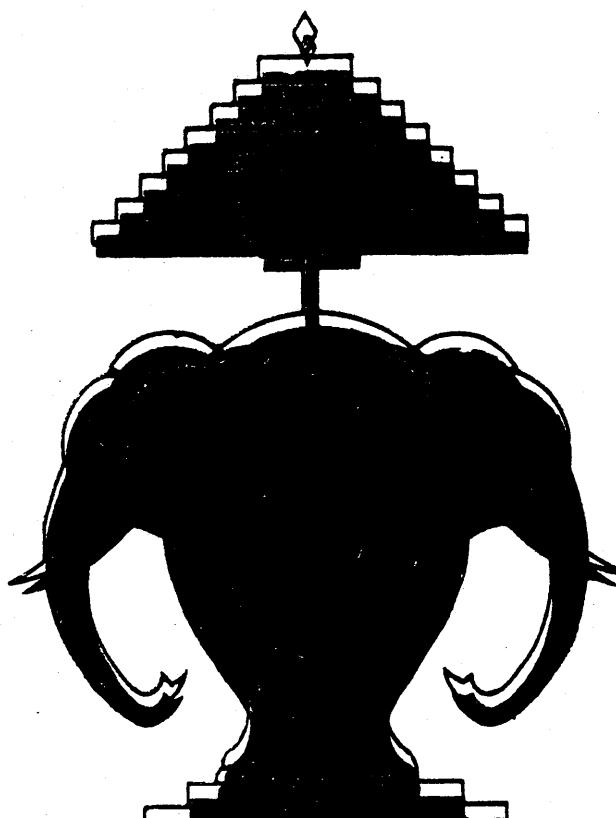


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~~SECRET~~ SUMMARY OF CINCPAC PARTICIPATION IN EVENTS IN LAOS



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PART II

SUMMARY OF CINCPAC PARTICIPATION IN EVENTS
IN LAOS

INTRODUCTION

All CINCPAC activities in Laos during the succeeding crises in that country have been entangled with the internal affairs of a people who often seemed at once indifferent and inscrutable. Although this account is principally concerned with CINCPAC's efforts to improve the military and economic position of Laos, it necessarily includes background information and describes some State Department activities in order to make the story more understandable.

CHAPTER I

THE BEGINNING OF U.S. SUPPORT OF THE ROYAL LAOTIAN
GOVERNMENT

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The loosely joined tribes and petty principalities that in 1961 made up the Kingdom of Laos had become accustomed to invading conquerors long before France gained a dominant position in 1893, and established its rule of an area that included Laos, Vietnam, and Cambodia and was then known as French Indochina.¹ Under the French, the Kingdom of Luang Prabang in the north was recognized as a protectorate; the southern part of Laos was ruled as the colony of Bassac. The French remained until driven out by the Japanese during World War II. Toward the end of that war, when the Japanese realized their defeat was imminent, they persuaded the King of Luang Prabang, French educated

1. This background information is taken from the following sources: "The Situation in Laos," Department of State Pamphlet, 1959; "Briefing Notes on the Royal Kingdom of Laos," U.S. Information Service, Vientiane, Laos; "Conflict in Indo-China & International Repercussions, A Documentary History, 1945-1955," Allen B. Cole et al, Cornell University Press, 1956; and "Country Study and Station Report," The Military Assistance Institute of the Department of Defense, 1959. All sources are unclassified.

King Sisavang Vong, to declare Lao independence. In September 1945, the then 60-year-old ruler proclaimed himself king of an independent Laos that included both the northern and southern areas. This newly established kingdom became the descendent of an ancient State that possessed a written record since the 14th century when it was known as the "Land of the Million Elephants."

Geography

As established in 1945, Laos was a landlocked country 660 miles long and from 80 to 300 miles wide, with an area of 90,000 square miles, or less than the state of Oregon. It shared an ill-defined, nearly 1000-mile border with Red China and North Vietnam in addition to common frontiers with South Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand and Burma. The Mekong River formed most of the border with Thailand and Burma.

The northern area of Laos is steeply mountainous with crests up to 6,500 feet, separated by ravines and swift streams. In this almost inaccessible terrain there were only small cultivated areas. The major settlements in the north were located in the small basins along the streams.

The narrow southern portion of Laos is mountainous along the eastern border, with a valley floor adjoining the Mekong River and plateaus that are generally 1,000 to 3,500 feet above the sea.

The long border of Laos, the difficult mountainous regions, many of which were covered with jungle growth, and the lack of all types of communication facilities contributed to the military and economic problems of the country.

Population

Of the population, estimated to be between one and a half and two million, approximately half was from the politically dominant ethnic group of Lao-Thai people. The balance consisted of several minority groups or tribes, many of which were geographically culturally isolated.

Laos After 1945

A month after its creation, the newly established Kingdom of Laos collapsed under pressure from a nationalist movement that objected to the King's alleged loyalty to France. A provisional government ruled until it was driven into exile by French troops when they returned to Laos in May 1946.

The leaders of the provisional government established in Thailand a government in exile. The French quickly recognized the principle of a united Laos under King Sisavang to whom they gave considerable administrative authority. The following year, 1947, a Lao constitution establishing representative government was adopted. Upon the ratification of a France-Lao treaty on 20 September 1949 Laos became an independent state within the French Union and most of the leaders of the provisional government who had been displaced by the French in 1946 now returned from their exile in Thailand to support King Sisavang's government. The status of the new Kingdom was more clearly defined in a 1953 Treaty of Friendship and Association between the Kingdom of Laos and the French Republic, by which France recognized Laos as an independent and sovereign state, reserving only certain supervisory rights relating to military and economic matters. Most free nations extended diplomatic recognition to Laos, and it became a member of the United Nations in 1955.

Origin of Communist Opposition in Laos

When leaders of the exiled government of Laos returned from Thailand in 1949, a few advocates of stronger ties with Vietnam Communists in their opposition to the French split to form an independent movement. The force behind this swing to the left was Prince Souphanouvong. Born in 1912 and educated in France and Hanoi where he married a Vietnamese girl, Souphanouvong claimed to be the son of the Viceroy of the Kingdom of Luang Prabang, a claim the Viceroy denied. In 1950 Souphanouvong founded the Pathet Lao Resistance Movement in North Vietnam with the support of the Vietnamese Communists, who in turn were receiving open support by this time from

the Chinese Communists. Despite its appeal as an essentially nationalist movement, it was evident from its beginning that the Pathet Lao movement was under communist control. This dominant role was revealed by a Vietnamese Communist document in 1951 that claimed the right of the Vietnamese Party to supervise the activities of its brother parties in Cambodia and Laos.

Despite optimistic claims, the Pathet Lao government existed primarily in the imagination of the Vietnamese Communist radio announcers from the time of its organization until 1953, although during this time Souphanouvong did control a few guerrillas, some discontented mountain tribesmen, and Vietnamese Communist cadres through whom he controlled a few sparsely populated pockets near the Chinese and Vietnamese borders.

In April 1953, armed forces of the Vietnamese Communists launched the first of three full-scale invasions of northern and central Laos, using regular units of the Viet Minh Communist Army as the bulk of the force. French Union Forces checked the invasion, and by the middle of the year had pushed the communists back to northern Laos, except for a few guerrilla pockets in the south. The same forces launched a second invasion in December 1953 and during Christmas week cut Laos and Vietnam in two by driving a wedge across to Thakhak on the Mekong. A third one, this time apparently aimed at the capital city of Luang Prabang, was launched in February 1954. Prince Souphanouvong returned to Laos during the first of these invasions, bringing with him a few followers and a claim that the "resistance government" that he established in the town of Sam Neua was "the legal representative government of Laos." Although these invasions had been checked by the end of February 1954, Souphanouvong remained in control of the two northern provinces of Sam Neua and Phong Saly which have remained as the traditional stronghold of Souphanouvong since then.

The Geneva Conference of 1954

In 1954 there was an intermission in communist guerrilla activity in Laos while representatives of the United States, France, Laos,

Cambodia, non-communist Vietnam, Communist Vietnam, and Communist China attended a Geneva conference at which the United Kingdom and the USSR acted as co-chairmen. The purpose of the conference was to end the hostilities that had existed in Indochina since 1946 between the French forces and Viet Minh communist forces. Communist representatives, although persistent, failed in attempts to include Pathet Lao representatives on the list of conferees.

The more important agreements that concerned Laos were contained in the Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities in Laos.¹ These agreements provided that:

1. As soon as the cease-fire proclamation became effective, the introduction into Laos of reinforcements or military personnel from outside of Laos would be prohibited. Specifically mentioned was the right of the French to leave not more than 1,500 officers and NCOs to train the Laotian National Army in the territory of Laos.
2. Establishment of new military bases was prohibited throughout the territory of Laos.
3. France retained the right to maintain in Laos not more than 3,500 men required for the maintenance of two French military establishments, one at Seno and the second in the Mekong valley.
4. The introduction into Laos of armaments, munitions and other military equipment of all kinds was prohibited, with the exception of a specified quantity necessary for the defense of Laos.
5. Pending a political settlement, the fighting units of the Pathet Lao would move into the Provinces of Phong Saly and Sam Neua, except for any military personnel who wished to be demobilized where they were.
6. The establishment of an International Commission for Supervision and Control (ICC) in Laos to control and supervise the

1. This document was signed "For the Commander in Chief of the fighting units of Pathet Lao" as well as on behalf of the communist Army of Vietnam by TaQuang Buu, DRV Vice Minister of National Defense, and by a French military representative on behalf of the French Union forces which represented the interests of Laos.

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cease-fire agreements while the Royal Lao Government (RLG) and Pathet Lao (PL) negotiated at peaceful integration of the Pathet Lao with the Lao nation. The ICC was composed of representatives from Canada, Poland and India, with the Indian representatives acting as chairman of the group.

By separate declarations, the Royal Government of Laos stated its resolve to integrate all citizens into its national community and to guarantee to them the rights and freedoms provided by the constitution, to permit all Laotian citizens to participate in its general elections, and to provide special representation in the administration of the provinces of Phong Saly and Sam Neua between the cessation of hostilities and the general elections. The RLG also resolved not to pursue an aggressive policy, not to join with other States in any agreement to form a military alliance not in conformity with the principles of the UN or the Geneva Agreements just reached or, unless its security was threatened, to permit the establishment of bases on Laotian territory for military forces of foreign powers.

Finally, each of the conferees except the U. S. declared that it would respect the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam, and would refrain from any interference in their internal affairs. Although the U.S. did not join in this declaration, it declared unilaterally that it would not disturb the Geneva Agreements by threat or the use of force, and that it would view with grave concern any renewal of aggression in violation of the Agreements.

Administering the Geneva Accords

The Geneva Convention adjourned late in July, 1954. The cessation of hostilities became effective on 6 August. On 8 August the Pathet Lao indicated that it would refuse to permit the RLG to administer the two northern provinces already under its control. Disregarding the provisions of the Agreement, Souphanouvong claimed on 20 November that "The Pathet Lao forces . . . have proclaimed the power of the Pathet Lao in the two provinces of Sam Neua and Phong Saly . . ." and although admitting that they had been placed under the authority of the Royal Government, the communists in Hanoi and the Pathet Lao indicated that

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they would not tolerate encroachments upon the territory of these two provinces. Disregarding the "agreements" signed at Geneva, the Pathet Lao proceeded to strengthen its position and widen its administration of the two provinces it claimed. In this effort, Souphanouvong had the advice and support of the Vietnam Communists, exercised through a central coordinating mission located near the PL Sam Neua headquarters. The mission, in turn was guided by a special staff located just across the border in Vietnam. Guidance to Pathet Lao leadership was furnished through Vietnamese "advisors" who worked with the PL at both staff and unit level, and in North Vietnam at special training facilities operated for Pathet Lao military personnel.

As provided by the Geneva Agreements, the ICC attempted to carry out its obligations by instigating the RLG-PL discussions to reach a political settlement as the basis for full integration of the Pathet Lao into the RLG. The first meetings, commenced in January 1955, were broken off in June after making scant progress toward a settlement. After further prodding by the ICC members, the talks were resumed at Rangoon during November of the same year, again with little indication that the PL intended to permit the RLG to exercise its authority in the northern provinces.

Attempts on the part of the three-member ICC to conduct investigations of military activities in Sam Neua and Phong Saly provinces encountered similar delays and difficulties, originated by either the Pathet Lao or by the Polish member of the commission who was consistently hostile toward the RLG and sympathetic towards the PL. Freedom of movement in PL territory was restricted by PL authorities with the explanation that some areas were unsafe and that the commission members could not enter these areas since the Pathet Lao were responsible for their safety and did not wish to have any untoward incidents occur. When the ICC presented complaints to the PL, it was told that unless the PL authorities had advance information concerning the areas to be investigated it was impossible to prevent difficulties.

In addition to stalling the negotiations and restricting effectively the work of the ICC in the area under its control, the PL forces

repeatedly violated the cease-fire terms by raiding small outposts of the RLG.

After nearly 18 months of failure, the ICC published a resolution (with the Polish member abstaining) in which the commission cited the PL violations of the Geneva settlement and blamed the PL for the ICC's failure.

RLG Attempts at Integration

As a result of the Geneva Conference, the RLG was obligated only to integrate all citizens into the national community, and to provide PL representation in the Royal administration of Sam Neua and Phong Saly provinces. The final declaration at Geneva also noted that the next general elections in Laos were scheduled for 1955.

In carrying out these provisions, the RLG scheduled elections for all of Laos for 28 August 1955. Although open to the PL and guaranteed to be free elections by secret ballot, the Pathet Lao refused to participate. Accordingly, in the hope of getting PL agreement and participation in the national elections, the government postponed the elections until 25 December 1955. This time the PL refused to participate until drastic changes were made in the electoral laws, a demand to which the ICC did not agree. The election was held as scheduled and, on 21 March 1956, a new government led by Prince Souvanna Phouma was invested by the National Assembly.

Prince Souvanna, then 55, was the son of a Viceroy of the Kingdom of Luang Prabang, and a half brother of the Red Prince Souphanouvong, whom he accepted as such. Souvanna had been a member of the provisional government-in-exile and had remained in Thailand until 1949 when he returned to Laos to join the cabinet of Phoui Sananikone as the Minister of Public Works. He served as Prime Minister from 1953 until 1955 when he was replaced by Katay D. Sasorith, who, with Souvanna, founded the National Progressive Party. An advocate of solving the problems plaguing Laos through compromise and negotiation with the PL, Souvanna initiated informal correspondence with his half brother and, on 31 July 1956, Souphanouvong went to Vientiane to

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negotiate a solution. Although none of the Geneva Agreements required the formation of a coalition government or other RLG concessions, Souvanna agreed to include the Pathet Lao in a "Government of National Union" and, among other major concessions, to recognize the Pathet Lao political organization, the Neo Lao Hak Xat (NLHX). Supplementary elections were to be held later to select additional deputies to expand the National Assembly from 39 to 59.

Having gained these significant concessions from the RLG, the Pathet Lao finally joined in forming a coalition cabinet that included PL members Prince Souphanouvong as Minister of Plans, Reconstruction and Urbanism, and Phoumi Vongvichit as Minister of Religion and Fine Arts. The new cabinet was invested by the National Assembly of Laos on November 19, 1957. In filling the newly created assembly seats, the RLG yielded to NLHX demands that the supplementary elections be delayed until May 1958. Although the RLG won a solid majority, the NLHX and another Communist controlled party won 13 of the 20 newly created seats, partly because the pro-government vote was split among several candidates. After the election, the National Assembly contained 38 non-communist deputies, and 21 members who supported communist backed organizations.

For its part, the RLG proceeded to carry out terms of two additional concessions made to the PL, one by which the RLG offered to appoint PL representatives to half of the civil offices at all levels in the provinces of Phong Saly and Sam Neua, and another by which Souvanna offered to integrate the Pathet Lao armed forces into the RLG Army as a prerequisite to the general settlement in Laos. Accordingly, after more than three years of illegal control, the Pathet Lao agreed to recognize by the end of 1957, the authority of the RLG over Phong Saly and Sam Neua. In fulfilling its part of the agreement, the RLG appointed PL representatives to half of the civil positions, and proceeded to integrate the PL fighting forces with the RLG Army.

Written agreements between Souvanna and Souphanouvong provided that the National Army would take over all personnel and equipment of the PL fighting units, but further provided that, because of budgetary

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limitations, only 1,500 of all ranks would be integrated into the RLG Army. On 18 February 1958, 1,501 members of PL forces were integrated into the Royal Lao Army during a special ceremony at Plaines des Jarres. In addition, the Lao Government processed 4,698 PL military personnel for release. It is significant to note that although 6,199 military personnel were processed, they gave up only 4,773 weapons, including only 23 machine guns, 65 mortars, 40 carbines, 10 automatic rifles, and about 2,500 rifles. When the Geneva Agreements were signed in 1954, the PL strength was estimated at less than 1,000, and although the personnel could have been recruited without foreign assistance, the increase in weapons could have been accomplished only by violating the Agreements.

The integration of military units appeared to complete the solutions sought by the Geneva Agreements and the work of the ICC. After an exchange of notes observing this fact, the International Commission for Supervision and Control in Laos adjourned sine die on 19 July 1958, and the members left Laos.

Although the ICC reported that the internal affairs in Laos were established and aligned in the manner prescribed by the Geneva Agreements, and although the Prime Minister of Laos and his half brother appeared to have accepted the compromises and the conditions necessary to end the discord within Laos, it soon became apparent that agreement was only superficial and that neither the RLG nor the PL had in fact altered its fundamental objective. Despite the fact that the NLHX was a legal political party that had achieved surprising success during the May 1958 elections, it continued to carry out subversive work. As Minister of Planning and Reconstruction, Souphanouvong had access to information on the aid being furnished to Laos by the United States Operations Mission (USOM), and his interest seemed to center more on discrediting the U.S. assistance than on using it profitably. His communist associate, the newly appointed Minister of Religion and Fine Arts, used his position to disseminate propaganda by using the religious structure and the respected Buddhist monks.

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Increased Opposition to Communism

The concessions granted to the Pathet Lao, although acceptable to Souvanna, had not met with the approval of members of the two major moderate political parties who were not concerned with the penetration of communists in the Royal Lao Government. Leaders of the moderate parties were also concerned because of their own lack of unity that had contributed to communist success during the May 1958 supplementary elections. Scarcely more than a month after the elections, the two moderate parties merged into a new party called the Rally of the Lao People, a party dedicated to the oposition of communism in Laos. A few days later, on 15 June 1958, a group of young civic and business leaders formed a Committee for the Defense of the National Interests, which bluntly stated its opposition to the introduction of the communist ideology into the Kingdom, and its desire to clean "the political climate characterized by personal rivalries which prejudice national interests."

