When this proposal was referred to the RLG, the latter responded ambiguously on 4 January, and on 7 January appeared to favor the idea. This was scarcely the position the U.S. would have desired the RLG to take. At this time, the U.K. sought India's support for the idea. The State representatives at the meeting (Undersecretary Merchant and ASec Parsons) explained that U.S. policy at the time was to avoid a frontal rejection of the proposal and to express agreement with the professed objectives of the ICC but not to agree in detail to actual reactivation of the ICC or to any other actions that would limit U.S. freedom to act in Laos, unless other guarantees were given that would assure achievement of a Laotian government

^{1/} CM 58-61, 11 January 1961, Memorandum for JCS, subject:

"Laos," from CJCS, TOP SECRET; Enclosure to JCS 1992/897.

^{2/} JCS to CINCPAC 988690, DTG 132137Z January 1961, TOP SECRET.

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that would have a pro-Western orientation, although it would profess to neutrality.^{1/} Any consideration of the ICC tended to discourage consideration of measures to aid Phoumi that would reveal too openly the American participation.

137. On 17 January the DJS submitted a draft memorandum, staffed by J-3, and which was a preliminary response to the 11 January request of the CJCS, stimulated by the new reports of the buildup on the Plaine des Jarres, and was turned out on the Sunday preceding the Inauguration. It took the form of a draft memo proposed to be sent by the SecDef to the SecState, which said, in sum, that the U.S. should take immediate action to destroy or reduce the PL/CommBloc buildup in Laos, or else forego U.S. national objectives in Laos. To avoid the latter course, it was proposed that authorization be sought for:

- a. Earliest possible completion of arrangements with SVN and Thailand for the use of their aircraft and pilots,
- b. Stimulate the RLG to request this help from these governments,
- c. []
- d. Control of these air operations by a joint operations group manned by experienced fighter-bomber personnel.

138. This proposal probably reflected some advance knowledge of the contents of CINCPAC's formal reply to the 13 January query, which reply came in a few hours later (at DTG 180200Z). Before the proposal drawn up on 17 January could be acted upon by the JCS, however, it was withdrawn from formal considerations. But the specific suggestions included in it were taken up among those listed "for later consideration" in the long meetings at State that began on the day of the inauguration.^{2/}

^{1/} ASD/ISA Memorandum for the Record, I-12163/61, "State-JCS Meeting held 13 January 1961," SECRET.

^{2/} JCS 1992/902, 19 January 1961, and "Note by the Secretaries to the Holders," 26 January 1961, TOP SECRET.

139. Late on 17 January CINCPAC responded to the JCS request of 13 January for a summary of current activities in Laos and a recommended program of additional actions to be considered. Summarizing current activities, he first noted that, before mid-December, the U.S. had done nothing except pay FAL troops, give some limited training, and provide some food and minor equipment items. As of the present, JTF-116 was activated, and although its alert status had been somewhat relaxed, it was ready for operations on short notice. [

] The A/USAIRA's from Saigon and Vientiane were now getting good visual reports and photos showing the rebel buildup. Actual military operations in Laos were in the hands of the PEO, [

] Six Lao pilots were undergoing T-6 training and 2 U.S. fighter-bomber pilots were on temporary assignment to the PEO staff in Vientiane to give technical advice for the T-6 operations. The U.S. currently was supporting a FAL of 29,000 and in addition, 28,000 "Auto-Defense Corps" (ADC) - a sort of Laotian Home Guard. [

] [

140. CINCPAC's recommendations for additional measures were as follows:

a. Air support for the RLG offensive in the Plaine des Jarres, possibly using Republic of Vietnam (RVN) pilots,

b. []

c.]

]

d. Convert 2 FAL infantry battalions to paratroop battalions,

e.]

]

f. Convert PEO to overt MAAG,

g. Authorize MAAG advisers at company level,

h.]

]

i. Allocate \$10 million contingency funds to get operations out of hand-to-mouth status. ^{1/}

CINCPAC's recommendations will be found to turn up in both JCS and national level deliberations.

141. On 19 January, the SecDef forwarded a letter of policy recommendations to the SecState, many of which were based on JCSM 13-61 of 14 January, which carried the recommendations of the J-3 study begun in December and approved 11 January (JCS 1992/894). The SecDef's letter to the SecState in fact included JCSM 13-61 as an Enclosure. The study resulting from the CJCS's request of 11 January (JCS 1992/903) was not approved by the JCS until 23 January, the same day that the President was giving his approval to a policy and program developed by the interdepartmental task force on Laos. (JCS 1992/903 is summarized below on page .) However, as noted in the paragraph above, some of the ideas elicited from CINCPAC especially for this study were informally injected into the considerations of the Task Force and at the White House. Thus, although formal staff procedures were not executed promptly enough to have the formal study ready before high level decisions were made, its main ideas were made available through informal channels.

^{1/} CINCPAC to JCS, DTG 180200Z January 1961, TOP SECRET.

II. FROM THE INAUGURATION []RECONSIDERATION OF POLICY BY THE NEW ADMINISTRATION

142. The new administration took office on Tuesday, 19 January. The same day, a strenuous and concerted effort was begun, at high interdepartmental levels, to review comprehensively the Laotian problem and to develop a political and military policy to cope with it. It is evident that much work in preparation for these meetings had been accomplished, in State and in OSD/ISA, before they began at 2 P.M. on 19 January in the State Department. The brainstorming effort was conducted over a period of 5 days. The interdepartmental working group, as it was then called, met on 19, 20 and 21 January to develop a program to be recommended to the SecState. The program developed by this group was presented to SecState, the CJCS and to Mr. McGeorge Bundy on 22 January. And the program that emerged from the meeting on 22 January was presented the next day at the White House to the President. At that meeting the President approved some of the recommendations, leaving others in a deferred category for further consideration and possible later action. With this general outline of the procedure in mind, let us examine both the steps that were taken and the substantive considerations and recommendations that were involved.

The Working Meetings at State

143. In the 3 days of working meetings at State, there were 6 representatives from the State Department, headed by the Director of Policy Planning Staff and by Ambassador Bohlen. The DOD representation was headed by the ASD/ISA (Mr. Nitze), who was aided by the Laos desk officer. A Deputy Director for Operations (Mr. Bissell) represented CIA. JCS was represented

on the final day only, by the officer from the Contingency Plans Branch in J-5 who was most active on matters pertaining to Laos. 19 January was devoted to a general orientation. 20-21 January were devoted to consideration of 12 draft enclosures prepared by OASD/ISA and State.

144. Enclosures 1 through 8 were submitted by OASD/ISA. Enclosure 1 presented the possible military objectives in Laos in terms of 4 alternatives ranging from bare maintenance of the RLG to wiping out all PL resistance, and suggested major factors to be taken into account in choosing between them. It was apparently offered as an introductory, generalized think-piece, and no action was taken upon it. Enclosure 2 began with an assumption that neither political nor military measures alone were sufficient to provide a satisfactory solution. From this point it was argued that whereas political and military measures needed to be concurrent, an improved military position was prerequisite to political progress. Enclosure 2 then listed 15 specific measures, several of which survived in later rewrites and were presented for approval to the President on 23 January. Enclosure 3 was a brief general review of the background and development of the current situation in Laos leading up to, but not explicitly presenting, general policy recommendations. Enclosure 4 was devoted to identifying and describing the political and military assets estimated to be available to each side in the area. Enclosure 5 consisted of 9 suggested military actions, all but one of which were approved and included in the final recommendations of the group. Enclosure 6 consisted first of 5 and later of 7 somewhat more daring suggestions of military action, most of which found their way later into a list of measures marked for later consideration at the 23 January White House meeting. Enclosure 7 listed "broad policy alternatives available." This was a theoretical excursion ranging from a generalized suggestion to exploit the evident desire of Russia to avoid nuclear war in China to emphasis on minor actions hopefully involving minimum risk of military escalation and maximum potential political benefits.

145. Enclosures 8 through 12 were State Department submissions. One concentrated upon the low morale of FAL, implying that U.S. policy should not rely upon its effectiveness. Another urged that the U.S. should make it fully evident that we would accept a truly neutral Lao government if that government were able to protect itself from subversion. Another concentrated on the point that Russia was the key to the situation, and that it was unwise to approach Russia for a solution until we possessed superior military-political assets in Laos. Another proposed a Neutral Nations Commission under a Sihanouk-Savang agreement, along with discouragement of further talk of ICC rehabilitation.

146. The Director of the Policy Planning Staff of State agreed to put together, from these drafts, a single set of recommendations for consideration first by the SecState and thereafter by the President. The sense of the meeting was that the proposed military actions agreed upon by the working group should be included as part of the recommendations in the paper to be presented to the SecState. "Purely political considerations," presumably, would be left for determination by the State Department as distinct from the interdepartmental working group. At the conclusion of the three-day working session, the J-5 representative and the Laos desk officer of OASD/ISA recommended to the Director of the Policy Planning Staff that the CJCS be invited to attend the next day's meeting.^{1/} The Director replied that he believed the SecState had already invited him.

The Meeting For The Secretary of State

147. The meeting on 22 January was attended by SecState Rusk, by the CJCS and his special assistant for policy, by the ASD/ISA,

^{1/} The account of the meetings of 19-21 Jan. is based upon the Memo for Record on these meetings in the OASD/ISA-FER-Laos Desk file, dated 21 Jan. 61 (with drafts of the enclosures), TOP SECRET.

by Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, Mr. McGeorge Bundy, and by several others from the working group. Following a long and apparently discursive discussion, the SecState summarized his views:

- a. Increase support to Phoumi short of committing the U.S. flag.
- b. Pursue diplomatic possibility of a neutralized Laos.
- c. Take some actions to assure SEATO nations that problems in Laos do not relate to what we would do if they got into trouble.

148. The CJCS and his special assistant for policy then recommended that:

- a. Financial restrictions for aid be lifted,
- b. Positive steps be taken to increase aid to Sarit and Diem, 2 Regimental Combat Teams (RCT) to the former and 20,000 men to the latter, and
- c. Be careful not to let it appear the U.S. accepts the Neutral Nations Commission idea out of weakness.

149. The SecState then concluded by recommending that the briefing to the President on the following day should begin by a military briefing by the CJCS, after which there would be a brief statement of ongoing negotiations by the Assistant Secretary of State for Southeast Asian Affairs. After this, there would be a discussion of the conclusions, which would be as prepared by the working group during the previous 3 days. Finally, the SecState advised the group that the President would probably want most to know what he would have to do to break the log jam. The group should be able to say how quickly and quietly we could interdict the Russian airlift.^{1/}

^{1/} Memo for the Record, "State/Defense Meeting on Courses of Action in Laos," 22 Jan 61, by D. C. Pollock, Col., USMC, Contingency Plans Branch, J-5, TOP SECRET.

The White House Meeting of 23 January

150. At the White House meeting on 23 January, the center of attention was upon the recommendations presented to the President by the working group on Laos. The meeting began with a military briefing by the CJCS, after which the SecState presented the main elements of the State/Defense/CIA task force paper. In discussion the political steps to be taken in coordination with the military measures being considered, the SecState said that a first step would be to consult with major allies and attempt to develop a common strategic approach. Meanwhile, the ICC maneuver already set in train by the British would be permitted to run its course. Also, in the meantime, the Neutral Nations Commission approach would be used as a counter to a possible UN move on Laos. And finally, the U.S. would explore measures for joint SEATO action and possibly a SEATO commission.

151. The recommendations were arranged in 2 groups. The first group was listed as "Courses of Action to Improve the Military Situation." These were further labeled "Actions to be Taken Immediately," with details of timing and implementation to be left to CINCPAC. The SecDef, who was present at this meeting, is recorded as having commented that the recommended measures would be helpful, but that they were not enough to reverse the unfavorable long-term trend. It is noteworthy, and characteristic of much of our experience in Laos, that this observation was made, was apparently accepted, and yet the consideration of the proposed measures proceeded as if such a judgment had never been expressed. The measures were:

a. [

b. [

c. [

]

d. [

]

e. [

]

f. [

]

g. [

h. [

]

i. Make \$10 million drawing account for special requirements available to ChPEO and CINCPAC to cover deficit and meet current requirements.

132. In addition to these approved proposals there were additional military proposals not recommended for immediate adoption because they were considered either politically less attractive (risky) or of a long-term nature, and therefore reserved for possible future consideration and use. They included:

a. [

]

b. [

]

c. Preparation for commitment of U.S. aircraft if ChiComs start fighter escort of airlift.

d. [

]

- e. Remove restriction on use of bombs and napalm by T-6's.
- f. Augment FAL airlift with volunteer aircraft and personnel.

153. In commenting upon the briefings the President is reported to have expressed concern at the apparent weakness of our military position in Laos and at the weakness of allied support over our policies in that area. Our record of this meeting is a memorandum written by ASD/ISA to the SecDef making a record of the event. The ASD/ISA said that the President appeared to authorize, but not to direct, all of the courses of action proposed in the first group. The ASD/ISA remarked that he felt it necessary to reassure himself on this point by a later telephone call to Mr. McGeorge Bundy. On the basis of this telephone call he affirmed the approval, but said that proposal c. was subject to clarification by State and Defense concerning the legal status

[
] ^{1/} Mr. Bundy provided written confirmation of Presidential decisions by sending identical memos to the SecState and the SecDef saying that "after listening to the discussion, the President approved the immediate military and paramilitary proposals outlined in subparagraphs a. through i. However, understood that increased activity by U.S. military personnel in Laos would be authorized only in the light of advice from Vientiane. Political negotiations and proposals were left in the hands of the SecState in accordance with the outline of prospective immediate steps which he presented."^{2/}

154. At this White House meeting, the officers with continuity of experience in dealing with the U.S. effort in Laos were not

^{1/} Memo to SecDef from ASD/ISA, "White House Meeting on Laos, January 23, 1961," signed by Paul H. Nitze, being 1-18062/61, 23 Jan 61, TOP SECRET.

^{2/} Memo from Mr. McGeorge Bundy to the Sec State and SecDef, 23 Jan 61, Subject: "Discussion on Laos in the Cabinet Room, 23 Jan 61," SECRET.

present. This is one of several occasions on which JCS and DOD personnel with continuity of special knowledge of events and programs were excluded from participation in meetings as issues reached the higher echelons at which important and binding decisions were made. The program as developed was not attributed, at the time, to those with regular staff planning functions: a memo to the CJCS from the Military Assistant to the SecDef, written 3 days later, said "the current approved plan (for Laos) is that developed by Nitze, McGee and Bissell last weekend."^{1/}

155. The situation in Laos had been found to be unmistakably deteriorating. The measures already in effect had demonstrably failed to halt that deterioration. Three general lines of alternative policy had been considered: (a) a primarily political solution, with little or no increase in use of force, (b) [

] (c) an attempt to strengthen our position by overt military actions. The decision at the national level at this time was to adopt the second of these alternatives, a policy that may have been judged a compromise between two extremes. [

Although documentation is not available to prove the point, oral testimony has been received -- and it is believed to be essentially true -- to the effect that these policy decisions on Laos were part of a larger decision. [

] Such a decision, of course, involved a choice of both the nature of the measures whereby U.S. policy was to be implemented and of the agency given responsibility for the execution of those measures.

^{1/} Memo for CJCS from George S. Brown, E/G, USAF Military Assistant to SecDef, 26 Jan 61.

[] were chosen. C 2

And it will be observed that in the events of the next three months, the major continuing role of the JCS and of the U.S. military establishment, with respect to Laos, []

JCS 1992/903

156. On the same day that the President was approving the program presented by the interdepartmental task force, the Joint Chiefs were approving a policy proposal addressed to the same general problem. This was in response to the memo of the CJCS on 11 January. On 23 January they approved a memo to be sent to the SecDef the following day. This memo described the U.S. interest in Laos, expressing the judgment that it was essential to prevent Laos from falling into Communist hands because if that should happen the other non-Communist nations of Southeast Asia would be helpless. For these reasons, it urged that the U.S. accept as a minimum goal that "the U.S. should take any action necessary to enable the Boun Oum/Phoumi government to maintain control of the principal population and communication centers in Laos." (This was a restatement of the goal previously approved in JCS 1992/894.)

157. In pursuit of this goal the memorandum went on to state that "the U.S. must . . . be prepared to take any steps necessary, to include overt U.S. intervention which would probably eventually involve sizable U.S. forces." As specific measures to achieve these goals, the memorandum included an expression of "recommended political/military actions in Laos,"

which was based largely on the recommendations provided by CINCPAC's message DTG 180020Z, January 1961.^{1/}

INITIAL STEPS TO IMPLEMENT WHITE HOUSE DECISIONS

158. The policy guidance resulting from the 23 January White House meeting was transmitted to CINCPAC on 26 January in a message written by the Laos Battle Staff. The three-day interval is probably explainable by the fact that 24 January was a Sunday and the message, when sent, was evidently based upon a canvas to assure definite assignment of administrative responsibility, for the approved measures, among the different agencies concerned. [

- a. [
- b. [
- c. [
- d. [

- a. [
- b. [
- c. [

^{1/} JCS 1992/903, 24 Jan 61, TOP SECRET. The memo to the SecDef was forwarded as JCSM-34-61, 24 Jan 61. A copy of the Joint Chiefs memo and enclosure was forwarded by the SecDef to the SecState on 28 Jan 61 in a letter that called attention to the substantial area of agreement between the recommendations of the Joint Chiefs and the recommendations of the interdepartmental task group on Laos. See note by the Secretaries to the holders of JCS 1992/903, 2 Feb 61.

d. []

159. In addition to these measures, CINCPAC and ChPEO were to have additional funds to cover the existing deficiency and meet current needs, plus \$10 million for special requirements. The message ended with a qualification upon the use of PEO as tactical advisers. This qualification directed that the instructions given by JCS 984040, DTG 081653Z Oct 60, might not be exceeded until explicitly directed.^{1/} The earlier directions had been to the effect that "personnel under command [of] PEO will not repeat not serve with units in combat. However, AChPEO using caution and own judgment will assign personnel in advisory capacity in operations and logistics. Every reasonable precaution will be taken to avoid assignments that expose personnel to risk of capture."

160. At the end of January, PACOM forces earmarked for JTF-116 or in direct support thereof were on DEFCON 3. CINCPAC had requested and had been given an added C-130 squadron from the Continental U.S. (CONUS). Selected Seventh Fleet units were positioned in the South China Sea with one Marine BLT and helos aboard. HQ/JTF-116 was activated and alert. Photo recce aircraft were available on carriers, and added USAF photo recce aircraft were available at Clark Field. PACOM forces were prepared to begin landing U.S. forces in Laos in execution of CINCPAC OPLAN 32-59 within three days after order to execute.^{2/}

LAOS TASK FORCE MEETING OF 2 FEBRUARY

161. The Laos Task Force at that time was chaired by the ASecState SEA. The meeting of the Laos Task Force of 2 February

^{1/} JCS to CINCPAC 989331, DTG 261933Z Jan 1961, TOP SECRET.

^{2/} JCS 1992/912, 3 Feb 61, TOP SECRET.

1961 reviewed the status of both political and military affairs. Ambassador Brown, who had been recalled previously to Washington for consultation, attended this meeting along with the Assistant Secretary and six other State Department representatives, two representatives of CIA, the ASD/ISA and three others from OASD/ISA. From the JCS there were the special assistant to CJCS for policy, the Vice Director of the Joint Staff, and a representative of the Laos Battle Staff.

162. This meeting centered its attention mainly upon political problems. These included the unreadiness of the British and French to support fully the American approach to the Laos problem, difficulties within SEATO, and the position and prospects of a Neutral Nation Commission to supervise the neutrality of Laos. The chairman acknowledged receipt of the additional proposals for military measures received from the JCS and commented that whereas some seemed acceptable, others appeared to raise political problems. The record of the meeting indicates that most of the State representatives appeared more impressed with the necessity of preserving relations with our European allies and with the difficulty or impossibility of achieving our aims in Laos by purely military means. Those from JCS and DOD appeared on the whole to distrust purely political measures, such as the Neutral Nations Commission, to think that an improved military condition was a prerequisite to political strength, and to be much readier to adopt a go-it-alone policy in Southeast Asia. The available minutes did not indicate that any very urgent proposals were put before the group on this occasion, or that any specific decisions were reached, although the JCS delegation sought to get approval for a 9-team augmentation of the LTAG effort in Laos.^{1/} Decision on this matter was delayed a week.

^{1/} Memo for the Record of Meeting at State Department at 1400, 2 Feb 61, SECRET, in OASD/ISA-FER files.

OPLAN 32-59

163. The policy considerations of this period are best understood in the context of the operating plans then in effect. For a meeting on 22 January, the Southeast Asian Branch of J-3 prepared an extended briefing for the CJCS on OPLAN 32-59. This briefing had an apparent bearing not only on more general considerations of strategy, but also on the preparation of a specific capabilities study, JCS 1992/912, which was approved on 3 February and is discussed in detail below. It is important because it supplied the assumptions concerning military operations upon which both general strategic judgments on Laos, and the specific judgments set forth in the capabilities study, were based.

164. Phase II OPLAN 32-59 dealt with Communist-directed insurgency, insurgency as distinguished from overt aggression. The objective of Phase II operations was defined as to assist the recognized government to subdue and eliminate the Communist insurgents. The basic plan for Phase II, and the first three alternate plans, provided for movement of PACOM forces into Thai bases near the Laos border, and into the principal Mekong Valley cities of Laos, which would be occupied in order to free FAL for operations against the Pathet Lao. A recent alternate plan had been added which involved building up Marine strength in Vientiane as a first step, to be followed by the airdrop of an Army battle group in the Plaine des Jarres, or at Xieng Khouang or Luang Prabang, as would seem advisable. The para-dropped Army battle group would shortly thereafter be reinforced by two airlanded Marine battalions from those previously brought into Vientiane and Thailand. Air support would come from Thailand, the Philippines, carrier strike forces off Tourane, and from the Marine Air Group at Vientiane or Udorn. This new alternative involved more an aggressive and more activist intervention than had been contemplated before for Phase II. The plan had been developed at CINCPAC. What political guidance CINCPAC may have received through the CINCPAC political adviser (CINCPACPOLAD) is not known. We have no record of transmission of political inputs for these plans from JCS

to CINCPAC. As will become evident later, highest political authority was later to become deeply interested in details of military operation plans in Laos.

165. However, it is Phases III and IV that are of greatest interest. Phase III dealt with overt aggression by DRV. Phase IV dealt with overt aggression of both DRV and PRC. In the case of Phase III, it was assumed that any overt DRV attack would involve South Vietnam as a major object of DRV aggression. Phase III plans therefore called for maximum use of South Vietnamese forces to retard the DRV attacks in that area. If Phase II had been bypassed and Marine units had not already been committed to Laos, then they would be moved immediately to Tourane instead. Many other details were also made contingent upon the extent to which the U.S. or SEATO allied forces might be either available, or not available because otherwise committed, or withheld for unforeseeable policy reasons. For current considerations it is most important to note that the plan called for the earliest possible move on a major scale by U.S. and allied forces, from the sea, against the east-west axis of DRV generally in the Hanoi-Haiphong area, possibly in conjunction with another drive eastward across Laos into DRV from Thai bases. [

166. [

[

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THE MID-WINTER CAPABILITIES STUDY, JCS 1992/912

167. A major JCS capabilities appraisal at this period was conducted and first submitted on 30 January, as a report by J-5 in collaboration with J-2, J-3, J-4, and J-6, and approved as JCS 1992/912 on 3 February 1961. The title was, "Air and Sea Lift, Readiness and Posture of Laos." The problem for this study was posed in the following terms:

"In light of the actual situation existing in Laos, to determine:

a. What could be lifted by air and sea to Laos within 30 days,

b. If troops were to be committed, what could they achieve in the first thirty days and what implications would their commitment have upon U.S. readiness and posture?"

Three alternative assumptions were to be considered:

- a. No overt intervention by PRC or DRV,
- b. Overt DRV intervention,
- c. Overt intervention by both PRC and DRV.

The record does not disclose where the request for this study originated, nor how or why the problem was conceived and described in these terms.

168. The conclusions of the study were arranged in four groups:

- a. General conclusions,
- b. Lift and support capabilities,

1/ Based on a summary of CINCPACPLAN CPLAN 32-59, which is Tab C of "Working Paper for the CJCS for the State-Defense Meeting of 22 January 1961. Subject: 'Logistic and Command Problems Associated with Unilateral U.S. or Bilateral Intervention in Laos.'" TOP SECRET. The overall responsibility for this Working Paper, which consisted of several Tabs, was lodged with the International Policy Branch of J-5.

c. U.S. force capabilities in Laos in the first thirty days, and

d. Broad implications concerning U.S. readiness and posture.

169. Under general conclusions the study found that in such a limited war situation maintenance of continued capabilities was dependent upon a Presidential declaration of national emergency to initiate partial mobilization, to augment military lift, to expend more production, and to raise limitations on expenditures. Unilateral U.S. action was assumed, but it was also assumed that Thailand and the Republic of Vietnam (RVN) would cooperate fully to permit transit and land LOC's and provide terminal facilities.

170. On the subject of lift and support capabilities, the study reached five separate detailed conclusions. These were:

a. [

b. It was explicitly stated in estimating these deployments that it was preferable to develop a posture of overall strength in Southeast Asia rather than to develop a maximum concentration in Laos. (This appears to have reflected a presumption either that the purpose was less combat than a show of force or that any involvement would be in SEA generally.)

c. The existing logistic facilities and LOC's were described as marginal but could be made adequate for the operation as conceived by a maximum engineering effort.

d. Deployment of logistic support forces and PACOM reserve stocks would degrade U.S. logistic posture for general war or for an additional contingency. PACOM stock degradation would be for approximately 180 days. PACOM sea- and airlift would have to be augmented by resources drawn from other areas during initial deployment.

e. Communications, with augmentations already planned, were adequate.

171. There were five conclusions concerning the question of U.S. force capabilities in Laos in the first thirty days. These were:

a. With no overt PRC or DRV intervention, U.S. forces could protect key cities, communication centers, LOC's, and establish a secure base for either FAL or U.S. forces to defeat PL in the field.

b. With overt DRV intervention, U.S. forces would probably have the capability of fighting delaying actions and probably could hold Vientiane and Southern Laos.

c. "If there is both DRV and PRC intervention, capability of U.S. forces in Laos would be similar . . . to conditions of DRV intervention alone and would be dependent upon U.S. and allied counteractions taken in areas outside of Laos, but directly influencing operations in Laos." (Emphasis supplied)

d. Prepositioning U.S. forces in Thailand and forward deployment of naval and air units would enhance U.S. capabilities for intervention in Laos.

e. Although allied participation would increase Free World capability, the U.S. capability to support U.S. forces logistically would be reduced by the amount of U.S. logistic aid that would need to be diverged to allies.

172. [

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173. Under the heading of Broad Implications on U.S. Readiness and Posture, there were four further conclusions:

a. Overall capabilities for general war or for additional contingencies, although initially degraded by operations under consideration, would be later increased if the emergency proclamation measures indicated in the first general conclusion were taken.

b. [

]

c. Capabilities in the Western Pacific would be significantly enhanced by forward deployment into that area.

d. Capabilities of CONUS-based ground and TAC air forces to operate in other areas of the world would initially be reduced. But this imbalance could be restored as reserve forces were mobilized, increased, and trained. Naval capabilities in other areas of the world would probably be improved "because of increase in readiness and accelerated deployments."

Influence of Assumptions Upon Assessment of Capabilities

174. The findings of this study, and the policy implications of its findings, were determined largely by the particular way in which the problem was stated, by the questions that were not.

asked or made explicit, and by the assumptions. This is evident when the study is compared with the study of capabilities conducted during April and approved on 10 May. An account of this later study occurs in the appropriate place below. Suffice here to note that the emphasis upon logistical problems for a time limited to thirty days, plus the tacit assumption employed in part of the study that display of strength rather than combat would be the purpose, plus the assumption that PRC assistance to a DRV intervention would be very limited, [

] led to conclusions that were almost diametrically opposed to the conclusions of the later study. The reason for this is that the later study defined the problem differently, [] and directed attention to the follow-on problems of an initiating military action.

175. The major hesitations and misgivings of political authorities derived from their fears of enlarging the area of conflict and initiating an escalation that could become uncontrollable and lead to general war. Certainly many of these misgivings and hesitations were more a reflection of intuitive cautiousness than a calculated disapproval of the risks. But failure to deal head-on with the issues which caused hesitation and uncertainty did not result in any perceptible increase in political boldness. The political authorities wanted a convincing assurance that proposed military measures would succeed against responses that they believed they could foresee. Failure to deal explicitly with these feared responses did not induce new confidence.

CONTINUING EFFORT TO RENOVATE AMERICAN POLICY

176. The attempts to rethink American policy toward Laos that began with the inauguration of the new President continued well

~~TOP SECRET~~

into February. Ambassador Brown was recalled for consultation. The interdepartmental task force on Laos, manned by men from State, DOD, JCS, CIA and the White House, was established under State Department chairmanship, and there were frequent meetings of this group. This provided a more formal organization for dealing with the mixed political-military, overt-covert issues in Laos. But this task force, as such, made few decisions. Its function appears to have been mainly to screen recommendations developed by the staffs of member agencies before these recommendations were presented to the SecState and the White House for decision.

177. The participation of the State Department in policy discussions was strengthened, and the role of the JCS appears to have declined. [

] There was always White House representation at the meetings, but we have no record of that representation being empowered to act. Issues were commonly taken to the President for resolution, whereas during the last five months of the previous administration the President is known to have intervened to make decisions on only two occasions. But it was often difficult to get a problem before the President for decision at the time when the decision was needed, as will be repeatedly seen in examining the problems of getting responsible executive decision on questions of specific means of implementation. An added problem here was that specific measures known about at the White House generally needed clearance there; [

] The combination of political-military moves which were to comprise the new administration's first attempt at a coordinated new policy gradually came into being through the long series of interdepartmental conferences, and emerged as U.S. policy about 10 February.

178. At the meeting of the Laos Task Force on 7 February, the group was informed that the messages to the field providing guidance on U.S. policy were in process of clearance in DOD, State and the White House. The record of the meeting does not reveal

that any action was taken on specific measures at this meeting. The record does reveal, however, an interesting discussion of the relationship of political and military moves. In this discussion, Ambassador Bohlen and the White House representative (Mr. Rostow) emphasized their belief that successful military operations would have a favorable effect upon political negotiations, but that unsuccessful or stalemated military operations would weaken our political position. ASecState SEA Parsons and others from State emphasized their fears, however, that military operations would conceal our willingness to negotiate. These divergent views of the effect of military pressure upon negotiations are of interest. Discussions of the question of expected probability of success in military operations, which probably underlay some of the dispute, brought out that military planning was currently based on an assumption of no increase in aid to the Pathet Lao. This is another point of more than passing interest. The record does not show that this point was pressed, but in the context of other events the conclusion is suggested that an evident but not fully discussed lack of confidence in the prospects of success of military operations was the basis of much hesitancy of American policy-making at this time.^{1/}

179. The emergent policy was further discussed on 9 February at the 476th NSC meeting. The main points of the new policy, as made evident at that time, called for both diplomatic and military moves. Approved diplomatic moves were to:

- a. Strengthen the claims to the legitimacy of the present Laos government,
- b. Attempt to establish Neutral Nations Commission through invitation by King Savang Vathana,

^{1/} Memo for Record of Meeting at Department of State, 1000 hours, 7 February 1961, SECRET, in OASD/ISA-FER file.

- c. Increase efforts to enlarge the role of SEATO members either independently or in teams to formalize SEATO action,
- d. Explore possibilities of channeling all economic aid through an international mechanism,
- e. Seek to have all military assistance to Laos channeled through a Neutral Nations Commission.

Approved military moves were:

- a. Nine-thousand-eight-hundred man augmentation of Laos ADC forces,
- b. Four-battalion augmentation of legal FAL,
- c. [REDACTED]
- d. Augmentation of U.S. training effort in Laos by nine 8-man teams.^{1/}

130. In the formal instructions to the field on the Neutral Nations Commission proposal, it was emphasized that CommBloc opposition to the proposal was expected. It was also stated as an estimate that the Soviets might feel that time favored the PL and for that reason they would be reluctant to yield to purely political pressure. This led to the judgment that military pressures were also needed, and for this reason the recapture of the Plaine des Jarres was obviously important. The King and the RLG had already been coached to appeal for the formation of the Neutral Nations Commission, notably including Burma and Cambodia; this commission was somehow to report to the UN Security Council. The responsibility of the Commission would be to arrange for the cessation of all Soviet airlift and all other foreign military intervention (in terms of both personnel and provision of arms) in violation of existing international agreements.^{2/}

^{1/} From informal notes in OASD/ISA files, TOP SECRET.

^{2/} DepTel to Bangkok 1182, and to Vientiane 841, 1961 Feb 10, 9:22 P.M., SECRET.

The British Foreign Office had already been informed of the Neutral Nations Commission proposal, and although Her Majesty's Government found it acceptable they were apparently very pessimistic about the Soviet reaction to it. Also it did not fully satisfy the British stand that a truly neutral government would have to include Souvanna. The British also urged that the Neutral Nations Commission idea would need immediate support of the French, Australians, Cambodians, and Indians.^{1/}

181. On 19 February King Savang Vathana issued the planned proclamation, which stated the desires of the Kingdom of Laos for peace and for an end to foreign intervention. While insisting upon the full sovereignty of Laos, the King appealed to Cambodia, Burma and Malaya to form a commission which would come to Laos to establish publicly the peaceful intentions of the Kingdom of Laos, and to denounce foreign intervention which imperiled the independence, neutrality and integrity of the country. Finally, the proclamation asked the Secretary General of the UN to bring the proclamation to the attention of his organization.

182. The Lao declaration was favorably greeted by press releases from the State Department and the British Foreign Office, and was promptly denounced by Prince Souphannouvong, by Red China, and by the Soviet Union.^{2/} On 24 February, Prime Minister Menzies of Australia visited the President, and after consultations at the White House, expressed his country's support of the Neutral Nations Commission plan.^{3/} The following day, however, the bottom fell out of the Neutral Nations Commission plan when both Cambodia and Burma rejected participation

^{1/} Deptel to Bangkok 1183, and to Vientiane 842, 1961 Feb 10, 9:22 P.M., SECRET.

^{2/} NYT, 20 Feb 61, pp. 1, 3 & 12; NYT, 21 Feb 61, p. 6; NYT, 22 Feb 61, pp. 2 & 5; NYT, 23 Feb 61, p. 13.

^{3/} NYT, 25 Feb 61, p. 1.

in the plan on the grounds that they did not recognize the Boun Oum government.^{1/} This eliminated the key element in the diplomatic program, and left the U.S. with no strong political initiatives and no ready alternatives to the proposal to reactivate the ICC. How and why we had not ascertained the readiness of the key neutral nations to form a Neutral Nations Commission before we committed ourselves publicly to the idea is not known and is beyond the scope of this study.

THE PROGRESS OF FAL FROM THE YEAR-END SCARE TO THE FIASCO AT PHOU KOUN

183. The movement of Kong Le's main forces from the Vang Vieng area to the Plaine des Jarres at the time of the year-end scare upset the basis for the plans that had been drawn up by FAL, shortly after the reoccupation of Vientiane, for the reestablishment of RLG authority throughout Laos. The evident buildup of the Kong Le and Pathet Lao groups by the Soviet airlift, and the apparent renewed and strengthened activity of the Vietminh in support of these insurgent groups, changes the nature of the problem confronting FAL. The pressing problem was quickly recognized to be to break the hold of Kong Le and the PL on the Plaine des Jarres area.

FAL Occupies Vang Vieng But Temporarily Loses Phou Koun

184. Phoumi's first reaction was to attempt to step up the operation of GM-1 in its move to recapture Vang Vieng, and to reenforce some of the FAL garrisons located in areas bound to feel the pressure of Kong Le's strengthened and reinforced forces in the Plaine des Jarres area. GM-1 forded the Nam Lik River on 14 January and seized Vang Vieng on 16 January, in the face of what was apparently no more than very light rear-guard action. At this point, Col. Kouprasith, commanding the GM-1

1/ NYT, 26 Feb 61, p. 16.

returned with his staff to Vientiane where they received promotions, while the command of their forces was turned over to other officers. While GM-1 rested on its laurels in Vang Vieng, and its previous officers celebrated in Vientiane, the junction of Routes 13 and 7 and the junction town of Phou Koun were taken by the Pathet Lao without a struggle.^{1/}

Plans to Recapture the Plaine des Jarres

185. Meanwhile, on 10 January, ChPEO had reported to CINCPAC on a new plan developed by Phoumi for the recapture of the Plaine des Jarres. CINCPAC criticized it severely and suggested an alternative plan which would center upon a coordinated airborne and ground attack involving considerable augmented airlift.^{2/}

Phoumi's plan as reported on the 10th had, however, again been upset by the loss of Phou Koun and the junction of Routes 13 and 7. This called for a revision of offensive plans to include recapture of these lost positions. A plan was now drawn up which involved a movement of one group southward from Luang Prabang and another group northward from Vang Vieng to envelop the Phou Koun junction area. After Phou Koun and the highway junction were recaptured, the combined ground forces would then turn east to form the main part of an eastward attack on the Plaine des Jarres. In coordination with this eastward ground attack, two paratroop battalions were to be dropped a few miles east of the main Plaine des Jarres airfield. Capture of the airfield was to be followed up by the airlift of 2 infantry battalions into the airfield.^{3/}

186. In commenting on the plan, CINCPAC indicated his approval but emphasized that the operation would require close air support.

^{1/} SCPEL, pp. 61-65, TOP SECRET.

^{2/} ChPEO to CINCPAC, DTG 100946Z Jan 61, TOP SECRET: CINCPAC to ChPEO, DTG 182251Z Jan 61, TOP SECRET.

^{3/} SCPEL, p. 66, TOP SECRET: ChPEO to CINCPAC, PEO-Opt 421, DTG 261040Z Jan 61, TOP SECRET: CINCPAC to JCS, DTG 290340Z Jan 61, TOP SECRET.

He visualized that the decisive battle would most likely be fought at the point where Phoumi's ground forces, in approaching the Plaine des Jarres, had stretched their ground LOC's to the maximum. At this juncture, he reasoned, Kong Le would probably commit his full force and extraordinary measures would have to be taken to oppose Kong Le's counterattack successfully. This was the time, CINCPAC commented, to end restriction upon the use of bombs and napalm, upon use of AD-6 aircraft from SVN. [

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FAL Recaptures Phou Koun and Faces East on Route 7

187. The execution of the revised FAL plan began on 27 January with one Groupe Mobile moving southward from Luang Prabang. The GM moving north from Vang Vieng encountered some obstacles north of Muong Kassy, but no determined resistance, and it continued a slow advance. By 3 February the 2 GM's had retaken Phou Koun and the road junction, the enemy having withdrawn a short distance east on Route 7.

188. After some delay for reorganization, the FAL forces began to move eastward on Route 7. Phoumi had allowed a time element of seven days for his Plaine des Jarres attack, but when ChPEO on 4 February calculated the detailed air drop requirements of the planned assault, and added consideration of other logistic need, he concluded it would take 21 days.^{1/} Very soon the column moving east from Phou Koun ran into increased resistance and its progress was halted. Soon thereafter, a second FAL column, moving up toward the Plaine des Jarres from the south, also ran into resistance and stopped.^{2/} Thereafter, FAL stood still until Kong Le's troops took matters into their own hands on 6 March.