The election of the deputies in the supplementary elections of May 1958 was validated by the National Assembly on 22 July. In accordance with the Lao constitutional processes, Prime Minister Souvanna's cabinet submitted its resignation on the same day. In accepting the resignation, the Crown Prince noted that Souvanna's government had been invested for the specific purpose of integrating the Pathet Lao into the Royal Government, which had been accomplished. The newly expanded National Assembly formed a new cabinet headed by Phoui Sananikone. Invested on 18 August 1958 according to constitutional procedures, the new cabinet included no one with Pathet Lao affiliation. The new prime minister announced the policy of his government would be to oppose the threat of communism, preserve the national independence and unity by combatting subversion, preserve the constitutional monarchy, eliminate graft and corruption, and to observe a neutral policy in accordance with the principles of the United Nations Charter.

As the Royal Lao Government grew firmer in its opposition to communist intervention, the Communist Bloc reacted by increasing its pressure to weaken and intimidate the RLG. On 14 December 1958, North Vietnamese troops crossed the border into southeastern Laos

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and established several military positions in the Savannakhet province, interference that brought strong protests from Prime Minister Phoui.

Two other events of significance occurred early in 1959. The Lao Government, because of a tottering financial structure, had been forced during the fall of 1958 into pushing through a monetary reform that was unpopular and that threatened the new government under Phoui Sananikone. To avoid a crisis that could have precipitated intervention from North Vietnam, the National Assembly, on 14 January 1959, granted to Prime Minister Phoui special powers to rule without parliament for a one-year period. The second event occurred on 11 February when Phoui stated to the press that his government considered that it had fulfilled all of its obligations under the Geneva Agreements and that as a member of the United Nations, it recognized arbitration originating only from that body, a declaration that the RLG no longer recognized the Geneva Agreements. Both of these actions were criticized by communists.

With Souvanna and Souphanouvong out of the government, the unsteady integration of PL troops into the Royal Lao Army began to collapse. After the February 1958 ceremony to observe the official integration, the 1,501 former PL troops had been organized into two battalions, and although the distribution of officer and NCO positions was delayed, a 1957 agreement provided that PL forces would provide a proportionate share -- 41 officers and 400 NCOs. After the integration ceremony, PL representatives demanded 112 officer positions. To reach a settlement, the Lao Army finally agreed to this figure but on 11 May 1959, the date set to award the ranks to members of the two battalions, the PL leaders refused to participate and ordered their men to arm and deploy. Faced with this insubordination, but because many of the former PL soldiers wished to accept, the Lao Army offered the former PL soldiers the choice of submitting, resigning, or being declared rebels. One battalion submitted on 17 May, the other fled camp on the 18th, and embarrassed the Royal Lao Army by escaping and going north to the Vietnamese border. After this act of rebellion,

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communist bloc propaganda described conditions of "civil war" and terrorist raids within Laos, threatened intervention, and appealed for re-establishment of the adjourned ICC.

Resumption of Combat

The RLG coalition with the communists ended abruptly on 18 July 1959 when a communist controlled force overran a Lao outpost in the Sam Neua province. Although fighting was light, the action was accompanied by vigorous and aggressive propaganda from Hanoi, Peiping and Moscow. The RLG reacted to the outbreak of warfare by arresting 10 NLHX leaders. Among these was Prince Souphanouvong. The RLG also declared a state of emergency in several provinces, and presented to the UN a complaint based upon interference and intervention from North Vietnam.

Renewal of Pathet Lao attacks, and the tempo and temper of the communist propaganda program were obviously designed to intimidate the Royal Lao Government, to discourage intervention by the United Nations, and to discourage the United States in its undertaking to furnish military and economic aid to Laos.

U. S. Assistance to Laos

United States support to the Royal Laotian Government had its roots in the Agreement for Mutual Defense Assistance in Indochina - the "Pentalateral Agreement" - signed at Saigon on 23 December 1950 by the U. S., France, Laos, Vietnam, and Cambodia. Under this agreement the United States provided extensive military and financial support to France during its war against the communists in Indochina, which ended with the Geneva Conference of 1954.

The United States and Laos entered into an Economic Cooperation Agreement on 9 September 1951 in order "to further sound economic conditions and stable international economic relationships" necessary to maintain "individual liberty, free institutions, and independence." These agreements were later expanded in notes exchanged with Laos on 6 and 8 July 1955.

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The U. S. program of economic aid in Laos was administered by the United States Operations Mission (USOM), staffed by the International Cooperation Administration and operating under the general direction of the U. S. Ambassador.

Administration of the military assistance program was handled by a Programs Evaluation Office (PEO) established within the USOM at Vientiane. The PEO was staffed by civilians, most of whom had previous military experience.

The French had overall responsibility for military training in Laos. However, the French Military Mission suffered from such a lack of personnel, equipment, and purpose that, in order to maintain an effective training program, the Commander in Chief Pacific initiated late in 1958 a study aimed at improving the effectiveness of training program. The resultant plan became known as the "Heintges Plan" after Brigadier General John A. Heintges who, as Chief PEO designate, was instrumental in its development. The Heintges Plan provided for joint U. S. - French teams to train the Laotian Armed Forces (designated as Forces Armees Laotienne, or FAL) in military subjects, but since the Geneva Agreements gave to the French Government the sole responsibility for training, the implementation of the plan required agreement with the French. Accordingly, representatives of the two governments met in Paris during May 1959 and agreed to conduct FAL training on an urgent basis, with the U. S. responsible for individual and technical training, and the French conducting unit type training. The U. S. would furnish training teams that would operate under French supervision. One of the more important provisions of the agreement was the incorporation of U. S. training personnel from Army Special Forces units into the training teams. In recognition of RLG sovereignty, the Paris agreement was called "General Principles Looking Toward a Possible Eventual Agreement with RLG on Training of its Army."

When the Pathet Lao forces renewed hostile actions on 18 July 1959, the RLG realized its need for additional troops and training, and on 23 July 1959, in conjunction with the French Government, asked the United States to furnish a number of technicians to help with an

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emergency training program to last from six months to one year. Also, in response to another RLG request, the United States approved an increase in military aid to Laos and, on 26 August 1959, stated its determination to help Laos resist communism.

Military Activities during the Summer of 1959

Following the initial organized attack on 18 July 1959, the PL forces overran other FAL outposts in Sam Neua, and advanced to Phong Saly Province by the end of the month. These attacks were accompanied by a sudden increase in guerrilla type activity, heaviest in the northern provinces but also scattered through central Laos. The RLG reacted slowly to the PL attacks and, because of inadequate communications, delayed and inaccurate reporting from the field, and the fact that the RLG forces were on widely separated security missions, several weeks passed before the RLG strength in the north amounted to ten battalions, and the FAL had restored a large part of the two provinces to Government control.

Reaction of Other Countries to Conflict in Laos

The resumption of hostilities caused several actions by interested nations. Communist Bloc countries agitated for the return of the ICC, a move opposed by the RLG. The UK suggested that it and the USSR, as the co-chairmen of the Geneva Convention, sponsor a resolution to send a UN mediator to Laos, a plan rejected by Laos, the U.S., and France because of the connotation that the RLG was a co-disputant with North Vietnam rather than a plaintiff in the dispute. The UN Secretary General suggested that an Indian representative try to negotiate a settlement between Hanoi and Vientiane, and the USSR suggested that the ICC delegation chairmen be sent to investigate. Laos considered both of these suggestions a return of the ICC and rejected them on that basis. The Royal Lao Government, claiming intervention of North Vietnamese forces was the chief source of trouble, on 3 September appealed to the Secretary General of the UN to send an emergency force to Laos to stop the aggression, and considered asking SEATO to intervene on its behalf.

The Western Powers involved in the Lao problem were plagued by disagreements almost as great as those that existed between the pro-communist countries and the Western Powers. The French took the position that the situation in Laos was internal and political for which Prime Minister Phoui's government was responsible because of its method of dealing with the NLHX leaders. The UK agreed with France that political rather than military action was indicated in Laos, but did not believe that any attempt should be made to bring the NLHX leaders back into the RLG. (UNCLASSIFIED)

The U. S. agreed that a long term solution to the Lao problem couldn't be obtained by military means, but nevertheless firmly opposed any appeasement of the communists on the grounds that any concession to PL demands would only strengthen the communists and encourage them to make additional demands. (UNCLASSIFIED)

SEATO called several special meetings during September 1959, but the member nations were unable to force their divergent positions into any agreement beyond their recognition of the need to keep fully informed on the situation and to update SEATO plans in the event that Laos asked for help. (UNCLASSIFIED)

As a result of the RLG appeal, a UN Security Council sub-committee arrived in Vientiane on 15 September to investigate RLG charges of North Vietnamese intervention. In this, the group failed. Although circumstantial evidence was abundant, the sub-committee found no positive proof, possibly because a lack of adequate transportation made it difficult to inspect the northeastern provinces.¹

Propaganda broadcasts from the communist countries objected to the Security Council's inspection, demanded a return of the ICC, and stressed offers of the former PL leaders to negotiate with the RLG provided they were taken back into the cabinet, U.S. aid was terminated, and the ICC returned to Laos. (UNCLASSIFIED)

1. Although the U.S. was prepared to furnish helicopters and other means of transportation, the UN group was reluctant to use planes or pilots furnished by a government that was a permanent member of the UN Security Council or from any member governments bordering on Laos. See msg, STATE from VIENTIANE 881, Sep 59. (S)

U. S. Aid to Laos Increased

Within a few days after the PL renewed hostilities, the United States took decisive action to strengthen the Royal Government through delivery of equipment and supplies. By the middle of August, CINCPAC reported to the Joint Chiefs of Staff that the CINCPAC Component Commanders had prepared supporting plans for the CINCPAC unilateral plan to counter communist aggression in Southeast Asia, OPLAN 32/59 (Phase II) (Laos), and that Joint Task Force 116 headquarters had been activated for planning purposes.¹ By 5 September, JTF 116 was activated for operations and Seventh Fleet was in the process of improving its readiness.^{2,3} At the same time, the JCS authorized temporary support of 40 additional 100 man volunteer companies, additional civil action support, and additional allocations of funds and equipment.⁴

JTF 116 Deactivated

As the RLG concentrated its forces in the northern provinces, there was a noticeable and corresponding decrease in PL activity until it approached a complete lull in the fighting by the middle of September. In the meantime, however, there was a sharp rise in insurgent activity in southern Laos, indicating that rebel forces had shifted their operations. But with the Royal Government in control of the northern provinces the military threat appeared diminished. On 5 October the CJTF 116 released part of his forces for return to normal duty, and the entire task force was deactivated on 11 October, although it was required to maintain certain capabilities and personnel available in the Western Pacific.^{5,6}

The UN Security Council Investigation

The UN Security Council sub-committee stayed in Laos from 15 September until 12 October. Although Lao witnesses told of fighting

1. CINCPAC 152347Z Aug 59 (TS)
2. CJTF 116, 050820Z Sep 59 (TS)
3. COM7THFLT 050702Z Sep 59 (TS)
4. JCS 041433Z Sep 59 (TS)
5. CINCPAC 060245Z Oct 59 (TS)
6. CINCPAC 102239Z Oct 59 (TS)

against North Vietnamese, of having been captured by "Vietminh" and taken to North Vietnam from where they had escaped, the sub-committee remained unconvinced that large numbers of North Vietnamese troops were fighting in Laos. There was in fact, ample time between the sub-committee's arrival in Laos and its eventual trip north for the Vietnamese to return to their own country. In any case, the U.S. hoped that the presence of the sub-committee in Laos would enable the RLG to regain control of the northern provinces. Pathet Lao activity subsided noticeably after the UN representatives arrived in Laos. By October 1959 the FAL units were frequently out of contact with PL fighting forces, and insurgent activity was reduced to skirmishes, patrolling, and small but numerous encounters.¹

The Royal Lao Armed Forces started to bring back under Lao control the territory lost during the PL attacks and also territory that had rarely, if ever, been under either the RLG or French colonial control. The RLG Army at this time consisted of two elements: the regular forces that numbered approximately 29,000 men after a 4,000 man augmentation for the July and August emergency, and the local Auto-Defense Corps, a paramilitary force of 16,000 authorized strength, also augmented by 4,000 during the crisis. The combat echelon available for service in any part of Laos comprised two airborne battalions, one artillery battalion, a tank company, two armored reconnaissance companies, 12 infantry battalions, 5 combat engineer companies and a signal company.²

U. S. Effort to Strengthen RLG Forces

During the fall of 1959 and the first months of 1960, a period of persistent rebel activity and skirmishes described by the French as a "Phony War", and by the Chief of PEO, [Mr. Heintges], on one occasion as "the stillness in Laos," CINCPAC pursued his effort to strengthen the

1. Ltr, [Heintges to Felt] 24 Nov 59, 002007 (S)
2. Memo, "Our Policy, Problems, and Programs in Laos", prepared by Ambassador Horace H. Smith, 30 Mar 60., CINCPAC Route Slip 003483-60 (S-NOFORN)

small kingdom's ability to resist communism. By September the flow of supplies had increased significantly, much of it by air to Thailand since military planes were prohibited from flying into Laos. From Thailand the supplies and equipment were shuttled to Laos by civilian operated C-47 planes. By September between five and ten planes reached Vientiane daily.¹ Much of the equipment was intended to outfit the 4,000 additional troops authorized for the regular FAL, and an equal number for the Auto Defense forces.²

Twelve Mobile Field Training Teams that had recently arrived in Laos initiated a seven-week training cycle at the beginning of September 1959. Composed of military personnel on a six-month temporary duty status from the Continental U.S., the twelve teams operated training centers located at Luang Prabang, Vientiane, Savannakhet and Pakse, and were expected to work directly with battalions as soon as the units were relieved of their combat assignments.

B



The Royal Laotian Government suffered from ignorance of and indifference to the government on the part of subjects who were fragmented by very poor communications and transportation facilities and also split into a number of distinct ethnic groups. In 1957 the RLG initiated a program of establishing outposts of national authority in communities that were either ignorant of or antagonistic toward the government with the purpose of creating a spirit of national consciousness and unity, reporting on internal security matters and helping local people in matters of education, agriculture, health, public works and civil government. By the end of January 1960 there were 267 6-man teams scattered throughout the remote and backward areas.⁴

1. Ltr Heintges to Felt, 21 Sep 59, CINCPAC Route Slip 002097-59 (S)
2. Monthly Status Rpt, CHPEO Laos, Sep 59, CINCPAC Route Slip 002097-59 (S)
3. Ibid.
4. Monthly Progress Rpt, CHPEO Laos, Jan 60, CINCPAC Route Slip 001416-60 (S)

Associated with the Rural Security Teams was a civil affairs plan to increase the coverage of propaganda broadcasts to the Lao people. The purpose was to help the FAL deal with the civil populace that was frequently suspicious of military personnel and activities.

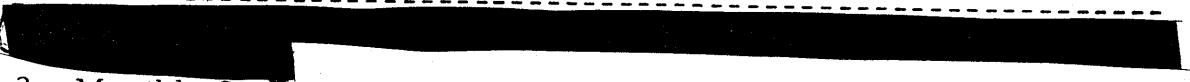


In addition to other projects, a large effort was devoted to construction of facilities -- airfields, hangar space, and training schools and centers.

All CINCPAC and PEO efforts to bolster the RLG forces did not produce immediate results. Instructors and advisers in Laos were often faced with a lethargy, lack of knowledge and indifference that was difficult to penetrate or disturb. Lao soldiers would let their weapons remain dirty or rusty, and most RLG officers were reluctant to accept any of the unpleasant responsibilities and refused to take part in the training. At one training area some of the officers missed most of the training because of excessive night life and others refused to fire their rifles because they complained it hurt their shoulders.²

Political Crisis of December 1959

The military crisis of July and August 1959 was replaced at the end of the year by an equally disrupting political crisis. King Sisavang Vong had died in October 1959 and was succeeded by the slightly more politically active Crown Prince, Savang Vatthana. As the new King, Savang extended his support to the Committee for



2. Monthly Status Rpt, CHPEO Laos, Sep 59, Sect II, CINCPAC Route Slip 002097-59 (S)

the Defense of the National Interest (CDNI) - the anti-communist organization which was agitating to carry out the trials of the NLHX leaders who, since July of that year, had been waiting trial on charges of treason. The members of the CDNI, and other RLG officials, wanted to proceed with the trial in order to have the communist leaders and the issue out of the way before the coming elections. They were particularly anxious to try those NLHX leaders who were also National Assembly deputies before the Assembly was called into session, at which time the insurgent leaders would be able to invoke their legislative immunity. Prime Minister Phoui also wanted to go ahead with the trials because, in the political entanglement in Laos, he reasoned that the trials would improve his chances of extending his power for another year, to which the CDNI was opposed. In the end, the trials were postponed indefinitely because of fear that the Communist Bloc would take advantage of the propaganda possibilities. However, the army, CDNI members and the Crown Prince forced the Phoui government to resign. The National Assembly was dissolved and the army ruled Laos for a week until an interim government, headed by elder statesman Kou Abhay could be formed to rule until the general elections scheduled for 24 April 1960.^{1,2}

Elections of 24 May 1960

The formation of the new government satisfied most of the political leaders, excepting former Prime Minister Phoui, and temporarily left the country without a crisis or condition of emergency. With the FAL meeting only light resistance to its continuing drive to clean out the pockets of communist strength, the most important national problem was the coming election scheduled for 24 May. After the humiliation suffered during the May 1958 elections when the communist candidates won a number of National Assembly seats because the anti-communist vote was split among several candidates, political

1. National Intel Survey Laos, Chap I, p. 21 (S)
2. PACOM Weekly Intel Digest #2-60, of 8 Jan 60, p. 9 (S)

leaders cooperated to insure that the name of only one conservative candidate appeared on the ballot in any district where a Pathet Lao candidate had entered the race.¹ As added precaution, Minister of Defense Phoumi Nosavan early in April began dispersing the army throughout the country to maintain order during the national elections. Large numbers of troops were detailed to guard government buildings and polling places, and to provide security for the homes of many Lao officials. Senior FAL officers were reported to be more concerned with political activities during the month than with their military responsibilities.² To further discourage the communist vote, the polls were located so that pro-communists from the minority tribal groups would have to travel a considerable distance to vote.³

The plans and precautions of the government paid off with an election that was conducted calmly and that produced a solid conservative victory. After holding run-off elections in May, King Savang asked Prince Somsanith to head the new government as prime minister. The new prime minister a nephew of former Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma, had a reputation of staunch opposition to communism and the Pathet Lao.^{4,5} With the elections over, the Chief of the Programs Evaluation Office, Brig. Gen. Heintges, hoped that the RLG armed forces would be available for training, which had been seriously interrupted by a protracted celebration of Lao Army Day during March, and by elections during April. Lao government officials had repeatedly promised General Heintges that once the new government was installed, they would be in a position to give strong support to defense needs.⁶

Escape of NLHX Leaders

Before the newly elected government could be invested, a new crisis and a new threat appeared. During a heavy rainfall on the night

1. Monthly Status Rpt, CHPEO Laos, Mar 60, Sect II, (S)
2. Ibid., Sect III
3. CINCPAC Daily Intel Bul 2887, Suppl 1, 19 Jul 60 (S)
4. Monthly Progress Rpt, CHPEO Laos, Jun 60, Sect III, (S)
5. National Intel Survey, Laos, 43B, Jan 61, Key Personalities (S)
6. Ltr, Heintges to Felt, 7 May 60 (S)

~~SECRET~~

of 23-24 May, the Red Prince Souphanouvong and 15 other communist sympathizers escaped from a Vientiane prison after ten months of confinement. They escaped on foot, according to the Minister of Defense, with the help of a rebel commando group and the complicity of guards within the prison compound¹. General Heintges immediately considered the escape as bad news for the RLG and its allies. He considered it probable that the escaped NLHX leaders would try to set up a rival government either in Laos or in exile. There was also the threat that, with its leaders out of jail, the insurgent Pathet Lao would be more apt to increase terrorist activities, justified with the claim that extensive use of the FAL during April elections constituted a rigged election.²

Although the RLG placed all regional units of the FAL and National Police on special alert and search status, none of the escapees was recaptured.