1/ ChPEO to CINCPAC PEO-Log 42, DTG 041444Z Feb 61, TOP SECRET.
2/ SCPEL, pp. 66-67, TOP SECRET.

The Phou Koun Fiasco

189. In a special report on 7 March ChPEO reported on the discouraging events of the preceding 24 hours. On 6 March, 2 platoons of Kong Le forces probed the FAL positions in the Phou Koun area, and the FAL forces withdrew. Two Kong Le companies were then funneled into the gap. At this point Col. Bounthieng, the local CO of FAL, ordered his battalion to withdraw. There followed a series of reports of attacks, in consequence of which one after another FAL element withdrew. At one juncture a T-6 was called in to attack the enemy but it attacked a FAL battery instead. No damage or casualties were inflicted, but the battery withdrew, perhaps more hurriedly than it would have otherwise. By the end of the day of the 6th, Bounthieng was back at the junction of Routes 7 and 13. By the morning of the 7th the situation had deteriorated further and by midday, the enemy controlled the junction and Bounthieng had withdrawn to the north. ChPEO referred to the withdrawn as "unjustified panic," and observed that the Kong Le forces did not vigorously exploit the opportunity presented to them. By mid-afternoon of the 9th, the Kong Le troops in their turn had stopped forward movement, seeming content merely to control the junction of Routes 7 and 13.^{1/}

190. At the time of the fiasco at Phou Koun, CINCPAC was enroute to Washington to attend a conference to consider means of halting the deteriorating situation in Laos. The Phou Koun affair constituted an emphatic acceleration of that deterioration. [

^{1/} ChPEO to CINCPAC, PEO 914, DTG 071410Z Mar 61, SECRET.
See also SCEPL, p. 76, TOP SECRET.

ISSUE OF U.S. LOGISTIC FLIGHTS INTO LAOS

The Unused Authorization of 7 January

191. One of the issues that the U.S. decision-making machinery found it difficult to resolve effectively during the January-February period concerned authorization of direct airlift by U.S. military aircraft into Laos in support of the Phoumi military effort. Our first available record of attention to this issue concerns a State-Defense meeting on 7 January 1961 in the office of the Secretary of State. In addition to the SecState and the ASecState SEA there were also present the Director of CIA, the ASD/ISA, and the CJCS, plus other less prestigious representatives of State and Defense.

192. The available notes on this meeting record that the ASD/ISA recommended at one stage during the meeting that the use of U.S. airlift for logistic flights into Laos in logistic support of Phoumi be authorized if other means were not sufficient. The meeting reached the decision that authority already existed for the use of U.S. aircraft for logistic support directly to Laos and that this be made clear to the field in a JCS message to CINCPAC.^{1/} At 2:20 that afternoon JCS dispatched a message, evidently prepared and sent by the Secretariat, advising CINCPAC, with info copies to ChPEO and ChJUSMAAG, that a high level decision had been reached permitting the use of U.S. military aircraft to fly supplies into Laos [

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193. The issue did not arise again for the next 10 days, apparently []

1/ OASD/ISA-FER-Laos Desk notes on meeting in Secretary Herter's office, 7 Jan 61, 0930, local time, SECRET.
2/ JCS to CINCPAC 988337, DTG 072017Z Jan 61, TOP SECRET.

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194.

- 1/ CINCPAC to JCS, DTG 180200Z Jan 61, TOP SECRET.
- 2/ CINCPAC to ChPEO, DTG 202355Z Jan 61, TOP SECRET.
- 3/ Memo to SecDef from ASD/ISA, 23 Jan 61, Subj.: "White House Meeting on Laos, 23 Jan 61, I-1806/2/61," TOP SECRET; "Rough Notes of a Presentation to the President on 23 January," in OASD/ISA-FER Laos Desk Files, TOP SECRET, "Sensitive."

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195. The JCS recommendations developed about the same time and forwarded as JCSM-34-61 on 24 January 1961 made no explicit mention of the use of U.S. airlift into Laos for logistic support of Phoumi, although considerable attention was given to recce and combat air support, [

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196. [

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The Revived Need of Direct Airlift and Laos Task Force Action

197. On 4 February the Phoumi change in plans for his campaign against the Plaine des Jarres was revealed, and this led to a rapid realization of considerably increased airlift requirements. To overcome the objections of American advisers, Phoumi now included measures which absorbed into the actual military operation most of his available airlift capacity, including that

- 1/ JCS 1992/903, 24 Jan 61, TOP SECRET.
- 2/ JCS to CINCPAC 989331, DTG 261933Z Jan 61, TOP SECRET.
- 3/ Memo for DJS, Subj.: "State Department Meeting 31 Jan 61," from Paul J. Fontana, BG/USMC, Deputy Director for Operations, J-3, TOP SECRET.

depended upon to shuttle supplies in from Thai bases. This made an augmentation of airlift into Laos a prerequisite to the success of his proposed operations in the Plaine des Jarres.

198. These considerations were presented to the Laos Task Force on 7 February by the Chief of the Laos Battle Staff, who was the JCS representative on the Laos Task Force. In explaining the increased need for airlift, he suggested three methods of providing the airlift support in order of ascending efficiency. The first was the present system of U.S. delivery to Bangkok, thence delivery into Laos by contract. Second was USAF delivery of prepackaged ammo and other supplies to Vientiane, thence delivery by FAL or by contract aircraft to troops in forward positions by air drops. The third and most efficient method of all would be direct USAF air drops to troops in the field.

199. In the discussion that followed, Ambassador Bohlen said that he did not think flights into Vientiane or even air drops to troops in the field, by USAF planes, would cause a Soviet reaction. The White House representative (Mr. Rostow) agreed with this judgment. Assistant SecState Parsons, acting as Chairman, recalled that on 7 January SecState Herter had authorized direct flight into Laos when they were needed. In response to a State Department inquiry [

] The memorandum recording this meeting concludes its account of this matter by stating that the matter was left with the understanding, which was suggested by ASecState Parsons and accepted by Gen. Fontana, that the JCS should draft a message of instructions which would then be cleared with State, presumably repeating the authorization first conveyed on 7 January.^{1/}

^{1/} "Memo for Record of Meeting at Department of State, 1600, 7 Feb 61," OASD/ISA-FER-Laos Desk files, SECRET.

200. This action was very possibly in response to a request from the field. At about the time of this meeting -- actually about 3 hours earlier, if the DTG indication is correct -- ADMINO/CINCPAC sent a message to JCS that cited reports from ChPEO emphasizing that prohibition of direct supply to Phoumi by U.S. aircraft would threaten the adequacy of support of Phoumi's current operations because of a shortage of both aircraft and of the packing and rigging capabilities required for supply of troops in the field. JCS action to get Washington to remove restrictions preventing this was urgently requested.^{1/}

201. A few hours later ADMINO/CINCPAC advised ChPEO that at the moment it seemed possible that the embargo on using U.S. aircraft to airland supplies in Vientiane might be lifted but it seemed unlikely that similar authority would be granted in other locations in Laos.^{2/} This message suggests that some informal word had been passed, perhaps by telephone, from JCS to CINCPAC Headquarters advising that the Laos Task Force meeting had ended in apparent approval of U.S. airlift direct to Vientiane.

Task Force Action Lost in the NSC

202. However, on 9 February the tentative judgment of the Laos Task Force was either ignored or overruled by the 476th meeting of the NSC. This meeting was attended by none of those regularly participating in the Interdepartmental Laos Task Force, nor having specialized responsibility, and continuity of special knowledge, concerning Laos. Those listed as having taken part in the meeting are as follows:

^{1/} ADMINO/CINCPAC to JCS, DTG 071820Z Feb 61, TOP SECRET.

^{2/} ADMINO/CINCPAC to ChPEO, DTG 080136Z Feb 61, TOP SECRET.

The President
The U.S. Representative to the U.N.
The Secretary of the Treasury
The Director of the Bureau of the Budget
The Director Designate of the U.S. Information Office
The Secretary of State
The Undersecretary of State
The Deputy Secretary of Defense
The Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
The Special Assistant to the President for Science and Technology
The Counselor Designate to the Department of State
The ASD/ISA
The Military Aide to the President
The Deputy Director (Intelligence) CIA

Laos was one of three subjects of action at this meeting.

203. The discussion of policies and actions with respect to Laos was in the form of an oral report by the SecState. This report was devoted to the whole subject of the new and coordinate U.S. policy of political and military actions toward Laos. Attention to the problem of airlift constituted only one comparatively small detail, and was not posed in the same terms in which it had been considered at lower levels. [

] ^{1/} How the recommendation was given this form is not known. If the recommendation was indeed presented to the NSC in this form, as our records of the meeting indicate, the effective decision was really made not by the NSC or by the President, but by whatever person or agency cast the issue in these terms, rather than in the terms of the original JCS or Laos Task Force recommendation.

1/ The available sources on this NSC meeting are: "Record of Actions by the NSC at 476th Meeting -- 9 Feb 61 (NSC Actions No. 2402-2404, TOP SECRET); "Informal Notes on 476th NSC Meeting, 9 Feb 61," in OASD/ISA files, TOP SECRET; the Official Minutes of this meeting have not been made available to this study.

204. On the same day, and evidently in response to word of the NSC decision, the Laos Battle Staff prepared a message to CINCPAC, signed by J-3, advising that U.S. airlifts to Vientiane had not been approved [

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a. [

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b. [

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c. [

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The requested telecon occurred on schedule. At the Washington end there were 13 persons present at the telecon headed by J-3, J-4, the Assistant Deputy CSAF for Plans and Programs, and the Deputy J-3 who was serving as Chief of the Laos Battle Staff. Representatives of J-5 and J-6, and the Laos desk officer of OASD/ISA-FER were also present. At the CINCPAC end were his JO-1 (Vice Adm. Riley), JO-3, J-3, J-4, and 4 others.^{2/} The telecon began by the JWR group asking for comment on the subject message. The reply was that the critical battle for the Plaine des Jarres was already under way and that Phoumi's prospects for success were dependent upon logistic support. Phoumi's LOC's were already long on the ground and the Pathet Lao's demonstrated ability to ambush and interrupt LOC's made airdrop essential. The PEO airlift was already overtaxed. Landing supplies at Vientiane was one way of helping to reduce the turn-around time required for the airdrop shuttle which the PEO airlift was conducting. [

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^{1/}
^{2/} CINCPAC is JO-0. His Chief of Staff is JO-1. There are two Deputy Chiefs of Staff, one for Plans and Operations (JO-2) and one for Military Assistance, Logistics, and Administration (JO-3). These are in addition to, and at a higher staff echelon, than the regular J's.

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205. The decision at the NSC meeting of 7 February, formally approved by the President on 9 February is, of course, the decision that stuck. Midday on 10 February, local mid-Pacific time, ADMINO/CINCPAC advised ChPEO that Washington had not approved landing U.S. aircraft in Laos or making airdrops of supplies to Phoumi's troops anywhere in Laos, and no such₁ authorization was to be expected in the immediate future.

206. It is unquestionably appropriate that, the issue having been referred to the highest echelon, the highest echelon rendered a decision upon it. The evident inefficiency of the process lay in the fact that apparently no one with special operating responsibility, and continuous experience and detailed knowledge, was present at the meeting, nor were important pertinent factors known to those with special knowledge conveyed to the group where the decision was made. The records available do not indicate that the NSC and the President had the issue posed to them in the same terms as it was understood by those with special and detailed knowledge of the situation. There is an upper limit to the number of decisions a single person can make within a given length of time. When the nominal power to make decisions is highly concentrated at the top of the command and control structure, economy of time and effort requires that the person who makes these ultimate decisions must have preparatory work pertinent to the decisions performed for him by others. The echelon below must be called upon to formulate the issues, describe the options and select and present the pertinent information. Because this task inherently involves exercise of choice and of other forms of judgment, which affect the range and form of options and the availability of information bearing upon the choice between options, it must affect the nature of the decisions rendered. Thus it involves some real delegation of power of decision, whether or not that delegation of power of decision is formally recognized.

1/ ADMINO/CINCPAC to ChPEO, DTG 110129Z Feb 61, TOP SECRET.

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207. The issue of direct flights into Laos lost prominence in the message traffic, in policy papers, and in the records of official meetings to consider Laos policy, after 9 February. However, on notes made of the Laos Task Force meeting for 26 February it is recorded that, after the JCS representative gave a briefing on the situation and said that the JCS wanted authorization for direct cargo flights into Vientiane (as well as for T-6's to use bombs), there was a discussion in which [] there appeared to be a consensus among those present, that the President would have approved cargo flights into Laos had a stronger case been made for them. It was then agreed that a draft message would be prepared to initiate such a reconsideration.^{1/}

203. Four days later, on 3 March, there was another White House meeting at which related problems of Laos were considered. In preparation for this meeting, the ASD/ISA addressed a memorandum to the chairman of the Laos Task Force, asking that approval from higher authority be sought for a Joint State/Defense message to the field for the suggested wording of which was as follows:

"In view of increasing operation requirements for air resupply within Laos and necessity of having maximum [] FAL aircraft available for direct support of FAL operations, U.S. logistic support aircraft are authorized to deliver essential MAP material to Laos."^{2/}

There is also record of a JCS talking paper prepared for the same occasion which made a substantially identical recommendation -- for supply of additional aircraft [] and for the authorization of direct airlift to Laos.^{3/} (There was

^{1/} ISA notes on "Highlights of the 27 Feb Laos Task Force Meeting, SECRET, in OASD/ISA-FER files.

^{2/} I-12,827/61, Memo for Mr. J. Graham Parsons, Chairman Laos Task Force, from Paul H. Nitze, ASD/ISA, Subject: "Use of Logistic Support Aircraft Into Laos," 3 Mar 61, SECRET.

^{3/} Included is an exhibition an unnumbered Memo from Adm. Heinz to Mr. Nitze, Subject: "Laos," 3 Mar 61, TOP SECRET.

generally close communications and working relationships between the Laos desk officer of OASD/ISA-FER and the Laos Battle Staff of the JCS at that time.)

209. The only available record of the 3 March White House meeting is in an account of the 7 March meeting of the Laos Task Force. On the latter occasion, the Chairman began the meeting by reviewing the decisions that had been taken at the 3 March White House meeting. This review of decisions taken at the 3 March meeting made no mention whatsoever of the subject of direct flights into Laos in support of Phoumi. It is not entirely clear what happened to this particular recommendation at that particular meeting on 3 March. It may again have been temporarily lost in the shuffle, as the issue moved up to the highest echelon of command. But since what looked like a decision was made [

] it is perhaps a better supposition that decision was deliberately deferred until the matter could be considered in the context of other proposals.

210. Direct logistic flights into Laos with USAF aircraft remained an intermittent and often vexing issue for most of March and April. The later experience with this problem, beginning with its apparent but not lasting resolution [] will be told after other items have been brought up to date.

PROBLEMS OF T-6's FROM MID-JANUARY []

211. Following the realization that armed T-6's were not effective against the Soviet airlift, the problem was to find a proper and effective use for them. This was a persistent problem although the amount of personnel and equipment involved was small, and there was a shortage of pilots. As of mid-January,

in addition to 4 pilots qualified for helos only, FAL had a total of 14 pilots checked out in C-47's and/or T-6's. Of these, 2 were assigned out of the country, one had been grounded, one was presumed lost to enemy action, and one was still classified as a trainee. Four were qualified a C-47 pilots.^{1/}

212. The persistent approach to the problem was to seek authorization for the use of bombs and napalm in addition to the machine guns and rockets. Authorization to use bombs had been sought from the beginning, and was urged by CINCPAC in the days immediately following the abandonment of the idea that the armed T-6's would be effective against the Soviet airlift.^{2/}

The reconsideration of policies and programs concerning Laos that occurred at the time of the Inaugural did not alter the restriction upon the use of bombs and napalm by T-6's, although relaxation of the restriction was among the list of "possible additional military actions" which were left open for further consideration.^{3/} Removal of all restrictions on the use of bombs and napalm was strongly advocated at this time by the JCS.^{4/}

213. Advocacy of relaxation of the restrictions upon T-6's was accelerated by the plans that were developing at the end of January for a Phoumi offensive to recapture the Plaine des Jarres. For instance, on 28 January CINCPAC advised ChPEO that he was "continuing [his] efforts to get the close air support which would assist immeasurably the advance of Phoumi's forces."^{5/} Twenty-four hours later CINCPAC advised JCS that the new plan for attack on the Plaine des Jarres offered chances of success

^{1/} ChPEO to CINCPAC, PEO-AF-336, DTG 141828Z Jan 61, SECRET.

^{2/} CINCPAC to JCS, DTG 182058Z Jan 61, TOP SECRET.

^{3/} I-18062/61, Memo to SecDef from ASD/ISA, 23 Jan 61, TOP SECRET.

^{4/} JCSM-34-61, 24 Jan 61, TOP SECRET.

^{5/} CINCPAC to ChPEO, DTG 280340Z Jan 61, SECRET.

but would require close air support to be successful. This close air support, he specified, should include the use of T-6's without restrictions upon their use of bombs and napalm.

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214. Phoumi's behavior raised difficulties. Following the first loss of an armed T-6 to ground fire he had refused to commit his T-6's in the Plaine des Jarres area because Anti-Aircraft (AA) defenses were established there. Phoumi told ChPEO he recognized the value of air strikes, but that B-26's were the type of plane needed, not armed T-6's.^{2/} When ChPEO reported this, CINCPAC expressed the hope, in reply, that Phoumi's excessive caution could be overcome. CINCPAC still wanted to use the T-6's with bombs and napalm, and asked for ChPEO's opinion of the best way to employ the T-6's.^{3/}

215. This inquiry drew a long reply. ChPEO first said that utilization of the T-6's was seriously impaired by the doctrine that FAL pilots were final authority on whether or not to execute a mission ordered by FAL HQ. If the FAL pilots judged that the mission was too risky, they simply refused to fly it. Generally they refused to fly against AA and small arms fire. (This privilege of pilots to refuse to execute orders deemed too hazardous has been explained as derivative from a French military practice which permitted division commanders, under some circumstances, to ask for reconsideration of an order that the division commander believed placed his division in extreme or unnecessary jeopardy.)

1/ CINCPAC to JCS, DTG 290340Z Jan 61, TOP SECRET.

2/ ChPEO to CINCPAC, PEO 456, DTG 290626Z Jan 61, TOP SECRET.

3/ CINCPAC to ChPEO, 292137Z Jan 61, TOP SECRET.

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216. ChPEO expressed confidence that the T-6 had the potential to give good support to ground forces, with good targeting and pilot effectiveness. ChPEO had presented to FAL for its approval a close air support plan including use of panels, targeting identification and air/ground communications. Final approval was believed forthcoming. (This is the first mention that has been found in the message traffic of the problem of effective ground observer-pilot coordination as an ingredient of close support.) An increase in rocket armament has been proposed but ChPEO was still unsure of the plane's ability to carry the proposed increase. Napalm effectiveness was recognized, but handling problems were great, and this fact plus the 100-lb. limitation of the bomb racks suggested that bombs and rockets would be more practical for the T-6's. ChPEO further commented that FAL headquarters had evinced disgust with the T-6 pilots' performance. [

] Finally, ChPEO said that the present buildup in the Plaine des Jarres area was impressive and that strong air attacks by other than T-6's on the area and on the routes leading to it would be prerequisite to victory for Phoumi in his attack (emphasis supplied).^{1/}

217. For reasons not fully apparent, the problem of the T-6's thereafter disappeared from the message traffic for nearly a month. At the end of February the question was revived at a Laos Task Force meeting held on 27 February. In preparation for this and for a later meeting at the White House, CINCPAC repeated again his standing recommendation to let the T-6's use bombs [

^{2/}] At the 27 February

^{1/} ChPEO to CINCPAC, PEO 495, DTG 311149Z Jan 61, TOP SECRET.
^{2/} CINCPAC to JCS, DTG 262255Z Feb 61, TOP SECRET.

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meeting, when the subject of the use of the armed T-6's came up, the White House representative (Mr. Rostow) asked if enough dumps had been identified to make T-6 bombing worthwhile. The JCS representative replied that a number of dumps could be located. After what the available record indicates was a somewhat desultory discussion of the problem of bombs for the T-6's, the meeting agreed that in presenting the issue to the White House for approval, the problem should be put in the context [] Although the record does not make the point explicit, the point is nonetheless clear that the agreement amounted to a vote of no confidence in the Lao pilots. How important this lack of confidence was in the continued refusal of Washington officials to approve use of bombs cannot be determined. But the best guess seems to be that it was very important; possibly the determining factor.

218. The use of bombs with armed T-6's was not approved at the 3 March meeting at the White House. Suddenly, three days later, the shape of all our considerations was drastically changed by the disaster of Phou Koun, which has already been described. The Phou Koun affair stimulated the more lively U.S. reactions to the situation in Laos []

[] Because the later development of the T-6 issue took place []

[] of serious consideration of active intervention, and of still other developments that came later, it will best be recounted in a later portion of this narrative.

PROBLEMS OF SIZE AND FUNCTION OF THE U.S. MILITARY ADVISORY GROUP

219. Throughout the period of this study there were many questions which needed to be resolved concerning the size and

1/ ISA notes on "Highlights of 27 February Laos Task Force Meeting," SECRET.

functions of the U.S. Military Aid Group. The principal recurrent issues concerned whether its function should be to give tactical assistance in addition to purely technical and logistic assistance; whether it was to aid in actual operations or just in training; [

] and to what echelons of FAL U.S. military personnel should be assigned. These issues were complicated by many factors. Among the complicating factors were the terms of the Geneva Agreements of 1954 (under which only the French were permitted legally to maintain military bases and personnel in Laos and give military training to FAL), [

] and French sensitivities about yielding to the U.S. a major role in a former French colony. These factors placed limits upon what the U.S. could do without risking offense to a major ally. The readiness of Laotian military officials to adopt practices or accept arrangements deemed wise by the U.S. was far from automatic and raised further difficulties. [

220. It was generally assumed that the military operations of FAL could be made more efficient by increasing the amount of U.S. training and advice and by extending the participation of U.S. military personnel in training and operations to lower echelons of FAL. The originally approved practice had been to limit U.S. participation to training and to technical aid (technical as distinct from tactical), and to restrict assignment of U.S. military adviser to FAL HQ and to the HQ of the Military Regions of Laos. There had been a good deal of fudging

beyond these limitations, but the fudging was not acknowledged publicly, and some were held quite secret. Most of the issues that arose developed out of attempts to increase U.S. control and influence upon operations.

221. The effective instructions concerning assignment of PEO personnel (including LTAG personnel) were those promulgated by JCS in October 1960. These instructions specified:

"Personnel under command of PEO will not, repeat not, serve with units in combat. However, using caution and own judgment ChPEO will assign personnel in advisory capacity in operations and logistics. Every reasonable precaution will be taken to avoid assignments that expose such personnel to risk of capture."^{1/}

How these instructions were to be interpreted and applied was a constant problem. For American advisers to provide examples of leadership to Laotian troops and above all to the officer corps of FAL inescapably involved personal hazard and risk of capture. They could not expect to instill courage and a sense of responsible leadership among the Laotians if they always remained behind at rear echelon HQ, out of danger. But the responsibility for placing American personnel in places of risk and peril without the status normally accorded to military personnel was an onerous responsibility. Awareness of this problem was a constant source of worry to those in the chain of military command.

222. On 11 January, ChPEO queried CINCPAC concerning his authority to attach PEO and LTAG personnel to FAL units. CINCPAC replied, citing and giving his interpretation of the JCS instructions of October 1960, referred to previously: PEO and LTAG personnel were to assist the establishment and operation of aerial resupply to battalions and higher units of organization; they were to establish unilateral U.S. communications between

^{1/} JCS to CINCPAC 984040, DTG 081653Z Oct 60, TOP SECRET.

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the FAL battalions and higher FAL echelons, and PEO HQ in Vientiane. But they were not to engage in operations forward of Battalion HQ nor go behind insurgent lines for any purpose.

[Personnel were not to be exposed to the risk of capture.]^{1/}

223. In the course of extensive reconsideration of policies and programs for Laos in mid-January the JCS recommended establishment of an overt MAAG in Laos, and at the same time an increase in support to FAL both in equipment and in advisory and training personnel. This recommendation was forwarded by CJCS to the SecDef on 14 January but was not acted upon until the new administration took office. On 26 January a memorandum was prepared in OASD/ISA-FER recommending that the size, scope, and authority of PEO be increased, but advising that formal establishment of an overt MAAG at that time would entail political problems inconsistent with the overall U.S. approach. On 27 January this memorandum was forwarded by ASD/ISA to the SecDef, and its recommendations later included in a letter from the SecDef to the SecState.^{2/}

224. Any proposal to alter the functions of the U.S. military advisory establishment in Laos at that time was particularly complicated by the relationship with the French Military Mission and by Phoumi's recurrent hostility to the French. Moves that Phoumi made were suspected of being a preliminary to an attempt to oust the French entirely from Laos. The State Department

^{1/} ChPEO to CINCPAC, 253, Notal, DTG 110515Z Jan 61, TOP SECRET; CINCPAC to ChPEO, DTG 130420Z Jan 61, TOP SECRET.

^{2/} JCS 1992/894, 14 Jan 61, "Course of Action in Laos," and "Note by the Secretaries to the Holders of JCS 1992/894," both TOP SECRET; I-12314/61, Memo to SecDef from ASD/ISA, Subj.: "JCS Proposal for Establishment of a MAAG in Laos," 27 Jan 61, SECRET; Memo for CJCS from DepSecDef, Subj.: "Course of Action in Laos," 1 Feb 61, SECRET.

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was much impressed with the fact that [

But French and U.S. policies in Laos were so divergent that effective cooperation between French and American military training teams had become, in the judgment of CINCPAC, "an illusion." It seemed necessary to find some way, while recognizing the need to get along with the French, to shape the program in such a fashion that American policies would not be handicapped by French reluctance to go along with them.^{2/}

225. At this same time CINCPAC was providing comprehensive policy recommendations on Laos, in the course of which he included a regularly constituted overt MAAG and assignment of MAAG advisers down to the company level.^{3/} In the program adopted by the new administration on 23 January, one measure approved for immediate implementation was the use of PEO as tactical advisers to FAL units, ostensibly as training advisers.^{4/} Authorization to this effect was conveyed to CINCPAC three days later, but with reference to the 8 Oct 60 instructions, which, it was specified, were not to be exceeded.^{5/} This was in essence merely repetition of what had already been agreed to and had been put in practice where circumstances and local FAL CO's permitted. On the same day the new Chief of PEO in Laos (B/G Andrew J. Boyle), in reporting on his first conference with

1/ DepTels to Vientiane 722 and to Paris 2926, 17 Jan 61, both SECRET.

2/ CINCPAC to JCS, DTG 212326Z Jan 61, SECRET.

3/ CINCPAC to JCS, DTG 180200Z Jan 61, TOP SECRET.

4/ I-18062/61, 23 Jan 61, Memo to SecDef from ASD/ISA, Subj.: "White House Meeting on Laos," 23 Jan 61, TOP SECRET.

5/ JCS to CINCPAC 989331, DTG 261933Z Jan 61, TOP SECRET.

Phoumi noted, among other things, that Phoumi had agreed to the placement of LTAG teams at battalion headquarters.^{1/}

226. On 27 January a copy came in to Washington of a message from ChPEO to CINCPAC in which he advised that, in response to CINCPAC's instructions of DTG 130420Z Jan 61, LTAG personnel had been attached to 3 GM's that were currently engaged in combat and also that PEO advisers were attached to the headquarters of Phoumi and Eounleut. Five more LTAG teams, expected to be available on 1 February, would be assigned to five battalions to be named by Phoumi. Additional PEO personnel and personnel for 9 additional LTAG teams would be needed in the foreseeable future.^{2/}

227. This message from the field brought Washington face-to-face with the immediate problem. At a Laos Task Force meeting at State at 1430 on 27 January the subject was reviewed at length. The ASecState SEA, who was chairman of the group, said that on 24 January a message had been sent to Ambassador Brown requesting that the French be sounded out before PEO officers were placed with FAL battalions and that Brown had replied recommending that this be discussed with the French Embassy in Washington. Discussion then brought out that the 24 January message to Brown originated from the 23 January memorandum of the Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs to the SecDef and SecState, summarizing the program approved by the President, and specifying, among other things, that:

"Increased activity by American military personnel in Laos would be authorized only in the light of advice from Vientiane."

^{1/} ChPEO to CINCPAC, PEO-385, DTG 230315Z Jan 61, TOP SECRET.
^{2/} ChPEO to CINCPAC, PEO Opt-439, DTG 271708Z Jan 61, SECRET.

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The available evidence suggests that this qualification, which was apparently added because of ignorance of what was already being practiced, was not cleared up before the JCS message to CINCPAC of DTG 261933Z. The JCS representative at the task force meeting found, in the course of the discussion, that the conferees had not previously been informed of the established practice of assigning PEO and LTAG personnel down to the battalion level in cases where FAL would accept them. The meeting closed with agreement that a State/Defense message would be promulgated to clarify this subject.^{1/} Our available record of this meeting carries the notation that as of 30 January J-3 was still working on the promised clarification. A message from CINCPAC on 28 January indicated that assignment of PEO and LTAG personnel, according to the plan proposed by ChPEO, was being referred to the ambassador for approval.^{2/}

228. ChPEO's request for a 9-team LTAG augmentation was discussed in the Laos Task Force meeting at State on 31 January, and was further considered and tentatively approved by the same group meeting on 2 February. [

The 9-team augmentation of LTAG was given further approval at the 476th NSC meeting on 9 February, at which meeting there was no one present with knowledge of current or past practices in the matter.

- 1/ Memo for the Record, Subj.: "State Department Meeting, 27 Jan 61, " by P.J. Fontana, B/G, USMC, Deputy Director for Operations, TOP SECRET.
- 2/ CINCPAC to JCS, DTG 281852Z Jan 61, TOP SECRET.
- 3/ Memo for Director Joint Staff, Subj.: "State Department Meeting, 31 Jan 61," from P. J. Fontana, B/G, USMC, Deputy Director for Operations, TOP SECRET, OASD/ISA-FER informal memo for the record of meeting at State Department, 1400, 2 Feb 61, SECRET; JCS to C/S Army 990154, 3 Feb 61, SECRET.

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229. At the end of February a State Department representative briefed the Laos Task Force on a demarche being undertaken with the French to obtain their concurrence in the proposed increase in the PEO effort. In the ensuing discussion it was affirmed by State that understanding with the French on training matters would have to be at the national level.^{1/} Our available sources do not reveal the immediate upshot of these negotiations, although, as will be described later, the PEO effort was gradually increased, with PEO breaking into the open as an overt MAAG in April; our sense of decorum then being satisfied, so far as French sensibilities were concerned, simply by informing them of what we were going to do.

ORIGINS OF THE MEO PROGRAM

230. On 3 January 1961 the Army, Navy and Air Force attaches in Bangkok sent in a joint message reporting an interview with 2 American USOM personnel, a Meo, and a Chinese who had been evacuated from the Plaine des Jarres on 30 December. After reporting generally on what could be learned from these sources, the interview concentrated on a suggestion made by one of the evacuees that the Meos and Black Thai in that area would combat the Pathet Lao if they were trained and supplied. FAL was criticized for not giving them arms and support. The message concluded by recommending that the proposal be given serious consideration.^{2/}

231. The idea of using the Meos and the Black Thai was not entirely new. It had been suggested before but without much emphasis. The Meos and Black Thai were aboriginal, more primitive tribal groups that had rarely if ever been fully subordinated to any Lao government. They were not culturally

1/ OASD/ISA-FER notes on "Highlights of 27 Feb Laos Task Force Meeting," SECRET.

2/ USARMA/Bangkok to DA/CNO/CS/USAF, CX-1, DTG 030710Z Jan 61, SECRET.

assimilated, and occupied comparatively remote and scattered inaccessible areas, living their own lives in their own ancestral ways, without benefit or hindrance of encroaching civilization. The Meos dominated much of the opium trade. Both groups were reputed to be considerably more warlike than the Lao, and it was generally considered that in defense of their own hilltops they could be counted upon to put up a stubborn fight.

232. The Bangkok attaches report on the Meos and Black Thai caught the attention of the Vice Director of the Joint Staff, and on 5 January he sent a message to CINCPAC asking the latter's judgment on the feasibility and desirability of urging Phoumi to provide additional assistance to the Meos and the Black Thai if indeed the report from Bangkok was correct.^{1/} CINCPAC was evidently aware of the reluctance of Phoumi (or in fact of any central Laotian government) to provide arms or otherwise to strengthen a native group that had never really been under the control of the central government. Nonetheless he asked ChPEO for his personal estimate of Phoumi's reaction to a proposal to recruit, train, and supply one or two battalions of Meos or other ethnic groups.^{2/}

233. ChPEO's reply is not available, but it was evidently not completely discouraging, because on the following day CINCPAC asked ChPEO to identify both U.S. and native personnel who would be useful in developing participation by the Meos in anti-Communist operations, for both the immediate and the more distant future. CINCPAC proposed that an LTAG team in Vientiane be made the core of a communications network and that airdrop of supplies could be provided [] with the

1/ JCS to CINCPAC 988180, DTG 051816Z Jan 61, TOP SECRET.

2/ CINCPAC to ChPEO, DTG 060115Z Jan 61, SECRET.

knowledge and support of Phoumi. CINCPAC further asked for an estimate of the logistic support required for partisan operations by these tribal groups. He concluded by asserting that Phoumi's reluctance to build up military strength among the Meo and the Black Thai was a political problem that must be overcome.^{1/}

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236. The available accounts of the policy planning sessions of 19-22 January, and of the White House meeting on 23 January, do not indicate any explicit mention of a project to enlist the active aid of the Meos. Our next mention of the Meo program comes on 18 February. [

237. [

- 1/ CINCPAC to ChPEO, DTG 072322Z Jan 61, TOP SECRET.
- 2/ CINCPAC to ChPEO, DTG 120222Z Jan 61, SECRET.
- 3/ CINCPAC to JCS, DTG 182344Z Jan 61, SECRET.
- 4/ OSD to CINCPAC 990570, DTG 181850Z Feb 61, TOP SECRET.

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1/ JCS to CINCPAC, exclusive for Felt from Lemnitzer, JCS 991705, DTG 112037Z March 61, TOP SECRET.

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FORTUNES OF FAL AFTER PHOU KOUN

242. The period from the disastrous withdrawal from Phou Koun on 6 March, [to the confused and abortive offensive against Muong Kassy in early April, was a period of continued deterioration of FAL and of frantic efforts, first, to find ways to turn the tide, and later, to salvage as much as possible from the worsening situation. Effort intended to accomplish these ends took the form of diplomatic maneuver, of measures to strengthen Phoumi's military position, and finally of developing plans and readiness to intervene either with U.S. or with SEATO forces. The most important measures that were considered or undertaken, whether military or political, will be discussed in other sections on a topical basis. This section is concerned primarily with FAL operations during this period and with those U.S. activities that were intimately linked with these FAL operations on a day-to-day basis.

The Situation After the Phou Koun Fiasco - Doubts About Phoumi

243. Following his capture of the highway junction at Phou Koun on 7 March, the enemy consolidated his position along

Route 13 both to the north and south, as FAL troops fell back northward toward Luang Prabang and southward through the town of Muong Kassy toward Vang Vieng. By 9 March the Kong Le forces were in possession of Muong Kassy. The remaining FAL forces between Muong Kassy and Vientiane were GM-1 and GM-12, which were located near Vang Vieng. Phoumi had wanted to assume a purely defensive posture following the defeat at Phou Koun. ChPEO persuaded him, however, to plan a more aggressive course. Phoumi designated new CO's for the 2 GM's, and having satisfied himself that they planned an attack to retake Muong Kassy and the highway junction, he abandoned his military responsibilities in the middle of the month for a 7-day junket escorting King Savang Vathana through a series of ceremonial functions.^{1/}

244. For a fortnight there were no further military actions of consequence although U.S. intelligence was impressed by the consolidation of Kong Le forces north and south of the Phou Koun junction and also by the large buildup by the Soviet airlift of supplies in the Plaine des Jarres. It was also considered very likely that a Communist movement in force along Route 13 either north toward Luang Prabang or south toward Vientiane was likely to occur before the rainy season became pronounced at the beginning of May. There were also rumors of a possible coup against the Phoumi government in Vientiane.^{2/}

245. At this same time many serious doubts were expressed concerning the will and capability of Phoumi to lead the opposition to the Communist threat. CINCPAC, in Bangkok, for the SEATO Military Adviser (Milad) meeting, reported that he and

^{1/} SCPEL, p. 83-84, TOP SECRET.

^{2/} SIRAB No. 57, 24 Mar 61, SECRET.

Ambassador Brown [

] The next day the Vice Director of the Joint Staff, also in Bangkok at the time for the Milad meeting, advised the JCS that in his opinion the "biggest problem is lack of determination, will and leadership on part of FAL and Phoumi." He [

] CINCPAC Phoumi Meeting on 29 March

246. CINCPAC laid it on the line to Phoumi at Udorn on 29 March. Immediately after the meeting with Phoumi he sent in a long report to the JCS and to SecState. According to that report Phoumi began the session by giving a long briefing on the military situation and asking for more help in general. As for specifics, he asked for a speedup in the flow of supplies, and for support for 6 new battalions that he was organizing, although clearance for the latter move had not been given by the U.S. CINCPAC had promised to speed up the supplies, and mentioned the recent arrival in Bangkok of 75mm howitzers (which FAL would now have to train men to use). Concerning the 6 new battalions, CINCPAC and ChPEO had asked Washington to approve, but no decision had yet come from Washington. Phoumi then asked directly for the U.S. to intervene. To this request CINCPAC replied without commitment, emphasizing this was a matter

1/ CINCPAC to JCS, DTG 211730Z Mar 61, TOP SECRET.

2/ CINCPAC to JCS, DTG 220917Z Mar 61, "Exclusive to Gen. Wheeler from Adm. Wellings," TOP SECRET.

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to address not to him but to the ambassador. In addition, CINCPAC pointed out that Laos must prove itself willing to fight for itself. Finally, he had just come from a SEATO meeting, and SEATO intervention could hardly be expected unless the Vietminh were demonstrably engaged in overt aggression. At the end of the report CINCPAC included a series of qualifications on Phoumi's testimony which originated with ChPEO. These related especially and most forcefully to Phoumi's estimates of the opposition he faced and of his own operational capabilities. Both were seriously overestimated by Phoumi, in the opinion of ChPEO.^{1/}

Kong Le Seizure of Tha Thom, 30 March

247. The military lull was suddenly broken on the last day of March, not along the Route 13 axis from Vientiane to Luang Prabang but at Tha Thom, a village north of Paksane midway on the road (trail) from there to Xieng Khouang. This was the northernmost position attained by FAL troops in its planned but never executed attack upon the Plaine des Jarres from the south. Tha Thom was in a narrow, deep valley that was indefensible unless the defending forces occupied the ridges on each side. On 30 March, while one ridge was left temporarily unoccupied, it was quietly seized by the Kong Le forces. On the morning of 31 March, the enemy forces that had seized the ridge the day before began a well-executed artillery barrage which apparently came as a complete surprise to the FAL forces in the valley and led to their immediate and precipitate flight. All crew-serviced weapons, including 2 105mm howitzers, were left behind and captured intact. [] and an LTAG team were left behind by the FAL forces that were assisting, and had to make their way as best they might. The

1/ CINCPAC to JCS and SecState, DTG 300800Z Mar 61, TOP SECRET.

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next stop for the FAL forces was at Borikhane, far to the south and only about 12 miles north of the Mekong River town of Paksane.^{1/}

248. Although all judgements indicated that the enemy assault at Tha Thom had been executed in a professional manner and that the FAL withdrawal had been something akin to "mass hysteria," it was soon evident that the enemy was either not able or not anxious to exploit his immediate advantage. It was soon judged, therefore, that there was no immediate threat to Paksane.^{2/}

Phoumi's Plans to Recapture Muong Kassy

249. Shortly thereafter, the focus of military attention shifted west, again to the area along Highway 13. In response to pressure to resume the offensive and to recapture the junction of Routes 7 and 13, from which his forces had recently been so unceremoniously expelled, Phoumi had developed a plan, proposed for execution on the morning of 5 April, for an attack against Muong Kassy and the highway junction 20 miles to the north of the town. The orders for the attack were reported issued on 2 April by M/Gen. Bounleut, who was CINC of FAL, and who was located at the time in Luang Prabang.

250. The plan called for a parachute drop beginning at 6 o'clock in the morning of 5 April, of a small group at a point a short distance north of Muong Kassy. This group would immediately secure a landing zone for helicopters. When this was accomplished, helicopters would bring in reinforcements which would

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2/ ChPEO to CINCPAC, PEO 1294, DTG 111320Z Apr 61, SECRET;
PACFLT IntSum 76-61, CINCPACFLT to AIG 286, DTG 020057Z
Apr 61, SECRET.]

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establish roadblocks on Highway 13 to prevent reinforcements coming from the junction to the relief of Muong Kassy. Meanwhile, GM-12, then in the vicinity of Vang Vieng, would attack north along Highway 13 and over mountain trails paralleling it, and 2 groups from the north, one at Luang Prabang, another to the southeast of Luang Prabang (GM-11) would attack southward toward the junction of 13 and 7, using Highway 13 as the axis of advance. [

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THE CONFUSION THAT CAME FROM SEEKING WASHINGTON APPROVAL

251. On the morning of 4 April, there began an exchange of messages between Washington and Vientiane concerning the planned FAL offensive to retake Muong Kassy. The first message that we know of in the series is a message from CINCPAC to JCS, repeating for them a message sent by Ambassador Brown to SecState Rusk, [] subject Phoumi plan to attack Muong Kassy, and Brown's entire message: "Request you support Phoumi plan to the hilt."^{2/} There is no record of a direct reply to this, and it must be assumed the message got lost so far as immediate affirmative action was concerned. Following the DTG sequence, our next message was a report from Ambassador Brown to the SecState, describing the planned offensive to retake Muong Kassy. It said that the plan had been under consideration for some time but had not been finalized until the night before. (We have already noted that ChPEO was of impression that the

^{1/} ChPEO to CINCPAC, PEO 1327, DTG 041145Z Apr 61, SECRET.

^{2/} CINCPAC to JCS, DTG 040711Z Apr 61, TOP SECRET.

attack had already been ordered on 2 April.) Ambassador Brown's message argued in favor of the operation. It said that the planned operation was designed to put FAL on the offensive again and to restore morale and balance in the military situation. It said that the proposed operation involved merely the extension of the use of helicopters already in the service of FAL. It stressed that the objectives were limited and argued that the action seemed justified by the reports, admittedly yet not fully confirmed, that Soviet planes had dropped paratroops in the vicinity of Tha Thom on 31 March. The message ended with a request for emergency instructions as to whether or not this operation would cause trouble in negotiations underway elsewhere, and commented that "we would hate to call it off."¹

252. Ambassador Brown's request for approval of Phoumi's offensive plans found the State Department unprepared to render an immediate decision. There had been no reply, evidently, to Brown's first request to SecState to support the Phoumi offensive, and to this next message the reply came back (signed by Bohlen and Steeves, not by Rusk), that State was "In no position to give positive go-ahead on such short notice. Will advise within 24 hours."² The buck that the ambassador had tried to pass to State was now back in the ambassador's lap, for action scheduled to begin in about 12 hours.

253. Upon the receipt of the message from State, Ambassador Brown tried to get in touch with Phoumi. Phoumi was just then at the airport with Boun Oum on the point of departing for Luang

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Prabang to report to the King on the status of U.K. and Soviet negotiations and also to confer with Gen. Bounleut concerning the next morning's attack on Muong Kassy. Ambassador Brown asked Phoumi to defer the attack for 24 hours in view of the delicate stage of negotiations and the prospect of an agreement for a cease-fire. Phoumi reacted with bitterness, saying that the enemy was not waiting and that delay was impossible and would demoralize everyone. Phoumi promised to talk with Gen. Bounleut, but gave no definite commitment concerning the Muong Kassy operation. In reporting all this to the Department, the Ambassador noted that he was now faced with a decision whether or not he should take it upon himself to withhold the choppers and the aircraft if Phoumi in fact went ahead the next morning with the offensive, as expected. Brown went on to say in his report to Washington that having made his suggestion to Phoumi he had had second thoughts. Because the objectives of the attack were limited, because Phoumi might not be able to restrain Kouprasith's northward movement from Vang Vieng anyway, because there were continuing reports of Soviet airdrop, because it would be an advantage to FAL to get on the offensive and, finally, because the Bohlen/Steeves message did not positively forbid the attack, the ambassador proposed to proceed with the operation if Phoumi decided to go ahead with it in spite of his request to delay it 24 hours.^{1/}

254. At this point we may observe that the American ambassador had reported to the State Department concerning an impending FAL offensive that he believed was wise from the local point of view, but that he believed Washington should pass upon because

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Washington might have reasons unknown to him for wishing it to be delayed. Washington had then informed him that it could not make a decision in less than 24 hours. However, the offensive was to begin within 12 hours. The American ambassador then asked Phoumi if he could delay the attack for 24 hours, but did not demand that he do so. This passed the decision to Gen. Phoumi.

255. What appears to be the next communication in the sequence is a message from the Director of the Joint Staff to CINCPAC saying that at 041330Z Mr. Steeves had assured him that a message had been sent to Ambassador Brown giving him the go-ahead on Phoumi's plan to attack Muong Kassy.^{1/}

256. The message to Ambassador Brown from State, referred to in the message from the DJS to CINCPAC, is not available. However, Ambassador Brown soon after (37 minutes later by DTG indications) sent a message to Quang Prabang for Phoumi which relaxed the pressure he had previously placed on Phoumi to delay the Muong Kassy attack. The tone of the message would seem to suggest that Ambassador Brown was simply acting out of further reconsideration of the problem, although the evidence cited above, to the effect that State had approved the attack, would suggest otherwise. [

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to tell him that "if after considering points he made, he still feels it undesirable to defer planned attack, aircraft will be at his disposal. Whichever way he decides, we wish him best of luck."^{2/}

^{1/} DJS to CINCPAC 993316, DTG 041407Z Apr 61, TOP SECRET.

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257. Very soon after the dispatch of the message to Luang Prabang, Ambassador Brown sent his comments to Washington on Department Circular Telegram 1510, which he had just received. He said he did not see how it was possible to impress upon Phoumi the absolute necessity of maintaining a military posture in order to prevent a last-minute Pathet Lao offensive while, at the same time, restraining from the limited attack which he had planned for the following day to retake Muong Kassy. He then repeated that "In the light of this difficulty he [] pass on to Phoumi his considerably altered instructions as related in the paragraph above."^{1/}

Report of Communist Airdrop

258. On 4 April, the USARMA reported that on his visit to the headquarters of Gen. Kouprasith at Vang Vieng that day, the General was "excited" but "not overly concerned" over reports of paratroop drops in the vicinity of Ban Nam Pe involving 4 IL-14's on 3 sorties each dropping a reputed total of 390 chutes.^{2/} On this occasion, the newspapers either carried a report that was faster, or commanded more attention than the intelligence communications. Under DTG of 041716Z, JCS queried CINCPAC and ChPEO concerning a Reuters dispatch from Vientiane giving a confusing account of a Russian airdrop of a Vietminh battalion of more than 300 paratroopers 6 miles north of Vang Vieng on 3 April.^{3/} One result of the unconfirmed reports of the parachute drop near Ban Nam Pe was that the commander of GM-12 in Vang Vieng sent 2 companies to the scene to investigate and to handle the situation.^{4/}

1/ []

2/ USARMA/Vientiane to DA, CX-64, DTG 041500Z Apr 61, SECRET. []

3/ JCS to CINCPAC, info ChPEO, 993327, DTG 041716Z Apr 61, CONFIDENTIAL.

4/ CINCPAC to JCS, DTG 042011Z Apr 61, SECRET; []

EXECUTION OF THE MUONG KASSY PLAN

259. The planned assault on Muong Kassy began approximately on schedule, with the airborne assault wave of C-47's and helicopters leaving Luang Prabang at 7 in the morning on 5 April. The airlanded group accomplished the early phases of its mission in professional fashion and by 2 o'clock that afternoon had established a roadblock and placed patrols as much as two miles south of the roadblock. However, as late as the next day the troops which according to plan were to move south toward the highway junction had still taken no forward moves, and the GM-12 moving north from Vang Vieng was moving only very slowly.^{1/}

260. Although reports came in later from Gen. Bounleut that the troops from the Luang Prabang command had finally started to move, there never was any forward progress that was observable to American advisers or intelligence sources there.^{2/} GM-12, operating northward from Vang Vieng, reported slow progress northward and continued contact with the enemy, but it was slow going, and the northern pincer never got into operation.

261. Gradually the failure of the Muong Kassy operation became evident. On 9 April, ChPEO reported his unhappiness with the reports of the Muong Kassy operation. The vertical envelopment had evidently been well executed, but he complained "that once you get these people on the ground they just sit on their blank instead of pushing out. We must recognize that once we get the troops to the right place at the right time our influence just about ceases and they are on their own."^{3/} Two days later ChPEO

1/

^{2/} ChPEO to CINCPAC, PEO Opt-1394, DTG 070950Z Apr 61, SECRET;
CNO IntSum on Laos, DTG 072245Z Apr 61, SECRET.

^{3/} ChPEO to CINCPAC, PEO 1432, DTG 090405Z Apr 61, SECRET.

was reporting that the situation of the airborne assault force was not clear but that it was apparent that a link-up with GM-12 as originally planned was remote, that some of the forces supposed to be attacking were withdrawing, and that the capture of Muong Kassy could not be expected soon.^{1/} Within 3 hours ChPEO was reporting on additional intelligence that had reached him which confirmed the withdrawal of more FAL elements and led him to conclude that the failure of attacking forces from north and south to link-up could only be viewed as a serious setback.^{2/}

262. The following day ChPEO reported that the RLG had announced the return to Luang Prabang of the elements of the 1st Para. Bn. and 26th Inf. Bn. that had been scheduled to link-up at Muong Kassy with GM-12, confirming, in effect, that the RLG had given up all hopes of retaking Muong Kassy.^{3/}

263. The 13 April edition of SIRAB (No. 71) reported that the Muong Kassy operation was apparently folding. And when the Laos Task Force met on 13 April to consider a series of policy proposals for recommendation first to SecState Rusk and thereafter to the President, the considerations began with emphasis upon the worsening situation created by the disheartening collapse of the offensive against Muong Kassy.

DIPLOMATIC INDECISION AND CONFUSION IN INTELLIGENCE REPORTS

264. The Muong Kassy affair had been marked by 2 minor incidents which deserve some attention because they were of concern to those carrying command responsibilities at the time. The first of these was the hesitation of Ambassador Brown on 4 April to accept responsibility for the offensive to seize Muong Kassy, even though he professed to favor it, because he feared the

^{1/} ChPEO to CINCPAC, PEO 1458, DTG 111315Z Apr 61, SECRET.

^{2/} ChPEO to CINCPAC, PEO Opt-1464, DTG 111610Z Apr 61, SECRET.

^{3/} ChPEO to CINCPAC, PEO 1476, DTG 121340Z Apr 61, SECRET.

effect of the offensive upon diplomatic negotiations centered elsewhere. From the evidence at hand, it is not clear whether or not Ambassador Brown's irresolution had any effect upon the effectiveness of the FAL operation. It would be difficult to prove that it had any effect at all. But it is clear that it could have had an adverse effect, and this possibility weighed heavily upon CINCPAC.

265. In the midst of the confusion in the hours immediately preceding the attack, CINCPAC sent a message to JCS which listed [] messages, concerning the Phoumi offensive, that had been exchanged between Vientiane and Washington, citing that they indicated a lamentable indecision concerning the offensive and concerning support of Phoumi in the proposed offensive action.

"I hope that understanding can be reached and that orders are issued so that in the future Phoumi will know definitely where we stand...the damage was done by Ambassador Brown making a request to Phoumi to defer his attack and indicating that he would withhold aircraft." 1/

266. Procedurally, CINCPAC's complaint was that Ambassador Brown's messages concerning a possible delay in initiating the offensive were communicated through channels that did not guarantee prompt cognizance by military authorities. Thus, in passing an info copy of his message to JCS to ChPEO, he explained:

"In important problems involving military matters, it is vital that I and JCS have full knowledge of them through military sources. []

]"...vitally important hours...lost in giving Phoumi the go signal...might have been avoided had Amb. Brown's action been reported by you to CINCPAC info JCS.

1/ CINCPAC to JCS, DTG 042011Z Apr 61, SECRET.

"...did you know that Amb. Brown had ideas of delaying Phoumi's long awaited offensive?

"Beginning now...you are requested to parallel promptly any [] pertaining to urgent or emergency military matters by military channels to me with info to JCS." 1/

267. A second problem concerned the reports of an enemy parachute drop on 3 April (mentioned in paragraph 242 above) close to an area then occupied by FAL elements scheduled to take part in the Muong Kassy offensive. []

[]

268. There then ensued an exchange of messages clouded at one point by an incorrect paragraph reference in the CINCPAC query, leading ChPEO to confuse his report of a planned drop of friendly paratroops with CINCPAC's reference to reported enemy paratroop drops. When finally the confusion was cleared away, what emerged was that ChPEO had not forwarded the original report of an enemy paratroop drop because he considered it was erroneous. He asked then if CINCPAC desired unevaluated intelligence along with evaluated intelligence; and the incident concluded with affirmation from CINCPAC that his headquarters wanted all intelligence, evaluated or not. 3/

269. In the period before the confusion was cleared up, the report of the paratroop drop had been taken at its face value, and at CINCPAC's was about to be used at the JCS level in

1/ Exclusive for Mr. Boyle info Gen. Lemnitzer from Felt, DTG 052241Z Apr 61, TOP SECRET.

2/ CINCPAC to ChPEO, DTG 042116Z Apr 61, SECRET.

3/ ChPEO to CINCPAC, PEO Opt-1341, DTG 050618Z Apr 61, SECRET; CINCPAC to ChPEO, DTG 051917Z Apr 61, SECRET; ChPEO to CINCPAC, PEO 1378, DTG 061515Z Apr 61, SECRET; CINCPAC to ChPEO, DTG 070114Z Apr 61, SECRET.

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Washington as an argument for authorizing the use of bombs by the armed T-6's. "Recommend that Phoumi's request to drop bombs from his own aircraft be approved and that Ambassador Brown to instruct to remove his restriction...the Communist attacks on the RLG have been escalated in that Soviet aircraft have dropped paratroops in the territory of Laos..."^{1/} But within an hour CINCPAC was conceding "I wrote third sentence into part 2 [meaning the quote above] in full recognition of fact that intelligence officers do not have hard intelligence that Soviets dropped paratroops in Laos. You may not want to use the argument contained in that sentence. However, there are reasons to suspect that troops have been dropped and I think that Phoumi is justified in reacting to the suspicion."^{2/}

GENERAL PROBLEMS OF NATIONAL POLICY FROM THE COLLAPSE OF THE NNC PROPOSAL THROUGH THE 13 APRIL WHITE HOUSE MEETING

270. The new administration's policy of a truly neutral Laos, announced in most general terms in the Inaugural Address in January had at first formulated this policy into the political proposal for a Neutral Nations Commission, and this proposal, as we have seen above, was rudely rejected almost as soon as it was made. The efforts of the Phoumi-Boun Oum government to negotiate with Souvanna came to naught and the remaining publicized political formulae were for a revival of the ICC and a reconvoation of the Geneva Conference as a 14-Nation Conference. Both of these, unless extensively qualified, would represent a major Communist victory.

^{1/}CINCPAC to JCS, DTG 070017Z Apr 61, TOP SECRET.

^{2/}CINCPAC to CJCS, exclusive for Gen. Lemnitzer from Adm. Felt, DTG 070115Z Apr 61, TOP SECRET.

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271. These failures confirmed the January judgment that Phoumi's military position would have to be strengthened before he would be in a position to negotiate successfully with the Kong Le/Pathet Lao opposition. [

] both the comparative strength and the morale of FAL continued to deteriorate while the Communist buildup of Pathet Lao and Kong Le forces continued apace. All of these factors prompted a frantic search for a new policy to salvage something from the rapidly worsening situation.

Considerations of Different Kinds of Intervention

272. One obvious possibility, of course, was intervention. Consideration of intervention raised questions of whether intervention should be through the vehicle of SEATO or whether it should be a unilateral U.S. intervention, [

] Intervention also raised questions of what the minimal objectives of a military operation should be, and of the necessary or desirable political conditions for an interventionary effort.

273. On the morning of 16 March at a State/JCS meeting, SecState Rusk outlined a proposal to have King Savang Vathana appeal to SEATO to intervene. The SecState's proposal expressed the hope that in response to such an appeal SEATO would send a composite

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force to hold the Mekong River crossings and occupy the cities along that river following essentially the scheme of OPLAN 5/60. If SEATO as an organization would not intervene, then the U.S. would act [

] The CJCS and the DJS were present and explained major features of existing plans. These called for a total of 26,000 men, the first element to be an ABG from Okinawa which could be emplaced within 24 hours if previously alerted. The Navy's nearest forces were in the South China Sea, including a complement of Marines, but its immediate operational capacities were slightly lower [

] The available record of this meeting suggests that it was the sense of the meeting that the President would be asked to endorse a policy seeking such intervention -- through SEATO if necessary -- unilaterally, otherwise to occupy the Mekong River cities. The objective was to prevent them from falling into hands of the rebels and to free and support FAL to combat the Pathet Lao in the field. The White House Special Assistant who at the time was most particularly active on Southeast Asia told the DepASD/ISA that he would see the President that afternoon to urge him to ask the SecState to get out the necessary alerts that very day. Word of this was passed on to the CJCS. ^{1/}

274. The U.S. made no immediate policy decisions or commitments, however. A State Department circular sent out widely to both SEA and important world capitals on 18 March summarized the position that the U.S. wished its representatives in these capitals to represent as the U.S. policy. (State Department circulars

^{1/} Unaddressed memo signed by the DepASD/ISA, Subj.: "Laos," dated 1300 hrs, 16 Mar 61, TOP SECRET.

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commonly express U.S. declaratory policy.) This circular said that the crux of the situation centered on the Pathet Lao offensive combined with the breakdown of negotiations between the RLG and Souvanna, which in turn involved Souvanna's refusal to participate in a broadened RLG or a Neutral Nations Commission before convocation of a 14-Nation Conference. The U.S. still strongly supported the 17 February declaration of neutrality by King Savang Vathana and his call for the NNC. The U.S. considered that an international conference called without a prior understanding concerning the possible bases of settlement would serve solely as a propaganda forum and would lead to increase tensions rather than reduce them. The U.S., therefore, generally supported the position taken by the RLG that the situation in Laos be investigated by an NNC before such a conference so that the NNC could formulate a framework for settlement. Finally, the U.S. had serious reservations concerning reactivation of the ICC, because RLG officials considered it an infringement on their national sovereignty.^{1/}

British Good Offices - Origins of The Cease-Fire Formula

275. It was apparently on this same day that what was later to become the accepted cease-fire formula originated. On 21 March the British ambassador in Washington delivered a note to the SecState which began by recalling a suggestion which the British ambassador said was made to him by the SecState at the conclusion of their discussion of Laos on 18 March. This suggestion concerned the British reply to the Soviet note of 18 February. The SecState's suggestion, which he emphasized was personal and not yet fully considered, was in two parts. First, the British might agree to reactivation of the ICC in New Delhi; second, the British would reserve their position on an

^{1/} State Department Circular 1422, 1961 Mar 18, PM 817, SECRET.

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international conference unless the Soviet government would agree to the ICC using its offices to bring about a cease-fire and to bring about also a meeting of Laotian factions aimed to form a more broadly based government. The British ambassador in his note said he had referred this proposal to Foreign Secretary Lord Home, who liked the idea but considered that something must be changed to meet the Russian insistence on an agreement to a conference before any progress could be made in settling the dispute. With this Russian objective in mind, Lord Home asked if the U.S. would favor British acceptance in principle of the idea of a conference by qualifying this acceptance with the proviso that the conference could not meet until a cease-fire had become effective. If this were favored by the British their representative therefore would propose the following sequence: First, the ICC would meet in New Delhi. Second and simultaneously, the cochairman (the UK and the USSR) would issue an appeal for a cease-fire and for a suspension of armed shipments to Laos. Third, the ICC would report when satisfied that a cease-fire was effective. Fourth, the 14-Nation Conference would convene.

276. The British ambassador enclosed a draft of a note, embodying these provisions, proposed for delivery in Moscow. It was further stated that if the SecState concurred with the general lines of this approach, communications to Nehru, invitations to the international conference, and the cochairman's cease-fire appeals, would be drafted. Documentary evidence of the U.S. response to this British note was missing. The U.S. did not commit itself immediately to this formula, but this is almost exactly where we ended up as we went to Geneva 6 weeks later. The date of this note -- 21 March -- and the record of the White House meeting that is available for the same day, plus

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the later sequence of events, suggests strongly that the British-American diplomatic exchange may have been of the most crucial importance in the development of American policies concerning Laos at this juncture.

White House Meeting Of 20 March

277. There was a meeting on Laos at the White House on 20 March of which there is an excellent, informal firsthand report. According to this report the first question asked (evidently by the President) was whether or not Gen. Trapnell had yet reported. He had not. (Lt. Gen. Thomas Trapnell had been sent to RVN and Laos -- apparently on White House initiative -- to report on conditions and make recommendations. An account of his report will be given later.) The next question asked was in essence the crucial one. Did the JCS believe that the U.S. should intervene to prevent the loss of Vientiane to the rebels?

278. In response to the latter question 3 possible plans of intervention were described for the President. First, the unilateral action by the U.S.; second, a SEATO intervention; third, [

] This induced the question of how much more would be required and how long it would take them to get there. [

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. 279. Further questions centered upon fears of the imminent fall of Luang Prabang or Vientiane or the capture of the King and of possible means of preventing the latter eventuality. Intervention to hold Luang Prabang was not recommended, but an attempt to persuade the King to move from Luang Prabang to Vientiane [

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280. A question was asked whether the U.S. could land troops in Thailand either from the fleet or from Okinawa before commitment to intervention in Laos. There was not a ready answer to this question (although CINCPAC was later to judge it impractical), but it was agreed that DOD would work out possible actions which could be taken on minimum time schedules with specific attention to possible landings in Vietnam or Thailand or Laos.

281. No action decisions are recorded to have taken place in this meeting, although a great sense of urgency was conveyed and it appeared clear that the U.S. must be fully prepared to intervene with SEATO, or even unilaterally "if necessary." It was clearly implied that the U.S. would intervene to protect Vientiane or to protect the King. The Trapnell report was repeatedly referred to and apparently much anticipated: [

] Finally, the possibility of landing U.S. forces in Thailand or Vientiane, or the movement of carrier forces to the South China Sea before an anticipated intervention by SEATO, was to be definitely anticipated.

282. Following the meeting the SecDef asked the JCS to consider:
- a. Moving U.S. aircraft to Thailand soon,
 - b. Move more carriers to the South China Sea,
 - c. Move U.S. forces to Thailand or Vientiane,
 - d. []
 - e. List all necessary actions with our allies regarding overflight rights, landing rights, housing, equipment, maintenance, etc.
 - f. List all possible actions with a time schedule attached,
 - g. Recommend conditions under which U.S. should intervene. ^{1/}

White House Meeting of 21 March

283. The White House consideration of the Laos problem on 20 March was continued on the 21st in a second meeting. The effect of the considerations of the second White House meeting was not a decision either to intervene or not to intervene but a decision perhaps better described as settling upon a policy of keeping open the prospect of intervention while striving for a political settlement following general lines of understanding developed between the SecState and the British ambassador between 18 and 21 March.

284. The available account of the meeting of 21 March indicates that the SecState was the principal spokesman and that he proposed a general policy which was apparently largely accepted by the President. The recommended policy was that the U.S. approach was to be a dual approach of negotiation and military action. Even if the U.S. intervened, the object was not to fight a big war but to provide a basis for negotiation. By implication, therefore, a military intervention would be limited and the objective would be the application of military pressure

^{1/} JCS to CINCPAC, DTG 210210Z Mar 61, cite SSO/JCS 360-61, TOP SECRET.

to obtain diplomatic concessions. On the diplomatic side it was hoped to get the British to move their position closer to our own,^{1/} to impress the Russians with the seriousness of U.S. views, yet let it be known that if a de facto cease-fire occurred the British would be willing to meet with the Soviets as cochairman of the old Geneva Conference. This in turn would lead to a 14-Nation Conference, and lead also to negotiation for settlement among Laotian political leaders. On the action side it was hoped the British could be induced to agree to the stationing of a SEATO force in Thailand, not immediately nor necessarily entering Laos. It was also hoped that the British could be persuaded also to support an effort to get all SEATO members to join in a common action. [

] Finally, the President would hold a press conference two days hence (23 March) expounding U.S. views on Laos.

285. Our record of the meeting indicates that one major unresolved question was explicitly recognized at the meeting. This was what would happen if the Russians would not agree to the de facto cease-fire. In response to this, someone suggested that we should seek to persuade the British to support the SEATO actions in any event and should prepare to move on [to more serious actions if the Russians refused to go along.^{2/}]

1/ Among the principal British-U.S. differences were: greater British than U.S. confidence in Souvanna, greater British than U.S. insistence on the need for "a broadly based" government, greater British than U.S. mistrust of Phoumi, and greater U.S. than British confidence in the efficacy of military and para-military measures.

2/ Memo for the Record by DepASD/ISA, Subj.: "Discussion of Laos at White House meeting, March 21 (from notes by Mr. Nitze)," 21 Mar 61, TOP SECRET.

Diplomatic and Political Follow-Up of White House Meetings

286. Following the White House meeting the SecState called in the British and French ambassadors and addressed them on behalf of the President. He urged that the British, in reply to the Soviet note of 18 February, should propose that the first step should be an effective de facto cease-fire. In addition, the British should ask the Russians to join them in bringing about an effective cease-fire and in inducing the Lao leaders in Phnom Penh to resume talks with the Boun Oum/Phoumi government. Granting these conditions, the U.S. would agree to a 14-Nation Conference following the convening of the ICC, the cessation of hostilities and the resumption of talks. Meanwhile, because the Communists were expected to use the interval of political delay to improve their position, the U.S. proposed, on the military side, to start consultations within SEATO to facilitate prompt military aid to Laos if aid was needed.^{1/}

287. On 22 March, Congressional leaders were briefed on the policy as it had evolved in the preceding few days. On 23 March, the President in a TV news conference told the nation of the U.S. resolution to preserve an independent neutral Laos. He called for an instant cessation of hostilities within that country and requested that negotiations for peace begin as swiftly as possible. He warned that "no one should doubt our resolution" to preserve an independent neutral Laos and indicated the U.S. would consult with its allies, especially those in SEATO, concerning what further military responses might be necessary if Communist aggression did not cease immediately.

The Trapnell Report And How It was Staffed

288. On the same day, Lt. Gen. Trapnell sent in a preliminary copy of his report on Laos from Bangkok. (He also reported on

^{1/} State Dept. Circular 1436, 21 Mar 61, SECRET.

^{2/} NYT, 24 Mar 61, pp. 1 and 7.

the situation in SVN on the same visit.) While in Bangkok, just before returning to U.S., Gen. Trapnell conferred with ChPEO and CINCPAC, both of whom were in Bangkok for the meeting at that time of the SEATO Milads. The Trapnell report was focused largely on details of military programs rather than general problems of national policy. Clearcut evidence is lacking of the origin of the Trapnell mission. Persons in positions of some confidence at the time were of the impression, however, that the impetus for the mission came from the White House, which desired to have a fresh appraisal of the situations in Laos and Vietnam.

289. The Trapnell report began with a few general observations, the first of which was that Laos provided little opportunity for conventional military operations. It was, on the contrary, made to order for guerrilla warfare. Pathet Lao success was attributed to the penetration of Vietminh advisers to the low echelons (company level and below).

290. Gen. Trapnell's specific recommendations were:

a. [

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b. To convert PEO to MAAG,

c. [

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d. To provide armed helicopters,

e. To authorize support for 9 additional FAL battalions,

f. [

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g. To place PEO advisers at key staff counterpart points at FAL headquarters,

h. To place U.S. advisers down to battalion level of FAL

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1. []
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291. Two days after his preliminary report was sent in from Bangkok, Gen. Trapnell arrived in Washington just in time to be placed on the plane that was carrying the President to Palm Beach for a meeting with Prime Minister MacMillan at Key West. Before the Trapnell report had been staffed by JCS, or the exchange of views upon the report between JCS and CINCPAC had been completed, Gen. Trapnell had briefed the Commander-in-Chief. The Deputy J-3 who served as Chief of the Laos Battle Staff was present on the plane, but for other reasons.

292. On the same day that General Trapnell briefed the President on his views, CINCPAC supplied CJCS with a point-by-point commentary on the Trapnell recommendations. CINCPAC was in Bangkok at the time, General Trapnell on his way back to Washington had passed through Bangkok (whence he had filed the advance copy of his report), and CINCPAC had had a day to discuss the report with ChPEO. CINCPAC's comments expressed no violent objection, but they clearly conveyed the impression that all of the ideas were well known to the field, and where they had not been adopted there were practical obstacles that fuller acquaintance with local conditions made evident, or the proposals were of a long-range nature and not currently feasible, or otherwise were debatable. This began a staffing action which continued for about three weeks, in which CINCPAC was asked for a second round of comments (plus a third on the controversial subject of armed helos), and both J-3 and J-5 prepared papers submitted to the JCS. "Tabular Summary of Staff Actions on Recommendations in Trapnell Report on Laos," summarizes comments embodied in various staff actions, and final action, on the several specific recommendations in the Trapnell Report.

1/ ChPEO to JCS and to CHJUSMAAG for Adm. Felt from Gen. Trapnell, PEO 1161, DTG 231600Z Mar 61, TOP SECRET.

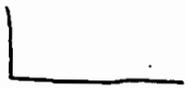
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Consultations With Allies

293. The week end of 25-26 March was a busy one for the President. On Saturday morning, the 25th, the President addressed a personal letter to Gen. de Gaulle. That afternoon he enplaned for Palm Beach. Sunday morning he met with Prime Minister MacMillan at Key West. The Key West meeting was concerned wholly with Laos, and largely with clarifying the conditions under which the U.K. would commit troops to a SEATO effort. Among those accompanying the President to Key West was the Chief of the Laos Battle Staff, the Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, and 3 representatives from State. Upon his return to Washington the evening of Sunday, 26 March, the President was met at Andrews AFB by the French Ambassador who handed him Gen. de Gaulle's reply to the President's note of the day before. Gen. de Gaulle remained firmly in the position that any approach to problems of Laos should be a 3-power matter with the U.S., U.K. and France as conferees. The next morning the

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President met with the Russian Foreign Minister, Mr. Gromyko, in the White House.^{1/}

294. During this period both Washington and London were in communication with Moscow and New Delhi on the issues of Laos. From the 27th to the 29th March, the SEATO meetings were in session in Bangkok, following on the heels of the meeting of SEATO Milads. These meetings opened with expressions of desire for a united, independent, and sovereign Laos, not subordinate to any nation or group of nations. They ended with a resolution that if the current efforts toward settlement of the strife within Laos did not succeed, members of SEATO were prepared, within the terms of the treaty, to take whatever action might be appropriate under the circumstances.

Effective de facto Cease-Fire the Central Issue

295. From this point on the central consideration of U.S. policy-makers was whether or not a de facto cease-fire would be observed by the Communist-supported rebel factions within Laos. To induce the observance of an effective cease-fire the U.S. followed two lines. One was to continue diplomatic pressure on the Russians to use their influence upon the Laotian rebels to accept a cease-fire. The other was to build up and strengthen FAL, and if possible strengthen the resolution of FAL to oppose the nibbling encroachments of the rebel forces. With the military balance of power shifted largely to the rebel forces, time appeared to be on the side of the rebels. It was, therefore, constantly suspected that Russia was dragging its feet on the business of calling a halt to the aggressions of the pro-Communist rebels. On the side of the RLG the officers and troops of FAL evidently

^{1/} I-18302/61, memo from Robt. H. B. Wade, Director, Coordinating Staff, NSC and Collateral Activities, OASD/ISA, to DepASD/ISA, Subj.: "Laos," 30 Mar 61, TOP SECRET.

had little love of combat when it was so widely advertised that a cease-fire was impending. The familiar and understandable dislike of being the last one to be shot seemed to be much more convincing to FAL than the cold appreciation, which the rebels seemed better to understand, that military pressure is sometimes most rewarding while negotiations are in progress.

296. As already related, the offensive against Muong Kassy in the first week of April quickly fizzled. The Russian airlift and the Pathet Lao buildup continued, and comparatively aggressive Pathet Lao patrols were reported daily. The hopes of a satisfactory and honorable political settlement that had developed out of the White House meetings on 20-21 March were gradually dissipated. The collapse of FAL, the failure of the Russians to do anything effective to restrain their rebel allies in Laos, bred a growing suspicion that while the U.S. waited for a political settlement, the Communist groups in Laos by military means would gradually nibble away all hope of the neutral Laos, which was our declared objective.

The Posing Of The Question Concerning Nonnuclear Capabilities

297. On 5 April -- the day that the ill-fated offensive against Muong Kassy was launched -- the DepASD/ISA addressed to the DJS a series of questions on military matters put to him by the SecState upon his return from the SEATO meeting in Bangkok. The DJS was able to respond directly to all but one of the questions. That one was referred to the JCS, and became the subject of a month-long study. The question was:

"Does the U.S. have the present capability, logistic and otherwise, to engage in a full-scale, non-nuclear campaign in Laos, and possibly North Vietnam and Red China, to include the capture of Hainan Island?" 1/

1/ DepASD/ISA to DJS, I-13, 533/61, 5 Apr 61, SECRET, in JCS 1992/976, 12 May 61, "Capabilities in SEA," TOP SECRET.

The study made in response to this request was not completed until 5 May and not approved by the JCS until 10 May, by which time the major current issues of U.S. policy in Laos, especially the question of intervention, had been resolved. It is evident, however, that judgments of U.S. conventional capabilities, similar to if not identical with those ultimately formalized in this study, played a very important role in determination of U.S. national policy concerning a possible military intervention in Laos. It seems wholly improbable that an urgent study on a subject so vital to crucial current issues would remain unknown to and without influence upon the considerations of cognizant officials in positions of immediate operational and decision-making responsibility. During this period a split occurred within the JCS on the subject of intervention, the Air Force and Navy chiefs favoring it, the Army and Marine Corps opposing it.

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PLANS AND PREPARATIONS FOR POSSIBLE INTERVENTION FROM MID-MARCH TO MID-APRIL

Major Classification of Evident Alternatives

298. Consideration of forceful means to oppose a Communist take-over in Laos generally followed along one or another of two paths. The first path, that of increased support to the Phoumi/Boun Oum regime, included increases in [] measures of support. The second path considered was intervention.

299. Consideration of intervention was in terms of acting through SEATO in response to an appeal by Laos to SEATO, or in terms of U.S. intervention that would be unilateral except for [

] the Republic of Vietnam, [

i] The greatest value of such assistance would be to provide bases, eliminate overflight problems, and give an Asiatic coloration to the effort. There were some problems involved in developing a preparatory posture that would readily adjust, at the last moment if necessary, to either situation. There were also problems of preparing for a possible intervention in ways that would not frighten off allies whom we hoped might be induced to cooperate, but who would not cooperate, we feared, if we appeared very aggressive.

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] Ten days later this continuing downward trend appeared so critical that, as already indicated, military intervention was being actively considered at the highest level.

A Minor Revision of OPLAN 32-59

301. On 18 March, CINCPAC sent JCS briefs of the current versions of CINCPAC OPLAN 32-59, Phase 2, and SEATO OPLAN 5/60 for use in briefing the SecState. The principal departure from earlier versions was that OPLAN 32-59 had a new alternative, designed to facilitate the seizure of objectives in unfriendly hands. This was to be accomplished by staging through airfields where

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administrative landings could be depended upon, leaving the initial occupation of Vientiane and Seno - which might be occupied by the enemy - to units prepared to seize objectives against opposition.^{1/}

302. It is not evident from the available records that the SecState was in fact briefed on the plans.

303. If the intervention were unilateral, it would be conducted by JTF-116 under command of the commanding officer of the 3rd Marine Division, headquartered in Okinawa. In the event of a SEATO intervention, most of the same U.S. forces would be involved but they would operate as a SEATO Field Force (SSF) under command of the Deputy CINCUSARPAC.

DEFCON Status Of PACOM Forces Earmarked For Laos

304. On 19 March, PACOM forces, earmarked for possible action in Laos, were placed DEFCON 3, and on 21 March the alert status was raised to DEFCON 2. Also on 21 March, a TAC squadron of C-130's began deployment from CONUS to Clark AFB, and the following day Marine Air Base Squadron 16 commenced movement from Okinawa to Udorn. The LEXINGTON and the MIDWAY were directed to the South China Sea and the BENNINGTON to a point in the Gulf of Siam about 100 miles south of Bangkok for a fly-off of helicopters. The THETIS BAY with a Marine battalion took up station in the South China Sea, while PHIBRON V was stationed south of Cambodia with another battalion aboard. Meanwhile, a regimental landing team from the First Marine Brigade in Hawaii was directed to Okinawa to replace the troops pulled out of there for more advanced stations, and preparations were made for positioning other Marine units in the South China Sea.^{2/}

1/ CINCPAC to JCS, DTG 180732Z Mar 1961, TOP SECRET.

2/ SCPEL, pages 46 and 47, TOP SECRET.

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Development of CINCPAC OPLAN X-61

305. In the midst of the growing crisis, CINCPAC left on 19 March to attend the meeting of the SEATO Milads in Bangkok. Because of the imminent prospect of intervention under circumstances which would find France and Britain, and probably Australia and New Zealand, unwilling to join in any common action, CINCPAC directed his staff on his departure to prepare an intervention plan based on corresponding assumptions. The specific assumptions that CINCPAC proposed for the study were:

- a. RLG would appeal to SEATO for military assistance;
- b. Entry into the key cities of Laos would be unopposed;
- c. The purpose would be to free FAL for combat operations;
- d. []

The resulting plan was a combination of CINCPAC OPLAN 32-59, Phase 2 (Laos), and parts of SFF OPLAN 5/61. It soon came to be known as OPLAN X-61. The first version was forwarded to JCS on 21 March. A revised version followed on 24 March. This revision, like the primary plan of OPLAN 32-59, called for administrative landing of the Marine battalions in Vientiane. The Army ABG was to be deployed through Clark Air Force Base and thus be available for possible assault landing in the Plaine Des Jarres or elsewhere.^{1/}

306. A day or two after CINCPAC's OPLAN X-61 reached JCS, State sent a message to CINCPAC and to the ambassadors in Vientiane and Bangkok stressing the need for detailed planning of any troop movements into Laos in response to an RLG appeal to either SEATO or the U.N. State wished prior decisions by all countries and prior forward positioning of forces so that movement could be completed within 12 hours, before the Communist Bloc could make an appeal to the U.N. Security Council. State expressed a desire to avoid a

^{1/} SCPEL, pages 85 and 86, TOP SECRET; ADMINO/CINCPAC to JCS, DTG 210445Z March 1961, TOP SECRET; ADMINO/CINCPAC to JCS, DTG 240658Z March 1961, TOP SECRET.