1. CINCPAC Daily Intel Summary hereinafter cited as DIB, No. 51-60, 24 May 60, (S NOFORN)
2. CINCPAC DIB No. 52-60, (S NOFORN)

CHAPTER II

THE KONG LE COUP & AFTERMATH

THE KONG LE COUP OF 9 AUGUST 1960

The heavy handed measures employed to win the election stirred a measure of discontent among those civilian leaders who failed to gain office or other reward, and among some younger elements of the Armed Forces who were weary of the continuous field campaigns being waged against the Pathet Lao, and bitter because of corruption among some high-ranking FAL officers. One of the malcontents was the commanding officer of a FAL parachute battalion, Captain Kong Le, an obscure officer known only as an excellent and dependable soldier.¹ Prior to August 1960, Kong Le and his elite Second Parachute Battalion had served in Southern Laos. Upon his return to Vientiane his unit was assigned to billets that he considered inadequate. He also received orders to move his unit out on a new operation on 9 August. His apparent resentment of what he considered unfair treatment in addition to long standing bitterness because of existing corruption in the government and the army, and neglect of his own units during its long period in the field, stirred Kong Le into action. Early on the morning of 9 August, taking advantage of the fact that the King and most cabinet members had gone to Luang Prabang the day before, Kong Le dispersed his 800 troops throughout the city and seized the key government buildings in Vientiane, including the Defense Ministry and the radio station. He secured the main routes to the city, subdued the police, and disarmed the other RLG troops in the immediate area, placing several top FAL officers under house arrest. By mid-afternoon, in undisputed control of the capital, Kong Le met with several cabinet officials who had remained in the city and presented his demands for a new government headed by Prince Souvanna Phouma and a return to a policy of strict neutrality. He sent a delegation to carry these demands to the King.²

1. Cold War Rpt, CHPEO, 1 Jul - 31 Dec 1960, CINCPAC Route Slip 003005-60 (S)
2. CINCPAC DIB, 9 & 10 Aug 60 (C)

Initial communique from "the High Command of the Revolutionary Forces" broadcast by Radio Vientiane promised to preserve the Throne and the constitution, but also criticized U.S. interference in Laos and complained of the number of American advisers who had been serving with his battalion, corruption, inflation, and charged that the government had misled the people.¹

Radio announcements made no mention of the force behind the coup, or the ultimate purpose of the revolution. In fact, the most unusual characteristic of the coup was the lack of knowledge, the speculation, and rumors about it, and the apparent lack of direction on the part of the "Chief of the Revolution," as Kong Le called himself. The uncertainty among the Americans and the Lao government officials was caused by the censorship and failure of communications that followed the coup. And, although the plan by which Kong Le seized power was complete and well conceived, it soon appeared that Kong Le had no plan for exploiting his success.² Despite the criticism of U.S. activities in Laos, there was no evidence that the coup was communist inspired. Kong Le had long appeared friendly to the United States and strongly anti-communist. The failure of the Communist Bloc to immediately develop the propaganda potential indicated that the communists shared the uncertainty.^{3,4}

Lao officials reacted in various ways to the coup. The King and members of his cabinet in Luang Prabang took no decisive action, although on the 11th the Lao Government had its Embassy in Bangkok release to the press a communique claiming that all Lao Armed Forces outside of Vientiane remained loyal to the Royal Government, which was setting up temporary headquarters in Luang Prabang until the FAL could restore order.⁵ The Commander of all Lao Armed

1. CINCPAC DIBs 9 & 10 Aug 60, (C)
2. General Phoumi had prepared the coup plan in December and Kong Le's battalion was given the mission of securing the city if the coup was carried out, see msg, USARMA Vientiane 240550Z Sep 60 (C)
3. NIS 43B, Jan 61, p. 12, (S)
4. CINCPAC DIBs, 9, 10 & 11 Aug 60 (C)
5. CINCPAC DIB 11 Aug 60 (S)

Force, Brigadier General Ouane Rathikoun, who was also in Luang Prabang at the time of the coup, flew to Vientiane on the 10th to meet with Kong Le. Openly pro-American and the outstanding military leader at the time, he was also qualified for this task because Kong Le was married to Ouane's niece and was also a nephew of Ouane's wife.^{1,2} Prince Souvanna Phouma, former Prime Minister, half brother of the Red Prince Souphanouvong, and at the time President of the National Assembly who had been nominated by Kong Le to head Kong Le's proposed neutral government, took no action publicly. The first action in support of the coup came from a man known as a ruthless opportunist, Quinim Pholsena, head of a fellow-traveling splinter party suspected of complicity with the Pathet Lao, and several other leftwingers who were quick to recognize the awkward position in which Kong Le's revolt against the government had placed him. Realizing that Kong Le had isolated himself from those government leaders with whom his sympathies lay, including Minister of Defense General Phoumi, whom Kong Le had long admired, and also that the revolution's goal of establishing a neutral government could be turned to his own benefit, Quinim quickly made himself Kong Le's chief adviser.^{3,4}

General Phoumi's Opposition to Coup

The most decisive action came from the Minister of Defense Brigadier General Phoumi Nosavan, one of the bitterest foes of communism in Laos and, as it turned out, the only member of the Cabinet who stuck by his convictions and refused to arbitrate or compromise with Kong Le and other leaders who favored conciliating the Pathet Lao. Phoumi had gained national prominence through his association with the Committee for the Defense of National Interests, had headed the military junta that forced the resignation of the Phoui Sananikone cabinet on 31 December 1959, and enjoyed a position of favor with King Savang. When news of the coup reached Luang Prabang, Phoumi flew at once to

1. NIS 43B, Jan 61 Key Personalities, p. 24 (S)
2. CINCPAC DIB 11 Aug 60 (S)
3. NIS 43B, Jan 61 Key Personalities, pp 32, 33 (S)
4. Dept of State Intel Rpt No. 8435, 6 Apr 61 (S-NOFORN)

Thailand to avoid arrest and also to seek support from the Prime Minister of that country and his first cousin once removed, Marshal Sarit Thanarat. Sarit had backed Phoumi with large financial investments, was alarmed by the possibility of a neutral or communist Laos on his border, and was a logical person to whom Phoumi could appeal for help. From his base in Thailand, Phoumi flew first to Savannakhet to talk with the commander and troops of the Third Military Region, and then to Pakse for conferences with the Fourth Military Region commander. Claiming that he had the support of all FAL forces except those in Vientiane, as well as the support of the Lao Air Force and Lao Airborne Forces, Phoumi announced his determination to recapture the capital and force the surrender of the Revolutionary Group. To back up his counter-revolutionary forces, Phoumi asked Thailand to furnish supplies from its stocks subject to replacement from U. S. aid destined for Laos, to which Sarit reportedly agreed.^{1,2}

Although CINCPAC did not think that the situation warranted implementing OPLAN 32-59 (Phase II - Laos), he anticipated that conditions could easily deteriorate. He notified the CG of the 3d Marine Division to be prepared to activate JTF-116 if directed, and authorized him to assemble his joint staff or such portions as he wished. CINCPAC did not order a higher DEFCON, but directed his Component Commanders to be ready to rapidly execute Plan 32 if it became necessary.^{3,4}

The U. S. Position as a Result of the Coup

As were other nations, the United States was caught off guard by the coup and was uncertain as to whom it should offer support. On 12 August the JCS authorized CINCPAC to designate two senior representatives of CHPEO as advisers to senior Lao commanders at Luang Prabang, to establish secure communication channels between PEO and CHJUSMAG Thailand, to turn over a radio transmitter in

1. CINCPAC DIBs 10 and 14 Aug 61 (S)
2. CHJUSMAG Thailand 101955Z Aug 60 (TS)
3. CINCPAC 102319Z Aug 60 (TS)
4. CINCPAC 102300Z Aug 60 (TS)

Thailand for the use of the Lao Government, and to prepare two mobile radio transmitters for shipment to Laos. None of these actions was decisive in nature. The delicate problem of separating the rebels from the supporters of the Royal Government and deciding who was eligible to ask for and receive U.S. support became only more difficult with the passing of time. Phoumi's urgent requests for help were weakened because of his position in exile separated from the legal government, although somewhat strengthened by equally urgent pleas from Sarit. Both of these leaders threatened to "do it alone" if the U.S. refused aid, although U.S. personnel considered it doubtful that Phoumi could carry out his planned airlift, or that Sarit would act independently.^{1,2}

Instead of clearing up, the U.S. quandary became deeper during the next few days. Beginning on 12 August and repeated on following days, the rebel-controlled Radio Vientiane claimed that the legal Lao Government had resigned to permit the formation of a new government in accordance with the goals of the Revolutionary Forces. Although doubted at first, this report gained credence when backed up by the explanation that the resolution to dissolve the Somsanith cabinet was adopted unanimously by deputies held at gunpoint by Kong Le's soldiers.³ ~~(SECRET)~~

Confusion Within the RLG

Although Kong Le immediately announced his intention to return Prince Souvanna Phouma to the position of Prime Minister, Souvanna refused on the grounds that the National Assembly held the power to make the selection. However, after the National Assembly had been forced to express its lack of confidence in Somsanith, he resigned and Souvanna indicated his willingness to form a new government. In this manner a junior army officer with a few troops brought down the Royal Government that two months previously had received unanimous approval of its anti-communist stand. Somsanith's resignation was submitted to ~~(SECRET)~~

1. CHJUSMAG Thailand 140450Z Aug 60 (TS)
2. CHPEO 141218Z Aug 60 (TS)
3. CINCPAC DIB 15 Aug 60 (S-NOFORN)

the King for his acceptance. Negotiations continued for the next three days with emissaries of both groups traveling daily between the two towns. The Assembly dutifully voted on the 16th to approve Souvanna as the new Prime Minister, but when the action was passed to King Savang for the approval needed to make it constitutionally legal, the King delayed action for a two week period. In the intervening period -- until the end of August -- many of the military and political leaders in Laos were involved in an intricate web of intrigue, schemes and conspiracy that appeared to be aimed at the preservation of their own position rather than the integrity or welfare of the country.^{1,2}

From the U. S. point of view, the lack of a legal government provided unexpected opportunities for Pathet Lao insurgency. The Royal Lao forces were hopelessly split, and uncertain whose orders to obey. Kong Le still controlled Vientiane but he had failed to gain support of more than a few left wing opportunists, and his revolution was wearing thin, especially after his claims that the Souvanna government was in power proved to be premature.

The delay in forming a new legal government also benefitted General Phoumi who still stood firm and alone in his opposition to any compromise with the PL. Phoumi improved his position when, on 16 August, he airdropped leaflets on Vientiane announcing the organization of a counter-coup force and his plans to retake the capital. His claim that he represented the legal government in Laos had some basis since the Souvanna cabinet still lacked approval. This development caused increased tension in the city, and it appeared the situation was developing rapidly where no authority would be recognized.^{3,4}

When the Kong Le revolution was four or five days old and floundering for lack of support and definite purpose, it appears that General Phoumi could have put an end to the rebellion had he been able to move troops under his command to Vientiane. He appealed to the CHPEO Laos

1. CINCPAC DIBs 11 through 29 Aug 60 (S-NOFORN)
2. Dept of State Intel Rpt No. 8435, 6 Apr 61 (S-NOFORN)
3. CINCPAC Current Intel Digest, 17 Aug 60 (S-NOFORN)
4. Vientiane 301 to SECSTATE 160838Z Aug 60 (S)

for help in moving 200 parachutists from Erawan in Thailand, where they were undergoing training, to Savannakhet. If the Lao communication system or U.S. support had permitted movement of ground troops under his control, he could have mustered decisive strength in Vientiane. At that time, however, General Phoumi was the only person willing to risk decisive action and he was pleading for help from the U.S., the French, and Thailand. The French, siding with Souvanna and his policy of getting along with everyone, refused to go along with Phoumi. Prime Minister Sarit strongly favored Phoumi but was reluctant to stand alone in his support, and applied his own pressure for U.S. support of Phoumi.^{1, 2, 3, 4}

The U.S. policy toward the new situation in Laos had not jelled and was as uncertain as the status of the Royal Government. The State Department's position was further complicated by a 16 August report from CHPEO passing on a report that General Phoumi had the King's blessing in his determination to keep Souvanna out of office. In addition to delaying the cabinet from taking the oath of office, Phoumi was moving troops toward Vientiane. General Heintges wanted some C-47 planes sent to Bangkok for possible use if needed. With Phoumi backed by the military, and Souvanna enjoying the outward appearance of legality, the State Department hoped that King Savang would use his influence to prevent a showdown. Since there was no promise that the King was willing to muddy his fingers in politics, the State Department tried to steer a middle course by urging CINCPAC to establish a relationship of confidence with Souvanna, by authorizing limited CAS support to Phoumi, and at the same time, afraid that Souvanna's government would provide a way station to communist takeover, showed interest in having the investiture of the Souvanna Phouma government delayed to gain time to appraise other possibilities, such as Phoumi's Plan.^{5, 6, 7}

1. CHPEO 141218Z Aug 60 (TS)
2. SECSTATE WASH repeat of Bangkok 10PM 13 Aug 60 (S)
3. CHJUSMAG Thailand 140450Z Aug 60 (TS)
4. VIENTIANE 298 to SECSTATE 160930Z Aug 60 (S)
5. CHPEO LAOS 161630Z Aug 60 (S)
6. SECSTATE 171157Z Aug 60 (S)
7. STATE 184 to VIENTIANE (NAVCOMSTA 171658Z Aug 60 (TS)

CINCPAC and State Department Positions

Caught up in the same haze of uncertainty about Kong Le's ultimate aim, CINCPAC studied the events in Vientiane as reported by the Chief PEO, and on 20 August, recommended to the JCS that the U.S. recognize General Phoumi as the strongest anti-communist leader and support him. CINCPAC doubted that any compromise between the Souvanna Phouma coup group and Phoumi anti-communists could lead to anything except acceptance of adjustments to the left in Laos. Because of the coercion used to establish the Souvanna government, [Admiral Felt] ^{OK} thought U.S. interests would be served better by maintaining that the Souvanna-Kong Le regime was not legitimately invested. While recognizing that the existing difficulty arose from military insubordination and that it was a problem to be settled by the Lao military authorities, the U.S. should provide discreet assistance to Phoumi, and encourage the King and other anti-communist elements to hold out. While trying for a peaceful settlement of the problem, however, CINCPAC warned that there could be no absolute certainty of eliminating Kong Le's mutiny without bloodshed.¹ The Joint Chiefs of Staff agreed with CINCPAC's views and passed the message on for the consideration of the State Department.²

The State Department was not yet ready to furnish decisive support to Phoumi. The overriding objective in Laos, from the Department of State view was the re-establishment of a broadly based pro-western government. Moreover, the State Department hoped that in the process of establishing this kind of government, Laos could avoid a military clash between the RLG forces that should be preserved for a defense against the Pathet Lao. Toward the end of August, the State Department could see no apparent solution, but expressed the hope that some sort of agreement could be worked out between Souvanna and Phoumi, and that between them they could check Kong Le. The elimination of Kong Le from his position of power was considered as a requirement for any resolution of the crisis. If there was no way to bring Souvanna

~~(SECRET)~~

1. CINCPAC 202317Z Aug 60 (S)
2. JCS 242153Z cite 981873 Aug 60 (TS)

and Phoumi together quickly, the State Department thought its next best solution would be to move to a more forthright support of Phoumi. The State Department wanted a government that would not mortgage itself to the communists or risk security of the Kingdom by making naive concessions to the Pathet Lao, and did not feel that Souvanna by himself would be acceptable on this basis.^{1,2} ~~(SECRET)~~

Formation of New Government under Souvanna Phouma

On 17 August Souvanna broadcast an appeal to all disputants stressing his desire for peace with everyone and his willingness to discuss grievances with the Pathet Lao and other factions. He asked all military leaders to come to Vientiane to discuss the defense of their country. Although Souvanna's confidence in his ability to mix the cats and pigeons in a harmonious community was unrealistic, he still enjoyed popular support of the people, who were anxious to end the civil war and avoid bloodshed. It was also to Souvanna's favor that both France and the U.K. were willing to go along with his attempt at compromise, and that the U.S. recognized the disaster that could result if it backed Phoumi and he failed, a failure that would leave the Lao Army divided and unable to hold off the communists.^{3,4} Phoumi's position meanwhile was improving with time. He now claimed the backing of all military units except those in the vicinity of Vientiane. Several other government leaders had rallied to his support, and he had troops marching toward Vientiane. He still wanted planes and other support but announced his determination to recapture Vientiane with or without U.S. support. He rejected Souvanna's offer, refusing to go to Vientiane unless Kong Le's paratroop battalion was removed and three loyal battalions were brought in to establish order in the capital.^{5,6} On 18 August Phoumi had the facilities of a radio station located in Thailand near Savannakhet and, in his first broadcast he reiterated his loyalty to the King, and his

1. STATE 222 to VIENTIANE 241717Z Aug 60 (S)
2. STATE 223 to VIENTIANE 231852Z Aug 60 (S)
3. CHPEO Laos 172135Z Aug (S)
4. STATE 188 to VIENTIANE NAVCOMSTA 180650Z Aug (TS)
5. CHPEO LAOS 190150Z Aug 60 (S)
6. CHPEO LAOS 180745Z Aug 60 (S)

refusal to recognize the new government. The simple mention of his determination to fight swung an estimated majority of the Vientiane population to his side -- the usual desire of the Lao politicians to ride with the winner. The same announcement bolstered morale of his troops but triggered alarm among members of the revolution council. Souvanna was disgruntled because of the delay in securing the King's approval of his government and feared that the arrival of Phoumi's forces would create a situation beyond his control. He threatened to resign unless his government was approved in 48 hours. Several conciliatory moves decreased the tension briefly. Most of Kong Le's troops left the city and Kong Le announced that all control was being turned over to Prince Souvanna. In an obvious attempt to placate Phoumi, Souvanna named as the new Commander in Chief, General Ouane, FAL Commander under Phoumi in the Somsanith Government. It was a move that might have pleased Phoumi had not Ouane "selected" Kong Le as his deputy. Finally on 23 August, although Phoumi had refused to go to Vientiane, Prince Souvanna, General Ouane and a representative of Kong Le flew to Savannakhet for a conference with Phoumi. By radio he reported that they had reached agreement on their differences, and promised that Phoumi would come to Vientiane soon and that they would go before the King to receive a constitutional solution.^{1, 2, 3}