Suez-type of delay and confusion, and wanted to be sure that all decisions and plans were firm before an appeal was made by the RLG.^{1/} (It was at the White House meeting on 20 March that the President had shown himself strikingly interested, following the briefing on intervention plans, in reducing the time involved in getting the troops into Laos.)

307. On 29 March, JCS notified CINCPAC that the outline of OPLAN X-61, as submitted in amended form on 24 March, was approved, subject to certain qualifications which evidently stemmed from political considerations.

"1. Speed of execution and a conspicuous international flavor in forces being deployed are paramount considerations if military operations are directed in Laos with either SEATO or other multinational forces...

"2. Accordingly your Outline Operation Plan X-61...is approved for planning subject to the following:

a. Mission. Utilizing Asian combat forces integrated with U.S. combat and logistic forces, conduct immediate military operations to ensure the stability and friendly control of Laos by assisting the RLG in eliminating Communist-controlled insurgency, while being prepared to assist in maintaining the stability and friendly control of South Viet-Nam.

b. General Concept.

(i) A Multinational Force deploys rapidly to Laos securing certain key cities and crossings over the Mekong River in the vicinity within 48 hours after the order to execute is given. Without reducing the speed of initial U.S. force deployments, all feasible emphasis will be placed on [

(ii) After the key cities and the nearby Mekong River crossings are secured, forces will be prepared for further military operations as directed.

c. Execution.

(i) Deployment times be compressed to the minimum, avoiding slow movement through. Further pre-positioning of forces to be achieved as necessary.

(ii) Within 48 hours from order to execute or ASAP, deploy following forces into Laos: one airborne battle group with support elements; minimum of one Marine BLT; Marine Air Group (-); [and Pakistani, Philippine, and, if available, Australian] with size forces and destinations to be determined by you.

^{1/} SCPEL, pages 86 and 87, TOP SECRET; DepTel to Vientiane 1025, 26 March 1961, 0550Z, TOP SECRET.

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(iv) If not secured initially, appropriate forces be prepared to secure Luang Prabang if an emergency arises threatening Communist capture of the King." 1/

SEATO understandings and relationships were to be utilized or copied as much as possible and the basic concept of initial deployment to the Mekong River Valley cities with preparation for further military operations, as later decided, was approved.

308. In what looks like an early afterthought, a message was dispatched shortly after to CINCPAC advising him that political factors would be especially sensitive during a period preliminary to the execution of X-61. For this reason, in prepositioning forces, there was great need for discretion to prevent an appeal by the USSR to the U.N. Security Council, based on the presence of U.S. forces near Laos. Such an action could destroy the timing of what were considered to be necessary concurrent political maneuvers. 2/

Status of PACOM Forces At End of March

309. In the meantime the PACOM forces involved continued in the deployments ordered beginning 19 March. On 25 March, the JCS issued a Laos Situation Summary (SITSUM), sent to all CINC's, detailing the measures taken by PACOM to increase readiness. These included:

- a. CJTF-116 preparing for out-loading amphibious shipping in WestPac;
- b. All forces earmarked for or in direct support of Laos contingency operations in DEFCON 2;
- c. All forces earmarked or in direct support of SVN contingency operations in DEFCON 3;
- d. Remainder of PACOM in DEFCON 4;
- e. Marine battalion afloat proceeding to area 100 miles south of Bangkok;
- f. LEXINGTON proceeding to point 200 miles east of Tourane, MIDWAY already operating in area 200 miles east of Tourane;

1/ JCS to CINCPAC, 992897, DTG 291841Z March 1961, TOP SECRET.

2/ JCS to CINCPAC, 992922, DTG 292145Z March 1961, TOP SECRET.

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g. THETIS BAY to arrive Okinawa 24 March to pick up Marine battalion to proceed to South China Sea;

h. KEARSARGE sails from Pearl to Okinawa 25 March with Marine helo squadron;

i. 315th Air Division in process of moving Marine Air Base Squadron to Udorn;

j. C-130 CONUS augmentation squadron has arrived Clark AFB;

k. Army ABG Okinawa prepared to deploy on minimum notice. ^{1/}

CINCPAC Becomes Optimistic of Allied Cooperation

310. March ended with the deeply discouraging defeat at Tha Thom, but a measure of encouragement came to CINCPAC from the impressions he derived from discussions with SEATO Milads in Bangkok.

Reporting to JCS on the SEATO meeting, CINCPAC gave a very optimistic reappraisal. [

] He concluded that OPLAN 5 was credible and that the SFF 5/61 was the best basis for planning for international action. He now judged that his assumptions for X-61 had been too pessimistic, and he proposed to put that plan on ice. Very soon, with a message citing proposed modifications to be adopted in SFF 5/61, he said he was prepared to reposition units to reduce reaction times; and he cited optimistically a conversation [

1/ CINCPAC's SITSUM 2, 992673, DTG 251755Z Mar 1961, TOP SECRET.]

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JTF-116 Disposition on 1 April

311. On 1 April the disposition of JTF-116 forces was reported as follows:

- a. One carrier group (MIDWAY) operating at 14.5 N, 113 E;
- b. Carrier group (LEXINGTON) enroute from Subic Bay to operation area 17 N, 115 E;
- c. THETIS BAY (LPH-4) with Marine battalion embarked and operating with an amphibious shipping at 12.5 N, 117 E;
- d. Amphibious shipping with Marine battalion embarked and operating with BENNINGTON (CVS-20) at 7 N, 107 E;
- e. Army airborne battle group at Okinawa ready;
- f. Two Marine battalions at Okinawa ready;
- g. PACAF Mobile Strike Force (MSF) at Okinawa and Clark AFB;
- h. Marine RLT enroute to Okinawa from Pearl, ETA 6 April;
- i. KEARSARGE (CVS-33) enroute Subic Bay from Pearl, ETA 5 April.^{2/}

Military Level Negotiations on SEATO Intervention Plans

312. At that time military level conversations were proceeding in Washington between members of the JS and the British Defense Minister concerning, among other things, British participation in a Laos contingency action. [

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1/ CINCPAC to JCS, DTG 020330Z Apr 1961, TOP SECRET.
 2/ JCS to all CINC's, 993187, DTG 010017Z Apr 1961, TOP SECRET.
 3/ JCS to CINCPAC 993186, DTG 010012Z Apr 1961, TOP SECRET. CINCPAC to JCS, DTG 020633Z Apr 1961, TOP SECRET.

313. A day later CINCPAC advised JCS that reflection upon the definitions and understandings of the military objectives of the SEATO plan might be expandable to include assistance to FAL to recapture the Plaine Des Jarres and Xieng Kouang. []

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315. []

1/ CINCPAC to JCS, DTG 030555Z Apr 1961, TOP SECRET.

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Readiness of PACOM Forces Committed To SEATO OPLAN 5/60

317. By 5 April CINCPAC was able to report that PACOM forces committed for action under SEATO OPLAN 5/60 were in a position to begin landing in Laos within 48 hours from an order to execute. It was explained that reaction time was highly sensitive to the time of day of the beginning landings in the objective areas. If they

1/ [

] both TOP SECRET.

2/ CINCPAC to all SEATO Milads, DTG 050206Z April 1961, TOP SECRET.

3/ CINCPAC to JCS, DTG 112331Z April 1961, TOP SECRET.

4/ JCS to CINCPAC, 994117, DTG 142128Z April 1961, TOP SECRET.

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were begun in early morning daylight, time could be reduced to 24 hours by moving L-day troops to Clark AFB and the afloat battalion closer into Bangkok (than the 100 miles distance it was currently observing). Prepositioning to achieve this capability required the full resources of the 315th Air Division, "loaded and cocked," at Clark. CINCPAC was ready to take these prepositioning steps. Efficiency would depend a great deal upon warning of an impending order to execute and he understood that word had been passed to Ambassador Brown in Vientiane and Ambassador Johnson in Bangkok to provide such warning.^{1/}

318. Meanwhile, CINCPAC had given orders for assembly and establishment of the SFF staff. On 5 April, the Deputy CINCUSARPAC was formally notified to proceed to Okinawa with a portion of the SFF staff already assembled. Upon arrival in Okinawa the Deputy CINCUSARPAC was named commander designate of SFF, in which capacity he was directed to assemble and activate his staff in Okinawa; and upon order to implementation of SFF OPLAN 5/61 he would assume the title of Commander, SEATO Field Forces. At the same time, CINCPAC cancelled the previous activation of CJTF-116 and staff, and directed that they revert to planning status.^{2/} The SFF commander designate arrived in Okinawa, established headquarters on 7 April, and approximately 100 of the staff personnel were in place on 8 April.^{3/}

[319. []]

^{1/} CINCPAC to JCS, DTG 050446Z April 1961, TOP SECRET.

^{2/} CINCPAC to CINCUSARPAC, C/SFF (Deputy CINCUSARPAC), DTG 050910Z Apr 1961, CINCPAC to JCS and PACOM Companies, DTG 052322Z Apr 61, TOP SECRET; CINCPAC to CJTF-116 (CG 3rd Marine Division) DTG 062320Z Apr 1961, TOP SECRET.

^{3/} CINCPAC SITREP 17, CINCPAC to JCS, DTG 080120Z Apr 1961, TOP SECRET.

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- 1/ OASD/ISA-FER-Laos Notes on Meeting in SecState Herter's office 7 January 1961, 0930, SECRET; JCS to CINCPAC 988336, DTG 072010Z Jan 1961, TOP SECRET.
 - 2/ CINCPAC to JCS, DTG 180200Z January 1961, TOP SECRET; I-18062/61, 23 January 1961, Memorandum to SecDef from ASD/ISA, Subject: "White House Meeting on Laos, 23 January 1961," TOP SECRET; JCSM 34-61, 24 January 1961, TOP SECRET.
 - 3/ CINCPAC to JCS, DTG 290340Z January 1961, TOP SECRET.

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- 1/ []
- 2/ JCS to CS/USAF, 991706, DTG 112046Z March 1961, TOP SECRET.
 - 3/ SSO/JCS/OSD to SSO/CINCPAC, cite SSO/JCS 360-61, TOP SECRET, Exclusive; JCS to CINCPAC 992240, DTG 210312Z March 61, TOP SECRET; OASD/ISA Memo for the Record, Subject: "Discussion of Laos at White House Meeting March 21 (from notes by Mr. Nitze)," 21 March 1961, TOP SECRET.

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1/ ShPEO to CINCPAC, PEO 1253, DTG 300355Z March 1961, TOP SECRET.
2/ [SECRET.]

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- 1/ ChPEO to CINCPAC, PEO 1431, DTG 090425Z April 1961, TOP SECRET; CINCPAC to ChPEO, DTG 130448Z April 1961, TOP SECRET.
- 2/ Memo for Defense Rep; Laos Task Force, from Director, OASD/ISA-FER, Subject: "Possible Discussion Topics for Laos Task Force Meeting 13 April 1961," TOP SECRET; Memo for the Record, Subject: "State Department Meeting held 13 Apr 1961," PJF, 13 April 1961, TOP SECRET; FER-ISA Memo for the Record, Subject: "Laos Task Force Meeting 13 April 1961," TOP SECRET; Memo for the Record, Subject: "White House Meeting on 13 April 1961 on Laos," PJF, 14 April 1961, TOP SECRET.

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Bombs and Napalm for the T-6's

328. Beginning with the initial disillusionment in the armed T-6 program in January, the judgment grew that the T-6's were of dubious value. [

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329. Authorization to use bombs and napalm with the armed T-6's was continually sought. A momentary break in the opposition to authorize the use of bombs [

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On 13 March, JCS authorized CINCPAC to make all preparations for the use of bombs by the armed T-6's. Such preparation was to include the positioning of bombs in Vientiane. The permission did not include authorization to store napalm nor did it include authorization actually to use the

1/ I-13739/61, Memo for the Record, Subject: "State/JCS Meeting, 14 April 1961," 15 April 1961, SECRET.
2/ OASD/ISA-FER-Laos Memo for the Record, Subject: "Laos Task Force Meeting, 1500, 17 April," 18 April 1961, SECRET.

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bombs. ^{1/} No record has been found of meetings or consultations that led to the JCS authorization to CINCPAC. On 19 March, ChPEO informed CINCPAC that bombs for the T-6's were in fact stored in Vientiane but FAL had not been informed. All details were taken care of however, except for the mechanics of actually arming the planes. ^{2/}

330. There is not recorded mention of the issue of authorizing the use of bombs and napalm during the meetings of 20 and 21 March. The Trapnell Report said nothing on the subject. The bombs were not used, and the message traffic during the last week of March shows no major concern with this subject. During the first week of April another T-6 was lost to ground fire. There were only 5 of an original 10 T-6's and only 7 qualified T-6 pilots left.

331. The question of authorizing use of bombs was partly supplemented, at this time, by the question of replacement of losses. On 1 April ChPEO advised that he did not feel justified in urging replacement of losses because of the ineffectiveness of T-6's. A few days later, ChPEO commented again that the best that could be said of the T-6's was that they were better than nothing. He hoped the lost T-6's might be replaced by higher performance propeller-driven aircraft. Replacement by jets was impractical because of the limitations of FAL pilots and the time involved in training them for jets. The argument was repeated that use of bombs would make the T-6's less ineffective. ^{3/}

332. In spite of the marked lack of enthusiasm for the military effectiveness of T-6's, there were T-6's [] which could readily be turned over to FAL, and availability became the dominant consideration. In Washington the argument favoring

^{1/} JCS to CINCPAC 991799, DTG 140156Z Mar 1961, TOP SECRET.

^{2/} ChPEO to CINCPAC, PEO 1068, DTG 190355Z Mar 1961, TOP SECRET.

^{3/} ChPEO to CINCPAC, PEO-AF 1295, DTG 010920Z April 1961, TOP SECRET.

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authorization of bombs had tended to become less an argument for the military effectiveness and more an argument that such authorization would serve principally to improve FAL morale.^{1/} In the field, CINCPAC tried to revive his own enthusiasm and gave ChPEO a personal list of 12 PL ammo dumps, vehicle parks and supply depots, "waiting to be burned," which even with the ban on bombs were deemed inviting targets, and looked good for single firing runs with rockets and guns. [

] There is no later indication of particular accomplishment by these T-6's, however, and in the crucial final week of April, emphasis shifted to the use of B-26's and consideration of the use of bombs by the T-6's became involved in the question on the use of the B-26's.

THE INTERMITTENT PROBLEM OF RECCE

333. The reader will recall that there had been a new and urgent need for aerial reconnaissance, especially photo recce, in late December and early January. The first need had been to learn about the movements and activities of Kong Le, the nature and magnitude of the Soviet airlift and the buildup thereby of the rebel forces, and finally, the movements of Vietminh and/or Pathet Lao along the DRV borders. The need had been met mainly by the use of photo recce capabilities in [] This

^{1/} Informal, unsigned memo from OASD/ISA-FER to Mr. Anderson, SEA/State Department, Subject: "Assistance for Laos" marked hand-carried to State, 8 April, TOP SECRET.

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capability had then been increased by assignment of additional aircraft and personnel with diplomatic accreditation.

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335. Although arrangements were far from perfect, recce did not become a particular problem again until April. The USAIRA capability continued in regular use and was more limited by poor visibility and enemy ground fire than by other obstacles. The 35mm film sometimes used with hand-held cameras was processed locally, but all other film was shipped out. The latter practice involved a regrettable delay, upon occasions, in getting the results of photo recce missions to Vientiane. [

To what extent U-2 photography was employed is not presently known to the study. There was always an awareness that more sophisticated and high performance capability was available in reserve, in case of an emergency, from carriers or from Clark AFB.^{2/}]

336. [

] These were made

- 1/ CINCPAC to JCS, DTG 060133Z Jan 1961, TOP SECRET; OASD/ISA-FER Notes on Meeting in Mr. Herter's office 7 January 1961, SECRET; JCS to CINCPAC 988336, DTG 072010Z Jan 1961, TOP SECRET; ChJUSMAAG to CINCPAC, DTG 140620Z Jan 1961, TOP SECRET.
- 2/ USAIRA/Vientiane to CS/USAF, Washington, D.C., C-10, DTG 191949Z Jan 1961, SECRET; JCS 1992/912, 3 February 1961, TOP SECRET; CINCPAC to JCS, DTG 262255Z Feb 61, TOP SECRET.

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available in April and were to play a considerable role thereafter.. Another factor that had considerable effect upon later considerations of means to satisfy recce requirements was the increasing danger to low flying or slow flying aircraft from rebel ground fire. This was dramatized by the shooting down of the C-47 with Major Bailey on 23 March, the same day that the President made his television presentation of the Laos problem. After this incident there was an increasing tendency to think of recce in terms of high performance aircraft.

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338. Moumi promptly supplied the required official request on behalf of the RLG.^{2/} [

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1/ JCS to CINCPAC 993538, DTG 062125Z Apr 1961, TOP SECRET.
2/ ChPEO to CINCPAC, PEO 1404, DTG 071219Z Apr 1961, TOP SECRET.
3/ CINCPAC to PACAF, DTG 072052Z Apr 1961, SECRET.
4/ CINCPAC to ChJUSMAAG, DTG 072251Z Apr 1961, TOP SECRET.

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THE ISSUE OF DIRECT AIRLIFT AGAIN

347. This section picks up the account of the issue of USAF logistic flights into Laos (paragraphs 191-210 above) and carries

- 1/ ChJUSMAAG to CINCPAC, MA-011015, DTG 110514Z Apr 1961, TOP SECRET.
- 2/ JCS to CINCPAC 993889, DTG 121604Z Apr 1961, TOP SECRET.
- 3/ CINCPAC to PACAF, DTG 122121Z Apr 1961, TOP SECRET.
- 4/ CINCPAC to PACAF, DTG 130321Z Apr 1961, SECRET.
- 5/ ChJUSMAAG to CINCPAC, MAZ-11066, DTG 150705Z Apr 1961, TOP SECRET
CINCPAC to PACAF, DTG 151925Z Apr 1961, SECRET; CINCPAC to PACAF
and to ChJUSMAAG, DTG 152122Z Apr 1961, TOP SECRET.

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it to 20 April, at which time the issue was settled for the period covered by this study. The question of whether or not to authorize direct flights by marked USAF aircraft was especially frustrating during this period, as it had in fact been during January and February, because no resolution of the problem ever seemed to stay put.

348. [

] Following this decision at the national level on 9 March the JCS on 13 March sent CINCPAC a joint State/Defense message authorizing him to airlift supplies direct to Vientiane when in his judgment supply requirements were sufficiently urgent.^{1/}

349. For two weeks there was no further reference to the matter. There was no mention of this or immediately related issues in the available records of the White House meetings of 20 and 21 March, nor in the Trapnell Report. However, in the latter part of this fortnight there were events that may have had their effect upon the issue. On 23 March Major Bailey was shot down over the Plaine Des Jarres. On 26 March the President talked to Prime Minister MacMillan in conversations that were devoted almost entirely to the problem of Laos. On 27 March the President received Foreign Minister Gromyko for conversations concerning Laos. On 28 March, the President talked to members of Congress concerning his meetings with the Soviet Foreign Minister and the British Prime Minister. From 27 to 29 March, the SEATO Council of Ministers was in session in Bangkok. This was a period of diplomatic negotiations concerning Laos in which Washington, Moscow, London, Paris, Bangkok, Phnom Penh, New Delhi and Peiping and Hanoi were involved.

350. Suddenly, on 28 March, there was a cancellation of the previous authorization to make direct USAF flights into Vientiane.

1/ JCS to CINCPAC 991798, DTG 140154Z Mar 1961, SECRET.

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Referring to a telephone conversation that had occurred between the CJCS and the Chief of Staff to CINCPAC, a JCS message to CINCPAC directed that

"in view of present delicate political situations, higher authority desires to avoid U.S. airlift landing in Laos at this time except in emergency. Accordingly, more U.S. airlift ... should terminate in Bangkok, []

351. This began a period during which authorization to fly USAF planes into Laos on logistic missions was to come from the President alone. The question was raised in the light of new and urgent needs that became evident on 3 April. At that time, a member of the White House staff told the administrative assistant in the office of the CJCS that the President's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs had said that the decision of 28 March still held. Therefore any further requirement to fly U.S. aircraft into Laos would have to be presented to and approved by the President before authorization could be given.^{2/} This is the first time we have a record, incidentally, of the channel from the White House to the JCS coming in through the administrative assistant in the office of the chairman. Following receipt of this information, the Director of the Joint Staff sent another message to CINCPAC advising him that the restriction upon direct flights decided upon 28 March remained in effect, and CINCPAC was asked to issue necessary implementing instructions.^{3/} This was the state of things until the crisis deepened in middle and late April.

FROM PEO TO MAAG

352. [] augmentation of PEO/ Laos and JUSMAAG/Thailand by approximately 100 personnel each. PEO was augmented by 63 officers and enlisted men, and JUSMAAG by

- 1/ JCS to CINCPAC 992870. DTG 290142Z March 1961, TOP SECRET.
2/ Memo for the Record, Subject: "USAF Airlift into Laos," 3 April 1961, by the Chief Pacific Division, J-3, SECRET.
3/ JCS to CINCPAC 993317, DTG 041432Z Apr 1961, TOP SECRET.

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94 officers and enlisted men, by 31 March. [

] these goals were substantially completed: PEO having received an augmentation of 90 and JUSMAAG an augmentation of 96.^{1/} [

] -- there were for a time no concerns about the PEO establishment in Laos, except to enlarge it sufficiently to discharge effectively the restricted and largely covert role it was called upon to perform.

353. [] argued strongly for an overt MAAG. It attributed PL success in large measure to the fact that Vietminh advisers were present to the company level and even below, [

] They should be in uniform to strengthen and enforce their authority. Legislation should be enacted to provide them with normal wartime benefits. [

354. What [] and many others who concerned themselves on a short-term basis with the issue seemed to miss was that full authority on the U.S. side already existed for ChPEO to place PEO advisers at the battalion level. The opposition came mainly from FAL itself. [] CINCPAC said that there was common agreement upon the conversion of PEO to MAAG as a long-range objective. As he explained further that although ChPEO had standing authority to place advisers at the battalion level, he had not been able to place them at that level because FAL battalion commanders objected.^{3/} Four days later,

^{1/} JCS to CINCPAC 993098, DTG 311833Z Mar 1961, TOP SECRET;

JCS to CINCPAC 994500, DTG 201857Z Apr 1961, TOP SECRET.

^{2/} ChPEO/Laos to JCS, PEO 1161, DTG 281100Z Mar 1961, TOP SECRET.

^{3/} CINCPAC to CJCS, DTG 250530Z Mar 1961, TOP SECRET.

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When CINCPAC met directly with Phoumi at Udorn, he took up the issue and urged strongly that LTAG teams be placed at the battalion level. However, when he reported on this meeting, he felt compelled to report that Phoumi had dodged the issue by saying he agreed in principle but problems of application needed to be worked out, and that there were problems of coordination between individuals.^{1/}

355. One of the practical problems was the simple matter of rank. By American standards, the Lao officer corps was much over-ranked in terms of training, experience, and ability. The Lao officers, nevertheless, were very sensitive on the score of rank. They chose not to be advised by persons of lower rank. This reluctance came in addition to a general reluctance to accept advice from foreigners. Finally, they were sometimes sensitive to the possibility of American censure of practices that were common enough in Oriental armies but were strongly disapproved of by Western standards.

356. The JCS staffing of the Trapnell Report approved the recommendation for an overt MAAG to replace PEO. This had been advocated in fact by the JCS for months. But the JCS report paid explicit attention to the political obstacles, noting that they would have to be cleared away before the creation of a formal overt MAAG.^{2/} This is where things stood until 13 April, when, as will be relating in section that follows on the 13 April meetings, the decision was finally taken to establish an overt MAAG.

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^{1/} CINCPAC to JCS and SecState, DTG 300800Z Mar 1961, TOP SECRET.
^{2/} JCS 1992/936, 28 March 1961, "Report on Laos," and JCS 1992/943, 31 March 1961, "A Report by the J-5 on Report on Laos," both TOP SECRET.

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THE 13 APRIL MEETINGSThe Worsening Situation

357. By 13 April official considerations of the cease-fire problem reached such pessimism that the view was accepted that further communications with the Russians concerning a cease-fire should be avoided because Russian respect would be lost by putting the U.S. in an entreating position.^{1/} Consideration of measures to break the deadlock gravitated back and forth between some form of overt intervention and a step-up of [

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The 13 April Laos Task Force Meeting

358. At the 13 April meeting of the Laos Task Force, much attention centered upon consideration of a Watch Committee^{2/} paper. That Committee predicted a continuing collapse of FAL and pointed out that Luang Prabang might be seized easily by the Communist rebels. The paper estimated Communist tactics were to stretch out the cease-fire talks as a cover for continued military encroachment. To meet this situation and strategy, the Watch Committee recommended that:

- ^{1/} Memo for Defense Rep, Laos Task Force, from Director, OASD/ISA-FER, Subj.: "Possible Discussion Topics for Laos Task Force Meeting 13 Apr 61," SECRET.
- ^{2/} The Watch Committee is a committee of the U.S. Intelligence Board, composed of representatives of member agencies, and cleared by the Dep/Dir of CIA, which meets periodically, but which through its agent, The National Indications Center, maintains an around-the-clock watch on all incoming intelligence, to detect indications of incipient crises. It reports through the Director/CIA, to the NSC and the President.

a. []

b. []

c. []

d. []

359. For this meeting ISA-FER had developed its series of recommended policies, which overlapped those suggested by the Watch Committee. These recommendations were:

a. No further message to be sent to the Russians until a cease fire was effective, for fear of putting the U.S. in position of entreating;

b. []

c. []

d. []

e. Opposition to proposal from U.S. embassy in Vientiane to pressure King to form new government before international conference convenes.

The ISA/FER memo also listed five of eight military actions that had been proposed by JCS and noted their status.

- a. []
- b. Use of bombs [] under consideration by State;
- c. Conversion of PEO to MAAG -- discussed above;
- d. Authorization and support of 7 additional FAL battalions -- discussed above;
- e. []

360. The Laos Task Force reached agreement that it should recommend to the SecState and to the President that SEATO OPLAN 5/60. should be implemented along lines following the Lebanon operation, []

[] It was further agreed that no additional messages should be sent to the Russians until the SEATO operation was already underway, at which time a note should be sent to them explaining the reasons for the action.

[] It was further agreed to recommend putting LTAG personnel into uniform and to provide logistic support and pay for 7 additional Lao battalions. Undersecretary Bowles said, at the close of the meeting, that he would discuss these matters with the SecState and possibly also with the President. ^{1/}

^{1/} The account of the Laos Task Force meeting, and preparations for it, are based upon the following sources: (1) "Recommended Action in Laos, 13 Apr 61," signed by FE: T. Corcoran, TOP SECRET, in ISA-FER files (this is evidently a Watch Committee document); (2) Memo for Defense Rep, Laos Task Force, from Dir OASD/ISA-FER "Possible Discussion Topics for Laos Task Force Meeting, 13 Apr 61," SECRET; (3) FER-ISA Memo for the Record, Subj.: "Laos Task Force Meeting 13 Apr 61" TOP SECRET; (4) Memo for Record, "State Dept. Meeting held 13 Apr 61," PJP, 13 Apr 61, TOP SECRET.

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The 13 April White House Meeting

361. Later the same day there was a meeting at the White House at which there were present, among others, the President, the SecState, the SecDef, the CJCS, and the Chief of the Laos Battle Staff. The SecState began the discussions, after the President arrived, and recommended that PEO and LTAG personnel should be placed in uniform. The SecDef and the CJCS agreed that this was one of the strongest measures the U.S. could take. The President approved this action and asked what other measures we could take. [

] was agreed that our allies should be informed of our decision to place military personnel in uniform and that they also be alerted "for possible implementation of SEATO forces." The President suggested sending a strong message to Ambassador Brown urging him to impress Phoumi with the fact that his future rested with the U.S. and that it was therefore necessary for him to take immediate military actions to prevent the deterioration of the situation in Laos. There is no mention in our record of the meeting of specific consideration of an affirmative recommendation to seek implementation of SEATO OPLAN 5/60.^{1/} The single brief record of the meeting that is available does not suggest, in fact, that all of the recommendations of the Laos Task Force were presented to the President. The impression is conveyed, on the contrary, that some were screened out by the SecDef to whom the Task Force recommendations were presented first, and who in turn made the presentation of recommended courses of action to the President.

1/ Memo for the Record, Subj.: "White House Meeting on 13 Apr 61 on Laos," PJF, 14 April 61, TOP SECRET.

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IV. THE HEIGHTENING CRISIS AFTER 13 APRIL,
AND ITS DEFLATION

362. The previous account has been narrated on a topical basis. The story has been carried along by dividing time into several periods, dividing events into several categories, then describing events of one category within one time period before taking up another category of events. When one topic was carried forward for a certain period of time another topic would be dealt with for the same time period. This is not the way things happen in reality, of course. Events of many kinds happen together or overlap, and most categorization is suspect. It is an intellectual convenience but a distortion of reality. Periodic and topical treatment is a standard procedure in historical narration. It tends to clarify events, but it does so by making them much simpler than the reality, and amounts therefore to a distortion. In this section several topics will be narrated together. This will fall far short of the complexity of the reality. But it will reduce, by a degree, the artificiality of the classification that has been followed up to now. It will complicate the narrative, but, it is hoped, will add a measure of reality, by giving a sense of many things happening at the same time, which sense generally is lost when each topic is dealt with separately.

THE STATE OF AFFAIRS GENERALLY IN MID-APRIL

363. During the 13 April crest of excitement, national policy was to postpone decision concerning intervention but to put into uniform the U.S. military men previously in civilian guise. While initial preparations were being made to convert PEO to MAAG, other related events were occurring. Souvanna was making his tour to the Communist Bloc and European capitals and Ambassador Thompson in Moscow was making representations to Gromyko urging a prompt reply by the USSR to U.K. proposals for cease fire.^{1/} On the 15th, Gromyko was reported to have promised an early reply to the Western proposal.^{2/}

^{1/} NYT, 14 April 1961, page 1.

^{2/} NYT, 15 April 1961, page 5.

364. Throughout April and until progress was made in the cease-fire negotiations early in May, the progressive deterioration of FAL as a fighting force continued. The deterioration was not so much made evident by defeat in combat. There was in fact very little pitched battle. The deterioration was evident, rather, in the greater readiness to turn tail at the sight or sound of the enemy and in the greater inclination to disorderliness in the manner of retreat. FAL casualties had never been high, and in fact, in early April the rate of casualties fell, although the rate of those listed as missing in action increased considerably. On 10 April, the USARMA in Vientiane had reported FAL losses in the first 3 months of 1961 and the first 10 days of the fourth month as follows:^{1/}

	<u>Killed in Action</u>	<u>Wounded in Action</u>	<u>Missing in Action</u>	<u>Prisoners or Deserters</u>	<u>Total</u>
January	32	67	-	-	99
February	111	132	18	POW 8	269
March	43	152	16	POW 2 DES 10	223
April (1-10)	5	39	60		104

[365. []]

1/ USARMA to DA, C-55, DTG 101355Z Apr 1961, SECRET.
2/ CRPEC to CINCPAC, RPO 1858, DTG 060700Z Apr 1961, TOP SECRET.

366. [

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367. [

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368. [

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1/ CINCPAC to JCS, DTG 070240Z Apr 1961, TOP SECRET.

2/ [

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3/ Unsigned ISA Memo to Mr. Anderson, SEA/State, Subject: "Assistance for Laos," marked "copies 1, 2, 3 handcarried 4/8 by Col. McCrea." TOP SECRET.

4/ CINCPAC to D/A and CINCUSARPAC, DTG 100655Z Apr 1961, TOP SECRET.

5/ ChJUSMAAG to CINCPAC 11026, DTG 120715Z Apr 1961, TOP SECRET.

6/ CINCPAC to ChJUSMAAG, DTG 132340Z Apr 1961, TOP SECRET.

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AIR TRANSPORT AND OTHER AID ASKED FOR CREMATION CEREMONIES

369. Along with the efforts to strengthen FAL by provision of additional artillery and other comparable measures, efforts were also being directed to the possible provision of air transport assistance to the RLG for the impending final cremation ceremonies of the late King. On 9 April ChPEO had reported that FAL engineers were constructing stands, building temporary shelters and clearing a field for ceremonies at Luang Prabang. Phoumi was planning to airlift from Vientiane to Luang Prabang on 13 April, 10 sedans for the transportation within Luang Prabang of diplomatic corps and other honored guests. There was a need also to transport 15 drums of motor gas, 6 tons of assorted supplies such as bed, cots, etc., on 26 April, along with about 50 civil servants and aides. Phoumi was also desirous of having four C-47's on standby duty on 27 April to shuttle guests "back and forth between Vientiane and Luang Prabang." The ceremonies preceding the actual cremation were to have occurred on 27 and 28 April and the cremation itself was scheduled for the 29th. Phoumi had already asked for the C-130,

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In reporting this ChPEO said that he planned to turn down all such requests as a distraction from the war effort. It was, he said, "just another example of relative position this war occupies in plans and thinking of the RLG. I am concerned that Phoumi and other FAL leaders will be occupied with these ceremonies for a number of days."^{2/}

1/ ChJUSMAAG to ChPEO, MAO-11076, DTG 140150Z Apr 1961, TOP SECRET.
2/ ChPEO to CINCPAC, PEO 1434, DTG 090757Z Apr 1961, SECRET.

370. For reasons that are not clear from the available sources, CINCPAC was much readier to honor the RLG request for cremation assistance than ChPEO. [

] he was confident that on second thought it would be judged that a few shuttle trips between Vientiane and Luang Prabang would not impair military airlift capability. The controlling factor would be whether or not [] could use the field at Luang Prabang.^{1/}

14 APRIL

371. On 14 April ChPEO advised CINCPAC of discussions that had taken place [] Phoumi and other Lao leaders, which convinced ChPEO that 40 additional autodefense companies embracing 4000 men could be formed from the Meos and other minority tribesmen in the Sam Neua, Luang Prabang and Phong Saly Provinces. These would be in addition to the 6000 Meos already in process of being organized and supplied with arms. A part of the idea was to move fast enough to complete the action before ICC could begin inspections.^{2/} [

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1/ CINCPAC to ChPEO, DTG 132351Z Apr 1961, SECRET.
2/ ChPEO to CINCPAC, PEO 1512, DTG 141130Z Apr 1961, SECRET.

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15 APRIL

372. On 15 April CINCPAC contributed what appears to be his final installment on the controversy over the value of armed helos which had been stimulated by General Trapnell's recommendations near the end of March. This last round of CINCPAC comment was in response to the JCS inquiry of 12 April (993914, DTG 122006Z). CINCPAC's reply was that his views remained unchanged from those previously related in his DTG 042325Z, April 1961. These views were that the loss in load carrying capacity resulting from addition of armament was not warranted by the doubtful advantages conferred. Helos were much too vulnerable to ground fire, and CINCPAC expressed his strong preferences for [

373. []]

1/ JCS to CINCPAC 994118, DTG 142132Z Apr 1961, TOP SECRET.
2/ CINCPAC to JCS, DTG 152107Z Apr 1961, TOP SECRET.

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374. [

] another serious setback occurred for FAL. On 15 April the FAL force east of Thakhek, GM-4, which had been located at a place called Nhommarath Keo, began a disorderly retreat in response to what American observers called 6 to 10 rounds of inaccurate artillery firing falling nearby. As of noon local time, 16 April, ChPEO reported that the disorganized GM-14 troops had retreated to a point west of the last suitable defensive position before Thakhek, and that retrieval of the situation would be dependent upon immediate commitment of trained troops, with supporting artillery, and who had the stomach to fight in the present of enemy artillery.^{2/} A few hours later ChPEO reported, on the basis of a conversation with Phoumi, that 3 T-6's had been moved to Savannakhet to bolster the defense of Thakhek and that a battalion of infantry with better training was also being deployed to aid in the defense. [

- 1/ ChPEO to ChJUSMAAG, PEO 1515, DTG 150210Z Apr 1961, TOP SECRET.
ChJUSMAAG to ChPEO, MAS 11068, DTG 151810Z April 1961, TOP SECRET.
ChPEO to ChJUSMAAG, PEO 1549, DTG 161200Z Apr 1961, TOP SECRET.
- 2/ ChPEO to CINCPAC, PEO 1546, being SITREP as of 1612G, DTG 161305Z Apr 1961, SECRET; ChPEO to CINCPAC, PEO Opt-1554, DTG 161645Z Apr 1961, TOP SECRET.
- 3/ ChPEO to CINCPAC, PEO Opt-1556, DTG 170545Z Apr 1961, TOP SECRET.
- 4/ ChJUSMAAG to ChPEO, MAO-11090, DTG 171620Z Apr 1961, TOP SECRET.

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16 APRIL

375. On 16 April, Souvanna Phouma arrived in Moscow from Warsaw. On that same day, also in Moscow, Gromyko handed to the British ambassador the Russian Aide Memoire describing the USSR's position with respect to the British cease-fire proposal. The first effect upon the U.S. of the knowledge of the receipt of the Russian reply by the British ambassador was to inhibit further actions not of a routine nature until the full import of the Russian reply was understood. The SecState, for instance, immediately asked for a temporizing delay in the conversion of PEO to MAAG. This was made known at the meeting of the Laos Task Force on 17 April. It is not clear, however, that any real delay was caused by this because the requisite uniforms had not yet been delivered.

376. Texts of the Soviet reply to the British proposals were received in Washington in the middle of the night between 16 and 17 April. The guts of the Russian note consisted of Russian proposals for revision of notes previously prepared by the British, and proposed for delivery to the government of India and to the participants in an international conference which was to work for a more lasting settlement of the Laos question. The notes appealed to the warring factions with Laos to agree upon a cease fire. The government of India was asked to reconvene the ICC for the supervision of a truce in Laos. And there was a call for an international conference on Laos to begin in Geneva on 5 May. But a first reading of the note did not indicate when the cease fire should begin nor whether it was to become effective before or after the convening of the conference in Geneva. It left the impression that the cease fire in fact would not begin until agreement upon specific terms of a cease fire had been effected between the government of Boun Oum and the Pathet Lao leadership. Finally, there was considerable vagueness as to how the cease fire was to be verified, let alone enforced.

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THE EVE OF THE BAY OF PIGS

377. The time of arrival of the text of the Russian note was important not only because it was the middle of the night, but because it was the middle of the night before the beginning of the abortive Bay of Pigs affair.

17 APRIL

378. In a meeting on the morning of 17 April between the SecDef and the JCS, on the subject of Laos, four major subjects were taken up. There was discussion of the Russian reply to the British note; there was a discussion of the deteriorating situation in Laos as a result of the Pathet Lao seizure of Nhommarath Keo; there was a discussion of the current conversion of PEO to MAAG, upon which final action was being held in abeyance, in response to the request of the Secretary of State, until the text of the Russian note was studied. Last, there was a discussion of possible actions to counter the Pathet Lao offensive operations in the Thakhek area. The available record suggests that, with respect to the current Pathet Lao offensive, word had come from Mr. Rostow that the President "last week" had indicated that he would view favorably [] if there were any further Pathet Lao offensives. However, at this meeting on the morning of 17 April, it was noted that one of the considerations predisposing []

379. The Laos Task Force meeting of 1500 hours on 17 April, like the SecDef/JCS meeting of that morning, was devoted to a review of the situation and of decisions taken at the White House rather than to the formation of new policies or the making of new decisions. In the manner of the morning meeting, this meeting began with a discussion of the Russian reply to the British note. By this time the unfavorable American reaction was crystalizing, and word had

1/ ISA Briefing Note, Subject: "Laos for 17 April 1961," SecDef/JCS Meeting, TOP SECRET.

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been received that the SecState had already told the British that in view of the unsatisfactory nature of the Russian note, we would probably go ahead with putting PEO in uniform. The chief State representative at the meeting (Mr. Steeves) reported that the British had expressed displeasure [] but that the U.S. would tell the British that we would go ahead with this in any event.

380. In reply to a query : [] the chief State representative said that this measure was lost in the shuffle because it had only marginal advantages in any event. In answer to an inquiry from the White House representative (Mr. Rostow), it was reported agreed by those at the meeting that []

381. []

1/ Memorandum for the Record, Subject: "Laos Task Force Meeting, 1500 hours, 17 April 1961," 18 April 1961 by Col. W. S. McCrea, SECRET.

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382. The problems of the cremation ceremonies had not lost out to the new excitement occasioned by the retreat from Nhommarath Keo. On 17 April ChPEO reported to CINCPAC that the use of C-130's to ferry notables and goods to Luang Prabang for the cremation ceremonies would not affect military operations, and that the Luang Prabang airfield was indeed suitable for C-130's if the runways were dry and the weather permitted flying by visual flight rules. It was estimated that 14 round trip sorties would be required for the lift that was envisioned. []

1/ SCPEL, pages 145 and 146, TOP SECRET.

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[] CINCPAC was therefore requested to obtain release of the marked C-130's in order to fulfill what was described in this message as a "commitment" to undertake this assistance.^{1/} CINCPAC thereupon requested JCS to approve the use for this purpose of a PACAF C-130 attached to the 315th Air Division.^{2/}

18 APRIL

383. Souvanna Phouma had been scheduled to arrive in Washington on the night of Tuesday, 18 April, after which he was to return to Moscow. On the morning of the 18th, he postponed his arrival in Washington for one day. The Secretary of State had speaking engagements in Georgia for the 20th which was the day proposed by Souvanna for a rescheduled meeting. Because of the Georgia engagements, the Secretary of State was unable to be in Washington at the time proposed by Souvanna and the Souvanna visit was accordingly cancelled. On April 18 additional comments from Moscow made it clear that the Russian reply to the British proposal was considered a basis for what amounted to a Soviet veto upon inspections by the ICC, by making the ICC report its findings to the cochairman of the 1954 conference (U.K. and USSR), with the co-Chairmen empowered to accept or reject the Commission's findings.^{3/} The U.S. disillusion with the Russian reply to the British cease fire and 14-Nation Conference proposal was by now nearly complete. But the only response that seemed clearly thought of was to go ahead with the conversion of PEO to MAAG.

384. On 18 April, a joint State/Defense message written at State, coordinated in DOD by OASD/ISA-FER, in JCS by the Director of the Battle Staff and at the White House by the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, announced that approval had been given to increase the U.S.-supported FAL ceiling by 2500 men.^{4/} This

^{1/} ChPEO to CINCPAC, PEO 1559, DTG 170800Z Apr 1961, SECRET.

^{2/} CINCPAC to JCS, DTG 172050Z Apr 1961, SECRET.

^{3/} NYT, 19 April 1961, page 1.

^{4/} There is no number on the copy of this message, that is in the J-3 R&R files. The classification is TOP SECRET. The message was repeated later in a JCS message to CINCPAC 994462, DTG 200024Z Apr 1961, TOP SECRET.

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message came about the same time that a delay of a day was announced in the ETA of the [] E

385. Russian alertness to American moves in the Southeast Asia area was strongly suggested at this time by a report which ChJUSMAAG sent in to CINCPAC. Russian embassy personnel had maintained a two-shift observation at Don Muang airport, 3 days before, of U.S. military aircraft movements, including six F-100's and mobile radar from the 13th Air Force. The Russian observation was considered significant by ChJUSMAAG because it occurred on only the one day when the 13th Air Force units were being deployed to Don Muang (obviously suggesting foreknowledge).^{2/}

386. The question of airlift for the cremation ceremonies continued. ChPEO needed CINCPAC for a decision as soon as possible on the PACAF C-130's. He said that timing was important and that he was worried over Phoumi's reaction to the failure to supply the planes because a "commitment" had been made to him. (Neither what such a commitment consisted of, nor who made it, nor when it was made is revealed by the available documentation.) ChPEO recommended that the airlift to Luang Prabang be provided, and revised his previous estimate somewhat, stipulating that two C-130's, each making four sorties in a 10-hour period during one day at the beginning of the ceremonial period and similarly during one day at the end of the ceremonial period, would meet the requirement.^{3/}

387. There is an interesting handwritten note on the J-3 copy of the message cited above. This handwritten note, carrying an 0602 time notation and signed "GB", says that the State Department Watch Officer called and that the latter would notify Chapman (of the SEA Division of State) at home about 0700. "Chapman's office picked up the message at 0600." A second handwritten note in different handwriting with a time notation of 0835 says "Col. McCrea advises he

1/ ChJUSMAAG to ChPEO, MAA-11092, DTG 180140Z Apr 1961, TOP SECRET; JCS to CINCPAC, []

2/ ChJUSMAAG to CINCPAC, AZ-31108, DTG 190210Z Apr 1961, SECRET.

3/ ChPEO to CINCPAC info SecState and PACAF PEO 1594, DTG 190455Z Apr 1961, SECRET.

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now has our draft message back with word that Steeves feels it wouldn't be good to have USAF flying autos around when there is a war going on??? He doesn't know whether the message is approved or not. Will call State again."

19 APRIL

388. CINCPAC, by his message dated a few hours later (DTG 190848Z), cited the ChPEO request for early decision and added his prestige to the pressure for a decision ASAP. It was about one more day before the decision was reached. On the evening of 19 April JCS dispatched a message to CINCPAC stating that the State Department would not approve the use of U.S. aircraft to assist in the royal funeral, [

]The JCS message concluded with expressions of regret that a more favorable decision was not obtainable "Appreciate effect (of) this decision."^{1/} It appears clear that ChPEO, CINCPAC and JCS, [

]were concerned with the political effect of granting or refusing this request. Obviously, however, these were interested in different aspects of political effect, or else were applying different criteria.

389. Coincident with the concern for C-130's for the cremation ceremonies [] Ambassador Johnson in Bangkok sent a message to ChPEO in Vientiane conveying his judgement that the performance during the previous few days of the 7th, 8th, and 9th battalions of infantry of FAL, which had not completed their basic training, demonstrated that they had a negative combat value. He argued that it was a fallacy to commit them to battle where they contributed "nothing but trouble" and tended to "infect other units with their mass hysteria." He concluded that the only answer was to complete the training

1/ JCS to CINCPAC 994470, DTG 200249Z Apr 1961, TOP SECRET.

390. [

391. The Laos Task Force meeting of 1600 hours 19 April opened with further discussion of the Russian reply to the British proposals. The British apparently had suggested that the Russian terms be accepted. The chief State Department spokesman brought up the idea that the proposals might be accepted with the important proviso that the U.S. would reserve the right to act unilaterally (and seek British agreement to participation in SEATO actions), if the Pathet Lao failed to heed a cease-fire. A discussion of possible intervention brought up again the question of time considerations. The JCS representative stated on this occasion that to put SEATO forces into Thailand, the U.S. would take from 24 to 48 hours, the British from 3 to 5 days, provided the U.S. supplied transportation. There was a discussion of the need for clearly defined conditions to trigger either a SEATO or an independent U.S. reaction. There was discussion of the disadvantages

- 1/ ChJUSMAAG to CmPEC, MAO-11122, Boyle from Johnson, DTG 190940Z Apr 1961, SECRET.
- 2/ ChJUSMAAG to CINCPAC, MAO-11125, DTG 191430Z Apr 1961, TOP SECRET.
- 3/ ChJUSMAAG to CINCPAC, MAO-11131, DTG 200600Z Apr 1961, TOP SECRET.
- 4/ ChJUSMAAG to CINCPAC, MAO-11135, DTG 200835Z Apr 1961, SECRET; USARMA/Bangkok to DA, CX-29, DTG 200900Z Apr 1961, CONFIDENTIAL.

of an initial move into Thailand, an action that would tip off the enemy. The meeting ended with the State Department representative repeating the proposal that the U.S. might suggest to the British a U.S. willingness to go along with the Russian proposal, expressly reserving the right to act unilaterally if the cease-fire were not truly effective. However, the State representative questioned the wisdom of the previously discussed notion of also asking for a British commitment to move SEATO forces in, in the event of Communist bad faith, as a quid pro quo for agreeing to the proposal. ^{1/}

392. On 19 April 1961, OSD originated a message to CINCPAC, [

] advising that CHPEO's proposal of DTG 141130Z April 1961 (No. 1512) to form forty additional ADC units should be deferred because of the current status of political negotiations and the uncertainty concerning a U.S. ability to provide adequate supervision. ^{2/}

20 APRIL

393. On 20 April ChPEO officially became Chief of the Military Assistance and Advisory Group/Laos (ChMAAG). The same day, the SEATO military planning office in Bangkok issued MPO Plan 5/61 (SEATO TS), a revision of the previous MPO Plan 5/60. This plan embodied no major or drastic changes. It consisted of a seven page summary including a basic plan with Annexes A through H. These annexes covered: forces available, proposed directive, concept of operations, logistic and administrative details, command arrangements, communications and electronics, and public information policy. Among the necessary assumptions of the basic plan were (1) that Laos appealed to SEATO for assistance against external forces, (2) that the SEATO council agreed to furnish SEATO force, and

^{1/} Memorandum for the Record, Subject: "Laos Task Force Meeting, 1600 hours 19 April 1961," 20 April 1961 in OASD/ISA-FER Files, SECRET.

^{2/} OSD to CINCPAC, No. 994458, DTG 192354Z Apr 1961, SECRET.

(3) that the council invited one SEATO member nation to become the "appointed nation." The mission was described as to assist the RLG to counter Communist insurgencies so that Laos would solve its own internal problems, and the security and independence of Laos be preserved. The concept of operations was to secure vital areas in Laos to free FAL to combat insurgents in other areas, and supply logistic support and other services such as air support, communications, psychological war and special operations. The SEATO command would be designated by the appointed nation, and furnished directives by the SEATO Council.

394. The U.S. plan in support of SEATO OPLAN 5/60 was the SEATO Field Forces plan (short title - SFF 5/60). The minor changes from SEATO OPLAN 5/60 to SEATO OPLAN 5/61 were not formally reflected in an approved SFF plan until 2 September 1961, at which time SFF 5/61 was approved.

21 APRIL

395. On Friday, 21 April, it was announced in London and Moscow that the U.K. and the USSR had reached general agreement on a program for ending the war in Laos. An appeal for a cease fire to be issued on the following Monday, 24 April was to have been made. The ICC was to be activated the same day and dispatched to Laos as soon as possible to verify the cease fire. Invitations to the 14-Nation Conference to decide on the future of Laos were to be sent out at the same time. The all-important specifics were not revealed, even on a confidential basis, to U.S. officers, and could only be speculated about, pending the public appeal.

396. On 21 April, in Laos, Prince Boun Oum made a public statement that he would step down as Premier of the Vientiane government if this would bring peace to his war ravaged country. Prince Souvanna Phouma departed from Moscow for Peiping after issuing a statement expressing his expectation that the warring factions of Laos would

open negotiations for a cease-fire the next week.^{1/} Soon after Souvanna's departure, the USSR issued a statement which was a joint-communique concerning the recent talks between Khrushchev and Souvanna. The communique of course called for the convocation of a international conference, a cease-fire, and reactivation of the ICC. The communique made clear that actual cease-fire was to be expected only as a result of agreements to be reached between the warring factions within Laos. The effect of this of course was a commitment to an international conference and a complete absence of definite and enforceable commitment to cease-fire.^{2/}

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398. []

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1/ NYT, 22 April 1961, pp. 1 and 4.
 2/ NYT, 23 April 1961, p. 10.
 3/ JCS to CINCPAC, 994582, DTG 211448Z Apr 1961, TOP SECRET.
 4/ JCS to CINCPAC, 994593, DTG 211830Z Apr 1961, CONFIDENTIAL.
 5/ CINCPAC to JCS, DTG 220306Z Apr 1961, TOP SECRET.

399. [

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22 APRIL

400. The enemy threat shifted, about this time, from southern Laos to the area north of Vientiane. An attack by the enemy was begun on Vang Vieng on the morning of 22 April and shortly after midnight GM-12, which was defending the town, withdrew. In the action, four Americans (1 captain and 3 sergeants) in an LTAG training team were captured.^{2/} The fall of Vang Vieng had the effect of shifting the most serious threat from Thakhek to Vientiane. [

] Within about 20 hours the request was granted and the

^{1/} ChJUSMAAG to CINCPAC, MAO 11159, DTG 220445Z Apr 1961, TOP SECRET
^{2/} ChJUSMAAG/Laos to CINCPAC, DTG 230315Z Apr 1961, SECRET.

use of the standby C-130 for this purpose was authorized by JCS to CINCPAC and by CINCPAC to ChMAAG.^{1/}

401. To face the threat to Vientiane, Phoumi confided to ChMAAG that he intended to ask Sarit for a paratroop battalion to block approaches to Vientiane. He also requested helos to move a special battalion from Vientiane to positions south of Vang Vieng to contest the enemy advance. (This request ChMAAG to action to fulfill immediately.) He also requested lift for three ranger companies from the 4th military region to Vientiane and thence north to meet the enemy advance. Finally, he requested permission to use bombs with his T-6's against the Vang Vieng airfield for enemy troops moving south.^{2/} The last request was not granted.

23 APRIL

402. On 23 April (a Sunday) the State Department issued a public statement to the effect that the United States would not participate in a 14-Nation Conference on Laos until there was an effective cease fire in that country. The State Department press release made reference to the Pathet Lao attack that had begun the day before in the Vang Vieng area, and which in fact resulted in the fall of Vang Vieng shortly after midnight of the 22nd.^{3/} As of that Sunday, the agreements on a formula to settle the problem, announced on Friday by the cochairman, appeared to have accomplished nothing. Vang Vieng had fallen and Vientiane now appeared to be threatened. Nothing much appeared to have been accomplished by this time, either, by the placing of the PEO in uniform, a measure that had been described at the 13 April White House Meeting, by the CJCS, as one of the strongest measures we could take (see para above). The result in fact had been the humiliating capture of four Americans at the time by a flanking movement that had been part of the Pathet Lao attack on Vang Vieng. It was in response to these discouraging events that a meeting was held at the State Department on Sunday, 23 April, with attendance reaching to the SecDef and SecState levels of authority.

^{1/} ChMAAG/Laos to CINCPAC, MI Opt-1680, DTG 230250Z Apr 1961, SECRET; JCS to CINCPAC 994700, DTG 232318Z Apr 1961, TOP SECRET; CINCPAC ChMAAG/Laos to CINCPAC ML-1682, DTG 230517Z Apr 1961, TOP SECRET.

^{2/} ChMAAG/Laos to CINCPAC ML-1682, DTG 230517Z Apr 1961, TOP SECRET.

^{3/} NYT, 23 Apr 1961, p. 17; ChMAAG/Laos to CINCPAC, DTG 230215Z Apr 1961, SECRET.

403. In that meeting the State Department delegation was headed by SecState Rusk, Under SecState Bowles and ASecs/State McGee and Johnson, and Mr. Steeves of the Southeast Asia group, plus two others. The White House was represented by Mr. Rostow, CIA by [] the Department of Defense by the SecDef, while the Joint Chiefs were represented by the Acting Chairman (The CNO) and by the Director and Deputy Director of the Joint Staff, as well as by the Deputy J-3 who headed the Laos Battle Staff. The meeting began with an announcement that a cease-fire note was expected to be presented to the U.S. at 9:00 the following morning. The Vang Vieng attack by the Pathet Lao was discussed and it was the consensus that the Pathet Lao were intent primarily on adding as much real estate to their control as was possible before a cease-fire would become effective. The cease-fire attack was not deemed by the SecState to be in itself sufficient cause for an immediate U.S. response, however. Our record of this meeting says that bombing with T-6's was announced as having been approved until a cease-fire might become effective. Presumably this decision had been made at the White House in response to the ambassador's request, as related below. In the discussion of this, the point was made that since a cease-fire was expected soon, this permission was not worth much.

404. The SecDef is reported by our account of the meeting to have made a short speech recommending that in cases where there were no political reasons against it authority for such practical matters should be delegated. He is reported to have said that a disease of our recent operations had been in keeping central control of too many details of this kind in Washington. SecState is reported not to have answered directly but to have appeared to think that the central government in Washington should not let loose of decisions of this kind until it was necessary.

405. The meeting agreed to authorize U.S. reconnaissance []

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[] until the cease fire was announced by the RLG.

According to our record of this meeting, this was a decision made at this meeting in contrast with the decision to authorize use of bombs with T-6's, a decision evidently made at the national level, and merely announced at this meeting. []

[] It is not clear whether or not these specific arrangements had been cleared at the White House.

406. The acting CJCS asked how long it would take to get a SEATO decision to move, once it was asked for. The consensus of the meeting was that it would require about 48 hours, France being the main problem. However, we would have to start to move our own forces at the time that we asked for a SEATO decision. The White House representative emphasized that we must have prior understandings with the U.K. and Thailand. Ambassador Johnson stressed that OPLAN 5/60 was aimed at protecting Thailand, not Laos. The acting CJCS replied that [] would be only initial measures, with great and powerful follow-up needed. The nature of that follow-up would have to be determined later.^{2/}

407. The decision to authorize the use of bombs with T-6's noted above appears to be explained in an account in the CINCPAC Command History. Citing a Vientiane EmbTel of DTG 230910Z (not available to this study), SCPEL says that in response to the rapidly deteriorating military situation and the threat to the key cities, the U.S. ambassador, who had previously opposed U.S...actions that risked any military escalation, directed a request to the State Department for approval of the use of bombs if the cease-fire agreed upon for 24 April failed to materialize or if the enemy threatened Vientiane

^{1/} ChMAAG/Laos to CINCPAC, ML 1635, DTG 231030Z Apr 1961, TOP SECRET.

^{2/} Op-61, Memorandum for the Record, Subject: "Meeting at the State Department on Laos, Sunday, 23 April 1961," 24 Apr 1961, TOP SECRET.

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or other major points. ^{1/} The apparent decision on 23 April to authorize the use of bombs with T-6's therefore appears to have been made at the SecState level, possibly upon the basis of a check at the White House with the President, upon the recommendation of the ambassador.

408.

1/ SCFEL, Page 91, TOP SECRET.

2/ ChMAAG/Laos to CINCPAC, ML-1635, DTG 231030Z Apr 1961, TOP SECRET.

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409. Early that Sunday evening, the JCS dispatched a message to CINCPAC conveying formal authorization for the use of bombs with T-6's [] in the manner and subject to the limitations specified. Both authorizations were to terminate with the acceptance of a cease-fire by the RLG. []

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24 APRIL

410. On 24 April, the Geneva cochairman issued jointly the three messages agreed upon between the two, and ostensibly directed toward a Laos settlement. One was a call for both sides to cease-fire. A second was a request to the government of India to arrange a meeting of a reactivated ICC for Laos in New Delhi. The third was an invitation to fourteen nations to meet at a conference in Geneva on 12 May. From the U.S. point of view there were two key questions left dangling. One was how and when the cease-fire was to be verified. Another was, what would be the exact function of the ICC when it reached Laos - for instance, would it be empowered to halt the flow of Soviet arms to the Pathet Lao? There were still no visible guarantees to prevent the Pathet Lao from continuing their conquest of Laos while negotiations were being conducted for final settlement.

25 APRIL

411. At 3:00 in the afternoon of 25 April - less than a full day after the issuance of the cochairman's appeal - the RLG issued a declaration of acceptance of the Co-Chairman's appeal for a cease-fire. The U.S. representative in Vientiane had failed to convince

1/ JCS to CINCPAC No. 994700, DTG 232318Z Apr 1961, TOP SECRET.

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the RLG to include suggestions concerning the time of cease-fire or first meeting of military representatives of both sides to implement the cease-fire. Having accepted the appeal for a cease-fire, the RLG was now awaiting the rebel response.^{1/}

412. There are two points to be noted about the RLG acceptance of the cease-fire offer. The first is that this acceptance cancelled the authorization that had just been given from Washington for the use of bombs by T-6's, and [

] The second point is that it otherwise left the RLG in a disadvantageous position. Having accepted the cease-fire it was in an unpromising position to oppose, as effectively as would otherwise have been possible, the continuing aggressions of the Pathet Lao. Mindful of the disadvantages, the State Department issued a statement in Washington on 26 April to the effect that U.S. military aid would continue to go to Laos until the cease-fire was effective.^{2/}

413. [

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532, SECRET.
2/ NYT, 27 April 1961, pages 1 and 2.

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414. [

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26 APRIL

415. On 26 April, ChMAAG/Laos reported FAL on the ropes and Phoumi worried over the imminent capture by the enemy of the Mekong Valley cities. [

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416. At the Washington end, the salient elements of the situation on the morning of 26 April appeared as follows to one responsible and well-informed DOD official: The U.K. and the USSR had issued a call for a cease fire, and leaders of both sides in Laos had expressed willingness to accept, but fighting continued and no agreement had yet been accomplished on how and when the representatives of the combatants could meet to arrange a cease-fire. ChMAAG

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3/ ChMAAG/Laos to CINCPAC ML 1722, DTG 260500Z Apr 1961, SECRET;
ChJUSMAAG to CINCPAC MAO 11188, DTG 260330Z Apr 1961, SECRET.

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reported FAL on the ropes and that there as a danger of a coup in Vientiane. There were reports circulating that the Chinese Communists had declared that no cease-fire would be effective until all U.S. military representatives had been withdrawn. The situation might conceivably deteriorate so rapidly that by 12 May, when the Geneva conference was supposed to convene, there would be nothing left to negotiate. State had proposed sending Ambassador Harriman and the CJCS to Vientiane but the purpose of the mission was not clear. The State Department Chief of the Laos Task Force (Steeves) was holding a meeting at 1430 hours of that day to consider what options remained open to the U.S. The major difficulty was that it might take several days to determine terms of an effective cease-fire and that the Communists, exploiting their current momentum, might by that time take the key towns and the key terrain. The only sure way to prevent this would be to move in U.S. and Thai forces to these key spots. But this was recognized as politically difficult, so long as it was not clearly demonstrated that the Communists had failed to accept the cease-fire.

417. An additional dilemma was that even if the Communists did not proceed as far as this immediately, unless the U.S. acted immediately, it would perhaps become impossible to prevent their taking these places later, by one or another means. Courses of action that seemed possible were:

a. To make clear to the U.S. people and to the world that if the cease-fire were not observed by the Communists, the U.S. might be required to take military action in response to a call from the King of Laos;

b. Move in now with some of the SEATO nations, accepting the political liabilities of that move;

c. Take obvious preparatory military measures to demonstrate U.S. willingness and to reduce the time requirements of an operation if in effect we later decided to go in. ^{1/}

Draft Memo to DCD ref., Laos Task Force, 4/26/61, subject: "Current Situation and Possible Courses of Action," in ISA-FER Laos Desk 5, SECRET.

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418. April 26 was a day of urgent activity both in the field and in Washington. The field was pressing Washington for actions and for authority to undertake actions, in order to arrest what appeared to be a rapidly crumbling situation. In Washington there was a meeting or meetings during the day of the Laos Task Force, but there is not an available record of those meetings. The activity of the day in Washington culminated with national decisions reached at the White House during an afternoon meeting.

419. On the morning of 26 April, the American ambassador in Vientiane urged [] and other U.S. or SEATO troops be used, if necessary, to stop the enemy military actions that were threatening key points in Laos. He urged that SEATO begin preparation to respond to an appeal that was anticipated from the RLG.^{1/} Shortly after this request from the ambassador, ChMAAG informed CINCPAC that he had recommended to the ambassador that authority be granted [] "when necessary to retain population centers." ChMAAG commented further that from a military standpoint, however, he believed that []

[] This, he considered, would be in the Plaine des Jarres.^{2/}

420. In the same message ChMAAG had asked CINCPAC for authorization [] Within two hours, if DTG's are to be depended upon, CINCPAC had dispatched a message to ChMAAG telling that he concurred in the urgent need []

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1/ Reported in SPCEL, page 91, and based upon an EmbTel from Vientiane, DTG 261434Z Apr 1961, TOP SECRET.

2/ ChMAAG to CINCPAC ML 1741, DTG 261635Z Apr 1961, TOP SECRET.

3/ CINCPAC to ChMAAG/Laos, DTG 261835Z Apr 1961, TOP SECRET.

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421. The accentuated crisis was brought to the White House for Presidential decision and action on the afternoon of 26 April. Our available records of that meeting do not specify all of those who were in attendance, but it is evident that attendance was largely restricted to high-level personalities -- mainly those of assistant secretarial status or above. SecState Rusk was at the time in Ankara and the CJCS in Bangkok. The Laos Task Force was informed at 8:30 the following morning of the decisions taken at the White House meeting the day before, and the ensuing actions. The meeting was given a crisis atmosphere, not only by the progressive deterioration of Laos and the continued aggressions of the Pathet Lao, but also by a ChiCom broadcast to the effect that a cease-fire could not precede cessation of aid by the U.S. to the RLG, Thailand and the Republic of Vietnam. The meeting led to three diplomatic actions undertaken on an urgent basis by the President himself, and produced Presidential decisions on four or five other issues.

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423. [

] On this score it is interesting to note that the Chief of the Laos Task Force hazarded the guess to the Laos Task Force the next day that in his judgment SEATO forces would never go into Laos because such action would be opposed and even "condemned completely" by other nations, especially India, Burma and Cambodia.

424. As a third action, the President dispatched a note to Prime Minister Nehru. No copy of this note is available, but probably it was designed to urge Nehru to use his influence upon the Russians, and perhaps others among the CommBloc group, to hasten the cease-fire. Probably it was intended also to explain the position of the United States and the West in the event that some form of intervention would be put into effect.

425. On the action side, the President approved the proposal to instruct CINCPAC to move naval forces into the Gulf of Siam and the South China Sea. The President also approved the alerting of forces earmarked for air movement into Laos in the event of implementation of SEATO CPLAN 5.

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427. Decision on the proposal to dispatch the Harriman mission to Laos was deferred for 24 hours. Some counsel was expressed against the dispatch of the Harriman mission, because the mission could not meet immediately with Laotian leaders, who had to be in Luang Prabang for the cremation ceremonies.

428. The President authorized the U.S. ambassador to the U.N. to explore with British, French and Laotian representatives in the U.N. the possibility of immediate Security Council action to reinforce the cochairmen's appeal for cease-fire in Laos.

429. A report of the decisions and actions decided upon at this meeting was sent out that night to Vientiane as DepTel 1172. The U.S. ambassador in Laos was instructed in the light of these actions and decisions to pursue the difficult course of impressing upon the RLG and Phoumi the need to maintain their position on the ground while at the same time showing readiness to comply with the cease-fire. He was further instructed that it was important to maintain the posture of an uncompromised legitimate government in the event of U.N. action and U.N. inquiry into the credentials of the RLG representatives.

430. In commenting upon the Presidential actions and decisions, the Chairman of the Laos Task Force the next morning told the Laos Task Force that the military had never convinced the President that, if the U.S. put forces in Laos, we had the capability to carry on our mission successfully in the face of a massive counter move by the ChiComs or the VietMinh.^{1/}

431. Late in the day of 26 April, CINCPAC initiated a series of steps designed to implement his instructions resulting from the

1/ The account of the White House meeting of 26 April is based upon two sources. The first is DepTel 1172 to Vientiane, 26 April 1961, TOP SECRET. The second is I-13930/61, Memo for the Record, 27 April 1961, Subject: "Laos Meeting in State Department" 0830, 27 April 1961, TOP SECRET.

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White House meeting to move naval forces into the Gulf of Siam and the South China Sea. Under DTG of 262120Z CINCPAC directed CINCPAC Fleet to move the afloat Marine BLT (Battalion Landing Team) and a carrier task group westward to positions previously designated in case of implementation of SEATO OPLAN 5/60.^{1/} At the same time CINCPAC directed PACAF to be prepared for his Mobile Strike Force (MSF) to mount out as previously indicated in such a contingency.^{2/} The commander designate of the SEATO field forces (Deputy CINCUSARPAC) and CINCPACFLT were directed to move the U.S. headquarters' elements of SFF and of Task Force ALFA and of the Air Component staffs, as a first priority, from Okinawa to Clark AFB. As a second priority, the Marine BLT was to be moved from Okinawa to Clark AFB. As a third priority, elements of the Marine air group not already moved to Cubic were to be so moved, and the Army ABG was to go to Clark from Okinawa. This repositioning was, of course, to reduce reaction time for a move into Laos if an order to that effect should come.^{3/} CINCPAC, in addition, directed CINCPACFLT to order Task Group 70.4 (hunter/killer group) to proceed south to a supporting position against the possibility that SFF Plan 5/61 would be executed.^{4/}

432. Just before 10:00 on the evening of 26 April, JCS sent out a general advisory message to all CINC's describing the situation in Laos and the acts taken to meet that situation. The Laos situation was described as extremely grave, with the USG conferring with the British and French governments on how to support a possible RLG request to the U.N. or to SEATO for intervention. CINCPAC had been directed to move carrier forces to support SEATO OPLAN 5/60, to move amphibious forces into the Gulf

^{1/} CINCPAC to CINCPAC Fleet DTG 262120Z Apr 1961, TOP SECRET.

^{2/} CINCPAC to PACAF, DTG 262121Z Apr 1961, TOP SECRET.

^{3/} CINCPAC to Commander Designate/SFF, CINCUSARPAC, and CINCPACFLT, DTG 262130Z Apr 1961, TOP SECRET.

^{4/} CINCPAC to CINCPACFLT, DTG 262347Z Apr 1961, TOP SECRET.

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of Siam to within 12 hours steaming distance of Bangkok, []
[] CINCPAC was to be prepared to land in Seno and elsewhere in Southern Laos and to land forces in Thailand and South Vietnam if Vientiane fell before SEATO OPLAN 5 could be executed. []

433. If DTG indications are to be depended upon, the CINCPAC orders for alerting PACOM elements described in the paragraphs above were undertaken before this formal JCS message. Presumably there was informal telephonic notification before this more formal message.

27 APRIL

434. At about the same time the JCS message to CINCPAC noted above was going out, State was informing the ambassador in Vientiane []

^{2/} The Laos Task Force convened at 0830 the next morning (27 April). It occupied itself mainly by reviewing the decisions taken at the White House meeting the afternoon before, and being further informed of the actions of the President and of the State Department pursuant of those decisions. []

- 1/ JCS to CINCPAC, Info to all CINC's 994935, DTG 270256Z Apr 1961, TOP SECRET.
2/ DepTel 1169 to Vientiane, 26 Apr 1961, 9:33 PM, SECRET.

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435. At DTG 270546Z, CINCPAC notified his component commands that the JCS had approved the repositioning moves he had directed earlier, and he conveyed to them the substance of the JCS directive to him at DTG 270256Z (JCS No. 994935). This appears to suggest that CINCPAC had sent out his first preparatory notices before he had himself received definitive word from the JCS. Additionally, CINCPACFLT was directed to move a second carrier task group southward into the northern part of the South China Sea in a position to support the carrier task group including the afloat Marines already ordered to be repositioned westward under CINCPAC DTG 262120Z. CINCPACFLT was also directed to keep Task Group 76.5 with its Marine BLT moving westward into the Gulf of Siam and to be prepared [

] if the need should arise. CINCPACAF was directed to be prepared to mount out an ABG to recapture Wattai Airfield, if necessary, or retake other key areas in Laos. All commanders were further directed to

[/ [] , Memo for the Record, 27 Apr 1961, Subject: "Laos Meeting in State Department, 0830, 27 Apr 1961," TOP SECRET.

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be prepared for transition from SEATO OPLAN 5/60 to Plan 32-59, Phase 2 and 4, which the U.S. would quickly adopt as SEATO OPLAN 6 and 4, respectively. Commanders were advised that JCS was anxious to avoid public discussion of actions.^{1/}

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437. High policy levels in Washington were occupied mainly on 27 April by a combination of public relations and implementing actions to carry forward the decisions of the previous days. The State Department issued a statement saying that two meetings on Laos were held at the White House on 27 April, explaining that the discussions centered upon the question of what approach the United States and other nations should take with respect to the threat to the integrity and independence of Laos should the Communist rebels prove unwilling to grant a cease-fire. One of the meetings was with the NSC, the other was with Congressional leaders. Both groups were apparently informed of the status of events, of the actions and decisions taken the day before, and of operations that were under way. It was further announced that the President on the following day would travel to New York to see former President Hoover at 11:00, General MacArthur at 11:30 and after that the Secretary General of the U.N.^{3/}

1/ CINCPAC to all component commands, DTG 270546Z Apr 1961, TOP SECRET. SEATO Plan 6 assumed overt intervention in South Vietnam by DRV; Plan 4 assumed overt intervention in SEA by both PRC and DRV (SCPEL 138-141).

2/ ChJUSMAAG to CINCPAC, MAO 11203X for Admiral Felt, DTG 270830Z Apr 1961, TOP SECRET.

3/ NYT, 28 Apr 1961, pages 1 and 3.

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438. [

] On 26 April, in response to the threat to Vientiane apparently posed by enemy actions to the north of the town, the ambassador had urged [

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- 1/ SPCEL, page 91, TOP SECRET; CINCPAC to JCS, DTG 280407Z Apr 1961, TOP SECRET.
- 2/ ChMAAG to CINCPAC ML 1741 DTG 261635Z Apr 1961, TOP SECRET.
- 3/ CINCPAC to ChMAAG Laos, DTG 261918Z Apr 1961, TOP SECRET.
- 4/ ChMAAG/Laos to CINCPAC for Felt from Boyle, ML 1744, DTG 270150Z Apr 1961, TOP SECRET.

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- 1/ CHMAAG to CINCPAC, ML 1754, DTG 280245Z Apr 1961, TOP SECRET.
- 2/ CINCPAC to JCS, DTG 280407Z Apr 1961, TOP SECRET.

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- 1/ CINCPAC to JCS, DTG 280407Z Apr 1961, TOP SECRET.
- 2/ JCS to CINCPAC, 994980, DTG 272253Z Apr 1961, TOP SECRET.
- 3/ CINCPAC to JCS, DTG 280245Z Apr 1961, TOP SECRET.

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message to CINCPAC relating that the CJCS had directed him to consider newest weapons and equipment that might profitably be made available to FAL. He said the CJCS had told him that if personnel knowledgeable of such items were not locally available, they could be sent from CONUS. ChMAAG said there were no such experts there and asked that an expert be sent to Vientiane.^{1/} CINCPAC thereupon initiated a series of queries to PACOM component commands in response to the ChMAAG query concerning the interest of CJCS in new weapons and equipment for FAL. The first reply to the CINCPAC query came from PACAF, who reported within 24 hours that on the Air Force side of the question, FAL performance with what was already provided did not suggest any capability to make good use of more sophisticated air weapons, and that PACAF HQ knew of no "appropriately simple weapon or gimmick" that would improve FAL's air combat or attack effectiveness. PACAF indicated that, of course, he could supply an officer versed in conceivably useful variations of elementary air weapons, if desired.^{2/}

28 APRIL

444. [

1/ ChMAAG/Laos to CINCPAC ML 1767, DTG 280435Z Apr 1961, SECRET.
2/ PACAF to CINCPAC, DTG 290450Z Apr 1961, SECRET.
3/ ChMAAG/Laos to CINCPAC ML 1769, DTG 280650Z Apr 1961,
TOP SECRET.

[] The fact that there was an apparent 12-hour interval between the request and the reply suggests that CINCPAC cleared with Washington before he made his reply. There is no documentation for his view, however.

445. On 28 April, the President, after seeing General MacArthur and former President Hoover in New York, flew to Chicago to give a speech before the Cook County Democratic Party organization. He stayed in Chicago until the next morning, when he returned to Washington. SecState Rusk, who had been in Ankara to attend a conference of the Central Treaty Organization, had originally planned to return to Washington on Sunday, 30 April, but changed his plans to return in time to attend an NSC meeting on Saturday, 29 April. Newsmen in Washington were given to expect that the National Security Council Meeting on Laos would deal with the question of whether or not the U.S. and/or its SEATO allies would intervene in Laos. News stories carried "the impression in diplomatic circles" that the President would make his decision over the week end concerning a possible intervention. In London, U.K. officials told newsmen they still hoped that a cease-fire would become effective in time to prevent a resolution by force. In Moscow, the U.S. ambassador called upon Foreign Minister Gromyko ostensibly to express the U.S. concern at the continued advance of Left Wing forces in Laos.^{2/} In New Delhi the ICC reconvened, and delegates expressed hope for a speedy solution of the Laotian cease-fire problem. The U.S. embassy in New Delhi announced that the American President's letter to the Indian Prime Minister had been delivered and indicated that it asked Nehru to seek an effective and speedy cease-fire, although the contents were not divulged as such.^{3/} In Luang Prabang, the second of the two final days of

^{1/} CINCPAC to ChMAAG/Laos, DTG 281905Z Apr 1961, TOP SECRET.

^{2/} NYT, 29 April 1961, pages 1 and 2.

^{3/} NYT, 29 April 1961, page 2.

precremation ceremonies was proceeding on schedule, with the actual, long-awaited and much prepared for cremation due the next day, the 29th.