While stalling off the Vientiane meeting, General Phoumi continued to advance his military units to strengthen his position and, for several days, threatened to call a session of the National Assembly in Savannakhet to declare Souvanna's government illegal.⁴ The meeting between the two contending political factions was finally scheduled for the end of August in the hope of resolving their differences before a reunited National Assembly due to meet on 30 August. Phoumi, accompanied by 22 assembly deputies and other supporters, arrived from Savannakhet on 28 August. Premier-designate Souvanna and

1. CINCUSARPAC to ACSI, DA 212355Z Aug 60 (S-NOFORN)
2. CHPEO Laos 231607Z Aug 60 (S)
3. VIENTIANE 143 to CINCPAC 23 Aug 9PM 60 (S)
4. CINCPAC DIB 26 Aug 60 (S)

34 deputies arrived the next day and met with Phoumi long enough for them to agree on the need to "bring peace and national concord" to Laos.^{1, 2}

Even before the meeting got underway American observers doubted that any solution would be acceptable to Phoumi, Souvanna, Kong Le and Souphanouvong. The conditions didn't portend a durable compromise. Phoumi, claiming 5,000 troops within 70 miles of Vientiane, declared that he would continue to move his troops regardless of the outcome of the negotiations. Kong Le exerted influence because he still had considerable authority and claimed the support of 6,000 troops in the Vientiane area -- a claim considered optimistic. He had, however, strengthened his bargaining power by distributing between 2,000 and 3,000 weapons to civilians in the Vientiane area who were sympathetic to his cause. Although he had promised to collect the weapons, just before the Luang Prabang meeting he refused to do so until some political agreement was reached.^{3, 4, 5} Spokesman for both factions claimed the loyalty of a majority of the deputies, but with mutual suspicion and personal antagonisms running high there was much in doubt. Both Phoumi and Souvanna hoped to see the King prior to the assembly meeting, each hoping to sway in his favor a king recognized as being susceptible to pressure. From the northern provinces, Prince Souphanouvong broadcast his criticism of what he feared might be a Phoumi-Souvanna accord, and announced his support of Kong Le.⁶

The National Assembly convened on 30 August and King Savang redesignated Prince Souvanna Phouma to form a new government, passing on to him the delicate and difficult task of selecting a cabinet acceptable to all factions that had a part in the crisis. When he announced his proposed cabinet on the following day, it appeared that he had succeeded in appeasing everyone except Kong Le. Souvanna had

1. CINCPAC DIBs 27, 28, and 29 Aug 60 (S-NOFORN)
2. CIA Current Intelligence Digest (hereafter cited as CIA CID) 29 Aug 60, p. 4. (S)
3. Ibid.
4. CHPEO LAOS to CINCPAC 282030Z Aug 60 (S)
5. CINCPAC DIB 29 Aug 60 (S)
6. CIA CID 29 Aug 60 (S)

chosen General Phoumi to be deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior, Ouane as Secretary of State for Defense, and Quinim Pholsena as Minister of Information, keeping for himself the Ministries of Defense, Foreign Affairs, Rural Affairs and Veterans Affairs. Kong Le, who appeared to be left in political isolation by these choices, reacted with adamant refusal to any Cabinet that included General Phoumi.¹ However, when the King approved the new government, the unpredictable Kong Le, in a sudden about face, announced that he accepted it and that he would turn over to it all of his administrative powers. Phoumi addressed the National Assembly on 31 August and announced the immediate dissolution of his committee against the coup. The Assembly voted amnesty for Kong Le and his followers, and Souvanna broadcast an invitation to "dear compatriots from the forests and remote villages" to come to Vientiane to discuss and settle remaining problems, which, with characteristic optimism, Souvanna thought could be settled within a few days.^{2, 3, 4, 5} Souvanna remained as Prime Minister until early in December. His short tenure of the office consisted of and contended with a series of coups and countercoups, compromises, schemes, plots, promises and agreements, broken promises and agreements, and cease-fire arrangements that apparently neither side intended to keep. Despite the record of previous failures, Souvanna maintained a simple but steadfast faith in his ability to bring about a compromise acceptable to each of the various factions within Laos.

The appearance of harmony after three weeks of political upheaval was misleading. The new government faced an immediate problem of restoring both civil and military administration, and a Pathet Lao threat that had been thriving on the discord and disorder within the kingdom. As far as CINCPAC was concerned, the U. S. program of increasing the Lao ability to resist communist had suffered as a result of the crisis. The quarreling during August had revealed dissension, dissatisfaction

1. CINCPAC DIBs 30 and 31 Aug 60 (S)
2. SECSTATE to CINCPAC 312035Z Aug 60 (S)
3. CHPEO LAOS 011102Z Sep 60 (S)
4. CINCUSARPAC to ACSI DA 020024Z Sep 60 (S)
5. CINCPAC DIB 1 Sep 60 (S)

and low morale at lower Army levels, and Souvanna's policy of appeasement threatened to weaken the U. S. aid and training program. This became clear when Souvanna indicated that he intended to return to the 1957 agreement with the PL, an agreement that put the Pathet Lao/NLHX in a position to take over the government through subversion.¹ In addition to the new government's policy of getting along with the Pathet Lao, and to Kong Le's contribution to the PL cause, the U. S. purpose had been weakened by anti-American broadcasts over the Vientiane radio during a three week period. These broadcasts, dwelling on the corruption of the Phoumi forces, had linked the corruption problem with American aid and had stirred a latent sub-conscious resentment against Phoumi, corruption, and American aid. They also provided an articulate voice to many Lao with anti-American sentiments.² The CHPEO was also concerned about the capability of the FAL to withstand PL attacks expected after the crisis was over. After three weeks of neglect, FAL equipment was in poor condition, the supply situation was disorganized, and all troops regardless of past loyalty were unpaid and in need of rice.^{3, 4}

CINCPAC was concerned about the plan to incorporate the Pathet Lao into the Army and Police, a move he believed would let down the bars to communist infiltration of serious consequence. Cautioning CHPEO that one of the key U.S. objectives was to preserve a defense against the Pathet Lao, CINCPAC recommended that PEO make no statements about continuing military assistance until the new Lao Government indicated where it stood. Although anxious to help the Lao people in their fight to maintain their own independence, CINCPAC wanted to be sure that U. S. equipment would not end up in PL hands.⁵

Discord Within the Souvanna Government

General Phoumi returned to Savannakhet on 1 September, not to dissolve his organization as he had promised the day before, but to

1. CINCPAC DIBs 1 and 2 Sep 60 (S)
2. PEO Cold War Report 1 Jul - 31 Dec 60, p. 2. (S)
3. CHPEO LAOS 231630Z Aug 60 (S)
4. CHPEO LAOS 231630Z Aug 60 (S)
5. CINCPAC to CHPEO LAOS 040342Z Sep 60 (S)

watch developments within Souvanna's government for a few days. He failed to appear in Vientiane on 2 September to attend the formal investiture ceremony for the new Cabinet. At the opposite end of the political scale, the PL responded to Souvanna's appeal for early negotiations by demanding Phoumi's ouster as a condition of their participation. As a special lure, especially to his half brother, Souvanna had the Lao courts re-examine the treason charges against Souphanouvong and other PL leaders and dismiss the charges for lack of evidence. He also announced that he was considering extending diplomatic recognition to Red China, North Vietnam and possibly to the Soviet Union in order to attain genuine neutrality.¹ The PL stepped up its guerrilla activity as a means of strengthening its bargaining position and pressuring Souvanna into meeting PL demands.²

When Phoumi refused to accept his position as Deputy Premier in the government, Souvanna sent a letter on 7 September guaranteeing his safety and asking him to return to Vientiane. Phoumi said he was willing to serve if he could exercise his functions from Savannakhet, but also expressed his doubt that the uneasy alliance would last.³ Two days later, on 10 September, Phoumi announced from Savannakhet the formation of a Revolutionary Committee under the chairmanship of Prince Boun Oum Na Champassak, with General Phoumi serving as military commander. Using the Savannakhet radio, Boun Oum declared that the constitution and Souvanna's government were abolished and that Laos was ruled by martial law. Behind this move was the obvious hope that Souvanna could be forced to resign, and that the King would then ask Boun Oum to form a new government in which General Phoumi would regain his post as Minister of Defense, a course of events that most certainly would be unacceptable to Kong Le who still maintained de facto control of Vientiane. Phoumi claimed the support of three of the four Military Regions outside of the capital city and even if this claim was not

1. CINCPAC DIB 6 Sep 60 (S-NOFORN)
2. CINCPAC DIB 8 Sep 60 (S-NOFORN)
3. CIA CID 9 Sep 60 (U)

completely accurate, observers believed he had more troops than Souvanna could control. Moreover, Souvanna had paid all troops through the first of September and Phoumi could expect to retain control of those forces loyal to him until at least after the following payday. ^{1, 2}

Faced with a new crisis, Souvanna carried his problems directly to King Savang, who asked the Boun Oum/Phoumi group to come to Luang Prabang to discuss the matter. The Phoumi/Boun Oum Revolutionary Committee had now become the force in rebellion against the government, replacing the Kong Le rebellion which had become a recognized part of the legal government. In spite of this fact, King Savang acted as if he sympathized with the new revolution, and Souvanna adopted a conciliatory attitude and decided against labeling the group as rebels. Phoumi immediately aggravated the situation by stalling attendance at the meeting in accordance with the King's request. First he proposed that he be allowed to bring a battalion to Luang Prabang. When this was refused, he proposed sending representatives in his stead. He and Boun Oum finally agreed to meet Souvanna and King Savang at the Royal Palace on 14 September, but when the appointed hour came, they failed to appear. ^{3, 4, 5}

The King didn't seem disturbed by this effront. Since Souvanna considered negotiations with the Pathet Lao necessary and Phoumi believed them to be fatal, the King considered their positions irreconcilable. In this respect, he agreed with Phoumi. The King was also becoming distrustful of Souvanna, but took the position that Souvanna had full powers and that he either should use them to cope with the new split in the government, or resign. Although Souvanna still claimed to have the King's support, he realized he lacked the forces to put down the Phoumi/Boun Oum revolt and that without the support of Kong Le his government would collapse. ^{6, 7, 8}

1. CINCUSARPAC 112359Z Sep 60 (S-NOFORN)
2. CINCPAC DIB 12 Sep 60 (S-NOFORN)
3. AMEMB VIENTIANE 141257Z Sep 60 (U)
4. CINCUSARPAC 130240Z Sep 60 (S)
5. CINCPAC DIBs 14 and 15 Sep 60 (S-NOFORN)
6. SECSTATE 142037Z Sep 60, STATE 528 (S)
7. CNO 162043Z Sep 60 (S-NOFORN)
8. CINCPAC DIB 15 Sep 60 (S-NOFORN)

CINCPAC Recommendations for Support of Phoumi

Admiral Felt had considered the Lao crisis as a problem primarily political. However, as time passed without a satisfactory political solution, and as he became aware that the FAL capacity to contain the Pathet Lao was rapidly deteriorating, he again appealed to the JCS, urging prompt measures to support Phoumi. As a basis for his position, CINCPAC stressed the fact that further deterioration of the FAL forces would jeopardize all previous U. S. efforts in Laos, and the urgent need to check the factional cleavages that were destroying the Royal Lao forces. CINCPAC contended that General Phoumi represented the best channel for U. S. support, and to provide this support would be consistent with basic U. S. policy of supporting a legal Royal Lao Government willing to defend the country's independence. CINCPAC doubted that the Souvanna government, despite its legal appearance, could free itself from Kong Le influence, or that it could lead the Kingdom anywhere beyond a hopeless entanglement with communists in Laos and abroad. As far as creating a split with the French and British, both of whom backed the Souvanna Government, CINCPAC argued that the split already existed, and that the U. S. should accept the disagreement but back Phoumi anyway because of the larger U. S. interest at stake, and because past similar experience had shown that the U. S. had been right and the British and French wrong.

CINCPAC recommended that the following specific measures be undertaken promptly:

1. Commence supplying FAL units using either PEO or CAS facilities channeled through Phoumi rather than through Ouane and Souvanna, as recommended by the Department of State.
2. Advise General Phoumi to prepare for submittal to the King a possible successor government that could include Souvanna in some harmless post to prevent his exploitation by the Pathet Lao.
3. Encourage Phoumi to [REDACTED]

1. CINCPAC 142358Z Sep 60 (S)

4. Persuade Prime Minister Sarit to arrange for discreet transit of FAL troops through Thailand from Savannakhet to Vientiane.

5. If a new government was invested, to promptly established it as "neutral" through a reiteration of traditional Lao neutrality, and not through making deals with the communists.¹

In spite of these strong recommendations for positive action, the State Department policy prevailed, and it called for neither decisive nor immediate action. Although recognizing the risk of inaction, the State Department did not think that the U. S. answer to the problem in Laos lay in supporting either Phoumi or Souvanna. A proposed alternative was the formation of a new government that would be acceptable to the majority of patriotic elements, a task in which the State Department hoped King Savang would take the initiative. Besides urging the King to bring about such a new government, the State Department instructed Ambassador Brown to dissuade Phoumi from his program of psychological warfare and military attack against Vientiane, and also to tell Souvanna that, although the U. S. had supported his effort to find a peaceable solution, the U. S. was deeply disturbed by the extent to which Souvanna had fallen under Kong Le's power and Pathet Lao influence. Souvanna was to understand that U. S. aid could not be effective if the situation continued to deteriorate.^{2,3}

The Situation at the End of September

Several other events during the middle of September contributed to the disorganization and confusion within the Lao Government. On the south side of the Mekong River, Prime Minister Sarit of Thailand had become increasingly frustrated because of the U. S. refusal to help Phoumi, but still believed that he could not intervene unilaterally. However, he apparently agreed to let some of Phoumi's forces conduct mortar fire against Vientiane from the Thailand side of the river,

1. Ibid.

2. SECSTATE to VIENTIANE 316 cite 172037Z Sep 60 (S)

3. SECSTATE to VIENTIANE 322 cite 200630Z Sep 60 (S)

action that destroyed the city pumping station and brought complaints from Souvanna's government. In Northern Laos, meanwhile, the Pathet Lao maintained heavier pressure against RLG forces, and expanded their area of influence while haggling about cease-fire conditions and by failing to reply to repeated requests to choose a place for negotiators to meet. On 20 September Prince Souphanouvong again stirred up the issue of the International Control Commission by writing a letter to Britain and the USSR, co-chairmen of the 1954 Geneva Conference on the Indochina cease-fire, to ask that they take urgent measures to halt the aggression of the U.S., Thailand, and South Vietnam against Laos "mounted by the Phoumi Nosavan clique." Obviously, Souphanouvong thought the ICC would be more apt than the UN to favor the communist cause. (Although the ICC withdrew from Laos in 1958, it was still operating in Vietnam and Cambodia.) Souvanna had been considering an appeal to the UN to restore order in Laos, supervise new elections and help in forming a new government. Another complication was posed by the former President of the National Assembly, Oun Sananikone, whom Kong Le had forced out of office. In mid-September, Oun was busy planning a coup to overthrow both Kong Le and Souvanna. Finally, on 20 September, Phoumi announced that his forces had encircled Vientiane and that he had besieged the city.¹

The flimsy construction of political alliances allowed abrupt changes in individual fortunes and General Phoumi's advantage temporarily disappeared because of military losses. King Savang tried a second time to find a way around the political impasse, and on 20 September asked General Ouane, General Phoumi, and all military region commanders to visit him in Luang Prabang. Phoumi backed away from this meeting also, claiming that a meeting would be useless, that Luang Prabang was not safe for him, and that the anti-communist fight in Laos would suffer if he lost his freedom. He offered to meet in several other areas, but it appears that he hoped to delay any meeting until he could maneuver his troops to his advantage and to the disadvantage of Souvanna. When

1. CINCPAC DIBs 12 through 27 Sept 60 (S-NOFORN)

the King called the meeting, most observers felt that Phoumi held the upper hand, but his refusal to go to the capital vexed the King. And on the same day, 21 September, three of Phoumi's battalions became engaged with Souvanna's forces on the Paksane road, about 60 miles east of Vientiane, and were defeated. The fighting was not heavy, but the loss of prestige, and the influence on other military leaders anxious to switch their loyalty to a winning side was significant. Souvanna's forces pursued and, within a day or two, forced Phoumi's battalions to abandon Paksane, which they had occupied for more than a month while awaiting orders to march on Vientiane. Phoumi and Prince Boun Oum made a sudden trip to Bangkok to see Prime Minister Sarit who had become increasingly open in expressing his sympathy for their objectives.^{1, 2, 3}

For a third time, on 23 September, King Savang asked his military leaders to meet in his presence. The message added that "his majesty insists that the meeting occur in Luang Prabang as soon as possible." Savang wanted first to settle differences among military leaders and reestablish the integrity of the Lao Armed Forces as the primary bulwark against the Pathet Lao threat, after which a solution of political problems would be easier. This time Prime Minister Sarit urged Phoumi to attend the meeting. Sarit argued that the only way for Phoumi to carry out his anti-communist work was to do it legally and with the King's approval. Under pressure, Phoumi sent word on the 25th that he would attend.^{4, 5, 6}

The meeting was held on the afternoon of 28 September. The only result was an agreement between General Ouane and other representatives of the Souvanna Government and General Phoumi and Boun Oum to observe a cease-fire pending the outcome of negotiations that were to begin within five days. Besides having suffered military defeat on

1. CINCPACFLT 220001Z Sep 60 (S)
2. VIENTIANE 597 to STATE 23 Sep 9PM (S)
3. CINCPAC DIBs 21 through 23 Sep 60 (S-NOFORN)
4. STATE to CINCPAC 230035Z Sep 60 (S)
5. BANGKOK 282 to VIENTIANE 25 Sep 6PM 60 (S)
6. CINCPAC DIB 22 Sep 60 (S-NOFORN)

21 September, Phoumi's influence at the conference had been severely hurt by three other events that occurred almost as the meeting began. The Pathet Lao, tightening its grip on the northern provinces, seized control of Sam Neua town and succeeded in pushing back the FAL defensive lines. On 28 September, the commander of Military Region II pushed through a one man coup and switched allegiance, aligning his forces in support of Souvanna rather than Phoumi. The third event was a report that Kong Le planned to drop small groups of parachute troops in the vicinity of Savannakhet. Their mission would be to organize the PL in the area and cut the roads to the Boun Oum/Phoumi capital.^{1,2}

The next day Kong Le carried out his plan and succeeded in interrupting communications to Savannakhet. This violation of the day old cease-fire caused some quarreling between Kong Le and Souvanna, who claimed that Kong Le had no right to make military decisions. Kong Le's independence was a major concern of the CHPEO and there is evidence that he was equally troublesome to Souvanna. Refusing to obey government orders and heartened by his success, Kong Le set out to eliminate the Savannakhet threat, with the alleged support of PL forces. In addition, on his own initiative, he had sent some of his paratroopers into Sam Neua to help the PL there.³