446. There was a State-JCS meeting on 28 April 1961. The meeting covered Laos, Southeast Asia more generally, Cuba and Algeria. ASecState Johnson began the discussion of Laos with a recap of the still-deteriorating military situation in Laos. There was

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There was then discussion of the possible use of bombs with T-6's. The ambassador had asked for authority to use bombs, and the consensus of the meeting was that there was no difference between bombs and rockets. It was therefore agreed to draft a State-Defense message authorizing issuance of bombs to Phoumi for his T-6's. [

ASecstate said that the JCS should be prepared to discuss this matter at the White House meeting the following day (29 April). The ASecState suggested that there should be exploration of the idea of saving the southern half of Laos. This would be one means of protecting Thailand and South Vietnam. An ISA representative (Mr. Williams) raised a point about the new Pathet Lao threat to Tchepone and asked for ways of meeting the threat. No recommendations are recorded. The discussion of Laos is reported to have concluded with a statement by

the ASecState to the effect that the President definitely did not want to leave any public impression that a decision had been made not to use U.S. or SEATO forces in Laos.^{1/}

447. Anticipating airlift problems in the event of implementation of an intervention plan, J-4 initiated an inquiry to CINCPAC which went out at DTG 281732Z asking for the maximum number of C-130 or C-124 sorties that could be flown into the following airfields per day, assuming combat loading: Ubon, Khorat, Don Muang, Vientiane, Seno, Saigon and Tourane.^{2/}

448. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] This was a message concurred in by State and Defense.^{3/} About this same time CINCPAC noticed a Vientiane EmbTel (No. 1960) wherein the ambassador reported that he proposed issuing instructions to FAL to remain in their present positions and not to fire unless attacked. CINCPAC immediately called the attention of ChMAAG/Laos to this message. He proceeded to ask ChMAAG to see the ambassador immediately and point out the unacceptable military advantage that would be conferred upon the enemy by this proposal. It would permit the enemy to occupy superior positions and would jeopardize the FAL's chances of holding the critical cities.^{4/}

449. [REDACTED]

- 1/ Draft Memo for the Record, Subject: "State-JCS Meeting, 26 April 1961," by Chief OASD/ISA-FER, SECRET.
- 2/ JCS to CINCPAC 995023, DTG 281733Z Apr 1961, SECRET.
- 3/ JCS to CINCPAC No. 995035, DTG 281924Z Apr 1961, TOP SECRET.
- 4/ CINCPAC to ChMAAG/Laos, DTG 282030Z Apr 1961, TOP SECRET.

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450. On 28 April, some concern continued, especially within PACOM, over the problems that would arise if there were a need for rapid transition from SEATO OPLAN 5/60 to CINCPAC OPLAN 32/59, especially the Phase 4, or general war phase, of the latter plan. A rapid transition from a standard cold war posture to general war posture posed evident problems. In commenting upon the problem, for the benefit of constituent PACOM commands and to assist the JCS in Washington discussions, CINCPAC pointed out his assumption that the U.S. would be designated the appointed command for a SEATO action and therefore the U.S. would appoint the SFF commander. [

[The Deputy CINCUSARPAC (Lt Gen Harkins) would be SFF CO for the Laos-Vientiane-Cambodia area as well as SEATO force CINC. Annex B of OPLAN 32/59 would continue valid and would apply. Problems of a rapid one-step transition all the way from Phase 1 to Phase 4 of CINCPAC OPLAN 32/59 remained, however. PACAF, CINCPACFLT and CINCUSARPAC were requested to review OPLAN 32/59 carefully and be ready to implement rapidly with emphasis on maintenance of air superiority.^{2/}

1/ CINCPAC to ChMAAG/Laos, DTG 282245Z Apr 1961, TOP SECRET.

2/ CINCPAC to PACAF, CINCPACFLT and CINCUSARPAC Info JCS, SAC and CSFF designate, DTG 282304Z April 1961.

29 APRIL

451. In Laos (12 hours ahead of Washington) the final cremation ceremonies for the late King Sisavang Vong were the center of attention on 29 April. Practically all officials of the RLG, both civil and military, and leading foreign diplomats accredited to Laos, were in attendance at the ceremonies. Prince Sihanouk of Cambodia was there and was reported to be making backstage efforts to develop a compromise with King Savang Vathana which could lead to a compromise that would end the civil war in Laos. There is no indication that these backstage efforts ever got anywhere. There were local rumors that Prince Souvanna Phouma and his half-brother, Prince Souphanouvong^{1/} would attend the ceremonies and that their attendance would lead to some sort of solution of the Laos situation, but this meeting did not occur. There were continuing patrols by Pathet Lao troops and some firing, although no important military operations were conducted. Ambassador Harriman arrived in Vientiane on 29 April and proceeded directly to Luang Prabang to confer the next day with Phoumi, Boun Oum and the King. The RLG on the afternoon of 29 April, issued a third statement on the radio calling for a second attempt at a flag of truce meeting to be held on 1 May north of Ban Vang Khay.^{2/}

452. From the mid-Pacific, CINCPAC passed to JCS his policy recommendations, presumably for the benefit of the high-level policy considerations that were to take place in Washington that day. Concurring in the State/Defense evaluation that the Communist purpose was to take over Laos while political negotiations remained in progress, and arguing that the RLG was itself incapable of sufficient counter-pressure to resist, CINCPAC proposed to JCS as follows:

1/ Prince Souphanouvong (sometimes Souphannouvong), figurehead leader of leftist Neo Lao Hak Kat, after the Kong Le coup of Aug. 60, first supported Souvanna and later allied with Kong Le, but remained generally inactive during the period under study.

2/ NYT, 29 April 1961.

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~TOP SECRET~~

- a. That the U.S. announce to other SEATO nations that it was moving into Laos immediately under OPLAN 5/60 and that it expected SEATO members to join.
- b. That two U.S. and one Thai battalion be moved to Vientiane.
- c. That one Thai battalion be moved to Thakhek.
- d. That Air Force units be deployed to Thailand.
- e. To tell the Russians that the U.S. was unwilling to see Laos overrun, and that the U.S. was prepared to accept a cease-fire and the establishment of a neutral government.
- f. Be prepared to have SEATO forces remain in Laos until the situation was restored.
- g. Be prepared to counter any responses by the USSR of the PRC or the DRV.^{1/}

453. [

1/ CINCPAC to JCS, DTG 290125Z Apr 1961, TOP SECRET.]

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454. On 29 April in Washington, it was publicly announced that the administration had cancelled plans to airlift more than 6000 troops then in the U.S. to West Germany on the following Monday (1 May) for NATO exercises. Although public officials made no express comment connecting this cancellation of troop movement with Southeast Asia, it was interpreted in the press in that sense and was not denied. At the White House on that day, there was an amply attended NSC meeting. It had been widely expected by officials, as well as advertised by news media, that this was the time major decisions concerning Laos would be made. However, on 27 April the President had conferred with Congressional leaders; on the morning of the 28th, he had conferred with General MacArthur and with former President Hoover; and on the evening of the 28th he had delivered a speech in Chicago. The speech in Chicago contained one passage that seems pertinent to U.S. policy decisions in Laos:

"Now our great responsibility is to be the chief defender of freedom in this time of maximum danger. Only the United States has the power and the resources and the determination. We have committed ourselves to the defense of dozens of countries stretched around the globe who look to us for independence, who look to us for the defense of freedom.

We are prepared to meet our obligations, but we can only defend the freedom of those who are determined to free themselves. We can assist them - we will bear more than our share of the burden, but we can only help those who are ready to bear their share of the burden themselves."^{2/}

^{1/} CINCPAC to JCS, DTG 290242Z Apr 1961, TOP SECRET.

^{2/} White House Press release of "Address of the President at the Dinner of the Democratic Party of Cook County, McCormick Place Exposition Center, Chicago, at 9:30 P.M. CST."

This may be read to suggest, especially in knowledge of other circumstances, that the President had made up his own mind on the question of intervention in Laos by the evening of 28 April.

455. The NSC meeting of 29 April began at 10:00 A.M. and lasted until shortly after noon. Among those known to have been present at the meeting were the President, the Vice President, the SecState, SecDef, the Director of the Office of Civil and Defense Mobilization, the Secretary of the Treasury, the Attorney General the Acting CJCS, the Director of CIA, the Director of the U.S. Information Agency, the Special Assistant to the President on NSC affairs, the Special Assistant to the President who had specialized on Laos (Mr. Rostow), the Scientific Advisor to the President, the President's military aide, USecState Bowles, DepUSecState Alexis U. Johnson, the Director of the Planning Staff of State, and Ambassador Bohlen as a special adviser on Soviet affairs, the DepSecDef, the ASD/ISA and the ChMAAG/South Vietnam, and the Dep J-3 who was Chief of the Laos Battle Staff.

456. Our record of the NSC meeting of 29 April indicates that the meeting was opened with a statement by the SecState. He first said that a decision on Laos should be made that day, and that in Laos there was a direct U.S.-Russian confrontation. His discussion centered on consideration of a Lao appeal to both SEATO and the U.N.

457. [

] The President also suggested getting the U.K. to lead a reaction to the Lao appeal to the U.N. The President postponed any decision on putting troops into Laos. The President explained that a group of Congressmen who met with him (on 27 April) unanimously opposed putting U.S. troops into Laos, and

that both General Eisenhower (whom he had seen on 22 April at Camp David) and General MacArthur (whom he had talked to on 28 April) had opposed putting U.S. troops into Laos.

458. The SecDef is recorded as having mentioned an increase in Soviet jet bombers in South China. The SecDef also is recorded to have said that, months before, he and all of the JCS were in unanimous agreement on putting U.S. troops in Laos, but that now the Chiefs were themselves split on this issue.

459. The President said that no decision would be made on that day concerning U.S. troops in Laos but that a decision would be made on Monday (1 May). Meanwhile we should consider what could be done and get the British to commit themselves on what they thought would be the best U.S. course of action.

460. The Acting CJCS suggested putting a brigade in Tourane and Udorn. The SecState said that the Geneva Accords forbade putting U.S. troops into Tourane. The President indicated then that the U.S. would put a brigade into Thailand to protect it if Vientiane fell. It was then agreed that certain actions would be taken before Monday. These were:

- a. DOD to prepare plans to send a brigade-size force into Thailand.
- b. Consult with British and French on activities of the ICC in connection with the cease-fire.
- c. Prepare for U.N. Security Council action.
- d. Talk to British and French about possible SEATO actions.
- e. No decision would be made on that day (29 April) about going into Laos.

461. [

[] He then reemphasized consultation with the British and French on SEATO to see if they could get the ICC to work properly; he also emphasized importance of action through the U.N.

462. The Attorney General then suggested that two groups appeared to be involved -- one saying the U.S. should go in and the other saying the U.S. should not go in, both having good reasons -- and that the two groups should get together and explore each other's views and submit a report to the President. The President agreed to this suggestion. A meeting to accomplish this was called, to take place the next day at 1700 hours at State. Our record does not specify the membership of the two groups.^{1/}

463. Responsive to the first of the action-decisions taken at the White House NSC meeting described above, the JCS requested CINCPAC later that day to prepare plans to move approximately 5000 U.S. troops into Udorn or vicinity and 5000 more troops into Tourane or vicinity, including all arms and appropriate air elements. The message to CINCPAC indicated that the decision to make such deployments was not yet firm, but a decision on Thailand was expected in a meeting that was tentatively scheduled for 1 May. The decision on Vietnam would come probably later due to Geneva Accords considerations. It was hoped that such moves, if taken, could be given a SEATO cover; the State Department was exploring this angle. The message to CINCPAC concluded with explicit word that a decision had not been reached that day concerning the implementation of SEATO OPLAN 5/60.^{2/}

^{1/} Unsigned Memo For the Record, made available to this study from the files of the Chief of the Laos Battle Staff, TOP SECRET.

^{2/} JCS to CINCPAC 995131, DTG 292003Z Apr 1961, TOP SECRET.

464. Shortly after this, a joint State-Defense message was sent to the ambassador in Vientiane through State channels. This related to a decision taken that day concerning authorization of bombs for T-6's, a subject which may or may not have been taken up at the White House meeting, but is not mentioned in our account of that meeting. The message was "Authority granted to release bombs to Phoumi for use on his T-6 aircraft until effective cease-fire is realized." This was the complete message.^{1/}

30 APRIL

465. 30 April was a Sunday. On 30 April in Vientiane it was announced that a broadcast from DRV said that the Pathet Lao were ready to meet representatives of the RLG to discuss details of a cease-fire, but that they specified meeting in Ban Namone rather than Ban Vang Khay, as previously suggested by the RLG. This caused a rise in hopes that an effective cease-fire would be realized, but suspicions remained that this was a further stalling tactic.^{2/}

466. On 30 April in Thailand, the SEATO Council of Representatives met for 2½ hours. Following the meeting a formal statement was issued by Pote Sarasin,^{3/} the SEATO Secretary General. The statement was diplomatically innocuous and expressed hopes for a cease-fire along with skepticism concerning Pathet Lao intentions. Also in Bangkok the CJCS met with Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat, the Premier of Thailand. The CJCS left on the following day for Saigon.^{4/}

467. On 30 April in Washington, the Secretary of State was closeted at the State Department most of the day with principal

^{1/} DepTel NIACT, 1192 to Vientiane, 1686 to Bangkok 42961, TOP SECRET.

^{2/} NYT, 1 May 1961, page 8.

^{3/} Pote Sarasin, Thailand's outstanding diplomat, and an international lawyer who attended school in the U.S., has been Secretary General of SEATO since 1958.

^{4/} NYT, 1 May 1961, page 10.

advisers in preparation for the meeting late that afternoon with the President. There was official but cautious cognizance of the rebel leaders' announcement that they were willing to meet with RLG representatives concerning a cease-fire. Late in the afternoon the President returned to the White House from Middleburg to meet with an inner group to discuss the Laos problem. The news account of the meeting lists SecState Rusk, SecDef, the ASD/ISA, the DepASecState for Political Affairs, and the ASecState for International Organization Affairs. A news account also says that this group met with the President for about 90 minutes, following which all except the SecState left. The SecState remained with the President for sometime thereafter.^{1/}

468. At the same time that the White House meetings were in progress, the Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee appeared upon a nationally televised program, and said, among other things, that he would favor further U.S. military action in South Vietnam, Thailand, or Burma if those nations requested it. But in distinction to these, the Senator stated, in response to questions, that he did not think that the terrain and the conditions of Laos were right for sending in troops and that the U.S. must seek another solution and was in fact seeking it.^{2/} What influence the Senator really had is not known, but his words now seem to have been prophetic.

469. At DTG 300526Z CINCPAC had directed to ChMAAG/Laos a repeat of DepTel 1192, which authorized the ambassador to release bombs to Phoumi for use with T-6's. About 10 hours after this, ChMAAG/Laos, reported to CINCPAC that he had been instructed by the ambassador not to release bombs in the following

^{1/} NYT, 1 May 1961, page 1.

^{2/} NYT, 1 May 1961, page 4.

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terms, "I direct that no action be taken on referenced message (DepTel 1192) until Ambassador Harriman and I return (to) Vientiane tomorrow morning. Do not mention to Lao." ChMAAG/Laos also reported to CINCPAC by the same message that Harriman and Brown from Luang Prabang had sent a message to the SecState saying that although they had not received, in Luang Prabang, a copy of DepTel 1192 they had, while in Luang Prabang, heard from CINCPAC that authority had been granted for the use of bombs on T-6's until the cease-fire was effected. They proceeded then to argue that to support efforts for an effective cease-fire, the President was appealing to Nehru, and the RLG to Prince Sihanouk of Cambodia. The cooperation of these neutrals, they argued, was dependent at least in part on belief that the U.S. and the RLG were sincere in seeking cease-fire and avoiding provocation. In this circumstance, to use bombs would provide the Communists with a pretext to further military action and also to raise doubts among neutrals concerning our sincerity, thus losing their goodwill. They counseled, therefore, against the use of bombs as providing provocation without achieving any desired results. And they concluded by saying that bombs would not be used until the Secretary of State replied to them on the points they had raised. After reciting these two messages, ChMAAG/Laos closed his message to CINCPAC by saying that in response to CINCPAC's notice, but before receiving instructions from the ambassador, he had notified FAL headquarters of release of bombs, and that pilots had been briefed for strikes scheduled at 0530 local time of 1 May. "I again sit in the middle. I strongly urge that we be authorized to carry out instructions."^{1/}

^{1/} ChMAAG/Laos to CINCPAC ML 1820SR, DTG 301645Z April 1961, TOP SECRET.

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470. Very soon thereafter JCS dispatched to CINCPAC, with info copy to ChMAAG/Laos, a message responding that ChMAAG's request for authorization, saying that the authorization conveyed by DepTel 1192 had not been approved at high level.^{1/}

471. State promptly replied to the ambassador's protest saying that no use of bombs was authorized without his, the ambassador's specific authorization. CINCPAC promptly informed ChMAAG/Laos that his DTG 300526Z gave authority to use bombs but did not direct him to use them. He explained further that the authority conveyed envisaged that ChMAAG would be alert for situations when it would be both militarily and psychologically important to Phoumi to have bombs, and that he would make recommendations to the ambassador and to CINCPAC accordingly. ChMAAG and the ambassador between themselves would then decide what to do.^{2/} It seems quite clear that final discretionary authority to use bombs had been reserved for the ambassador, acting no doubt in consonance with the State Department instructions and, it may be further surmised, remaining in reasonably close touch with the White House through the State Department.

1 MAY

472. There was a meeting of the NSC at 1600 hours, 1 May. Nominally, the making of a decision concerning intervention in Laos had been deferred until this date. In reality, the decisions concerning Laos, such as they were, had evidently already been made. Nevertheless, much of the formal flurry of high level policy making continued. That morning (1 May) the SecDef asked the Acting CJCS for information to be used at NSC meeting that afternoon, and the Acting CJCS passed the

1/ JCS to CINCPAC 995140, DTG 010224Z May 1961, TOP SECRET.
2/ CINCPAC to ChMAAG/Laos, DTG 010340Z May 1961, TOP SECRET.

request on the the Director of the Joint Staff, who in turn asked the Chief of the Laos Battle Staff to do what he could to prepare the information so that it could be made available for a meeting between the SecDef and the JCS at 1430, evidently in preparation for the NSC meeting at 1600. Questions that had been asked by the SecDef were:

- (1) Photos and other data concerning the airfields at Seno, Vientiane, Udorn, etc.
- (2) What places beside Vientiane and Seno should the U.S. occupy if we moved into the panhandle of Laos?
- (3) What air and ground bases were there in Laos besides Seno and Vientiane?
- (4) If Thailand were used for staging into the Laos panhandle, what points would we want to use in Thailand?
- (5) What action would be required to keep a Marine battalion afloat 12 hours off Bangkok if we so desired?

As an extra, the acting CJCS threw in a request, if possible, for a "commander's estimate" of the effect of the deteriorating military situation on the possibility of achieving a cease fire before the international conference convened. ^{1/}

473. The Secretary of State had made comprehensive preparations for the NSC meeting. He had prepared a policy paper as a memorandum for the President. Apparently the President had seen the memo in an earlier draft the day before. This memo attempted to outline the problem of Laos in comprehensive terms and to arrange the alternatives open to the U.S. in a systematic fashion. He conceived first, that there were two alternative situations: one in which there was an effective cease-fire, and an other in which there would be delay in a cease-fire or

^{1/} DJSM 508-61, 1 May 1961, DJS to JCS Rep/Laos Task Force, Subject: "Requirements for Laos," 1 May 1961, CONFIDENTIAL.

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else an ineffective cease-fire. If there was an early effective cease-fire there would be no problem because it would lead directly to the ICC/14-Nation Conference situation. For the second situation, that of an unsatisfactory or delayed cease-fire, the SecState proposed an elaborate, carefully timed and integrated program of appeals to SEATO on the one hand and to the U.N. on the other. Proposals for both the SEATO and U.N. actions were presented in considerable detail, intended to cover a range of contingencies. A letter had been drafted to Prime Minister MacMillan embodying these proposals. The memorandum concluded by asking authorization for initiating steps for a program of this kind.^{1/} The proposals in the SecState memorandum to the President, which formed the substance of the NSC meeting of 1 May did not eventuate as national policy. We lack a record of that meeting, but it is evident that high national policy had already been decided upon.

474. On 1 May, CINCPAC asked JCS for authority to preposition a battle group of the 25th Infantry from Hawaii to Okinawa on a temporary basis, and asked further that MATS be directed to provide lift from Hawaii. At the same time, he asked CINCUSARPAC to make initial preparations for such a move. JCS delayed a firm reply to this request, awaiting a decision on basic issues of national policy.^{2/} On 2 May, the DJS informed CINCPAC that there had been another meeting of the NSC and that again no decisions had been taken. The British had expressed worries that SEATO OPLAN 5/60 was outdated and would lead to an

- 1/ Memorandum for the President, Subject: "Laos 1 May 1961," TOP SECRET, transmitted under cover of separate memoranda to SecDef to the Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs and to the ASD/ISA from DepUSecState, 1 May 1961.
- 2/ Summary of CINCPAC participation in the events in Laos, page 93, TOP SECRET.

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extension of military operations automatically to Luang Prabang, Xieng Khouang and the Plaine des Jarres. [

] The DJS, in giving guidance to CINCPAC on policy trends, indicated that there were expressions of concern "at high levels" of the U.S. Government, also, that SEATO plans envisaged securing too many places in Laos. What was called "high level" guidance to the JCS was that only Vientiane and Seno, and possibly Pakse, should be secured by SEATO forces in the event of an intervention.^{1/} Thus, the idea that had been nurtured by CINCPAC and others, that protective occupation of Mekong Valley cities was to be viewed as an initial step toward a larger involvement - recapture of the Plaine des Jarres, for instance - was being softly but surely repudiated.

ANTICLIMAX

475. Our story is now nearing an end. The problem of Laos had not been solved; it is in fact still with us in the spring of 1963, and no end is in sight. But a turning point had come. By the first days of May it had become increasingly evident that the probabilities of employing U.S. military forces to effect a military solution of the problem in Laos had substantially decreased. Haggling over the time, the place and the terms of reference of a cease-fire meeting between RLG representatives and Pathet Lao representatives continued for some time. On 3 May, Phoumi announced his acceptance of a cease fire and fixed a time on the following day to meet with representatives of the Pathet Lao. On 8 May, the first elements of the ICC arrived in

1/ JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 995267, DTG 030232Z May 1961, TOP SECRET.
This message was written by the DJS.

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Vientiane and another group landed at Xieng Khouang. There was a continuing game in which the RLG and Pathet Lao met to determine where they should meet when they met the next time, and when they should meet if they could agree upon a place.

476. On 3 May, CINCPAC made his final reply to the inquiry of the CJCS concerning new weapons and equipment that might be made available to FAL. FAL reviewed new weapons and equipment and advised that none were suitable to FAL because FAL lacked the capability to employ more sophisticated weapons. What FAL needed, he said in summary, was motivation and leadership within the FAL officer corps; these were fundamentals without which equipment or weapons were useless. ^{1/} Means without motivation were useless.

477. In an attempt to compensate for the undisguisable setback of U.S. policy in Laos, much effort was devoted to reassuring Sarit and South Vietnam that the U.S. was not abandoning Southeast Asia. Reassurance of Sarit and South Vietnam was made a topic of the NSC meeting of 5 May 1961. There was even some consideration of including U.S. troops among the SEATO forces that might be stationed in Thailand. Tentative and generalized decisions were made to step up the U.S. training program in South Vietnam. On 9 May, there was a White House meeting in which instructions were approved for the delegates who were to represent the U.S. at the forthcoming Geneva Conference. Some considerable attention was also given to what was called OPERATION PORKCHOP, a proposal to divide

✓ CINCPAC to JCS, DTG 032301Z May 1961, TOP SECRET.

Laos into north and south, conceding the north to the Pathet Lao, making the south an anti-Communist stronghold. Nothing ever came of this however.

THE APRIL STUDY OF U.S. CAPABILITIES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

478. There is one remaining subject to which it is necessary to give detailed attention before this history is brought to its end. This is the study of U.S. capability in Southeast Asia which was undertaken in response to the questions forwarded by the SecState on 5 April. Although this study was not completed until 5 May and was not approved until 10 May, it evidently had its effect during the period that it was being worked on; its influence did not await formal approval and transmission through channels. Both its substance, and the circumstances surrounding it, are important to a understanding of the course of events relating to high U.S. policy during the entire month of April.

479. On 5 April, the DepASD/ISA advised the DJS by memorandum of 5 April 1961 that the SecState upon his return from the SEATO meeting in Bangkok asked several questions which might need to be referred to the JCS. The DJS answered all but one of these directly, but one question he referred to the JCS. This question was: [REDACTED]

480. On 5 May, a memorandum by the DJS, staffed by J-3, was presented to the JCS who met upon it on 10 May 1961, and after making amendments, approved its recommendations. [REDACTED]

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481. The JCS answer to the question, as embodied in the paper, approved on 10 May, was forwarded to the SecDef as JCSM 319/61, 12 May 1961, and later repeated verbatim in a letter of 25 May 1961 from the Deputy SecDef to the SecState
The brief and summary answer:

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482. The approved JCS paper (JCS 1992/976, TOP SECRET) had three enclosures. Enclosure A consisted of the draft memo to the SecDef and included an appendix which was the suggested draft of a letter to the SecState.

483. Enclosure B consisted principally of Order-of-Battle estimates for DRV and "South China." [

484. []

485. []

486. These order of battle estimates were intended to describe enemy forces currently in being. No effort was made to estimate reinforcement, augmentation or replacement capabilities. The U.S. capabilities estimates, however, were based largely on what might be accomplished by augmentation, as will be seen in the following paragraphs.

487. Enclosure C, "Discussion", was divided into four parts. The first part was Army inputs, the second part Navy and Marine Corps inputs, the third part Air Force inputs, and the fourth part consisted of logistic factors based on the Joint Staff Study.

488. [

[Redacted content]

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489. Against these estimates of force requirements, time-phased estimates of what could be deployed were given.

[Redacted content]

490. [

[Redacted content]

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491.

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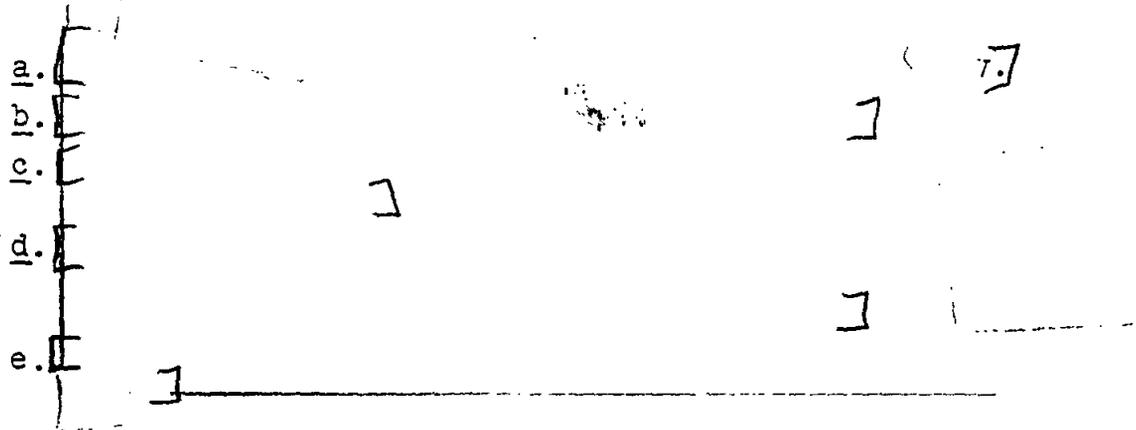
]

492.

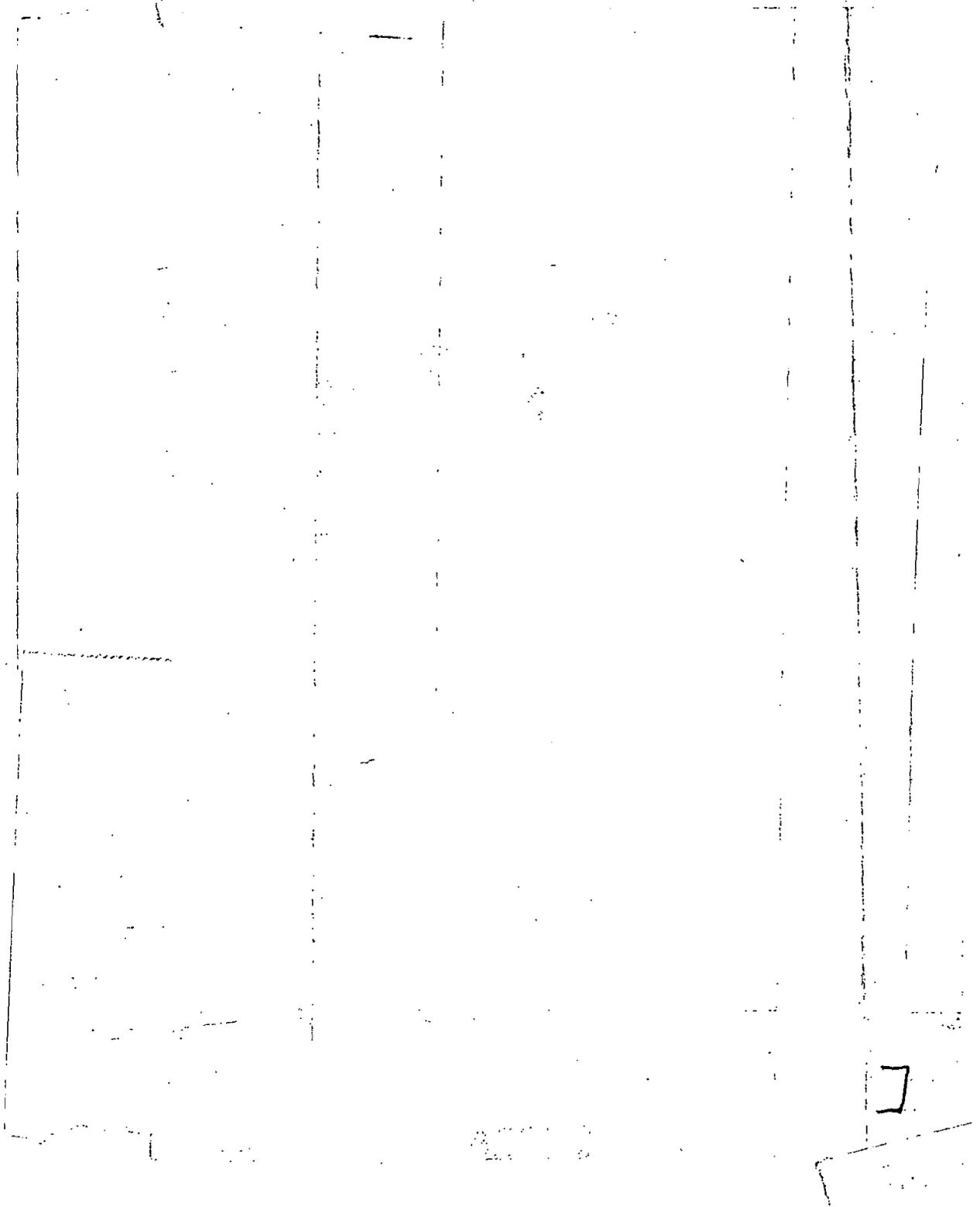
[

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493. The input supplied by the Air Force began with estimates of monthly sortie requirements for close support. [



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494

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495. The logistics input were supplied by a Joint Staff study (which in many details of fact duplicated the study that had been produced in January, but which, because of the way in which the question was framed in January, had led earlier to a quite different general impression of U.S. capabilities). The Joint Staff study of logistic factors concluded that:

a. [

]

b. [

]

[

]

496. Such was the study that had received priority attention from the Services and from the Joint Staff during the period of tension over Laos throughout the month of April. The major judgments of the Study were evidently known to the President before the 29 April NSC meeting. Some statements attributed to the President in our record of that meeting appear to be almost a paraphrase of the summary conclusions of the study. Even before this, some of those who dealt with the President on these issues had developed the view that the President had come to believe we lacked the means [] to deal successfully with moves that the DRV and PRC might take in response to a U.S. intervention. This had come out, for instance, at the Laos Task Force meeting of 27 April. In sum, the military means and plans that were politically acceptable held no real promise of success against readily imaginable enemy countermmoves. The sole military means available that promised to be effective against these readily imaginable enemy counter moves involved large-scale escalation that was judged politically unacceptable.

1/ JCS 1992/976, 12 May 1961, "Capabilities in SEA" (U), and Note by the Secretaries to the holders of JCS 1992/976 of 29 May 1961 and 4 October 1961, TOP SECRET.

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~TOP SECRET~~

APPENDIX "A"

PARTICIPANTS, TOPICS, AND DECISIONS OF INTERAGENCY AND NATIONAL
LEVEL MEETINGS ON LAOS

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~TOP SECRET~~

APPENDIX "A"PARTICIPANTS, TOPICS, AND DECISIONS OF INTERAGENCY
AND NATIONAL-LEVEL MEETINGS ON LAOS
(August 1960-May 1961)

Listings have been prepared of all known conferences of an interdepartmental or national-level character, at which problems of Laos were officially dealt with or decided upon, covering the period from Aug. 60-May 61. Because of their rather different character, the NSC meetings are listed separately.

The purpose is to suggest the degree of continuity of experience and special expertise, as well as the echelons of responsibility, associated with these considerations of national policy and operational decision making. These listings are believed to convey a correct impression of these matters, although they do not cover all the meetings, and in some cases for meetings that are covered, they do not include everyone who was present.

In the second section of Appendix "A", a listing has been prepared of all the NSC meetings from Aug. 60-May 61, including participants and agenda, in an attempt to indicate (a) the degree of continuity in participant representation and (b) other important issues being considered during the Laos crisis of Aug. 60-May 61, which issues may have tended to overshadow the Laos crisis at times. Where actions have been taken on topics within the Agenda, concerning Laos, these actions have been noted. The 471st, 474th, 475th, 477th, 478th, and 484th NSC meetings are not included, because these meetings did not carry Laos on their agenda.

The listings of meetings are presented in chronological order and include the following kinds of meetings: State-DOD-JCS-CIA meetings; State-DOD meetings; OCB Luncheon meeting(s); Interdepartmental Policy meeting(s); meetings of the Interdepartmental Working Group on Laos; State-JCS-ISA-CIA meetings; Lao Task Force meetings; Ad Hoc meeting(s); ISA-OSD-JCS meeting(s); State-DOD-JCS meetings; and NSC meetings.

The data in these listings do not lend themselves to valid and meaningful quantitative analysis. On the basis of inspection, however, it is possible to conclude from them that:

a. Laos was never, for any considerable time, the sole or even the major preoccupation of the policy and decision-making machinery at the national level.

b. Responsible official consideration and decisions on operations policy in Laos were rarely kept within the province of the same official group, and seldom undertaken on a continuing basis with the same officials present. Operations policy was officially considered, and decisions were made, on the contrary, by different groups, of different individuals, on several notable occasions.

c. Persons with continuous and specialized knowledge of Laos were not consistently present at meetings in which important issues were discussed or at which important decisions were made. On the contrary, they tended to be replaced by high-ranking officials presumably possessing a wider perspective and certainly a broader range of responsibility, but lacking specialized or localized competence, roughly in proportion as the importance of the issue increased.

SECTION I

AGENCY, INTER-AGENCY, AND WHITE HOUSE MEETINGS

11 Aug 60 - State-DOD-JCS Meeting

Participants

Douglas	DepSecDef	)	OSD
Bell	Representative from the Office of the Deputy Coordinator for Foreign Assistance, Economic Affairs	)	} State
Parsons	ASecState, Far Eastern Affairs)	
Merchant	UnderSecState for Political Affairs)	
General Lemnitzer	CJCS	)	JCS
Unnamed representatives of OASD/ISA		)	ISA

Topics

Means of giving support to Phoumi

Decisions

1. []
2. PEO representatives in Savannakhet and Luang Prabang authorized as channels direct to ChJUSMAAG.
3. []
4. Two 5 KW transmitters to be prepared for later shipment.
5. Direct communications, Savannakhet and Luang Prabang to ChJUSMAAG, authorized.

17 Aug 60 - State-DOD-JCS-CIA Meeting

Participants

Dillon	UnderSecState	}	State
Parsons	ASecState, Far Eastern Affairs		
Anderson	Director, Office of Southeast Asian Affairs		
Chapman	Laos Desk Officer, Office of Southeast Asian Affairs International		
Admiral O'Beirne	J-3	}	JCS
Williams	DepASD/ISA		
Admiral O'Donnell	Chief of OASD/ISA-FER	}	ISA
Col. McCrea	OASD/ISA-FER Laos Desk Officer		
Dulles	Director of CIA	}	CIA
Bissell	Deputy Director, Operations		
[]	CIA Rep		

Topics

Means of giving aid to Phoumi, possible restrictions on aircraft, and State draft message of instructions to Ambassador Brown.

Decision

1. []

22 Aug 60 - State-DOD Meeting

Participants

Unknown

Topics

Reconsideration of means of aid to Phoumi.

Decisions

1. [_____] is consistent with policy objectives stated in State to Vientiane DepTel No. 222.
2. Authorization of the replacement or reimbursement for military stocks so depleted.

23 Aug 60 - State-DOD-JCS Meeting

Participants

Gates	SecDef	)	OSD
Merchant	UnderSecState for Political Affairs	}	State
Parsons	ASecState, Far Eastern Affairs		
General Lemnitzer	CJCS	)	JCS
Unnamed ISA Representatives		)	ISA

Topics

Support of Phoumi, PL activities, and possibility of Souvanna being informed of U.S. intent to support Phoumi

Decisions

1. U.S. would indicate forthright support of Phoumi.
2. Phoumi informed he may expect moral and material support from U.S., and U.S. will meet any reasonable request.
3. Money will be made available for pay and rice for FAL.
4. [_____]

5 Oct 60 - OCE Luncheon Meeting

Participants

Merchant	UnderSecState for Political Affairs	} State
Steeves	Acting ASecState, Far Eastern Affairs	
Irwin	OSA ASD/ISA	) ISA

Topics

[]

Decision

1. []

7 Oct 60 - Interdepartmental Meeting

Participants

Gates	SecDef	) OSD
Herter	SecState	} State
Dillon	UnderSecState	
Parsons	ASecState, Far Eastern Affairs)
Irwin	ASD/ISA	) ISA
Unnamed CIA Representatives		) CIA

Topics

What to do with Phoumi; Ambassador Brown's interpretation of instructions; State dispatch regarding [] functions; and whether Souvanna Phouma was able to control Kong Le.]

Decisions

Unknown

8 Oct 60 - Interdepartmental Policy Meeting

Participants

Dillon	UnderSecState	}	State
Parsons	ASecState, Far Eastern Affairs		
Steeves	Deputy ASecState, Far Eastern Affairs		
General Lemmitzer	CJCS	}	JCS
General Gray	Chairman, Subsidiary Activities Division/J-5		
Irwin	ASD/ISA	}	ISA
Admiral O'Donnell	Chief of OASD/ISA-FER		

Topics

Objective of trip of Irwin, Parsons, and Admiral Riley to Southeast Asia.

Decisions

1. Specific objectives, tactics, schedule and cover story for trip.

13 Oct 60 - Interdepartmental Working Group en Laos

Participants

Unknown

Topics

[]

Decision

1. Request to be approved, but actual dispatch of body to be cleared with SecDef.

28 Oct 60 - State-JCS Meeting

Participants

Unknown

Topics

[]

Decisions

None recorded.

10 Nov 60 - DOD-JCS-State Meeting

Participants

Gates	SecDef	}	OSD
Douglas	DepSecDef		
Herter	SecState	}	State
Merchant	Under SecState for Political Affairs		
Parsons	ASecState, Far Eastern Affairs		
Usher	Deputy Director, Office of Southeast Asian Affairs	}	JCS
General Gray	J-5 ChSAD		
General Lemnitzer	CJCS		
General Bonesteel	Special Assistant to CJCS for Policy	}	ISA
Irwin	ASD/ISA		
Admiral O'Donnell	Chief, OASD/ISA-FER	}	

Topics

Clarification of basic differences between State and Defense re U.S. policies toward Laos, and a possible meeting with the President (Mr. Herter, Mr. Gates, and Mr. Dulles to attend) to obtain Presidential decision on these issues.

Decision

Nothing specific.