The Shift of Support from Souvanna to Phoumi

As Phoumi's bargaining position crumbled because of events at the end of September, Souvanna assessed his position and decided it had improved enough to permit him to go ahead with negotiations with the Pathet Lao. To represent his government at meetings scheduled for 11 October, Souvanna selected Quinim Pholsena, his left wing Minister of Information who was deeply involved with the Kong Le group. This choice, together with his announced intention

1. CINCUSARPAC 270234Z Sep 60, (S-NOFORN)
2. CINCPAC DIBs 27-29 Sep 60, (S-NOFORN)
3. CINCPAC DIBs 29-30 Sep, 3-5 Oct 60. (S-NOFORN)

to implement the Geneva and Vientiane agreements for integrating the Pathet Lao with the RLG forces, to establish diplomatic relations with the USSR, and his refusal to negotiate further with General Phoumi suddenly alarmed several of Souvanna's supporters who feared he would be too soft in his dealings with the communists.¹

Even though the Pathet Lao ignored its cease-fire agreement and was attacking successfully in the northern provinces, Souvanna went ahead with the opening session of the negotiations. The PL attack in Phong Saly Province, begun after the 28 September coup that switched allegiance of the Military Region II from Phoumi to Souvanna, and maintained after negotiations got underway, alarmed the deputy commander of the region who organized his own coup, arrested the military commander and swung the region's allegiance back to Phoumi. Negotiations with the PL lasted until 17 November, and the PL attacks continued during much of that time although at one point the PL representative promised to quit fighting FAL troops that, in his opinion, were loyal to the Royal Government, in exchange for a list of all FAL troops loyal to Phoumi.² Throughout the period of negotiations Souvanna's give-away attitude caused grumbling among members of his government and ranking military commanders. Suspicious from the beginning of the negotiations, General Ouane complained openly and talked of organizing a coup against both Souvanna and Kong Le if Souvanna made too many concessions. The commander of Military Region I announced his intention to switch his support from Souvanna to Phoumi. And on 12 October the FAL Deputy Chief of Staff and Commander of the Vientiane Garrison announced that he had joined forces with the Phoumi-Boun Oum group, claiming that the Communists were exerting influence in the FAL.³

In spite of this sudden loss of support, Souvanna was in no position to break off negotiations with the PL because of the intractable Kong Le's position of power and his growing collaboration with the

1. CINCPAC DIBs 5-10 Oct 60, (S-NOFORN)
2. CINCPAC DIB 17 Oct 60, (S-NOFORN)
3. CINCPAC DIBs 12, 13, and 17 Oct 60, (S-NOFORN)

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communists. Unable to match Kong Le's influence in Vientiane, the Souvanna cabinet decided on 12 October to move the government to Luang Prabang in order to escape Kong Le's influence, to draw the King into more active participation in the government, and to give General Phoumi a face-saving alternative to Vientiane should he decide to drop his opposition to the Souvanna government.¹

Souvanna also hurriedly rounded up 11 senior FAL officers who had been generally pro-U.S. and anti-Souvanna and sent them to attache posts out of the country, an act that further lowered morale of an Army accustomed to mixing in politics.²

Probably the severest blow to Souvanna's ability to keep his government was U.S. action suspending its aid. With Kong Le using both U.S. supplies and FAL troops to assist the PL forces (as in the capture of Sam Neua) and against Phoumi's Army, the U.S. Embassy made good its threat and notified Souvanna on 4 October that it would furnish only the immediate requirements needed to fight the Pathet Lao.³ This blow came when Laos already suffered from a lack of all POL products because of a Thailand blockade placed in effect immediately after Kong Le's 9 August coup, and easily enforced since all POL products moved through Thailand. By the end of September the stocks of cooking gas and kerosene in Laos were exhausted, there was a small supply of aviation and automobile gasoline and approximately a month's supply of diesel oil to operate the Vientiane power plant. Although the embargo was a Thailand action, neither the State Department nor CINCPAC registered a strong protest; the action was compatible with the "wait and see" policy, and, beyond stating that it had no objection to shipments of POL to any point in Laos for civilian use, the U.S. did not wish to force the issue and risk offending Premier Sarit.^{4,5} The embargo did not apply to Phoumi who had been

1. CINCPAC DIBs 12 & 14 Oct 60. (S-NOFORN)
2. CINCPAC DIB 17 Oct 60 (S-NOFORN)
3. State Dept Intel Rpt No. 8435, 6 Apr 61(S-NOFORN) In POLAD/ CINCPAC files.
4. SECSTATE to CINCPAC 270120Z Sep 60 (S)
5. CINCPAC to CHPEO Laos, 232234Z Sep 60 (S)

receiving covert aid from both the U.S. and Thailand.^{1,2} After temporarily suspending aid shipments on 20 August, the Department of Defense on 23 August authorized the use of Lao and Thailand MAP stocks to support General Phoumi at the discretion of the CHPEO and CHJUSMAG, Thailand.

Although Souvanna was advised on 4 October that most U.S. aid was suspended, he said nothing about it until the day after diplomatic relations were established with Russia, and then announced on 7 October that he would take the necessary steps to meet the situation.³ On several occasions thereafter, Souvanna hinted that unless U.S. aid was resumed he might have to ask the Soviets for help. Toward the end of October, embittered because of the lack of aid and by the Thailand embargo on oil products, Souvanna told the U.S. Ambassador that he would seek oil by air from Hanoi or the USSR unless Thailand removed its blockade.⁴

The shift in the U.S. policy came at the middle of October when the State and Defense Departments agreed on the plan to back Phoumi. The immediate problem was assembling in Laos all the supplies that General Phoumi would need. As a first move, CINCPAC directed his CHPEO to assign a lieutenant colonel as a personal adviser to General Phoumi. During the next several weeks, CINCPAC directed an extensive build-up of supplies, of which the more difficult items to provide were, 4,800 carbines and parachutes needed to resupply the ground troops.^{5,6,7,8} Delivery of the supplies and equipment was made to Regions I, II, III and IV, but none were sent to Region V in which Vientiane was located. By the end of November, the CHPEO reported to CINCPAC that General Phoumi had received all of

1. Dept of State Intel Rpt No. 8435, 6 Apr 61, P. 3. (S-NOFORN)
2. PEO Cold War Report 1 Jul - 31 Dec 1960, 6 Mar 61, P. 3. (S)
3. Dept of State Intel Rpt No. 8435, 6 Apr 61, P. 10. (S-NOFORN)
4. CINCPAC DIBs 17, 28 Oct 60 (S-NOFORN)
5. JCS 150046Z cite 984377 to CINCPAC, Oct 60 (S)
6. CINCPAC 150242Z Oct 60 (S)
7. CINCPAC 232027Z Oct 60 (S)
8. CINCPAC 292301Z Oct 60 (S)

the essentials that he would need to carry out his planned operation.

The next Lao coup fell on 10 November, and favored General Phoumi. While the Commander of Military Region I was touring Northern Laos with Souvanna and Brigadier General Ouane, an Army major seized control of Luang Prabang and declared his allegiance to General Phoumi.³ A few days later, on 14 November, Phoumi and other members of his group arrived in Luang Prabang for discussions with the King, who welcomed Phoumi warmly. The King bluntly told them that Souvanna's government appointees should be either replaced or reshuffled.⁴

Negotiations with the Pathet Lao came to an end on 17 November with the issuance of a joint Royal Lao Government - Neo Lao Hak Xat communique announcing that the negotiators had agreed to the formation of a coalition government to include that Pathet Lao, establishment of ties with North Vietnam and Communist China, and another cease fire. The agreement closely paralleled the political accords of November 1956 in which the Lao Government agreed in principle to recognize its neighbors regardless of political color. It was an agreement of which the communist countries approved.⁵

On the same day that this announcement was made, Radio Savannakhet announced that General Ouane had arrived on 16 November at Phoumi's headquarters "to collaborate with the Revolutionary Committee."⁶ This swing-over was another severe blow to Souvanna's position, although it could not have been unexpected since Ouane had complained frequently of communist influence and had threatened to switch to Phoumi's group unless Souvanna reached some agreement with him.⁷

1. CHPEO Laos 2832 to BEO Bangkok, 210227Z Oct 60 (S)
2. CHPEO Laos to CINCPAC 080617Z Dec 60 (S)
3. CINCPAC DIB 14 Nov 60 (S)
4. CINCPAC DIBs 14 & 15 Nov (S-NOFORN)
5. CINCPAC DIB 21 Nov 60 (S-NOFORN)
6. CINCPAC DIB 17 Nov 60 (S-NOFORN)
7. CINCPAC DIBs 27 Oct, 17 Nov 60 (S-NOFORN)

Souvanna's Decision to Request Aid from Russia

Ouane's defection to the Phoumi rebel group was a blow no more serious to the tottering Souvanna government than U. S. action to cut off its aid and divert it to General Phoumi. After threatening for two weeks to seek Soviet aid, on 23 November Souvanna went to U.S. Ambassador Winthrop G. Brown for help. When aid was refused to him, the Premier announced to the press that he intended to ask the USSR for all the aid it would give -- economic, military, or "otherwise." His threat was backed up by a hurried visit from the Soviet Ambassador to Cambodia who recently had been accredited also to Laos.¹ On the same day, and shortly before the USSR Ambassador's visit, Souvanna presented to the U. S. Embassy in Vientiane a formal request that the United States stop furnishing military aid to "rebels against the Royal Lao Government." This request placed the United States, which recognized the Souvanna Government, in a difficult position. If the U. S. refused to quit supplying the "rebel" group, Souvanna might sever diplomatic relations and give the communists an opportunity to move in. On the other hand, if the U. S. complied, Phoumi would have to either abandon his plan or move quickly before he exhausted the supplies on hand and before he had received other supplies promised and enroute.² Souvanna again appealed to the U. S. Embassy on 5 December asking it to cease furnishing arms and ammunition to the Phoumi forces. But by that time the Russians had already begun delivery of the petroleum supplies promised to Souvanna; the first IL-14 plane had arrived at Vientiane on 3 December.^{3, 4}

Events Prior to the Collapse of Souvanna's Government

From the middle of November until 10 December or later the military and political situations in Laos were obscure, confused, and subject to sudden and unexpected changes. At the end of November the RLG forces no longer could be identified as such since they were

1. CINCPAC DIB 24 Nov 60 (S-NOFORN)
2. CINCPAC DIB 25 Nov 60 (S-NOFORN)
3. CINCPAC DIBs 5, 6 Dec 60 (S-NOFORN)
4. Dept of State Intel Rpt No. 8435, 6 Apr 61, P. 14 (S-NOFORN)

engaged in several conflicting pursuits. Some FAL units under Phoumi's command were mounting a large attack aimed at the capture of Vientiane, others were engaged at the Ca Dinh River east of Paksane defending a truce line against Kong Le forces. And about 2,500 Phoumi troops were preparing to defend Luang Prabang, which had been taken over by a pro-Phoumi officer on 10 November. Other FAL soldiers were supposedly loyal to Premier Souvanna, but were under Kong Le's orders and engaged fighting Phoumi forces near the Nam Ca Dinh, and preparing for the defense of Vientiane. And some of Souvanna's (FAL) troops were marching toward Luang Prabang accompanied, according to reports, by Pathet Lao troops. Other Pathet Lao troops had joined Souvanna's effort to recapture Luang Prabang, or were engaged at their usual harassing missions in the northern provinces. In addition to these fighting factions, Souvanna claimed that his troops in the Nam Ca Dinh area had received heavy artillery fire from the Thailand side of the Mekong River.¹ It was a period when it was difficult to distinguish between friendly and enemy troops.

The political situation was no less perplexing. Still clinging to his belief that all the difficulties could be solved by a friendly discussion, Souvanna asked the King on 22 November to summon all Lao factions to a meeting in the Royal Capital, and had once more asked Phoumi to negotiate. King Savang showed neither interest in Souvanna's proposal, nor confidence in his ability to wrest order from the muddled chaos.² Not only did the King refuse to sponsor a coalition government conference, but he appeared content to have Phoumi's forces in control of Luang Prabang, and expressed his regret that Souvanna-Kong Le forces were advancing toward the capital.³ Thus rebuffed, Souvanna attempted to arrange a mission of National Assembly deputies to meet with Phoumi in Savannakhet. Phoumi and several disgruntled government leaders saw in this meeting an opportunity to discuss ways to bringing an end to the "situation in Vientiane." Accordingly, Phoumi

1. CINCPAC DIBs 27 Nov through 7 Dec 60 (S-NOFORN)
2. CINCPAC DIBs 22 and 28 Nov 60 (S-NOFORN)
3. CINCPAC DIB 29 Nov 60 (S-NOFORN)

agreed to negotiate and to guarantee their safe return. Involved in this plot were ex-Premier Somsanith who was then President of the National Assembly, the former Prime Minister Phoui Sananikone who was then in Luang Prabang, and the Commander of the Vientiane Military Region, Colonel Kouprasith. These leaders hoped to assemble outside of Vientiane a majority of the members of the National Assembly who could oust the Souvanna Government by a formal vote of no confidence. It was a possibility of which Souvanna was aware. At least 21 Assembly deputies were already out of Vientiane and only nine more would amount to a majority.¹

The delegation of National Assembly deputies from Vientiane met with General Phoumi in Savannakhet on 1 December where they agreed to hold a special assembly session in Luang Prabang and discussed the possibility of a government of national union that would include all political factions. Phoumi hoped that if he appeared willing to compromise it might be possible to get a majority no-confidence vote at Luang Prabang.² Twenty pro-Phoumi deputies went to Luang Prabang in anticipation of the Assembly meeting there, but in Vientiane the scheme ran into opposition from members of the left-leaning group who staged a demonstration outside the National Assembly building on 1 December. As a result, the deputies adjourned their meeting without approving the Luang Prabang session, thus ending hopes for an easy-method overthrow of Souvanna's government.²

Phoumi's Capture of Vientiane

Since the end of August, Phoumi had apparently been convinced that in time the Souvanna Cabinet would collapse from its own mistrust, suspicion and intrigue, and that it needed only military and psychological pressure to hasten the dissolution. At the end of November, Phoumi had at least five battalions on the south side of the Ca Dinh River. On the north side were troops dispatched by Kong Le in mid-September when he hoped to eliminate Phoumi and the Savannakhet threat. These

1. CINCPAC DIBs 29 Nov and 1 Dec 60 (S-NOFORN)
2. CINCPAC DIB 5 Dec 60 (S)

opposing forces had been engaged more often in violating the formal 28 September cease-fire than in its observance.¹

Phoumi launched his general offensive on 28 November. His initial objective was to mop up the truce line area at the Ca Dinh river to open the route to Paksane and then Vientiane. The fact that Phoumi launched this attack the day before National Assembly deputies arrived in Savannakhet on the latest peace effort indicated that Phoumi didn't share Savanna's confidence in a government of coalition and compromise.²

After several days of successful operations in the Nam Ca Dinh area, Phoumi was ready to move toward Vientiane. By 7 December his troops were closing on Paksane, and Phoumi claimed that his opposition was in disorganized flight.³

Confusion broke out in Vientiane again on the morning of 8 December. Colonel Kouprasith, Commander of Military Region V, acting with Phoumi's knowledge and support, disposed his RLG troops in a dawn maneuver and gained control of the city, airfield and Camp Chinaimo, a military camp about three miles south of Vientiane. Kouprasith's troops immediately distributed leaflets that pledged loyalty to Souvanna, but stated their determination to suppress the Pathet Lao. At this, Souvanna summoned the CHPEO to ask the U.S. to persuade Phoumi to hold up his attack against Vientiane. Reminding CHPEO of the U.S. pledge that arms furnished to Phoumi would not be used against Souvanna, and the importance of avoiding bloodshed, Souvanna pointed out that Kouprasith's troops would resist with equal determination both the PL and Phoumi's troops.⁴ Souvanna's hopes faded however, when Kouprasith's forces were reinforced with Phoumi's paratroopers who were dropped near the city, indicating an alliance between Phoumi and Kouprasith. CHPEO had planned to furnish Civil Air Transport planes for the airlift but when the U.S. Ambassador refused the request, Phoumi shuttled the three companies from Luang Prabang with three FAL C-47s, moving one company at a time.^{5, 6}

1. CINCPAC DIB 7 Dec 60 (S-NOFORN)
2. CINCPAC DIB 1 Dec 60 (S-NOFORN)
3. CINCPAC DIBs 5 and 7 Dec 60 (S-NOFORN)
4. CHPEO 080553Z Dec 60 (S)
5. CHPEO 081605Z Dec 60 (S)
6. CINCPAC DIBs 8 and 9 Dec 60 (S)

Souvanna made one more attempt to avoid bloodshed by asking both Kouprasith and Kong Le to hold troops outside of the city pending further talks. During the middle of the night, however, Kong Le disregarded Souvanna's plea and sent troops to take the radio station, airport and other key installations. Kouprasith's forces, including reinforcements, held Camp Chinaimo.¹ ~~(CONFIDENTIAL)~~

By the evening of 8 December, even the optimistic Souvanna realized that the tide of events was running against him. After capturing Paksane, Phoumi's advance elements were meeting little resistance to their advance toward Vientiane.² Souvanna had no military units that would obey his orders. Members of both the Army and his own government had turned against him, and his control of the government had collapsed on 8 December with the disappearance of 19 National Assembly deputies who fled to Thailand enroute to Savannakhet. These deputies had gone to Camp Chinaimo on 7 December for their personal safety, and stayed there until it was apparent that Kouprasith's "coup" had succeeded. Counting those deputies already in Savannakhet, a majority of the deputies would be available there for a special Assembly meeting.³ The following morning, on 9 December, after his last efforts had failed to achieve peace between Phoumi and Kouprasith, Souvanna declared Vientiane an open city, ordered all military units to leave and asked the police to assume control. The order was not obeyed. Sometime during the day Souvanna handed his power to the military commander and fled by plane to Phnom Penh, Cambodia, taking with him some members of his cabinet and his conviction that all factions in Laos could have reached a national reconciliation through friendly discussions. Even from exile he sent a message to King Savang the day after his arrival in Cambodia stating his willingness to go to Luang Prabang if the King wished to hold a conference there.⁴

1. AMEMB VIENTIANE 090750Z Dec 60 to CINCPAC (C)
2. CINCPAC DIB 9 Dec 60 (S)
3. AMEMB VIENTIANE 090750Z Dec 60 to CINCPAC (C)
4. AMEMB PHNOM PENH 110500Z Dec 60 to CINCPAC (S)

Bolstered by the 19 recent defectors, a majority of the members of the National Assembly met in Savannakhet on 11 December and voted no confidence in Souvanna's government, declaring it dissolved as of 9 December.¹ On 12 December, King Savang signed a Royal ordinance that ended the Souvanna Phouma government and temporarily transferred all powers to Phoumi's Revolutionary Committee. The Revolutionary Committee announced on the next day the formation of a new government headed by Prince Boun Oum, with Phoumi serving as Vice Premier and Minister of National Defense and Veterans Affairs.

Upon the departure of Souvanna, Quinim Pholsena, the Pathet Lao sympathizer who had been serving as Minister of information, left Vientiane and, with Souvanna's full approval, flew to Hanoi to look for parts of 105mm howitzers that Phoumi troops had removed before they abandoned guns to Kong Le forces in the fighting near Paksane. Quinim believed Kong Le would be able to recapture Camp Chinaimo if he had artillery support.² Quinim returned on 11 December and, as senior cabinet minister in Vientiane, claimed leadership of the government. On the same day, Soviet aircraft, which for several days had been bringing supplies of food and petroleum products from Hanoi, delivered howitzers and ammunition to Kong Le's forces. This was the beginning of overt Russian airlift support for Kong Le and PL troops.^{3,4}

By 12 December, Kouprasith's forces in Camp Chinaimo, reinforced by Phoumi's paratroopers, numbered approximately 1,800 men. Other Phoumi troops were within a day's march of the capital city. Kong Le's defending force was estimated at 2,500 or more men, of whom not all were considered loyal or willing to fight, plus some 2,000 Pathet Lao in outlying areas of Vientiane Province.^{5,6} The flow of Russian delivered howitzers, mortars and other weapons continued into 12 December.

1. CINCPAC DIB 12 Dec 60 (S-NOFORN)
2. AMEMB PHNOM PENH 110500Z to CINCPAC Dec 60 (S)
3. AMEMB VIENTIANE 111102Z to CINCPAC Dec 60 (C)
4. Dept of State Intelligence Rpt. No. 8435, 6 Apr 61, p4, (S-NOFORN)
5. Ibid.
6. CINCPAC DIB 13 Dec 60 (S-NOFORN)

Early in the afternoon, Quinim appealed to the American Embassy for help in stopping Phoumi's attack on the city. Quinim claimed he had intercepted a Phoumi message ordering an attack to commence that night from three directions, including Thailand. He also claimed that Vientiane was an open city and the only soldiers present were those in transit between points of concentration. To avoid bloodshed among the villagers, he wanted a truce but insisted that his troops in transit would have to defend themselves if attacked.¹

The first clash between Phoumi and Kong Le forces occurred on 13 December. For three days thereafter fighting in the partially evacuated city varied from sporadic to heavy, and then ended when the combined Kong Le/Pathet Lao forces abandoned the city and moved north on the road leading to Luang Prabang. The Russians continued to airdrop supplies to the withdrawing troops.^{2, 3}

PL/Kong Le Threat

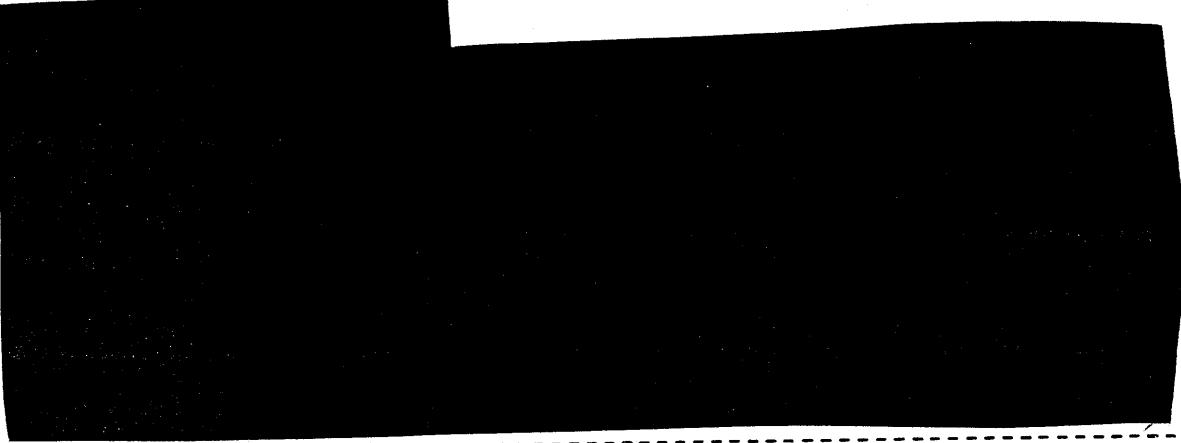
Phoumi's government, as yet unorganized, faced several urgent problems for which it needed aid. Some of the problems were inherited from the previous government, others were created by the new one. Of these, the one causing the most immediate concern was the old threat from the Pathet Lao reinforced by Kong Le's force and equipped and supplied by Russian planes. The communist countries reacted to the fall of Vientiane with a barrage of propaganda carried by radio Moscow, Peking and Hanoi that indicated a strong sensitivity towards Phoumi's victory. The Pathet Lao increased military pressure against Luang Prabang, ordered expanded guerrilla warfare throughout Laos, and called for action to "rescue the King and liberate Luang Prabang."³ Russia protested to the American Embassy in Moscow; North Vietnam threatened intervention and, with the support of Communist China, revived its appeal for the reactivation in Laos of the International Control Commission.^{4, 5}

1. AMEMB VIENTIANE 121337Z to CINCPAC Dec 60 (S)
2. Dept of State Intelligence Rpt No. 8435 of 6 Apr 61, p4 (S-NOFORN)
3. CINCPAC DIB 13 Dec 60 (S-NOFORN)
4. CINCPAC DIB 20 Dec 60 (OUO)
5. State Dept Intelligence Rpt No. 8435 of 6 Apr 61, pp15, 16 (S-NF)

THE PHOUMI/BOUN OUM GOVERNMENT

The newly appointed Prime Minister of Laos, Prince Boun Oum, arrived in Vientiane on 16 December and formally requested of the CHPEO that the U. S. continue military and economic aid for the RLG, a request that CINCPAC passed on to the JCS with the recommendation that action be initiated to redesignate the PEO as MAAG Laos. This would eliminate French interference and the limitations imposed on the PEO operation.^{1,2}

CINCPAC assessed the threat of communist retaliation and, on 14 December considered that the situation could warrant executing his OPLAN 32-59 (Phase II Laos) or a subsequent phase of the plan. On 16 December he directed the Commander of Joint Task Force 116 to activate those elements of his task force that were located in the Western Pacific.^{3,4} CINCPAC also directed CHPEO to support General Phoumi in developing an aggressive plan to eliminate the Pathet Lao forces throughout Laos. He cautioned against a "foolhardy scattering of forces" and against being lulled into a state of complacency and inaction. Asking for speed but not blind haste, CINCPAC wanted a coordinated and controlled series of campaigns that would "find Phoumi with high cards at each locale."⁵



1. CHJUSMAAG Thailand 8454 to CINCPAC 160445 Z Dec 60 (TS)
2. CINCPAC 162034Z to JCS Dec 60 (S)
3. CINCPAC 162357Z Dec 60 (TS)
4. CINCPAC 140214Z Dec 60 (TS-NOFORN)
5. CINCPAC 170351Z Dec 60 (TS)
6. CINCPAC 200322Z to JCS Dec 60 (TS)

pull, however, CINCPAC wanted to use Thailand facilities for training Lao pilots to operate armed T-6s so that the legal government could exercise its right to control the air space over Laos. As things then stood, CINCPAC recommended caution in using [redacted]

[redacted] In order to give Phoumi vigorous support, CINCPAC recommended to the JCS immediate action to furnish 10 armed T-6 planes from Thailand stocks, to work out an agreement for Thailand help in training Lao pilots, and to contract with Air America for maintenance. As soon as five pilots were ready, the RLG could warn the Russians that Laos would not tolerate further intervention by foreign aircraft, and then attempt to destroy the planes if the lift continued. CINCPAC thought that even an unsuccessful attempt would deter the Russians. Trained Lao pilots could also be used for reconnaissance and to attack PL artillery and vehicles. The Thailand planes would be replaced later under MAP. Because of the importance of stopping the Soviet supply effort, CINCPAC urged immediate action.¹ The JCS notified CINCPAC that the State and Defense Departments reacted favorably and wanted to go ahead with his plan, with special emphasis on the propaganda aspects. JCS wanted to be certain that Phoumi understood and accepted his part of the plan that involved making clear to world opinion the RLG's strong objection to Soviet violation of Lao air space.²

Establishing Legal Status of Phoumi Boun Oum Government

The project of furnishing T-6 planes to the RLG became entangled in another urgent problem facing the U. S. and the new Lao government, and served to define a fundamental difference that existed between State Department policy and the approach of Lao problems urged by CINCPAC. State Department policy favored the use of reason and world opinion to influence international relationships, reserving the use of force as a last resort; CINCPAC urged the use of military force or the willingness

1. CINCPAC 232339Z to JCS Dec 60 (TS)
2. JCS 280225Z to CINCPAC Dec 60 (TS)

to use force, arguing that any political move must have the backing of armed strength before it would gain respect from communist governments.

The other problem, one that plagued the U.S. government more than the Boun Oum government, was the question of the constitutionality of the Boun Oum government. It was a political problem of the new government's own making, aggravated by Souvanna's refusal to resign and by his public claim to be the only legal Prime Minister. Since Souvanna had originally asked the USSR to furnish POL supplies, the Russians legal basis for continuing the airlift rested on their recognition of his government. The task of establishing Boun Oum's government as the legal government of Laos was complicated by the fact that on 10 September Prince Boun Oum had declared that the constitution and Souvanna's government were suspended and replaced by martial law. On 22 December when the American Ambassador approached General Phoumi about the problem, Phoumi suggested his government could maintain the position that the constitution was suspended, the assembly dissolved and that the Royal Ordinance they had received from the King was sufficient authority for his government. The King's Royal Ordinance, however, was based upon the no confidence in Souvanna vote expressed by 40 members of the National Assembly. The weakness in this claim was the fact that in issuing the ordinance confirming the existing government, King Savang had referred to the National Assembly and implied its existence. It was also a course of action that, having no basis in the constitution, could create doubt in other countries about the status of the government. Another course of action would be for Boun Oum and Phoumi to ask for a vote of confidence by the assembly and go through the regular procedure of investiture, a course of action to which Phoumi objected because he claimed there were communist sympathizers in the Assembly and because this position was contrary to the previous one taken by his Revolutionary Committee.¹

1. AMEMB VIENTIANE 220400Z to CINCPAC Dec 60 (S)

Regardless of the contradiction in asking approval of an assembly the Revolutionary Committee claimed it had dissolved, the U.S. Ambassador urged Phoumi to ask the King to call a special session of the Assembly and to confirm the government in strict accordance with constitutional procedures.¹ This situation was also complicated by the fact that the King, in whom all power was vested by the constitution, had done nothing personally to dissolve the Assembly and considered that it still existed.²

One obvious solution was to persuade Souvanna to resign. Lao government officials, who considered Souvanna a sincere patriot, thought this could be arranged, particularly if the King asked for his resignation. But the King, suffering from his own chronic lack of resolution, failed to make an outright request of Souvanna. On 26 December he issued a second decree giving royal approval to Boun Oum's provisional government and announcing the dissolution of Souvanna's cabinet, actions that failed to force Souvanna's resignation.^{3,4} Even a delegation from Boun Oum that visited Souvanna in mid-January to offer to him his choice of posts in the new government, failed to persuade him to end the "government" the Russians claimed to be supporting.⁵

~~(SECRET)~~

The problem of furnishing planes to Phoumi became involved in the attempt to give the Boun Oum government the status of legitimacy. The U.S. Ambassador to Laos told Phoumi that the U.S. was considering furnishing him the armed T-6s providing the government established its legal status, filed a formal protest against Soviet interference, circulated protests through the United Nations, and warned the Russians that the government would take necessary steps if its protest was disregarded. Phoumi agreed to these conditions,

1. AMEMB VIENTIANE 220400Z to CINCPAC Dec 60 (S)
2. AMEMB VIENTIANE 221810Z to CINCPAC Dec 60 (S)
3. CINCPAC DIB 27 Dec 60 (S)
4. AMEMB VIENTIANE 221810Z to CINCPAC Dec 60 (S)
5. "Laos Clamor Overhead," Time, 20 Jan 61

except for reservations on the first one.¹ Although Admiral Felt appreciated the fact that the Boun Oum Government's delay in establishing before the world its legal status was embarrassing to the U.S. Government and a threat to its diplomatic effort, he stated his objections to the State Department action in a message to the JCS. While conceding that political efforts should be made, he doubted that political means would be enough, and favored military action to stop the airlift and to burn up the communist supply dumps and aircraft on the ground. These military actions, CINCPAC believed, were essential elements of the power required for diplomats to have freedom of action. CINCPAC also urged that the RLG issue no warning that it would defend its air space until it had the capability of carrying out the threat. The ideal solution, CINCPAC suggested, would be to make the warning and the strike simultaneously.²

Under heavy U.S. pressure for action, the King called a special meeting of the Lao National Assembly which met on 4 January 1961 and gave a 41 to 0 vote of confidence to the Boun Oum Government. Formal investiture occurred the next day, although too late to avoid crippling the U.S. effort to rally free world support to the new Lao government.³

RLG Attitude Toward the French

A third problem and source of embarrassment to the U.S. government was created by a distinctly hostile attitude that the Boun Oum/Phoumi Government adopted toward the French. In the struggle for power that followed the Kong Le Coup, the French had openly shown preference for Souvanna, and attitude the new government resented. Because of this and some tactless and irritating actions by individual French officers, the Boun Oum/Phoumi Government decided to get rid of the French Military Mission and to move the French from their control of Seno base. If carried out, this action would remove the legal basis on which the U.S. training program was justified under

1. VIENTIANE 1208 to CINCPAC 301320Z Dec 60 (TS)
2. CINCPAC 300131Z to JCS Dec 60 (TS)
3. AMEMB Laos 325, 4 Jan 61 (U)

the Geneva Accords. The U.S. warned both King Savang and Phoumi of the possible consequences.¹ The French Embassy in Laos ignored the first request that they evacuate the Seno base and, under strong U.S. pressure, the RLG eventually abandoned its hostile course of action.^{2, 3}

PHOUMI MILITARY OPERATIONS AGAINST COMMUNIST FORCES

During the period when General Phoumi's military objectives were the overthrow of the Souvanna Government and the reduction of Kong Le's influence, Phoumi organized and led his troops. But after capturing the capital city, Phoumi became embroiled in the affairs of state and turned over command of his military forces to Major General Bounleut, newly appointed Commanding General of the FAL. Whether for lack of aggressive leadership, for lack of an objective, or for other reasons, in pursuing the Pathet Lao and Kong Le forces beyond Vientiane, the RLG forces failed to develop the momentum necessary for decisive action. ~~(SECRET)~~

The Phoumi Plan to reduce the PL Threat

On 17 December, CINCPAC had urged his CHPEO to help Phoumi develop a carefully coordinated plan for a series of attacks to reduce the PL threat. Phoumi proposed a three phase operation calculated to disperse and destroy enemy forces in the mountainous areas between Vientiane and Luang Prabang, then those in the Sam Neua Province, and finally enemy forces in Phong Saly Province. Phoumi optimistically hoped to complete the first phase by the end of January, the second by the end of March and the final phase by the end of May. To reach his first objective, Phoumi intended to send four infantry battalions with artillery and armor support north toward Luang Prabang.⁴ A second column from Luang Prabang was to move south and a third column from Xieng Khouang would attack southwest to close the trap on Kong Le and his force. U.S. advisers believed the plan would require ~~(SECRET)~~

1. AMEMB VIENTIANE 290915Z to SECSTATE Dec 60 (S)
2. AMEMB Laos 4 Jan 8PM 61 (TS)
3. SECSTATE 17 Jan Noon 61 (TS)
4. PEO REP SVKT 139 to CINCPAC 231615Z Dec 60 (S)

coordination that was unusual for the FAL, and possibly beyond its capability. Nevertheless, with total Kong Le strength estimated at not more than 2,000 men, Phoumi had the advantage of the larger force and also the psychological advantage as the result of recent victories. His force was also better armed and supplied and he was considered capable of defeating Kong Le if the forces became engaged. The lack of coordination between the converging Phoumi columns, however, could easily provide Kong Le a chance to escape.¹ ~~(SECRET)~~

The pursuit of Kong Le and his troops actually got underway on the afternoon of 22 December, but the plan for the attack was more impressive than its listless execution. Although three Groupments Mobile (GM) participated in the attack, only one of them was in contact with the enemy. GM 1 moved north along Route 13 starting from positions approximately 15 miles north of Vientiane and until 29 December met only light resistance from the withdrawing troops.^{2, 3, 4} The Kong Le forces defended Vang Vieng and Phoumi's attack stalled south of the town. An Air Force attache made a reconnaissance flight of the area on 29 December and reported that Kong Le's withdrawal was blocked by a blown bridge about ten miles north of the town. He also reported that there was no sign of the Phoumi force that was supposed to be approaching from the north.⁵

Loss of the PDJ and U. S. Efforts to Support Phoumi

The military situation changed abruptly on 29 December when Pathet Lao forces commenced attacks against the towns of Nong Het, Ban Ban and Moung Soui, all of which were situated along Highway 7 between the North Vietnamese border and the junction of Route 7 with Route 13 near the town of Phou Khoun. By 31 December it became obvious that the enemy action was well coordinated and calculated to capture the Plaines des Jarres (PDJ). The reports, as was not

1. CINCUSARPAC 220237Z to DA, Dec 60 (S)
2. USARMA, VIENTIANE CX-A4, 230015Z Dec 60 (S)
3. USARMA Laos 240542Z Dec 60 (S)
4. CINCUSARPAC Summary 242242Z Dec 60 (TS)
5. USAIRA SAIGON to CINCPACAF 291250Z Dec 60 (S)

uncommon when describing strong enemy action, claimed the enemy force consisted of Vietnamese troops with a strength of at least seven battalions and that they were supported by airdrops made by USSR planes.¹

The RLG claim that North Vietnam troops had invaded Laos had more basis in fact than usual. There was solid evidence that the enemy force that moved from North Vietnam along Route 7 toward the PDJ contained North Vietnamese soldiers in numbers that constituted an outright invasion of Laos from an adjacent communist country, with identifiable North Vietnam truck convoys and military equipment. This act, more than any until that time, in all respects was justifiable cause for implementing either a U. S. unilateral or SEATO plan for defending Laos against "overt invasion." However, the opportunity to recognize the act as overt communist aggression to seize the vital and strategic Plaine des Jarres area was lost in an exchange of claims and counter claims between the RLG and the U. S. State Department as to whether the invaders were actually North Vietnamese forces, or PL forces trained in North Vietnam, or PL forces reinforced with North Vietnam cadres. As a result of the failure of the Free World countries to act decisively, the communists firmly established a position of strength that threatened all of northern Laos.^{2,3}

The PL action caught RLG forces at a most inopportune time. Phoumi had commenced a reorganization of his Department of Defense and was in the process of establishing a new command structure, and a realignment of assignments and responsibilities. Command functions had been split with a operational headquarters under General Bounleut at Luang Prabang, a Territorial Troop Command under General Bounpone at Savannakhet and Generals Phoumi and Ouane in Vientiane. Most authority, however, Phoumi had kept to himself without delegation and with very little staff assistance. The French advisers had taken a completely "hands off" attitude. CINCPAC's CHPEO was trying to help

1. CHPEO to CINCPAC 310810Z Dec 60 (S)
2. CINCPAC WID No. 11-61 of 17 Mar 61, p. 2 (S)
3. Paper prepared by CINCPAC J512 Dec 61, In CINCPAC Hist Branch (S)

stabilize the situation but found it a difficult job amid the confusion and inefficiency within the Ministry of Defense and FAL Headquarters.¹ (S)

Phoumi ordered GM 1 to move fast and capture Vang Vieng, and also directed that two battalions be airlifted to Xieng Khouang to reinforce RLG troops in the PDJ area. This left him with only three reserve battalions which he had to be cautious in moving since the communists had been quick to move into areas from which RLG troops were evacuated. To give Phoumi additional strength and flexibility, CHPEO advised CINCPAC that it was absolutely essential that a previous request for augmentation of 78 additional companies and 2,000 MEO be approved, and Phoumi pressed his old request for the armed T-6 planes that was then entangled in political decisions.² (SECRET)

CINCPAC reacted to the new communist threat by declaring Defense Condition 2 for JTF-116 forces earmarked for and supporting the Laos phase of CINCPAC OPLAN 32-59. He also asked the JCS to augment the 315th Air Division by the immediate assignment of a C-130 squadron, a request that the JCS promptly approved.^{3,4} CINCPAC also urged his CHPEO to see that Phoumi conducted his operations in a professional manner, and urged action to capture Vang Vieng and destroy supplies and military facilities there.⁵ CHPEO assured CINCPAC that he was doing his utmost to influence the situation, a difficult task amid the existing confusion and changes in plans and information.⁶ In a message to the JCS, CINCPAC also warned that the communist forces were out to take Northern Laos, leaving the FAL enveloped, seriously cut up, and in a weakened position for holding Southern Laos. He said the U.S. could expect a plea for direct military intervention, for which the PACOM forces were ready. "With full realization of the seriousness of a decision to intervene, I believe strongly that we must intervene now or give up Northern Laos."