21 Nov 60 - State-DOD-JCS Meeting

Participants

Herter ^{1/}	SecState	) State
Admiral Burke	Acting CJCS	) JCS
Col. McCrea	OASD/ISA-FER Laos Desk Officer	) ISA
Williams	Deputy ASD/ISA	

Topics

Clarification of policy and program items in Laos

Decisions (Sent to Field)

1. If reports of movements of forces to attack Luang Prabang are correct, support Phoumi if his forces will fight.
2. []
3. []
4. Remove all previous restraints on Phoumi and let him fight.

14 Dec 60 - State-DOD-JCS-CIA Meeting

Participants

Douglas	DepSecDef	) OSD
Hare	DepUnderSecState for Political Affairs	) State
Admiral Burke	Acting CJCS	) JCS
CIA participants		) CIA

Topics

Need for planning political actions and for State to review its instructions to Ambassador Brown.

1/ SecState phoned the President, in Atlanta, for approval of a policy directive to Ambassador Brown drawn up in the meeting.

Decisions

1. []
2. Initiate request from King or Lao government for U.S. aid.
3. State concurrence that JCS may have CINCPAC direct Heintges to deal directly with Phoumi on conduct of military operations.

14 Dec 60 - White House Meeting

Participants

General <u>1/</u> Goodpaster	Military Adviser to the President	) White House
Douglas	DepSecDef	) OSD
Hare	DepUnderSecState for Political Affairs	) State
Admiral Burke	Acting CJCS	) JCS

Topics

Support of Phoumi's effort to capture Vientiane

Decisions

1. Heintges now to provide direct military advice to Phoumi.
2. []
3. []

17 Dec 60 - State-DOD-JCS Meeting

Participants

Parsons	ASecState, Far Eastern Affairs	) State
Admiral Burke	Acting CJCS	) JCS
Others		

Topics

British and French attitudes and need for recce.

Decisions

None known.

1/ General Goodpaster phoned the President in Atlanta, for consultation and concurrence on matters taken up at the meeting.

27 Dec 60 - Interdepartmental Meeting (Probably State, Defense, and CIA)

Participants

Unknown

Topics

See "Decisions"

Decisions

1. Approval of a joint State-Defense message to Ambassador Brown containing the following points.
 - a. Contingent authorization for armed T-6 program.
 - b. Use of armed T-6's to be proceeded by establishment of necessary political basis.
 - c. Phoumi to be informed that USG would favorably consider a request for armed T-6's upon fulfillment of these necessary political conditions.
 - d. []
 - e. []
 - f. Actual delivery of aircraft to Phoumi would remain subject to final approval by Washington.

31 Dec 60 - White House Meeting

Participants

The President		) White House
Douglas	DepSecDef	) OSD
Merchant	Acting SecState (usually UnderSecState for Political Affairs	) State
Parsons	ASecState, Far Eastern Affairs	
Steeves	DepASecState, Far Eastern Affairs	
General Lemnitzer	CJCS	) JCS
Dulles	Director of CIA	) CIA

Topics

Evaluation of present situation in Laos and possible measures.

Decisions

None recorded or evident. Only source of information on this meeting is a newspaper account.

2 Jan 61 - White House Meeting

Participants

The President		) White House
Douglas	DepSecDef	) OSD
Herter	SecState	} State
Merchant	UnderSecState for Political Affairs	
General Lemnitzer	CJCS	) JCS
Dulles	Director, CIA	) CIA

Topics

Precautionary military measures to counter Communist moves in Laos

Decisions

None recorded or evident.

6 Jan 61 - State-ISA Meeting

Participants

Parsons	ASecState, Far Eastern Affairs	} State
Anderson	Director, Office of Southeast Asian Affairs	
Irwin	ASD/ISA	} ISA
Col. McCrea	Laos Desk Officer OASD/ISA-FER	

Topics

Discussion of Brown's message urging restrictions on armed T-5 activity; firmer U.S. statement of support;

Decisions

None recorded or evident.

7 Jan 61 - State-JCS-ISA-CIA Meeting

Participants

Herter	SecState	}	State
Parsons	ASecState, Far Eastern Affairs		
General Lemnitzer	CJCS	)	JCS
Irwin	ASD/ISA	}	ISA
Nitze	ASD/ISA Designate		
Dulles	Director, CIA	)	CIA

Other Representatives of State and DOD

Topics

Direct airlift; reauthorization for U.S. logistic aid; Russian airlift; T-33 recce; armed T-6's; [

] possible SVN pilot jet training; possible JCS and State messages joint clearance policy; Phoumi airlift support; FAL training inadequacy; and Ally notification of T-6's offensive use.

Decisions

1. Make clear to field that authority already existed for the use of U.S. aircraft for logistic support directly to Laos.
2. []
3. []
4. []

13 Jan 61 - State-ISA Meeting

Participants

Merchant	UnderSecState for Political Affairs	}	State
Parsons	ASecState, Far Eastern Affairs		
Admiral Heinz	Director of OASD/ISA-FER	)	ISA

Topic

U.S. policy toward reactivating ICC or installation of some political commission to achieve a political solution.

Decisions

None recorded or evident.

19-21 Jan 61 - Interdepartmental meetings were held, as the new Administration reviewed its policy in Laos and considered possible military-political measures. The participants of each day's meeting are listed below.

19 Jan 61

Participants

McGhee	Chairman, Policy Planning Council	}	State
Parsons	ASecState, Far Eastern Affairs		
Steeves	DepASecState, Far Eastern Affairs		
Nitze	ASD/ISA	}	ISA
Col. McCrea	OASD/ISA-FER, Laos Desk Officer		
Bissell	DepDir for Operations	)	CIA

20 Jan 61

Participants

McGhee	Chairman, Policy Planning Council	}	State
Parsons	ASecState, Far Eastern Affairs		
Steeves	DepASecState, Far Eastern Affairs		
Bohlen	Special Assistant to the SecState for Soviet Affairs		
Cummings	Rep., Bureau of Intelligence and Research		
Anderson	Director, Office of Southeast Asian Affairs		
Nitze	ASD/ISA	}	ISA
Col. McCrea	OASD/ISA-FER, Laos Desk Officer		
Bissell	DepDir for Operations)	CIA

21 Jan 61

Participants

McGhee	Chairman, Policy Planning Council	}	State
Parsons	ASecState, Far Eastern Affairs		
Steeves	DepASecState, Far Eastern Affairs		
Bohlen	Special Assistant to the SecState for Soviet Affairs		
Anderson	Director, Office of Southeast Asian Affairs		

Col. Pollock	J-5, Contingency Planning Branch	) JCS
Nitze	ASD/ISA	) ISA
Col. McCrea	OASD/ISA-FER, Laos Desk Officer	
Bissell	DepDir for Operations	) CIA

Decision

1. To present agreed recommendations to SecState.

22 Jan 61 - State-DOD Meeting

Participants

Bundy	Special Assistant to President for National Security Affairs	) White House
Rusk	SecState	) State
McGhee	Chairman, Policy Planning Council	
Parsons	ASecState, Far Eastern Affairs	
Bohlen	Special Assistant to the SecState for Soviet Affairs	
Cummings	Rep., Bureau of Intelligence and Research	) State
Anderson	Director, Office of South-east Asian Affairs	
Col. Pollock	J-5, Contingency Planning Branch	) JCS
General Lemnitzer	CJCS	
General Bonesteel	Special Assistant to CJCS for Policy	
Nitze	ASD/ISA	) ISA
Bissell	DepDir for Operations	) CIA

Decision

1. To present recommendations to President.

23 Jan 61 - White House Meeting

Participants

The President		) White House
Rusk	SecState	) State
General Lemnitzer	CJCS	) JCS
Nitze	ASD/ISA	) ISA

Decisions

1. Authorize actions to be taken to improve the military situation to include: [] use of PEO as tactical advisers to FAL; [] establishment of logistic support group in Thailand; augmentation of U.S. airlift in Southeast Asia and of FAL air capability; improvement in intelligence collection in Southeast Asia; and additional funding for deficits and PEO and CINCPAC training.

27 Jan 61 - State-JCS Meeting

Participants

Parsons	ASecState, Far Eastern Affairs	} State
General Fontana	Dep. J-3 and Chief of Laos Battle Staff	} JCS

Other not identified

Topic

Assignment of PEO personnel to FAL.

Decision

1. Agreement on Joint State-DOD message to clarify subject.

28 Jan 61 - White House Meeting

Participants

The President		} White House
Johnson	Vice President	
Bundy	Special Assistant for National Security Affairs	

Rostow	Special Assistant to the President	} White House
Sorensen	Special Assistant to the President	
McNamara	SecDef	) OSD
Rusk	SecState	) State
General Lemnitzer	CJCS	) JCS
Nitze	ASD/ISA	) ISA

Topic

Policy in Asia, including discussion of policy in Laos.

Decision

Not recorded.

31 Jan 61 - Joint State-JCS-ISA-CIA Working Group Meeting at State

Participants

General Fontana	Dep. J-3 and Chief of Laos Battle Staff	} JCS
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Other participants unknown

Topic

Review of status of measures authorized on 23 Jan 61 and discussion of ChPEO request for 9-team LTAG augmentation.

Decisions

Not recorded.

2 Feb 61 - Lao Task Force Meeting (State, JCS, ISA, and CIA)

Participants

Ambassador Brown	U.S. Ambassador to Laos	} State
Parsons	ASecState, Far Eastern Affairs	
Steeves	DepASecState, Far Eastern Affairs	
Anderson	Director, Office of South-east Asian Affairs	

Kohler	ASecState, European Affairs	}	State
Chapman	Office of Southeast Asian Affairs, Laos Desk Officer		
Weiss	Rep. from the Office of the DepCoordinator for Foreign Assistance Economic Affairs		
Jenkins	Regional Planning Adviser, Far Eastern Affairs		
General Bonesteel	Special Assistant to CJCS for Policy	}	JCS
Admiral Wellings	Vice DJS		
Colonel Flournoy	Deputy Chief of Laos Battle Staff		
Nitze	ASD/ISA	}	ISA
Williams	DepASD/ISA		
Admiral Heinz	Chief of OASD/ISA-FER		
Colonel McCrea	OASD/ISA-FER, Laos Desk Officer		
Bissell	DepDir for Operations	}	CIA
[]	CIA Representative		

Topics

Possible Lao Task Force jurisdiction over South Vietnam; Lao situation; USSR cooperation re neutral nation supervisory commission; cease-fire proposals; and augmentation of PEO.

Decision

1. Tentatively approved ChPEO request for 9-team LTAG augment.

7 Feb 61 - Department of State Laos Task Force Meeting (White House, State, JCS, ISA, and CIA)

Participants

Rostow	Special Assistant to the President	} White House
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Parsons	ASecState, Far Eastern Affairs	}	State
Steeves	DepASecState, Far Eastern Affairs		
Anderson	Director, Office of Southeast Asian Affairs		
Chapman	Office of Southeast Asian Affairs, Laos Desk Officer		
Bell	Rep. from the Office of the DepCoordinator for Foreign Assistance, Economic Affairs		
Weiss	Rep. from the Office of the DepCoordinator for Foreign Assistance, Economic Affairs		
Bohlen	Special Assistant to the SecState for Soviet Affairs		
General Fontana	Dep. J-3 and Chief of Laos Battle Staff	}	JCS
Admiral Heinz	Chief of OASD/ISA-FER		
Colonel McCrea	OASD/ISA-FER, Laos Desk Officer	}	ISA
Bissell	DepDir for Operations		
[]	CIA Representative	}	CIA

Topics

"Concept" message; SEATO; JCS proposals re airlift support and PEO training augmentation; effect of successful military action upon diplomatic negotiations; and proposed military operation success potential.

Decision

1. JCS should draft a message of instructions which would then be cleared with State, presumably repeating the authorization of 7 January for use of U.S. aircraft for direct flights to Laos for logistic support.

8 Feb 61 - White House Meeting

Participants

The President		}	White House
Bundy	Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs		
Rostow	Special Assistant to the President		

McNamara	SecDef	) OSD
Rusk	SecState	) State
General Lemnitzer	CJCS	) JCS
Nitze	ASD/ISA	) ISA

Topics

U.S. airlift; Neutral Nations Commission; SEATO; USSR airlift; 14-Nation Conference; and referral of Lao problem to U.N.

Decisions

None recorded.

27 Feb 61 - Lao Task Force Meeting (White House, State, JCS, ISA, and CIA)

Participants

Rostow	Special Assistant to the President	}	White House
Parsons	ASecState, Far Eastern Affairs		
Steeves	DepASecState, Far Eastern Affairs	}	State
Bohlen	Special Assistant to the SecState for Soviet Affairs		
Anderson	Director, Office of Southeast Asian Affairs		
Weiss	Rep. from the Office of the DepCoordinator for Foreign Assistance, Economic Affairs		
Usher	DepDirector, Office of Southeast Asian Affairs		
General Fontana	Dep. J-3 and Chief of Laos Battle Staff			}	JCS
Admiral Heinz	Chief of OASD/ISA-FER		
Bundy, W.P.	Dep ASD/ISA	}	ISA
Colonel McCrea	OASD/ISA-FER, Laos Desk Officer		
[]	CIA Representative			}	CIA
[]	CIA Representative		
Others			

Topics

Bombs for armed T-6's; direct cargo flights to Vientiane reconsideration; [] possible Air Force assignment of KT-33 to Lao AIRA; Meo ammo provision; [] Meo morale; coalition government; [] Soviet airlift; and rebel offensive ramifications.

Decisions

1. To recommend reconsideration at the White House of issue of direct cargo flights to Vientiane.
2. Bombs for T-6's to be recommended []
3. State-Defense message to be promulgated to clarify practice of PEO in assigning PEO personnel down to battalion level.

3 Mar 61 - White House Meeting

Participants

Parsons ASecState, Far Eastern Affairs) State

Nitze ASD/ISA) ISA

Other participants not specified

Topics

See "Decisions"

Decisions

1. JCS to prepare plan to be [] for retaking Plaine des Jarres.
2. An attempt would be made to set up Ambassador Gavin-President de Gaulle meeting to harmonize U.S.-French policy.
3. Felt and Boyle would be brought to Washington for conferences, and Felt visit to Vientiane would be considered.
4. State to give maximum publicity to Russian buildup in Laos.
5. State to continue efforts to obtain broadened government in Laos.
6. State to consider having Ambassador Johnson stop in Phnom Penh enroute to U.S. to see Souvanna.

NOTE: No discussion of use of bombs with armed T-6's.

7 Mar 61 - Lao Task Force Meeting

Participants

Bundy	Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs	}	White House
Rostow	Special Assistant to the President		
Steeves	DepASecState, Far Eastern Affairs	}	State
Bohlen	Special Assistant to the SecState for Soviet Affairs		
Parsons	ASecState, Far Eastern Affairs		
Usher	DepDirector, Office of Southeast Asian Affairs		
[]	CIA Representative) CIA

Topics

Review of decisions of 3 Mar White House Meeting; French note re U.S. training in Laos; British effort re reconstitution ICC; situation in Laos; possible escalation in Lao war; and impasse between Phoumi and ICA re policy augmentation.

Decisions

None recorded.

9 Mar 61 - Special Ad Hoc Meeting [

]

Participants

Not specified in available sources. Ambassador Brown and CINCPAC had evidently been consulted in program beforehand.

Topic

[]

Decision

To adopt.

10 Mar 61 - JCS Meeting

Participants

Regular JCS meeting so far as is known.

Topic

[

]

Decisions

- 1. JCS policy guidance for staff implementing actions.

10 Mar 61 - Service Planners/JS Planners Meeting

Participants

Not specified

Topic

[

]

Decisions

Not specified in available records.

13 Mar 61 - JCS-DOD-CIA Meeting

Participants

Admiral Wellings	Vice DJS	}	JCS
JCS Representatives			
CIA Representatives		)	CIA
Unspecified Service Representatives			

Topic

[

]

Decisions

Not recorded.

15 Mar 61 - Joint DOD/CIA Meeting

Participants

Not recorded

Topic

Proposed Command and Control Organization for Laos air operations.

Decisions

Not recorded.

16 Mar 61 - Laos Task Force Meeting (State-JCS-ISA-White House)

Participants

Rostow	Special Assistant to the President	}	White House
Bundy	Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs		
Parsons	ASecState, Far Eastern Affairs	)	State
General Wheeler	DJS	}	JCS
General Lemnitzer	CJCS		

Topics

Lao SEATO appeal and possible U.S. action.

Decision

1. The President would probably be asked to endorse policy seeking SEATO and possible U.S. intervention.

20 Mar 61 - White House Meeting

Participants

Bundy	Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs	}	White House
Rostow	Special Assistant to the President		
McNamara	SecDef	)	OSD
Bowles	UnderSecState	}	State
Parsons	ASecState, Far Eastern Affairs		
Admiral Burke	Acting CJCS	)	JCS

Topics

Possible U.S. intervention in Laos; []

Decisions

Not recorded.

21 Mar 61 - White House Meeting

Participants

The President		}	White House
Johnson	Vice President		
Bundy	Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs		
Rostow	Special Assistant to the President		
McNamara	SecDef	)	OSD
Rusk	SecState	}	State
Bowles	UnderSecState		
Admiral Burke	Acting CJCS	)	JCS
Dulles	Director	)	CIA

Topics

U.S., British and Russian policy on negotiations and proposed military actions;

Decisions

1. []
2. []
3. President would hold a press conference on the 23rd of March, expounding U.S. views on Laos.
4. Attempt to induce British to station a SEATO force in Thailand and support effort to induce all SEATO members to join in a common action.

28 Mar 61 - Laos "Planning Group" Meeting

Participants

Bundy	Special Assistant to the President on National Security Affairs	}	White House
McGhee	Chairman of Policy Planning Council		
Rowen	DepASD/ISA	}	ISA
Wade	OASD/ISA/NSC Affairs		
Bissell	DepDir, Operations	)	CIA

Topics

Key West Meeting and U.S. ICC inspection plans.

Decisions

Not recorded.

31 Mar 61 - State-JCS Meeting

Participants

Rostow	Special Assistant to the President	) White House
Bowles	UnderSecState	) State
Parsons	Assistant SecState, Far Eastern Affairs	
Admiral Burke	CNO	) JCS
General Lemnitzer	CJCS	

Topics

SEATO meeting; U.S. attitude toward Laos coalition government; ICC; []

Decisions

Not recorded.

4 Apr 61 - White House Meeting

Participants

The President		) White House
Dillon	Secretary of Treasury	) Treasury
McNamara	SecDef	) OSD
Rusk	SecState	) State
General Lemnitzer	CJCS	) JCS
Dulles	Director	) CIA

Topic

Laos policy.

Decision

None recorded or evident.

10 Apr 61 - Laos Task Force Meeting

Participants

Rostow	Special Assistant to the President	) White House
Usher	DepDir, Office of Southeast Asian Affairs	) State
Young	Chief Negotiator and Rep. for 14-Nation Conference	
Bowles	UnderSecState	
Steeves	Deputy ASecState, Far Eastern Affairs	
Bissell	DepDir, Operations	) CIA

Topics

U.S. statement on Laos; Southeast Asia regional position; [possible surfacing of PEO personnel;]

Decisions

Not recorded.

13 Apr 61 - Laos Task Force Meeting

Participants

Rostow	Special Assistant to the President) White House
Bowles	UnderSecState) State
Jenkins	Regional Planning Adviser, Far Eastern Affairs	
Steeves	DepASecState, Far Eastern Affairs	
Bohlen	Special Assistant to the SecState for Soviet Affairs	
Anderson	Director, Office of Southeast Asian Affairs) JCS
Young	Chief Negotiator and Rep. for 14-Nation Conference	
General Dean	J-3) ISA
Fontana	Dep. J-3, Chief of the Laos Battle Staff	
Nitze	ASD/ISA))
Williams	Deputy ASD/ISA	
Admiral Heinz	Chief of OASD/ISA-FER	

Bissell	DepDir, Operations	} CIA
[]	Agency Representative	

Topics

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Decisions

1. Recommend to SecState and President the following actions:

a. []

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b. []

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c. []

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d. []

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e. []

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13 Apr 61-- White House Meeting

Participants

The President) White House
McNamara	SecDef) OSD
Rusk	SecState	) State
General Lemnitzer	CJCS	} JCS
General Fontana	Deputy J-3 and Chief, Laos Battle Staff	

Topics

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Decisions

1. []

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2. []

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14 Apr 61 - State-JCS Meeting

Participants

Rostow	Special Assistant to the President) White House
McGhee	Chairman, Policy Planning Council	} State
Bohlen	Special Assistant to the SecState on Soviet Affairs	
Jenkins	Regional Planning Adviser, Far Eastern Affairs	
General LeMay	Chief of Staff, Air Force) JCS
Admiral Russell	ISA	} ISA
Williams	Deputy ASD/ISA	

Topics

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Decisions

Not recorded.

17 Apr 61 - ISA-OSD-JCS Meeting

Participants

Rostow	Special Assistant to the President) White House
McNamara	SecDef	) OSD
General Lemnitzer	CJCS	) JCS
Bundy	Deputy ASD/ISA	) ISA

Topics

Soviet response to British note; situation in Laos; conversion of PEO to MAAG; and possible U.S. military action in Laos.

Decisions

Not recorded.

17 Apr 61 - Lao Task Force Meeting

Participants

Rostow	Special Assistant to the President	} White House
Steeves	DepASecState, Far Eastern Affairs	}
Jenkins	Regional Planning Adviser, Far Eastern Affairs	
Young	Rep. to 14-Nation Conference	
Bohlen	Special Assistant to the SecState on Soviet Affairs	} State
Chapman	Laos Desk Office, Office of Southeast Asian Affairs	}
McConaughy	ASecState, Far Eastern Affairs	
Colonel Flournoy	Deputy Chief of Laos Battle Staff	
Admiral Anderson	CNO	} JCS
Colonel McCrea	OASD/ISA-FER, Laos Desk Officer	}
Admiral Heinz	Chief of OASD/ISA-FER	
[]] Agency Representative	}
[]] Agency Representative	

Topics

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Decisions

Not recorded.

19 Apr 61 - Laos Task Force Meeting

Participants

Young	Chief Negotiator & Rep. to 14-Nation Conference	}	State
Gluck	Special Assistant, SEATO Affairs, Far Eastern Affairs		
Anderson	Director, Office of Southeast Asian Affairs		
Jenkins	Regional Planning Adviser, Far Eastern Affairs		
Chapman	Laos Desk Officer, Southeast Asian Affairs		
McConaughy	ASecState, Far East Region		
General Fontana	Deputy J-3 and Chief, Laos Battle Staff	}	JCS
Colonel McCrea	OASD/ISA-FER, Laos Desk Officer		
Nitze	ASD/ISA	}	ISA
Williams	Deputy ASD/ISA		
Admiral Heinz	Chief of OASD/ISA-FER		
[]	Agency Representative)	CIA

Topics

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Decisions

Not recorded.

23 Apr 61 - Ad Hoc Interdepartmental Meeting at State

Participants

Rostow	Special Assistant to the President	}	White House
McNamara	SecDef		
		)	OSD

Rusk	SecState	}	State
Bowles	UnderSecState		
McGhee	Chairman, Policy Planning Council		
U. Alexis Johnson	DepUnderSecState for Political Affairs		
McConaughy	ASecState, Far Eastern Affairs		
Steeves	Deputy Assistant SecState, Far Eastern Affairs		
Anderson	Director, Office of South-east Asian Affairs	}	JCS
Admiral Burke	Acting CJCS		
General Wheeler	DJS		
Admiral Wellings	VDJS	}	ISA
General Fontana	Deputy J-3 & Chief of Laos Battle Staff		
Admiral Lee	Chief of Policy Planning Division)	CIA
[]	Agency Representative		

Topics

Cease-fire; Vang Vieng PL attack; White House approval of bombing with T-6's until cease-fire effective; recce; need for political understandings with U.K. and Thailand precedent to interventionary steps.

Decisions

1. []

26 Apr 61 - White House MeetingParticipants

The President

Unspecified State and DOD Representatives

Topic

ChiCom demands re Laos.

Decisions

1. Send letter to Nehru.
2. Learn British and French views on ChiCom demands re Laos.
3. CINCPAC to move naval forces into Gulf of Siam and South China Sea.
4. Designated airlift forces under SEATO OPLAN 5/60 to be alerted.
5. Possibility of Security Council action re cease-fire to be investigated.
6. []
7. Harriman's mission to Laos deferred temporarily.
8. U.S. ambassador in Laos to be sent instructions re RLG strategy to assure favorable cease-fire.

27 Apr 61 - Laos Task Force Meeting

Participants

Rostow	Special Assistant to the President	} White House
Steeves	Assistant SecState, Far Eastern Affairs	} State
Usher	DepDir, Office of Southeast Asian Affairs	
Colonel Flournoy	Deputy Chief of Laos Battle Staff)	JCS
Admiral Heinz	Chief of OASD/ISA-FER) ISA
[]	Agency Representative) CIA

Topics

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Decisions

Not recorded.

28 Apr 61 - State-JCS-ISA Meeting

Participants

Johnson	Deputy UnderSecState for Political Affairs) State
General LeMay	Chief of Staff, USAF	) JCS
Admiral Heinz	Chief of the OASD/ISA-FER	} ISA
Admiral Russell	ISA	
Williams	Deputy ASD	

Topics

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Decision

1. To draft a State-Defense message authorizing issuance of bombs to Phoumi for his T-6's.

30 Apr 61 - White House Meeting

Participants

The President		) White House
McNamara	SecDef	) OSD
Rusk	SecState	} State
Alexis Johnson	DepUnderSecState for Political Affairs	
Harlan Cleveland	Assistant SecState for International Organization Affairs	

Topics

Cease-fire prospects; and U.N. action on Lao situation.

Decisions

Not recorded.

9 May 61 - White House Conference

Participants

The President		}	White House
Rostow	Special Assistant to the President		
Ambassador Harriman	Ambassador at large	}	State
Ambassador Johnson	Chief Negotiator and Representative to 14-Nation Conference		
Admiral Burke	Acting CJCS	}	JCS
Colonel Flournoy	Deputy Chief of Laos Battle Staff		

Topics

Memo "International Conference on Laos" (containing guidance for Ambassador Harriman); coalition government; Operations PORKCHOP; PL and Souvanna Phoumi policy at 14-Nation Conference; rotation of Marines afloat on sea (on alert for 5/60); possible U.S. intervention; necessity of assuring security of Thailand, SVN, and South Laos; moral obligation to Meos; and prospects of U.S. being able to carry out policy objectives despite a Lao coalition government.

Decisions

Not recorded.

SECTION II
NSC MEETINGS

12 Aug 60 - 455th NSC Meeting

Participants

The President		) White House
Anderson	SecTreas	) Treasury
Stans	Director	) Bureau of the Eudget
McCone	Chairman	) AEC
Allen	Director	) USIA

Agenda

1. Geneva negotiations on nuclear testing.
2. U.S. policy toward horn of Africa.
3. U.S. policy toward Korea.
4. Laos.
 - (a) Noted President's approval of continued U.S. support for RLG and of preparation for logistic assistance to Laos upon request and demonstration by Laos of a capacity to use such assistance.
5. Launching of balloon satellite ECHO I.
6. U.S. policy toward Cuba.
7. U.S. policy toward the Congo.
8. U.S. policy toward the Dominican Republic.

18 Aug 60 - 456th NSC Meeting

Participants

President		) White House
Anderson	SecTreas	) Treasury
Stans	Director	) Bureau of the Budget
Mueller	SecComm	) Commerce
Allen	Director	) USIA

Agenda

1. National security implications of future developments regarding Africa.
2. U.S. policy toward Congo.
3. Significant world developments affecting U.S. security.
 - (a) Friction between the USSR and Communist China.
 - (b) Recent developments in the Soviet space and ballistic missiles program.
 - (c) The situation in Laos.

25 Aug 60 - 457th NSC Meeting

Participants

The President		) White House
Anderson	SecTreas	) Treasury
Stans	Director	) Bureau of the Budget
Rogers	Attorney General	) Justice
McCone	Chairman	) AEC
Allen	Director	) USIA

Agenda

1. Increased nuclear sharing with allies.
2. Significant world developments affecting U.S. security.
 - (a) Soviet space achievements.
 - (b) The apparent breakup of Mali Federation.
 - (c) Recent developments regarding the Congo, Laos, and Iran.

7 Sep 60 - 458th NSC Meeting

Participants

The President		) White House
Anderson	SecTreas	) Treasury
Staats	Acting Director	) Bureau of the Budget
Mueller	SecComm	) Commerce
McCone	Chairman	) AEC
Washburn	Acting Director	) USIA

Agenda

1. Significant world developments affecting U.S. security.
 - (a) Developments in the Soviet antiballistics missile program.
 - (b) Sino-Soviet relations.
 - (c) Khrushchev's plans to attend the forthcoming meeting of the UN General Assembly.
 - (d) Situations in Congo and Laos.
2. U.S. policy toward Congo.
3. Meeting of the organization of the American States.
4. Civilian Readiness Base.
5. U.S. import competition.

15 Sep 60 - 459th NSC Meeting

Participants

The President		) White House
Scribner	Acting SecTreas	) Treasury
Staats	Acting Director	) Bureau of the Budget
Rogers	Attorney General	) Justice
Washburn	Acting Director	) USIA
Douglas	DepSecDef	) OSD
Brucker	Secretary of Army	} DOD
Franke	Secretary of Navy	
Sharpe	Secretary of Air Force	
General Lemnitzer	Chief of Staff, Army	} JCS
Admiral Burke	Chief of Naval Operations	
General White	Chief of Staff, Air Force	
General Shoup	Commandant, Marine Corps	

Agenda

1. U.S. policy on continental defense.
2. Significant world developments affecting U.S. security.
 - (a) Congo, Laos, Jordan, Iran, and Berlin.
 - (b) Recent Soviet missile space activities.
 - (c) Certain developments in Chinese Communist air capabilities.

21 Sep 60 - 460th NSC Meeting

Participants

The President		) White House
Anderson	SecTreas	) Treasury
Stans	Director	) Bureau of the Budget
Mueller	SecComm	) Commerce
Bennett	Acting SecInt	) Interior
Killefer	Director, Vice Chairman	) Export-Import Bank of Washington
Burns	Chairman	) Council on Foreign Economic Polic
Rogers	Attorney General	) Justice
Washburn	Acting Director	) USIA

Agenda

1. Western European dependence on Middle East petroleum.
2. Petroleum development in Free World countries.
3. U.S. economic defense policy.
4. Significant world developments affecting U.S. security.
 - (a) Congo, Laos, South Vietnam, Syria, Jordan, and Berlin.
5. U.S. policy on defectors, escapees, and refugees from communist areas.

29 Sep 60 - 461st NSC Meeting

Participants

The President		) White House
Scribner	UnderSec Treas	) Treasury
Staats	Acting Director	) Bureau of the Budget
Allen	Director	) USIA

Agenda

1. Significant world developments affecting U.S. security.
 - (a) Laos, the Congo, and Cuba.
 - (b) Soviet and Chinese propaganda handling of the President's speech at the UN General Assembly.

- 2. U.S. policy toward Cuba.
- 3. U.S. policy toward Greece.
- 4. U.S. policy toward Turkey.
- 5. U.S. policy toward Spain.
- 6. U.S. overseas military bases.

6 Oct 60 - 462nd NSC Meeting

Participants

The President		) White House
Anderson	SecTreas	) Treasury
Staats	Acting Director	) Bureau of the Budget
McCone	Chairman	) AEC
Allen	Director	) USIA

Agenda

- 1. Strategic target planning staff.
- 2. U.S. and allied capabilities for limited military operations to 1 July 1962.
 - (a) Requested DOD and JCS to prepare report for early presentation to NSC commenting on possible deficiencies in the U.S. posture for limited military operations that are indicated, with particular reference to capabilities in S.E. Asia, air and sealift capabilities and mobilization base plans.
- 3. Significant world developments affecting U.S. security.
 - (a) Laos, the Congo, Algeria, Berlin, and Cuba.

13 Oct 60 - 463rd NSC Meeting

Participants

The President		) White House
Anderson	SecTreas	) Treasury
Rogers	Attorney General	) Justice
Stans	Director	) Bureau of the Budget
Hoover	Chairman	) Interdepartmenta Intelligence Conference and Interdepartmenta Committee on Internal Securit

Agenda

1. Status of national security program on 30 June 1960.
2. Significant world developments affecting U.S. security.
 - (a) Recent Soviet-missile space activities.
 - (b) Argentina, Laos, the Congo, and Japan.

20 Oct 60 - 464th NSC Meeting

Participants

Herter	SecState	) State
Scribner	UnderSecTreas	) Treasury
McCone	Chairman	) AEC
Stans	Director	) Bureau of the Budget
Fisk	DepASec, International Affairs	) Commerce
Washburn	Acting Director	) USIA

Agenda

1. Significant world developments affecting U.S. security.
 - (a) Soviet missile-space activity.
 - (b) Propaganda by the USSR regarding the Soviet man-in-space efforts.
 - (c) Recent developments with regard to Sino-Soviet dispute.
 - (d) Cuba, France, Argentina, Laos, and the Congo.
2. U.S. policy toward Cuba.
3. Future nuclear capabilities in the NATO area.
4. U.S. policy toward Laos.

31 Oct 60 - 465th NSC Meeting

Participants

The President		) White House
Anderson	SecTreas	) Treasury
Stans	Director	) Bureau of the Budget
McCone	Chairman	) AEC
Allen	Director	) USIA

Agenda

1. Long-range military assistance plans.
2. Significant world developments affecting U.S. security.
 - (a) Relations between Jordan and the
 - (b) The coup in El Salvador.
 - (c) Cuba, Venezuela, Laos, and the Congo.

7 Nov 60 - 466th NSC Meeting

Participants

The President		) White House
Anderson	SecTreas	) Treasury
Stans	Director	) Bureau of the Budget
Glennan	Administrator	) National Aeronautics and Space Administration
McCone	Chairman	) AEC
Allen	Director	) USIA

Agenda

1. Outer space programs under the auspicer of the Department of Defense.
2. U.S. policy toward Cuba.
3. Significant world developments affecting U.S. security.
 - (a) Sino-Soviet relations.
 - (b) Algeria.
 - (c) Laos and El Salvador.
4. U.S. policy toward Algeria:
5. U.S. policy toward Scandinavia (Denmark, Norway, and Sweden).

17 Nov 60 - 467th NSC Meeting

Participants

The President		) White House
Kistiakowsky	Scientific Adviser to the President)
Scribner	UnderSecTreas	) Treasury
Stans	Director	) Bureau of the Budget
McCone	Chairman	) AEC

Agenda

1. Significant world developments affecting U.S. security.
 - (a) Central and South America.
 - (b) Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, and Algeria.
2. NATO in the 1960's.

1 Dec 60 - 468th NSC Meeting

Participants

The President		) White House
Anderson	SecTreas	) Treasury
Stans	Director	) Bureau of the Budget
Glennan	Administrator	) National Aeronautics and Space Administration
Waterman	Director	) National Science Foundation
McCone	Chairman	) AEC
Washburn	Acting Director	) USIA

Agenda

1. International scientific activities.
2. NATO in the 1960's.
3. Significant world developments affecting U.S. security.
 - (a) Soviet missile space activity.
 - (b) Developments in the Congo and Laos.
 - (c) Moscow conference of Sino-Soviet leaders.
4. U.S. policy toward Germany.
5. U.S. civil aviation policy toward the Sino-Soviet Bloc.

8 Dec 60 - 469th NSC Meeting

Participants

The President		) White House
Scribner	UnderSecTreas	) Treasury
Stans	Director	) Bureau of the Budget

York	Director, Defense R&E	} OSD
McNeil	ASecDef (Comptroller)	
Douglas	DepSecDef	
Brucker	Secretary of Army	} DOD
Franke	Secretary of Navy	
Sharpe	Secretary of the Air Force	
General Lemnitzer	Chief of Staff, Army	} JCS
General White	Chief of Staff, Air Force	
Admiral Burke	CNO	
General Shoup	Commandant, Marine Corps	

Agenda

1. NATO in the 1960's.
2. Status of national security programs on 30 June 1960: the military program.
3. U.S. military programs for FY 62.
4. Significant world developments affecting U.S. security.
 - (a) Moscow conference of world communist leaders.
 - (b) Recent coup d'etat in Laos.
 - (c) Construction of a nuclear reactor in Israel.
5. U.S. policy toward Korea.

20 Dec 60 - 470th NSC Meeting

Participants

The President		} White House
Kistiakowsky	Scientific Adviser to the President	
Scribner	UnderSecTreas	} Treasury
Stans	Director	} Bureau of the Budget
Waterman	Director	
Glennan	Administrator	} National Aeronautics and Space Administratio.
Washburn	Acting Director		} USIA

Agenda

1. Outer space programs under the auspices of NASA.
2. Significant world developments affecting U.S. security.
 - (a) Congo.
 - (b) Ethiopia.
 - (c) Nepal.
 - (d) Possible developments regarding Berlin.
3. The situation in Laos.
4. U.S. policy toward Korea.
5. U.S. policy toward Italy.

29 Dec 60 - 472nd NSC Meeting

Participants

The President		) White House
Baird	UnderSec for Monetary Affairs	) Treasury
Stans	Director	) Bureau of the Budget
Rogers	Attorney General	) Justice
Belmont	Deputy Chairman	) Inter-departmental Committee on Internal Security

Agenda

1. Attack warning channels and procedures for civilians.
2. Significant world developments affecting U.S. security.
 - (a) Recent French atomic test.
 - (b) Developments regarding Cuba.
 - (c) Sino-Soviet Bloc promises of economic and military assistance to Free-World nations.
 - (d) The Belgian strike.
 - (e) Situation in the Congo.
 - (f) Situation in France-Algeria.
 - (g) Situation in Laos.
3. U.S. policy on Indonesia.
4. Evacuation and protection of U.S. citizens in danger areas abroad.

5 Jan 61 - 473rd NSC Meeting

Participants

The President		) White House
Anderson	SecTreas	) Treasury
Stans	Director	) Bureau of the Budget
McCone	Chairman	) AEC

Agenda

1. National security council intelligence directives.
2. U.S. policy on the Panama Canal and a future Inter-Oceanic Canal in Central America.
3. Significant world developments affecting U.S. security.
 - (a) U.S. break in diplomatic relations with Cuba.
 - (b) The Congo.
 - (c) Ethiopia.
 - (d) Algeria.
 - (e) Laos.
 - (f) The food supply in Communist China.
4. U.S. policy toward Cuba.
5. Possible deficiencies in the U.S. posture for limited military operations.
6. Missiles and military space programs.

9 Feb 61 - 476th NSC Meeting

Participants

The President		} White House
Dillon	SecTreas	
Bell	DirBurBudget	
Bundy	Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs	
Wiesner	Special Assistant for the President for Science and Technology	
General Clifton	Military Aide to the President	
Gilpatric	DepSecDef) OSD

Stevenson	U.S. Representative to the U.N.	}	State
Allen	DirDesignate, U.S. Info Office		
Herter	SecState		
Bowles	UnderSecState		
McGhee	Chairman of Policy Planning Council- Designate		
Nitze	ASD/ISA)	ISA
Bissell	DepDir for Operations)	CIA

Agenda

1. Significant world developments affecting U.S. security.
 - (a) Sputnik VII.
 - (b) Situation in the Congo.
 - (c) Situation in Republic of Korea.
 - (d) Proposed purchase of Cuban molasses by a U.S. firm.
2. Discussion of crisis areas.
 - (a) Laos - RLG military preparation; USSR nonreplial to British ICC suggestion; Laos Task Force recommendations to President; message explaining Neutral Nations Commission concept message re U.S. views on action by SEATO; message outlining approach to USSR re its cooperation; recommended statement of U.S. objectives; CINCPAC expenses; augmentation of Lao forces; provision of adequate airlift and air attack capability; and LTAG augmentation.
 - (b) The Congo.
 - (c) Cuba.
 - (d) Dominican Republic.
3. National security policies requiring urgent attention.