1. CHPEO Laos 020900Z to CINCPAC Jan 61 (S)
2. CHPEO Laos 300515Z to CINCPAC Dec 60 (S)
3. CINCPAC 311430Z to JCS Dec 60 (TS)
4. Hq Tac 311812Z Dec 60 (TS)
5. CINCPAC 3023302Z Dec 60 (TS)
6. CHPEO Laos 011517Z to CINCPAC Jan 61 (S)

Faced with new threats to the freedom of Laos, the JCS asked for CINCPAC's appraisal as soon as possible on the size of ground, naval, and air forces, either SEATO or U.S. unilateral, that would be required to clean out Laos and restore an acceptable degree of order to the country. As a basis for making the appraisal, the JCS suggested that CINCPAC assume that communist forces from neither Red China nor North Vietnam would intervene overtly, but that North Vietnam would continue to furnish volunteers and other assistance. The JCS were thinking of a military operation lasting 30 to 45 days.¹

Recent events in Laos gave scant reason for CINCPAC to rely upon any effective action from the RLG. The towns of Nong Het and Ban Ban had passed to PL control on 1 January and, although Phoumi had moved two battalions to Xieng Khouang, enemy forces retained effective control of the PDJ.² Although the FAL outnumbered enemy forces and was well supplied, U.S. observers considered it poorly organized and coordinated, and in some cases, tired and reluctant to fight. The FAL had a much greater area and more static positions to defend. The initiative remained with the enemy.³ Phoumi's offensive against Vang Vieng bogged down before enemy victories in the Plaine des Jarres, and many of his commanders were asking for reinforcements that he could not furnish. To U.S. observers, the military situation was obscure, but they expressed serious doubt about Phoumi's capability to mount a successful counter offensive to recapture the PDJ area. By comparison, the Pathet Lao/Kong Le forces occupied the strategic ground from which they could threaten the main population centers of Laos; they had air and road supply lines and a supply base from which they could equip and maintain harassing operations for an indefinite period and from which they could launch major attacks if they wished.^{3,4}

In replying to the JCS request, CINCPAC said he doubted that the country could be "cleaned up" in 30 to 45 days but that he did think it

1. JCS 032312Z Jan 61 to CINCPAC (TS)
2. CHPEO Laos 011240Z Jan 61 to CINCPAC (TS)
3. AMEMB VIENTIANE 031430Z Jan 61 to CINCPAC (S)
4. CINCUSARPAC 050308Z Jan 61 to DA (S)

possible to break up the Kong Le/Pathet Lao/North Vietnamese hold on the Plaine des Jarres area and to re-establish the conditions approximately as they were before the Kong Le coup, with the Boun Oum government in control of all but the two northern provinces of Phong Saly and Sam Neua. To accomplish this, CINCPAC recommended the use of a two brigade task force consisting of one airborne and two other battle groups furnished by USARPAC, and three battalion landing teams from FMFPAC -- a force of approximately 24,000 including supporting air but not counting naval forces that would consist of an attack carrier force and other naval support. If the operation was conducted under the SEATO label, the U.S. contribution would be about half - or approximately 12,000.¹

By 6 January, when it appeared that the PL did not intend to pursue its advantage, CINCPAC relaxed the defense condition of troops committed to JTF-116 to condition 3.²

After faltering for two weeks, FAL forces succeeded in forcing a crossing of the Nam Lik river on 14 January and in the capture of Vang Vieng on the 16th.^{3,4} But instead of pressing the attack, Colonel Kouprasith and members of his staff returned to Vientiane after the capture of Vang Vieng. Kouprasith and seven other officers received promotions, as a reward for their victory. GM 1 was turned over to new officers. Members of the CHPEO office expected a long delay before the new staff could get the attack moving again, but an efficient transfer took place, attributed to several capable officers who recently had been placed in the FAL headquarters.⁵ This achievement was immediately offset by the loss of the town of Phou Khoun and the road junction of highways 13 and 7 north of Vang Vieng, a serious loss and one that occurred without a fight according to a U.S. observer.⁶

~~(SECRET)~~

1. CINCPAC 060054Z Jan 61 to JCS (TS)
2. CINCPAC 062230Z Jan 61 (TS)
3. CHPEO SITREP 131200Z Jan 61 (S)
4. CHPEO Laos 161515Z Jan 61 (S)
5. CHPEO Laos 191235Z Jan 61 (S)
6. CINCPAC Daily Intelligence Summary No. 10-61 of 19 Jan 61 (S)

During the remainder of January the FAL forces made no significant progress. Phoumi, in the meantime, revised his plan of attack. His first objective was to retake the lost road junction which he planned to do with one column moving north from Vang Vieng on Route 13, and another column attacking south on the road from Luang Prabang. These two columns would then turn east to form the main effort of his attack toward the PDJ area. As a secondary effort, Phoumi planned to use a third force located southeast of the PDJ in the vicinity of Tha Thom to attack toward Xieng Khouang and the PDJ area. He also planned to drop his two paratroop battalions on the Phong Savan airfield a few miles east of the main PDJ airfield, and if this proved successful, to follow up by airlifting two infantry battalions to the airfield. Phoumi hoped to capture Phou Khoun in time to commence the drive east by 6 February, and estimated he would be able to seize the PDJ a week later, an estimate that the CHPEO modified to three weeks.¹ This venture got underway on 27 January and by the end of the month the Groupe Mobile approaching the Phou Khoun road junction from the north was in contact with the communist forces controlling the key area. The other government force had encountered felled trees and other obstacles along the narrow road north of Moung Kassy, but the enemy force withdrew with only light resistance.² By 3 February, Phoumi's forces had recaptured the road junction controlling the approach to the PDJ, and commenced reorganizing for the next phase of the attack.³

The second phase of Phoumi's attack promptly ran into trouble. As FAL forces moved eastward along Route 7 they encountered increased resistance including an unusual number of anti-tank and anti-personnel mines -- delaying measures that the enemy had employed first in the defense of the Phou Khoun road junction. It soon became evident that the communists placed a high value on the Plaines des Jarres and, from positions on the high ground surrounding Phou Soung, were prepared to prevent a FAL break through. Since the fall of Vientiane, FAL forces

1. CHPEO Laos 041444Z Feb 61 (TS)
2. CINCPAC Daily Intelligence Summary No. 15-61 of 30 Jan 61 (S)
3. CINCPAC Daily Intelligence Summary No. 18-61 of 6 Feb 61 (S)

had demonstrated only a slight capability to overcome genuine resistance. When the FAL columns advancing from both the west and the south toward the PDJ came up against Pathet Lao determined to hold their ground, the FAL columns faltered, and stopped.¹ ~~(SECRET)~~

Attempts to Stop the Soviet Airlift

CINCPAC had hoped to stop the Soviet airlift and improve the FAL fighting spirit by backing the FAL with support from both reconnaissance and fighter planes. Effort to expedite action to transfer armed T-6 planes from stock in Thailand had run into a temporary snag toward the end of December when the Department of State had made the constitutionality of the Boun Oum government a condition for receiving the desired planes. CINCPAC had objected to this, had asked the JCS to help get inter-agency authorization for the transfer, and had asked his CHJUSMAG Thailand to help expedite the transfer at that end.^{2,3} The plan was to first warn Russia that the RLG objected to the violations of its airspace by the Soviet planes, and would take necessary steps if they were not stopped, and thereafter attack the airlift planes while they were on the ground. Later, CINCPAC hoped to furnish B-26 planes for this purpose. He advised the JCS that he did not believe that these actions would result in a large scale war, but that the Lao would fight if the U. S. would stand firmly beside them.⁴

Four T-6 aircraft with wing mounted .30 caliber machine guns and equipment to handle 5" rockets and bombs were ready for transfer on 4 January. A few days later four Lao pilots with previous experience had been checked out and, on 9 January they flew their planes to Savannakhet, and to Vientiane the next day.^{5,6} On 7 January, however, the JCS restricted the use of armor on the planes to machine guns and rockets. Otherwise, Phoumi was authorized to make immediate use of

1. CINCPAC Daily Intelligence Summaries No. 20-61, 10 Feb 61; 21-61, 14 Feb 61; and 26-61, 28 Feb 61, (S)
2. CINCPAC 312322Z Dec 60 (TS)
3. CINCPAC 312323Z Dec 60 (TS)
4. CINCPAC 070320Z Jan 61 (TS)
5. VIENTIANE 1293, 090705Z Jan 61 to STATE (TS)
6. VIENTIANE 1251, 040555Z Jan 61 to CINCPAC (TS)

the T-6 aircraft, with first priority against communist airlift on the ground or in the air, and second priority to be against troops, dumps and other similar military targets.¹

On the afternoon of 10 January, the RLG delivered its note of protest to the Soviet Embassy where an official read the note and then refused to accept it, stating that the USSR did not recognize the Boun Oum government.² On the afternoon of 11 January, the first combat mission was flown with the mission of making an armed reconnaissance of the road from the Nam Lik River to the Vang Vieng airstrip. The pilots found neither Soviet aircraft or enemy vehicles so they expended their ordnance on two bridge sites with unknown results. They reported that about half of their machine guns malfunctioned.³ CINCPAC was not pleased by the report of the first T-6 mission, and advised his CHPEO that he wanted scheduled strikes against specific targets located by competent intelligence.⁴ On 15 January, Lao pilots destroyed two large trucks at Vang Vieng and the morale of Phoumi's fliers temporarily soared, but two days later one of the aircraft was lost to ground fire, and the pilots complained of the ineffectiveness of the planes. Their lack of speed and the difficulty the unskilled pilots experienced in damaging communist aircraft on the ground with rockets and machine guns limited the value of the T-6 craft. CHPEO wanted the restriction against the use of bombs lifted.^{5, 6, 7}

CINCPAC urged the JCS to cancel the restrictions and permit use of bombs and napalm in Laos, but this was not done and, in spite of strong protests by communist bloc countries against the introduction of armed aircraft, the T-6 planes did not at first significantly influence the course of events in Laos.^{8, 9} The PDJ area was protected by camouflaged anti-aircraft weapons, which discouraged both the pilots and

1. JCS 072101Z Jan 61 to CINCPAC (TS)
2. CINCPAC Laos Diary 12 Jan 61 (TS)
3. CHPEO Laos 111555Z Jan 61 to CINCPAC (TS)
4. CINCPAC 130040Z Jan 61 to CHPEO Laos (TS)
5. CINCPAC Laos Diary 16 Jan 61 (TS)
6. CHPEO 181011Z Jan 61 to CINCPAC (TS)
7. CHPEO Laos 180840Z Jan 61 (S)
8. CINCPAC 182058Z Jan 61 to JCS (TS)
9. CINCPAC Daily Intelligence Summary No. 8-61 of 17 Jan 61 (S-NF)

General Phoumi, who wanted B-26 planes instead. Members of the FAL and PEO who had hoped the extra support would prove decisive, were disgusted with the performance of the T-6 pilots.^{1,2} Concerned about the failure of the Lao pilots and the decision to limit the T-6 armament, a decision influenced by a State Department and U. S. Embassy Laos attitude that CINCPAC considered unrealistic and overly cautious, CINCPAC stated to the JCS his position on the subject. He took exception to a message in which the U. S. Ambassador in Laos opposed introducing new weapons and techniques in Laos, but expressed his hopes that Phoumi would recapture the PDJ area. CINCPAC thought the Ambassador's analysis contained small basis for the hope expressed. "There is a larger and better basis for hope," CINCPAC said, "by removing restraints which have been self-imposed on the kind of support we can give to Phoumi's fighting men, by continuing to bolster leadership at troop level, and by building morale by winning the fight."³

At CINCPAC's suggestion, CHPEO had earlier considered the use of light automatic anti-aircraft weapons against the Russian airlift planes but had concluded they would be impractical in Laos. Besides the fact that the Russian planes cautiously made their drops at safe distances inside areas held by the Pathet Lao, CHPEO feared that the more sophisticated AA weapons would be a burden upon the FAL maintenance facilities that could barely maintain the simple weapons then on hand.⁴

The problem of providing aerial reconnaissance was one CINCPAC had undertaken in December when he asked the CHPEO to urge General Phoumi to send two official memos, one to the CHPEO and one to appropriate Thailand officials, requesting that necessary reconnaissance flights over Laos be conducted. If Thailand refused or could not make the flights, it would be necessary to consider use of U. S. planes.⁵ A few days later, after CINCPAC learned of the 31 December Pathet Lao attack against the PDJ, he alerted CINCPACFLT to be prepared to use task group aircraft if directed.⁶

1. CHPEO Laos 290626Z Jan 61 to CINCPAC (S)
2. CHPEO Laos 311149Z Jan 61 to CINCPAC (TS)
3. CINCPAC 301925Z Jan 61 (TS)
4. CHPEO Laos 021020Z Jan 61 (S)
5. CINCPAC 292032Z Dec 60 (TS)
6. CINCPAC 312208Z Dec 60 (TS)

Although both the U. S. and Thailand recognized the need for effective reconnaissance, each hoped that the other would conduct the flights. The JCS authorized CINCPAC to raise the question with Thailand officials in an attempt to persuade that country to use its RT-33 planes, preferably without insignia and piloted by Thai volunteers. Failing in that, the JCS suggested use of the armed Lao T-6 planes by either Lao pilots or Thai volunteers.¹

Four New Battalions for Phoumi

Pathet Lao offensives forced Phoumi to disperse his approximately 29,000 troops throughout Laos and to commit most of his reserve. Toward the end of January he asked the CHPEO for authority to activate four additional battalions to be supported by the U. S. Phoumi wanted to station a battalion at each of the four towns of Vang Vient, Paksane, Sayaboury, and Pakse.⁵ CHPEO used the request as a lever to secure Phoumi's consent for the U. S. to place an military advisory teams with the headquarters of his battalions, which the PEO considered one of the most significant actions that he could take then to bolster the FAL.⁶ CHPEO then passed on the request to CINCPAC with his recommendation for favorable consideration, pointing out that the FAL was spread so thin the commanders could not risk concentrating forces against the PL without risk of other losses.⁵ The matter went to the JCS for decision

1. JCS 010119Z Jan 61 to CINCPAC (TS)
2. CINCPAC 092107Z Jan 61 to JCS (TS)
3. CHJUSMAG Thailand 140620Z Jan 61 to CINCPAC (TS)
4. CHJUSMAG Thailand 190939Z Jan 61 to CINCPAC (TS)
5. CHPEO Laos 280521Z Jan 61 (S)
6. CHPEO Laos 230915Z Jan 61 (TS)

and when they indicated that the request would be approved, CHPEO encouraged Phoumi to activate the extra units. Training of the new units commenced on 11 February.¹ Final authority was received on 15 February and provided for an increase of 3,522 men, which included the four infantry battalions, supporting artillery, and special forces operational detachments with necessary command elements. Phoumi was advised that the increase would be temporary, and was warned not to make commitments for additional units without prior U. S. approval.²

1. CHPEO Laos 160550Z Feb 61 (S)
2. STATE 868 of 15 Feb 2PM 61 to VIENTIANE (S)

CHAPTER III

CINCPAC ACTIVITIES DURING ATTEMPTS TO
NEGOTIATE A SETTLEMENT IN LAOS

PROPOSALS FOR ICC INTERVENTION

Just as soon as military events turned against the Pathet Lao/Kong Le forces in early December, the Communist Bloc raised the plea for reactivation of the International Commission for Supervision and Control in Laos (ICC). As events later indicated, the communists were no more willing to permit the ICC to supervise or control their military activities in Laos than they had been during the period 1955-58, but apparently hoped to weaken the opposition's will to fight by proposals of international intervention. The first proposals for reactivating the ICC came from Peiping and Hanoi. The Boun Oum Government refused to consider the return of an ICC that had a proven record of inefficiency. Russia remained silent on the proposal until late in December after King Savang announced the formal dissolution of the Souvanna cabinet. Acting in its capacity as co-chairman of the 1954 Geneva Convention, Russia asked for UK cooperation in calling a meeting of governments to revive the ICC in Laos.¹

India, which had furnished the chairman of the previous Lao ICC team, favored its reactivation and presented a proposal to the U. S. government which pointed out the necessity of respecting the wishes and decisions of the RLG in the matter.² An objection shared by all Western governments was the communists' insistence that the ICC could deal only with the Souvanna government, a condition that would have the effect of substantiating Souvanna's claim to authority, or of impeding the return of the ICC either because the communists did not wish to give the Boun Oum Government the international recognition it would receive by dealing with the ICC or because they preferred to continue fighting until they could turn events to their advantage.³

1. CINCPAC Laos Diary 23 and 28 Dec 60 (TS)
2. STATE to CIRCULAR (919) 300315Z Dec 60 (TS)
3. CINCPAC Laos Diary 5 Jan 61 (TS)

CINCPAC opposed the return of an ICC, and set forth his objections in a message to the JCS. CINCPAC doubted that a revived ICC in Laos would have a pattern of operation different from the ineffective Vietnam ICC. He objected to accepting prohibitions on U. S. activities that could be imposed after the Bloc had completed its airlift and placed the PL/Kong Le/North Vietnamese forces in a position to defeat the FAL without further overt supply effort. The communists also could continue a clandestine supply program undetected by the ICC whereas U. S. aid either would be stopped or made more vulnerable to detection. Admiral Felt believed that without SEATO or U. S. unilateral intervention the only U. S. chance of preventing communist take-over was by providing substantial support to counter the Russian imports. Principally, CINCPAC felt that an ICC and the pressures behind it by the British and others would end U. S. flexibility in respect to unilateral military operations as well as whatever faint possibility existed of using SEATO military forces. The net result would be to remove cause for communist worries that western military forces might oppose their moves in Laos.¹

Although there was nearly unanimous agreement among interested nations that the Lao situation should be internationalized, the suggested solutions varied as sharply as the aims. The communist countries were united in their desire to reconvene the Geneva Conference powers and reactivate the ICC -- a proposal with a built-in provision for replacing the Phoumi/Boun Oum Government with a more palatable one headed by Souvanna. The Indians and British appeared willing to go along with the ICC, but the French opposed the ICC or an appeal to the UN. Cambodia had asked for a new Geneva Conference adding Thailand, South Vietnam and Burma, a plan that also appealed to Souvanna who was cool to an ICC. The RLG was leaning toward some kind of mediation committee of neutral powers. Thailand, National China, the Philippines and South Vietnam preferred SEATO action.² (SECRET)

1. CINCPAC 070359Z Jan 61 to JCS (TS)
2. AMEMB VIENTIANE 071250Z Jan 61 to SECSTATE (S)

As analyzed by the U. S. Ambassador in Laos, the U. S. had four main choices:

1. An appeal to SEATO by the RLG. In effect a military solution with the U. S. carrying most of the burden, this was expected to split SEATO wide open and be labeled a provocative action by both communists and neutrals.
2. An appeal to the UN by the RLG. The appeal would be made first to the Security Council, where the Soviets would veto it, thus requiring special General Assembly meeting.
3. Reconvocation of the Geneva Conference. This would give the communists what they had been asking for and would leave the U. S. with a choice between abstaining from participation or sitting down with the Red Chinese and North Vietnamese. A variation of this solution would be the reactivation of the ICC without reconvening the Geneva Conference -- a victory for the communists while forcing the RLG to return to the PL the official status it had lost since 1954.
4. Creation of a Neutral Mediation Group. This solution would force the communists to go along with a plan acceptable to the RLG and the uncommitted neutrals, or disappoint the neutrals. A commission of this sort could be arranged by having the RLG ask a neutral nation such as India or Cambodia to arrange for the participation of other Asian neutrals under terms of reference agreed upon by the RLG and the presiding country.¹

Of these choices, the U. S. Ambassador considered the last one most acceptable to the U. S. and one that had the advantage of eliminating the intractable Polish member of the ICC. The chief disadvantage of this plan was the probability that the communists would not accept it or that they would refuse to be bound by the decision of such a committee. To the U. S. the machinery for negotiations was not as important as whether or not it could stop the Soviet airlift with the least prejudice to the U. S. and RLG position.