27 Apr 61 - 479th NSC Meeting

Participants

The President		}	White House
Sorensen	Special Counsel to the President		
Feldman	The Assistant to the Special Counsel to the President		
Eundy	Special Assistant to President on National Security Affairs		

Rostow	Special Assistant to the President) White House	
Wiesner	Scientific Adviser to the President		
General Taylor	Adviser to the President for paramilitary affairs		
General Clifton	President's Military Aide		
Rusk	SecState) State	
Bowles	UnderSecState		
Johnson	DepUnderSecState		
Ball	UnderSecState, Economic Affairs		
McGhee	Chairman, Policy Planning Council		
Durbrow	U.S. Ambassador to Vietnam		
Morgan	DepChairman Policy Planning Council		
Bohlen	Special Assistant to the SecState on Soviet Affairs		
McNamara	SecDef) OSD
Gilpatric	DepSecDef		
Stahr	Secretary of the Army) DOD	
Connally	Secretary of the Navy		
Zuckert	Secretary of the Air Force		
McGarr	Chief MAAG, Vietnam) JCS	
Col. Liles	Rep. USAF		
Admiral Burke	Acting CJCS		
General Decker	Chief of Staff, Army		
General White	Chief of Staff, Air Force) ISA	
General Shoup	The Commandant, Marine Corps		
Nitze	ASD/ISA		

Dulles	Director	}	CIA
Bissell	DepDir, OP		
Murrow	Director	)	USIA
Hoover	Director	)	FBI
Ellis	Director	}	Office of Civil and Defense Mobilization
Dillon	SecTreas		
Bell	Director		
Kennedy	Attorney General	)	Justice
Ribicoff	SecHealth, Education, and Welfare	}	Health, Education, and Welfare
Boggs	Acting Executive Sec		
Smith	Rep.	)	NSC

Agenda

1. The situation in Laos.
 - (a) Discussed the current situation in Laos (the situation if the Communist rebels would not observe an effective cease fire) and noted the President's view that the congressional leaders should be promptly briefed on the subject. A meeting with the congressional leaders was arranged for later in the morning.
2. U.S. policy in Vietnam.
3. Emergency freedom fund.
4. Privileged nature of NSC discussions.

29 Apr 61 - 480th NSC Meeting

Participants

The President		}	White House
Johnson	Vice-President		
Bundy	Special Assistant to the President on National Security Affairs		
Rostow	Special Assistant to the President		

Wiesner	Scientific Adviser to the President	} White House
Sorensen	Special Counsel to the President	
General Clifton	Military Aide to the President	
McNamara	SecDef	} OSD
Gilpatric	DepSecDef	
Boggs	Acting ExecSec	} NSC
Smith	Staff Member	
Rusk	SecState	} State
Young	Ambassador to Thailand	
Durbrow	Ambassador to Vietnam	
Stevenson	Ambassador to UN	
Bowles	UnderSecState	
Johnson	DepUSecState for Political Affairs	
McConaughy	ASecState, for Eastern Affairs	
Ball	USecState, Economic Affairs	
Bohlen	Special Assistant to the SecState on Soviet Affairs	
Steeves	DepASec, for Eastern Affairs	
Ellis	Director	} Office of Civil and Defense Mobilization
Dillon	SecTreas	} Treasury
Bell	Director	} Bureau of the Budget
Kennedy	Attorney General	} Justice
Siegenthaler	Staff Member	
Admiral Burke	Acting Chairman	} JCS
General Fontana	Deputy J-3 and Chief of Laos Battle Staff	

General Decker	Chief of Staff, Army	}	JCS
General White	Chief of Staff, Air Force		
General Shoup	Commandant, Marine Corps		
Nitze	ASD/ISA	)	ISA
General McGarr	Chief, U.S. Military Assistance Advisory Group, South Vietnam	}	DOD
Stahr	Secretary of Army		
Connally	Secretary of Navy		
Zuckert	Secretary of Air Force		
Dulles	Director	)	CIA
Murrow	Director	)	USIA

Agenda

1. U.S. policy with respect to Laos.
 - (a) Discussed situation with respect to Laos, including considerations involved in various alternative courses of action.
 - (b) Agreed to undertake certain military and diplomatic measures before next meeting of NSC, including consultations on progress of cease-fire negotiations, on International Control Commission and on possible action in U.N. and SEATO.
2. U.S. policy in Vietnam.

Actions

1. A decision on intervention in Laos deferred.
2. DOD to prepare plans to send brigade-size force into Thailand.
3. Consultations to be held with British and French re ICC activities.
4. Prepare for U.N. Security Council action.
5. Consult with British and French about possible SEATO actions.
6. The two diverse groups, one advocating intervention, one not, should meet, discuss issue, and submit report to President.

1 May 61 - 481st NSC Meeting

Participants

The President		
Johnson	Vice President	
Jenkins	Assistant to Vice Pres.	
Sorenson	Special Counsel to the President	
Bundy	Special Assistant to President on National Security Affairs	White House
Rostow	Special Assistant to the President	
Wiesner	Scientific Adviser to the President	
General Taylor	Adviser to the President for Paramilitary Affairs	
General Clifton	Military Aide to the President	
Dulles	Director	CIA
McNamara	SecDef	OSD
Gilpatrick	DepSecDef	
Rusk	SecState	
Murrow	Director, USIA	
Bowles	UnderSecState	
Johnson	DepUnderSecState for Political Affairs	State
McGhee	Chairman, Policy Planning Council	
Bohlen	Special Assistant to the SecState on Soviet Affairs	
Stevenson	Ambassador to U.N.	
Boggs	Acting Executive Sec.	NSC
Smith	Staff Member	
Admiral Burke	Acting CJCS	
General Fontana	Deputy, J-3 and Chief of Laos Battle Staff	
General Decker	Chief of Staff, Army	JCS
General White	Chief of Staff, Air Force	
General Shoup	Commandant, Marine Corps	

Nitze	ASD/ISA	) ISA
Dulles	Director	) CIA
Ellis	Director	) Office of Civil and Defense Mobilization
Dillon	SecTreas	) Treasury
Bell	Director	) Bureau of the Budget
Kennedy	Attorney General	) Justice
Stahr	Secretary of Army	) DOD
Zuckert	Secretary of Air Force	
Connally	Secretary of Navy	
Washburn	Acting Director	) USIA

Agenda

1. U.S. policy with respect to Laos.

- (a) Discussed current situation in Laos and agreed that no final decisions as to U.S. courses of action with respect to that situation should be taken at this meeting, pending further developments in the cease-fire negotiations.
- (b) Noted that President would be prepared, under certain conditions, to deploy U.S. forces to Thailand.
- (c) Agreed that JCS should prepare for presentation at next meeting of NSC, on appreciation of military implication of various measures that might be taken in Laos, Thailand, and other countries of S.E. Asia.

2 May 61 - 482nd NSC Meeting

Participants

The President) White House
Sorensen	Special Counsel to the President	
Bundy	Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs	
Wiesner	Scientific Adviser to the President	
Rostow	Special Assistant to the President	

General Taylor	Adviser to the President for Paramilitary Affairs)	
General Clifton	Military Aide to the President)	
Jenkins	Assistant to the Vice President	)	White House
McCloy	Adviser to the President on Disarmament)	
Fisher	Deputy Adviser to the President on Disarmament)	
Bohlen	Special Assistant to the SecState, for Soviet Affairs)	
Johnson	DepUnderSecState, for Political Affairs)	
Stevenson	Ambassador to the U.N.	)	State
Dean	U.S. Representative to the Geneva Conference on Discontinuance of Nuclear Weapons Testing)	
Gullion	DepDir, U.S. Disarmament Administration)	
Dillon	SecTreas	)	Treasury
Bell	Director	)	Bureau of th Budget
Kennedy	Attorney General	)	Justice
Gilpatric	DepSecDef	)	OSD
Dulles	Director	)	CIA
Murrow	Director	)	USIA
Nitze	ASD/ISA	)	ISA
Boggs	Acting Executive Sec.)	
Smith	Staff Member	)	NSC
Komer	Staff Member)	
Seaborg	Chairman	)	AEC
Stahr	Secretary of Army)	
Connally	Secretary of Navy	)	DOD
Zuckert	Secretary of Air Force)	

Admiral Burke	CJCS	} JCS
General Decker	Chief of Staff, Army	
General White	Chief of Staff, Air Force	
General Shoup	Commandant, Marine Corps	

Agenda

1. U.S. policy with respect to Laos.
 - (a) Noted and discussed briefing by the ACJCS on military implications of possible courses of action in Laos.
 - (b) Noted President's directive that contingency military planning for Southeast Asia should be continued in light of rapidly developing situation and should be discussed with United Kingdom.
2. The Geneva test ban negotiations.

5 May 61 - 483rd NSC Meeting

Participants

Johnson	Vice President	} White House
Jenkins	Assistant to the Vice President	
Bundy	Special Assistant to the President on National Security Affairs	
Rostow	Special Assistant to the President	
Sorensen	Special Counsel to the President	
Feldman	Assistant to the Special Counsel to the President	
Wiesner	Scientific Adviser to the President	
General Taylor	Adviser to the President for Paramilitary Affairs	
General Clifton	Military Aide to the President	
McNamara	SecDef		} OSD
Gilpatric	DepSecDef	

Rusk	SecState	}	State		
Achilles	Special Assistant to SecState				
Smith	Assistant to Achilles				
Murrow	Director, USIA				
Bowles	UnderSecState				
Johnson	DepUnderSecState for Political Affairs				
McGhee	Chairman, Policy Planning Council				
Bohlen	Special Assistant to the SecState for Soviet Affairs	}	Office of Health, Education, and Welfare		
Ribicoff	Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare				
Boggs	Acting ExecSec	}	NSC		
Smith	Staff Member				
Admiral Burke	Acting CJCS	)	JCS	
Nitze	ASD/ISA	)	ISA	
Dulles	Director	}	CIA		
Bissell	DepDir, OP				
Ellis	Director	}	Office of Civil and Defense Mobilization		
Fowler	ASecTreas)	Treasury
Bell	Director)	Bureau of the Budget
Kennedy	Attorney General	)	Justice	
Murrow	Director	)	USIA	

Agenda

1. U.S. policy toward Iran.
2. U.S. policy toward Korea.
3. U.S. policy toward Cuba.
4. U.S. policy toward the Dominican Republic and Haiti.

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5. U.S. policy toward British Guiana.

6. U.S. policy in mainland Southeast Asia.

- (a) Noted that efforts should be made to reassure Sarit and Diem that we are not abandoning Southeast Asia.
- (b) Noted President's view that Sarit could be told we are considering inclusion of U.S. troops in SEATO forces to be stationed in Thailand, timing to be dependent on developments during or after forthcoming 14-nation Geneva conference.
- (c) Noted that Secretaries of State and Defense would be sending recommendations to President promptly on U.S. training troops in Vietnam.

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APPENDIX "B"

ORIGINATORS OF OUTGOING JCS MESSAGES

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APPENDIX "B"

ORIGINATORS OF OUTGOING JCS MESSAGES

1. A tabulation of the "writers" and "releasers" of outgoing JCS messages concerned with the crisis in Laos, as contained in a J-3 loose-leaf file of such messages, has been compiled for the purpose of suggesting the degree of continuity of participation, and the association by echelon of acting officers with type of message sent.

2. No statistical analysis of these data has been attempted because its nature does not warrant it. It is incomplete, perhaps on a selective basis. The entries of names of "writers" and "releasers" is in some cases nominal rather than real. Sometimes these messages serve mainly as a formal record, or confirmation, of information or understandings already conveyed informally, in some cases no doubt by another person.

3. Nevertheless, this compilation gives an impression of diversity of participation that is in accord with other evidence bearing on the same subject.

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TABLE I

TABULATION OF OUTGOING JCS MESSAGES CONCERNED WITH CRISIS IN LAOS, OCTOBER 1960 TO MAY 1961, CONTAINED IN J-3 LOOK-LEAF FILE OF SUCH MESSAGES, TO SUGGEST ORIGIN WITHIN JCS

GROUP I	MESSAGE NO.	DATE	WRITER BY NAME	WRITER'S LOCATION WITHIN JCS	RELEASEE BY NAME	RELEASEE'S LOCATION IN JCS	ADDRESS	NATURE OF MESSAGE	NOTES
	983752 (S)	3 Oct 60	JCS	-	Cdr. F.E. Kinne	Secretariat	CINCPAC	Policy Guidance	Reflected interagency meeting and agreements
	983914 (TS)	4 Oct 60	Col. Oswald	JCSDD	J.W. Carter	D/JS	CINCPAC	Policy Guidance	Reflected JCS-DOD agreement
	983946 (TS)	6 Oct 60	JCS	-	Col. Chapla	Secretariat	CINCPAC	Request for info & comment on policy questions	
	983974 (TS)	7 Oct 60	-	-	Gen. Dean	J-3	CINCPAC	Request for info & advice in plans	
	984040 (TS)	8 Oct 60	Probably Adm. Wellings	-	Adm. Wellings	VD/JS	CINCPAC	Major policy guidance reflecting interagency understandings	
	985720 (TS)	11 Nov 60	Col. Echland	J-3	JCSDD for Gen. Gray	SAD-J5	CINCPAC	Operational suggestion	Possibly to be guarded against
	985733 (C)	14 Nov 60	Mr. Kearney	CJCS	Mr. Kearney for CJCS	CJCS	CINCPAC	Directed attention to BafTel	"From CJCS exclusive"
	986140 (TS)	21 Nov 60	JMR	JMR	JCSDD for Adm. Burke	AC/JCS	CINCPAC	Policy Guidance	Known to have been written in interagency conf.
	986279 (S)	23 Nov 60	J-3/JMR	JMR	JCSDD for Gen. Dean	J-3	CINCPAC	Policy Guidance	
	986439 (TS)	26 Nov 60	Col. Flournoy	J-3	JCSDD for Gen. Dean	J-3	CINCPAC	Request for comment []	
	986730 (TS)	2 Dec 60	JMR	JMR	JCSDD for Adm. Wellings	C/JS	CINCPAC	Policy Guidance	Reflected interagency meeting and agreements
	986852 (TS)	7 Dec 60	Col. Levy	JMR	-	-	ADMDD CINCPAC	Policy Guidance	Reflected interagency agreement []
	987102 (TS)	12 Dec 60	JCS	-	DO/Joint Secretariat	Secretariat	CINCPAC	Request for comment on policy proposal	
	987164 (TS)	14 Dec 60	Gen. Fontana	J-3	Gen. Fontana for D/JS	D/JS	CINCPAC	Request for info and policy suggestions	In anticipation interagency meeting
	987162 (TS)	14 Dec 60	JCS	-	Col. Chapla	Secretariat	CINCPAC	Proposal re cover story on readiness measure	Exclusive, Wheeler for Felt
	987200 (TS)	14 Dec 60	JCS	-	Col. Chapla	Secretariat	CINCPAC	Query: Do you need help in a particular matter?	
	987223 (TS)	14 Dec 60	JCS	-	DO/Joint Secretariat	Secretariat	CINCPAC	Report on interagency policy meeting	Exclusive for Adm. Felt
	987254 (TS)	15 Dec 60	Col. Flournoy	J-3	Gen. Fontana for D/JS	D/JS	CINCPAC	Policy Guidance	Possible future recon needs
	987431 (TS)	17 Dec 60	Gen. Wheeler	D/JS	Col. Mabry	JCSDD	CINCPAC	Policy Guidance	Reflected high-level policy guidance
	987432 (S)	17 Dec 60	Adm. Burke	AC/JCS	Col. Mabry	JCSDD	CINCPAC	Report on high-level policy meeting	Some specific operational proposals included
	987423 (TS)	16 Dec 60	JCS	-	Col. Chapla	Secretariat	ALL CINCS & Major Commands	Condition and prospect in Laos	C/JCS at HATO Meeting
	987702 (S)	23 Dec 60	JCS	-	A.J. Meyer for Col. Chapla	Secretariat	CINCPAC	Request for comment on proposal for FAL intelligence organization	
	987779 (TS)	24 Dec 60	Col. Levy	J-3	Col. Chapla	Secretariat	CINCPAC	Request for comment on proposals to strengthen	
	987781 (C)	24 Dec 60	Col. Flournoy	J-3	Col. Bachler	JCSDD	CINCPAC	Policy Guidance	Reflected interagency discussion
	987823 (TS)	27 Dec 60	Col. Levy	JMR	-	D/JS	CINCPAC	Advance notice of policy guidance to be sent by State Dept. channels reflecting interagency meeting	
	988064 (C)	3 Jan 61	JCS	-	Col. Chapla	Secretariat	CINCPAC	Notification of interagency approval of CINCPAC policy proposals	
	988094 (TS)	3 Jan 61	Col. Levy	J-3	Gen. Wheeler	D/JS	CINCPAC	Request for estimates of full requirements to clean out Laos	
	988180 (S)	5 Jan 61	Adm. Wellings	D/JS	Adm. Wellings	VD/JS	CINCPAC	Requesting comment on proposal to use Neo and Black Thai	
	988267 (TS)	6 Jan 61	JCS	-	Col. Chapla	Secretariat	CINCPAC	Approved CINCPAC proposal for FALCON air participation in Thai military review	
	988336 (TS)	7 Jan 61	JCS	-	Col. Burtmahaw	Secretariat	CINCPAC	Policy guidance reflecting decisions at high-level meeting	
	988337 (TS)	7 Jan 61	JCS	-	Col. Burtmahaw	Secretariat	CINCPAC	Additional policy guidance reflecting same meeting	
	988339 (TS)	7 Jan 61	Gen. Wheeler	D/JS	-	JCSDD	CINCPAC	Still more policy guidance reflecting same meeting	
	988690 (TS)	13 Jan 61	Col. Pollock	J-5	Col. Chapla	Secretariat	CINCPAC	Request for recommendations to improve program (timed for upcoming policy review)	
	988770 (TS)	16 Jan 61	Col. Butler	J-3	-	-	CINCPAC	[]	
	988936 (TS)	18 Jan 61	Col. Butler	J-3	Gen. Dean	J-3	CINCPAC	[]	

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TABLE I (CONT'D)

GROUP I (CONT'D)	MESSAGES CLEARLY CONCERNED WITH POLICY MESSAGE NO.	DATE	WRITER BY NAME	WRITER'S LOCATION VTHEIR JCS	RELEASEE BY NAME	RELEASEE'S LOCATION IN JCS	ADDRESSEE	NATURE OF MESSAGE	NOTES
	990154 (S)	3 Feb 61	Col. Butler	D/JS	Adm. Wellings	VD/JS	CINCPAC		
	989826 (S)	6 Feb 61	-	-	Col. Flickinger	D/JS	CINCPAC	Requests comments on proposed Naval force to Bangkok	
	990025 (S)	9 Feb 61	Col. Butler	D/JS	Gen. Dean	J-3	CINCPAC	Disapprove use of U.S. airlift to Vientiane	
	990386 (S)	15 Feb 61	Capt. LaJaunie	D/JS	Adm. Wellings	VD/JS	CINCPAC	States decision on financing of Laos military actions	Requests CINCPAC review for possible reduction costs
	991706 (S)	11 Mar 61	-	J-3	Adm. Wellings	VD/JS	CS/USAF & CINCPAC		
	991708 (S)	11 Mar 61	-	J-3	Mr. Kearney	CJCS	CINCPAC	Request report/opinion on SecDef action re assignment qualified military leaders to forward areas	
	991704 (TSX)	11 Mar 61	-	J-3	Adm. Wellings	VD/JS	CINCPAC		
	991705 (TSX)	11 Mar 61	Col. Butler	J-3	Adm. Wellings	VD/JS	CINCPAC		
	991727 (TSX)	13 Mar 61	Col. Butler	J-3	Mr. Kearney	CJCS	CINCPAC		Reviews policy and action to date
	991758 (S)	14 Mar 61	-	D/JS	Gen. Wheeler	D/JS	CINCPAC	States policy and authorization for airlift of supplies to Vientiane	
	991799 (TS)	14 Mar 61	-	D/JS	Gen. Wheeler	D/JS	CINCPAC	Authorizes T-6 assignment and their employment	
	992064 (TSX)	17 Mar 61	Col. Butler	J-3	Mr. Kearney	CJCS	CINCPAC	Policy on CAC of operations	Review of actions
	992240 (TS)	20 Mar 61	Col. Flournoy	J-3	Col. Levy for Gen. Dean	J-3	CINCPAC	Policy and decision on continued military action	
	992208 (TS)	21 Mar 61	Capt. Wilson	J-1	Gen. Wheeler	D/JS	CINCPAC	States FEQ and USAF staff manning policy	
	992330 (TSI)	21 Mar 61	Col. Brandt	J-3	Col. Belt for Gen. Dean	J-3	CINCPAC	Detailed review policy re continued U.S. action in Laos	
	992753 (TS)	27 Mar 61	Gen. Wheeler	D/JS	Gen. Wheeler	D/JS	CINCPAC	Confirms policy of DEF 992486 established at highest levels	
	992970 (TS)	28 Mar 61	-	-	Gen. Wheeler	D/JS	CINCPAC	Policy on USAF aircraft landings in Laos	
	992922 (TSI)	29 Mar 61	-	JCS	Lt. Col. Lemarie	D/JS	CINCPAC	Policy on discrete movements re US/SEAFO concern	
	992968 (TSX)	29 Mar 61	-	JCS	Lt. Col. Turner	D/JS	CINCPAC	Proposed plan troop movements - request comments	
	993187 (TSX)	31 Mar 61	-	JCS	Lt. Col. Turner	D/JS	ALL CINCS	SITSUM No. 3 - Reviews policies and concepts on future military actions	
	993199 (S)	31 Mar 61	-	JCS	Lt. Col. Lemarie	D/JS	CINCPAC	Lists recommended policies - actions of JCS to SecDef/request PAC comment	
	993316 (TS)	4 Apr 61	Gen. Wheeler	D/JS	Gen. Wheeler	D/JS	CINCPAC	Confirms State position re Phouai actions	
	993317 (TS)	4 Apr 61	-	D/JS	Gen. Wheeler	D/JS	CINCPAC	Confirms policy on restricting military aircraft in Laos	
	993538 (TS)	6 Apr 61	Gen. Fontana	J-3	Gen. Wheeler	D/JS	CINCPAC	Policy and authorization on use of jet recon aircraft in Laos	
	993889 (TS)	12 Apr 61	-	JCS	Lt. Col. Turner	D/JS	CINCPAC		
	993914 (TS)	12 Apr 61	-	J-3	Col. Jones	JCS	CINCPAC	Policy and direction on use of armed helicopters	
	994079 (TSX)	13 Apr 61	Mr. Carl	JCS	Gen. Fontana	J-3	CINCPAC	Announce policy on authority full use U.S. troops	
	994117 (TS)	14 Apr 61	Capt. Dye	J-4	Cdr. Jones	J-4	CINCPAC	Confirms MATS airlift decision/policy	
	994121 (TS)	14 Apr 61	Capt. LaJaunie	D/JS	Adm. Wellings	D/JS	CINCPAC	Confirms use of T-6 aircraft	
	994206 (TSI)	17 Apr 61	-	JCS	Lt. Col. Turner	D/JS	CINCPAC	Discuss policy on use of civilian guise of FEQ	
	994470 (S)	19 Apr 61	Col. Flournoy	J-3	Gen. Dean	J-3	CINCPAC	Confirms State policy on use military aircraft for royal funeral	
	994471 (TS)	19 Apr 61	Col. Flournoy	J-3	Gen. Dean	J-3	CINCPAC	Policy on military uniform wear by FEQ	
	994700 (TS)	23 Apr 61	Col. Flournoy	J-3	Gen. Dean	J-3	CINCPAC	Policy re use bombs/T-6 and recon aircraft	
	994850 (S)	26 Apr 61	-	JCS	Lt. Col. Lemarie	D/JS	CINCPAC & USCINCPAC	Outlines policy and directs development plan for MAP/Joint augmentation program	
	994935 (TSI)	26 Apr 61	-	JCS	Gen. Wheeler	D/JS	ALL CINCS	Outlines policy for increased readiness of military forces and their use	

TABLE I (CONT'D)

MESSAGES CLEARLY CONCERNED WITH POLICY MESSAGE NO.	DATE	WRITER BY NAME	WRITER'S LOCATION WITHIN JCS	RELEASER BY NAME	RELEASER'S LOCATION IN JCS	ADDRESSER	NATURE OF MESSAGE	NOTES
GROUP I (CONT'D)								
995035 (TS)	29 Apr 61	Col. Butler	J-3	Adm. Wellings	VD/JS	CINCPAC		
995131 (TS)	29 Apr 61	-	JCS	Gen. Wheeler	D/JS	CINCPAC	Policy - plans on brigade movement	
995140 (TS)	30 Apr 61	Col. Butler	J-3	Gen. Dean	J-3	CINCPAC	Disapproves use bombs/T-6 "by high level"	
995205 (TS)	2 May 61	Col. Levy	J-3	Gen. Wheeler	D/JS	CINCPAC	Policy - plan for MAAG-MAP support	
995267 (TSX)	2 May 61	Gen. Wheeler	D/JS	Lt. Col. Turner	D/JS	CINCPAC	Discuss JCS view on SEATO plans and policy	
995476 (TS)	5 May 61	-	D/JS	Lt. Col. Lesmaris	D/JS	CINCPAC		
995490 (S)	5 May 61	Gen. Fontana	J-3	Gen. Wheeler	D/JS	CINCPAC	Policy on press release re aircraft/MAP equipment	
995542 (TS)	6 May 61	Col. Levy	J-3	Gen. Wheeler	D/JS	CINCPAC	Discuss policy on troops 6. Vietnam - request opinion	
995561 (TS)	8 May 61	Col. Butler	J-3	Gen. Wheeler	D/JS	CINCPAC	Propose policy on troops Vietnam	
995753 (TS)	10 May 61	-	JCS	Col. Flickinger	D/JS	CINCPAC	States JCS policy on continuation and expansion of Laos action.	
GROUP II								
984486 (S)	18 Oct 60	Lt. Col. Casey	Pac. Hq. J-4	R/Adm. Parsons	J-4	CINCPAC	Request for info on shipments	
985162 (TS)	1 Nov 60	Lt. Cdr. Enyart	J-2	JCSDO for Gen. Gray	Dep. Dir. Ops	CINCPAC	Request for intelligence	
987127 (S)	13 Dec 60	JCS	-	Col. Chapla	Secretariat	CINCPAC	Classification earlier message	
987297 (TS)	15 Dec 60	Col. Millson	Pac. Hq. J-4	Col. Chapla	Secretariat	CINCPAC	Requested comment on logistic judgment	
987261 (TS)	15 Dec 60	Col. Mahen	J-2	Col. Piper	D/JS	CINCPAC	Requested comment on feasibility of recon proposal	
987264 (TS)	15 Dec 60	Col. Jones	J-3	Gen. Dean	J-3	CINCPAC	Directions on submission of SITREPS	
987426 (C)	17 Dec 60	JCS	-	Cdr. Mayer	Secretariat	CINCPAC	Request to procure secretarial goods	
987785 (C)	27 Dec 60	-	-	Col. Chapla	Secretariat	CINCPAC	Congratulations on success in Laos	
987800 (C)	27 Dec 60	Lt. Col. Casey	Pac. Hq. J-4	Cdr. Jones	J-4	CINCPAC	Notification that CINCPAC proposals are under study	
987876 (C)	28 Dec 60	Col. Lester	J-6	-	Secretariat	CINCPAC	Technical note on communications channels	
987982 (C)	30 Dec 60	-	JCS	Col. Chapla	Secretariat	CINCPAC	Classification of identity of earlier message	
987989 (C)	30 Dec 60	Capt. Labodney	J-2	-	Secretariat	CINCPAC	Inquiry concerning intelligence preparations for February SEATO meeting	
988036 (TS)	31 Dec 60	Col. Butler	J-3	Col. Liles	JCSDO	CS/AF	Directing assignment of C-130 sq. requested by CINCPAC	
988037 (TS)	31 Dec 60	Col. Butler	J-3	Gen. Fontana	J-3	ALL CINCS	Notification of DEFOON 2 for JTF-116 and supporting forces by CINCPAC	
988038 (TS)	31 Dec 60	Col. Levy	J-3	-	JCSDO	CS/AF	Assigning priority to movement of C-130's to CINCPAC	
988115 (S)	4 Jan 61	Col. Mellonby	J-2	-	Secretariat	Ch/PED/Laos	Request for photos of Ruman requirement	
988154 (TS)	4 Jan 61	Col. Flournoy	J-3	Capt. Spiker	JCSDO	CINCPAC	Conveying info re CINCPAC force deployments pertinent to SAC plans	
988286 (TS)	6 Jan 61	Col. Doolittle	J-4	Cdr. Jones	Secretariat	CINCPAC	Conveying info on planned use of MATS airlift for OPLAN 32-99	
988927 (C)	19 Jan 61	Col. Johnson	D/JS	Gen. Wheeler	D/JS	CINCPAC	Instructions in BIOP reporting requirements	
989121 (C)	23 Jan 61	Capt. Labodney	J-2	Lt. Pickell	Secretariat	CINCPAC	Request contribution for JCS contribution on SEA insurgency threat paper	
991527 (S)	8 Mar 61	Lt. Col. Wood	J-3	Gen. Fontana	J-3	PDO/Laos	Request Amb. opinion on proposed visit of 7th SFG Chaplain	
991709 (TS)	11 Mar 61	-	J-3	Adm. Wellings	VD/JS	CINCPAC	States JCS authority to augment PDO and JUSMAAG	
991823 (TS)	14 Mar 61	Col. Butler	J-3	Mr. Kearney	CJCS	CINCPAC		
992083 (TS)	17 Mar 61	Col. Levy	J-3	Col. Piper	D/JS	CINCPAC		
992164 (TSX)	18 Mar 61	Col. Butler	J-3	Gen. Wheeler	D/JS	CINCPAC		
992241 (TS)	20 Mar 61	Col. Flournoy	J-3	Col. Levy for Gen. Dean	J-3	CINCPAC		
992242 (TS)	20 Mar 61	Col. Levy	J-3	Col. Levy for Gen. Dean	J-3	CSAF & CINCPAC	Concurs on USAF aircraft assignment	
992185 (TSX)	20 Mar 61	Col. Butler	J-3	Mr. Kearney	CJCS	CINCPAC		
992226 (TSX)	21 Mar 61	Col. Butler	J-3	Mr. Kearney	CJCS	CINCPAC		
992354 (TSX)	22 Mar 61	Col. Butler	J-3	Mr. Kearney	CJCS	CINCPAC		
992473 (TSX)	23 Mar 61	Col. Butler	J-3	Mr. Kearney	CJCS	CINCPAC		

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TABLE I (CONT'D)

GROUP II (CONT'D)	MESSAGES CLEARLY CONCERNED WITH POLICY MESSAGE NO.	DATE	WRITER BY NAME	WRITER'S LOCATION WITHIN JCS	RELEASEE BY NAME	RELEASEE'S LOCATION IN JCS	ADDRESSEE	NATURE OF MESSAGE	NOTES
	992529 (TSX)	23 Mar 61	Col. Hansen	JWR	Gen. Wheeler	D/JS	CINCPAC	Disapproves visit request	
	992588 (TS)	23 Mar 61	Col. Lester	J-6	Lt. Col. Newbort	J-6	CINCPAC	Request urgent supply support ref. tel. conversation	
	992540 (TSX)	24 Mar 61	Gen. Wheeler	D/JS	Col. Piper for Gen. Wheeler	D/JS	CINCPAC	Personal comment on decision JCS	
	992559 (TSX)	24 Mar 61	Col. Butler	J-3	Mr. Kearney	CJCS	CINCPAC	Request USAF action	
	992584 (TS)	24 Mar 61	Col. Doolittle	J-4	Col. Jones	J-4	CS/AF	Request CBO action	
	992582 (TS)	24 Mar 61	Capt. Chestnut	J-4	Col. Jones	J-4	CBO	JCS SITSUM on actions to date	
	992673 (TSX)	25 Mar 61	JCS	J-2	Col. Flickinger	D/JS	ALL CINCS		
	992681 (TSX)	25 Mar 61	Col. Butler	J-3	Gen. Wheeler	D/JS	CINCPAC		
	992686 (TS)	26 Mar 61	Col. Flournoy	J-3	Gen. Dean	J-3	MAB-Key West	SITEREP	
	549699 (O)	26 Mar 61	Capt. Putnam	JWR	Capt. Putnam for Gen. Dean	J-3	MAB-Key West	Cancel SITEREP 992686	
	992705 (TSX)	27 Mar 61	Col. Butler	J-3	Mr. Kearney	CJCS	CINCPAC		
	992718 (TS)	27 Mar 61	Capt. Wilson	J-1	Col. Piper	D/JS	CINCPAC		
	992747 (C)	27 Mar 61	Capt. Tenney	J-2	Lt. Pickell	J-2	CINCPAC	Request add CINCPAC all intelligence reports	
	992758 (TSX)	28 Mar 61	Col. Butler	J-3	Mr. Kearney	CJCS	CINCPAC		
	993098 (TSX)	31 Mar 61	Col. Butler	J-3	Mr. Day for Mr. Kearney	CJCS	CINCPAC		
	993137 (TS)	31 Mar 61	Col. Lester	J-6	Caldwell for Newbort	J-6	CINCPAC		
	993186 (TS)	31 Mar 61	JCS	-	Lt. Col. Turner	-	CINCPAC	Request views on U.K. contribution/combined effort	
	993214 (TS)	1 Apr 61	Col. Flournoy	J-3	Capt. Putnam	J-3	CINCPAC	Approve CINCPAC request	
	993224 (TSX)	1 Apr 61	Col. Butler	J-3	Capt. Putnam	CJCS	CINCPAC		
	993269 (TSX)	3 Apr 61	Col. Butler	J-3	Mr. Kearney	CJCS	CINCPAC		
	993327 (C)	4 Apr 61	Col. Jones	J-3	Gen. Wheeler	D/JS	CINCPAC	Request info on reported parachute drops by USAR aircraft	
	993343 (TSX)	4 Apr 61	Col. Butler	J-3	Mr. Kearney	CJCS	CINCPAC		
	993426 (TSX)	5 Apr 61	Col. Butler	J-3	Mr. Kearney	CJCS	CINCPAC		
	993614 (TSX)	7 Apr 61	Col. Butler	J-3	Mr. Kearney	CJCS	CINCPAC		
	993700 (S)	8 Apr 61	-	D/JS	Gen. Wheeler	D/JS	CINCPAC	Directs Army Signal Company to Okinawa	
	993701 (S)	8 Apr 61	-	D/JS	Gen. Wheeler	D/JS	CSA	Authorizes Army Signal Company transfer	
	993708 (TSX)	8 Apr 61	Col. Butler	J-3	Col. Bone	J-3	CINCPAC		
	993714 (TSX)	10 Apr 61	Col. Butler	J-3	Mr. Kearney	CJCS	CINCPAC		
	993804 (TSX)	11 Apr 61	Col. Butler	J-3	Col. Castro	-	CINCPAC		
	993905 (TSX)	12 Apr 61	Col. Butler	J-3	Mr. Kearney	CJCS	CINCPAC		
	993973 (TS)	12 Apr 61	Capt. LaJamie	JCS	Col. Chapla	D/JS	CINCPAC	Verifies previous JCS message	
	994009 (TS)	13 Apr 61	Col. Gould	J-2	Lt. Pickell	J-2	CINCPAC	Request participants SEATO Conference	
	994087 (TSX)	14 Apr 61	Col. Butler	J-3	Mr. Kearney	CJCS	CINCPAC		
	994116 (TS)	14 Apr 61	Gen. Fontana	J-3	Adm. Wellings	VD/JS	CINCPAC	Confirms JCS support of ambassador request	
	994118 (TS)	14 Apr 61	Gen. Fontana	J-3	Adm. Wellings	VD/JS	CINCPAC	Request views on used LTAG team	
	994204 (TSX)	15 Apr 61	Col. Butler	J-3	Gen. Dean	J-3	CINCPAC		
	994307 (TSX)	18 Apr 61	Col. Butler	J-3	Mr. Kearney	CJCS	CINCPAC		
	994381 (TSX)	19 Apr 61	Col. Butler	J-3	Mr. Kearney	CJCS	CINCPAC		
	994421 (TS)	19 Apr 61	-	JCS	Lt. Col. Turner	D/JS	CINCPAC	Report State message on MAP Force and funding	
	994491 (S)	19 Apr 61	Col. Lester	J-6	Col. Caldwell	J-6	CINCPAC	Confirms communication channelization	
	994500 (TSX)	20 Apr 61	Col. Butler	J-3	Mr. Kearney	CJCS	CINCPAC		
	994582 (TS)	21 Apr 61	Col. Talbott	CJCS	Col. Talbott	CJCS	CINCPAC		
	994593 (TSX)	21 Apr 61	Col. Butler	J-3	Mr. Kearney	CJCS	CINCPAC		
	994826 (S)	25 Apr 61	Col. Scott	J-4	Adm. Wellings	VD/JS	CINCPAC		
	994900 (TS)	27 Apr 61	Gen. Wheeler	D/JS	Gen. Wheeler	D/JS	CINCPAC		
	994901 (TSX)	27 Apr 61	-	D/JS	Gen. Wheeler	D/JS	CINCPAC		
	995019 (TS)	27 Apr 61	Col. Doolittle	J-4	Capt. Jones	J-4	CINCPAC	Follow-up on conference in progress	Theatre airlift IAW AWP OPLAN 5/61

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TABLE I (CONT'D)

MESSAGES CLEARLY CONCERNED WITH POLICY	DATE	WRITER BY NAME	WRITER'S LOCATION WITHIN JCS	RELEASEE BY NAME	RELEASEE'S LOCATION IN JCS	ADDRESSEE	NATURE OF MESSAGE	NOTES
GROUP II (CONT'D)								
995023 (S)	28 Apr 61	Col. Scott	J-4	Capt. Jones	J-4	CINCPAC	Requests info on logistic air support	
995070 (S)	28 Apr 61	Col. Gillette	J-4	Capt. Jones	J-4	CINCPAC	Guidance on contract funding	
995133 (TS)	29 Apr 61	Col. Flournoy	J-3	Gen. Dean	J-3	CINCPAC	Concur on FORT EXPRESS plan	
995134 (TS)	29 Apr 61	Col. Flournoy	J-3	Gen. Dean	J-3	CINCPAC	Request recommendations on augmentation	
995138 (C)	30 Apr 61	Col. Jones	JWR	Gen. Fontana	J-3	CINCPAC	Administrative message	
995287 (TS)	3 May 61	Col. Butler	J-3	Gen. Wheeler	D/JS	CINCPAC	Approves decision request	
995478 (C)	5 May 61	-	JCS	Lt. Col. Lemarie	D/JS	CINCPAC	Administrative message	
99549 (S)	5 May 61	Col. Flournoy	J-3	Gen. Wheeler	D/JS	CINCPAC		
995546 (TS)	6 May 61	Col. Butler	J-3	Gen. Dean	J-3	CINCPAC	Release airlift to PACAF	

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