Communist clamor for a return of the ICC diminished by mid-

1. Ibid.

January when it became obvious that the FAL drive had run out of steam. Thereafter, as Phoumi's armed strength diminished, much of the initiative for international intervention came from the RLG.

To advance the concept of a commission of neutral nations to intervene in the Laos situation, the proposal came from King Savang who, at the beginning of March, read a message to "the countries of the world". Declaring that Laos was a "peaceful country which for more than 20 years had known neither peace nor security," The King asked that a commission from his neutral neighbors -- Cambodia, Burma and Malaya -- come to Laos to stop the fighting and to identify and denounce any foreign interventionists.¹ The idea didn't catch on. None of the three countries appeared eager to accept the role of peace maker for Laos and, although there was some attempt to reach a compromise between the concept of an ICC and the NNC, the idea failed to develop.^{2,3,4}

The next endeavor by the Boun Oum Government was a direct approach to Prince Souvanna Phouma in an attempt to negotiate a settlement that would stop the fighting, an idea Phoumi had considered even before the neighboring countries had rejected the Neutral Nations Committee proposal. At the beginning of March, confident he could persuade Souvanna to accept an important position in the Boun Oum Government, Phoumi volunteered to meet Souvanna in Saigon or Rangoon.⁵ Although still opposed to any government that would include the Pathet Lao, Phoumi was ready to form a neutral government that would include all nationalist elements except the communists.⁶ Souvanna won the first concession by insisting that the meeting take place in Phnom Penh. Phoumi met with Souvanna twice on 10 March and, although Souvanna declined to return to Vientiane as Vice Premier and Minister of Foreign Affairs for the Boun Oum Government, he

1. "Laos - King's Turn," Time, 3 March 1961
2. PHNOM PENH to STATE 1167, 1 Mar 61 7PM (C)
3. VIENTIANE 1624 to STATE, 5 Mar NOON 61, (S)
4. CAS Rpt, Sitrep No. 9, 22 Mar 61 (S)
5. VIENTIANE to STATE 1610, 1 Mar 61 8PM 677/02 (S)
6. VIENTIANE to STATE 1642, 7 Mar 61 9PM 702/7 (S)

appeared willing to compromise.¹ However, the Pathet Lao were quick to complain and criticize any attempt to compromise differences between Souvanna and the Boun Oum group. At a second meeting on 14 March, Souvanna insisted that the first step in any settlement of the Laotian problem would have to be an international conference.²

~~(SECRET)~~

DETERIORATION OF FAL MILITARY SITUATION

General Phoumi's plan for the recapture of the road junction of Routes 7 and 13 and the PDJ had stalled early in February when FAL troops encountered a determined defense of the important PDJ area. Neither side recorded significant progress for several weeks. On 6 March the PL forces initiated a series of probing attacks against FAL positions near the Phou Soung summit, using a force estimated at two platoons. When the attacks disclosed serious weaknesses in the FAL positions, the PL committed additional troops to exploit the initial success. Besides having the initiative, the PL attack was favored by a heavy cloud cover and fog that hampered FAL observation, and by what U.S. observers considered a lack of FAL leadership and determination. FAL units withdrew and abandoned considerable amounts of rice, gasoline, ammunition and weapons, thus giving up the road junction they had captured on 3 February.³

~~(SECRET)~~

The withdrawing FAL units split into two segments at the road junction, some elements going north and others south along Route 13, thus further weakening for the immediate future the effectiveness of the Lao Armed Forces. Before this give-away of the strategically important road junction, the FAL represented an army whose offensive had been stalled temporarily, but the loss of the road junction without a fight and the separation of the units involved had a demoralizing effect upon General Phoumi and his entire force. Generals and soldiers alike were a discouraged lot, and there will to fight -- at best a very tenuous quality -- had been destroyed by their own inefficacy.^{3, 4}

1. PHNOM PENH to STATE 1167, 10 Mar 7PM, 375/10 Mar 61 (C)
2. Dept of State Intelligence Rept No. 8436, Apr 6, 61 (S-NF)
3. CINCPAC Daily Intelligence Summary No. 28-61 of 7 Mar 61 (S)
4. CHPEO Laos 160200Z Mar 61 to CINCPAC (TS)

ADDITIONAL U. S. SUPPORT

Phoumi's failure to put up a fight at the road junction only aggravated U. S. concern over the basic problem, that of stopping the Soviet airlift. Diplomatic efforts to get rid of Souvanna and end the myth of his government had been no more successful than attempts to turn world opinion against the Russians and shame them into ceasing their illegal intervention. On 7 March, the time of the fiasco at the road junction, Admiral Felt was enroute to Washington where he was to attend a high level conference to consider, among other problems connected with Southeast Asia, means of strengthening the forces that were resisting communism in Laos. At a White House meeting on 9 March, President Kennedy authorized the following actions:¹

1. An increase in MEOs from 3000 to 4000 by April 1.
2. Defense Department to supply 16 H-34 helicopters to CIA for CAT use.
3. [REDACTED]
4. More maintenance and base support personnel for helicopters (300) (with consent of Thai government).
5. Defense Department to make available to CAT, appropriately marked, 4 C-130s. (On Okinawa or Taiwan)
6. [REDACTED]
7. CIA to make available 1 C-47 and 3 DC-4s, with crews.
8. In case of urgent supply requirements, USAF aircraft may resume delivery direct to Vientiane (C-130).
9. Negotiate with Sarit for immediate availability of up to 4 105mm batteries (Thai soldiers, equipment, and supplies).
10. PEO personnel will be augmented by approximately 100 officers and men, and the JUSMAAG personnel in Thailand by approximately 100.
11. Defense to make available 8 B-26s, plus necessary spares (at Okinawa).

1. White House Memo of 9 Mar 61, unnumbered. (TS). (One copy in CINCPAC J00 files. Also on file in Office of the Secretary of Defense under SecDef Control No. 321)

14. The Department of State will draft for the President's approval a message to Ambassador Brown giving the sense and meaning of the present steps.

15. General Boyle will go to work on Phoumi to lift the quality of FAL military leadership.

16. CIA is authorized to commit additional helicopters as obtained.

17. CIA is authorized to commit additional transport aircraft as obtained.

Recognizing that the FAL soldiers, characterized by an unusual emotional immaturity, needed a determination to fight more than U. S. aid and equipment, CINCPAC, upon his return from Washington, sent a message to his CHPEO Laos urging him to exert his influence to get the FAL back on the offensive. He was concerned because the communist forces with their preponderence of artillery and mortar strength had seized the initiative after the FAL panic at the road junction, and were then threatening Luang Prabang. Instead of conducting a fixed defense, CINCPAC wanted Phoumi to counterattack, and warned that if he didn't, Northern Laos would be lost to the communists and Phoumi would be negotiating from jail.¹ Encouraged by the White House decisions to furnish additional support, Phoumi replaced some of his ineffectual commanders and gave PEO personnel at least a short lived hope that he would pass his new determination down the chain of command to create a fighting spirit.² At the end of March Admiral Felt talked with General Phoumi when he was in Southeast Asia to attend a SEATO meeting. Phoumi pressed two requests. He wanted everything then destined for delivery to the FAL to be expedited, and he wanted the U. S. to intervene to help him. Phoumi raised the familiar claim of intervention by North Vietnamese and Chinese communist elements to substantiate his contention that the Pathet Lao activity in Laos had passed from civil war to

1. CINCPAC 140310Z Mar 61 to CHPEO Laos (TS)
2. CHPEO Laos 160200Z Mar 61 to CINCPAC (TS)

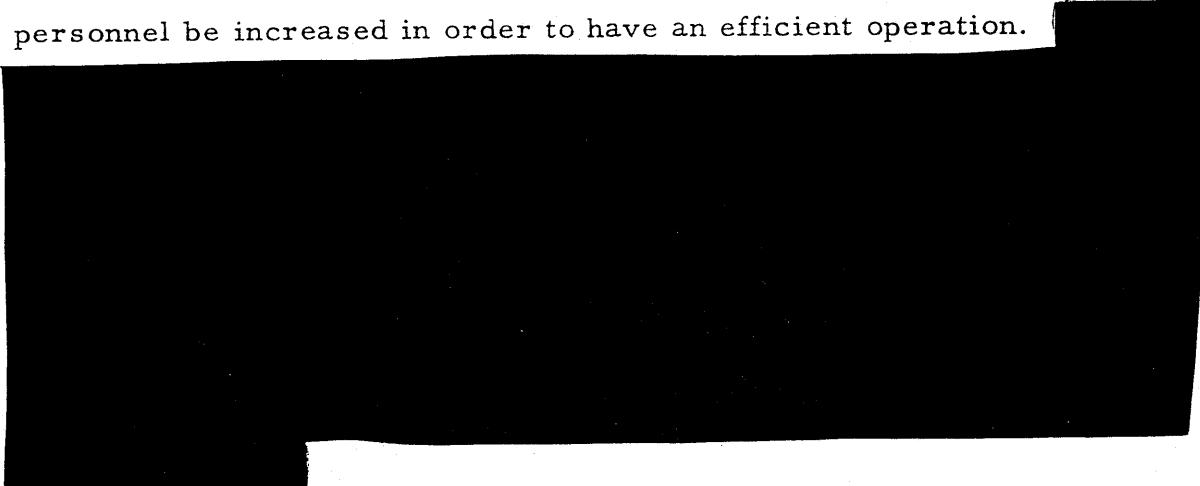
an international war. Admiral Felt explained that he was speeding up deliveries of supplies, but the U. S. intervention was a matter that would affect both world and SEATO opinion, and that the world first needed to know that the Laotians were willing to fight for their own country. He urged Phoumi to counterattack to prove to the world that Laos would fight for its freedom, and explained that a request for U. S. intervention would have to go through Embassy channels.¹

Millpond Activities

The U. S. program to increase support for the Lao Government as determined at the 9 March White House meeting was identified by the classified code word "Millpond." Much of the effort of CINCPAC's staff during the spring of 1961 was directed toward meeting the requirements connected with the Helicopters, B-26s, and negotiations with Prime Minister Sarit regarding the 105mm batteries.

Helicopters:

The JCS made CINCPAC responsible for supplying from his resources the 16 H-34 or HUS helicopters to CIA, with the request that two would be delivered to Bangkok as soon as possible.² The original decision was to furnish one pilot for each helicopter. Admiral Felt recommended to the JCS that the number of pilots and crew chiefs, as well as maintenance personnel be increased in order to have an efficient operation.



1. CINCPAC 300800Z Mar 61 to JCS (TS)
2. JCS 112029Z Mar 61 to CINCPAC (TS)
3. CINCPAC 142138Z Mar 61 to JCS (TS)

CHPEO Laos asked CINCPAC to consider the feasibility of equipping the helicopters with rockets and machine guns so they could deliver suppressive fires in support of FAL operations.¹ After investigating this possibility, CINCPAC concluded that it would be impracticable to arm H-34s and use them as tactical vehicles, principally because the doubtful advantages would not offset the loss of lift capability as a result of the armament. It was considered that the B-26 aircraft should provide the armed air capability.²

B-26 Aircraft:

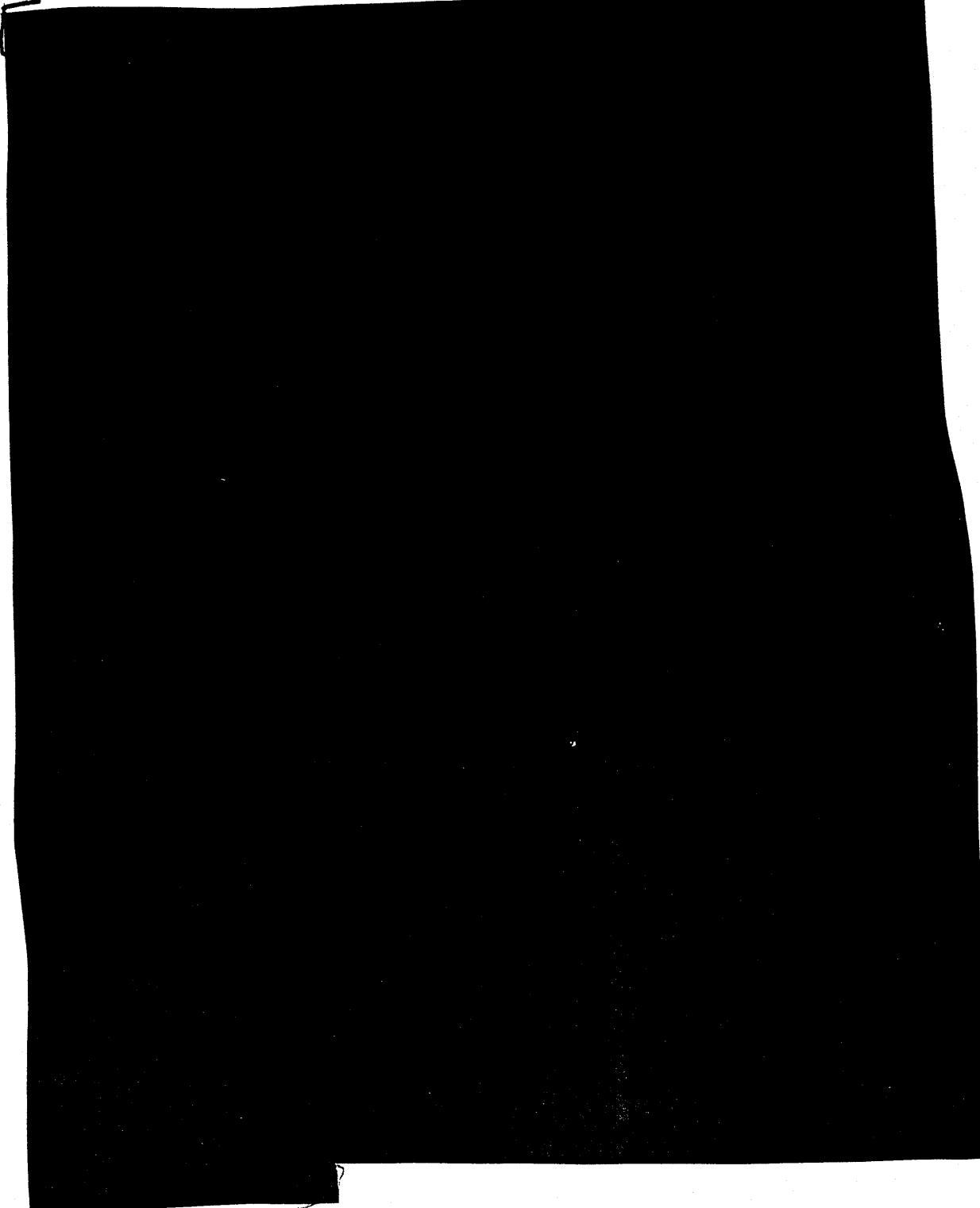
The problem of furnishing the B-26 aircraft and crews as specified by the White House memo was less of a problem than securing permission to use them after they were in place. The difficulty arose because of State Department reluctance to introduce this type of equipment in the Lao conflict. Twelve days after the White House decision to furnish the planes, JCS favored making a first strike with the maximum number of aircraft to gain surprise and the fullest shock effect, and suggested that the first eight be committed only in an emergency. The JCS suggested strike priorities be supply dumps, then enemy heavy weapons and transport, and close support for troops as third priority.³

CINCPAC, who was in South East Asia at the time, agreed that it was desirable to get the greatest possible shock effect but suggested to the JCS that the decision to use the planes should not be based upon the availability of a definite number but on the tactical situation. He also explained that all hands in Laos were convinced that it would be necessary to use the B-26s with bombs to break up the communist defense of the PDJ area.⁴

Employment of the B-26s anticipated that the January restrictions on the use of bombs and napalm would be lifted. This didn't happen. Instead, the plan to use the B-26 aircraft was postponed temporarily in March and then the authority to use bombs was withdrawn after the

1. CHPEO Laos 231000Z Mar 61 to CINCPAC (TS)
2. CINCPAC 152107Z Apr 61 to JCS (TS)
3. JCS 210312Z cite 99240 of Mar 61 to CINCPAC (TS)
4. CINCPAC 250530Z Mar 61 to JCS (TS)

~~SECRET~~



1. CINCPAC 122357 Z Mar 61 to JCS (TS)
2. CINCPAC 272037 Z Apr 61 to CJCS (TS)
3. CINCPAC 261847 Z Apr 61 to JCS (TS)
4. CHMAAG Laos 260500Z Apr 61 to CINCPAC (S)
5. CHMAAG Laos 261635Z Apr 61 to CINCPAC (TS)
6. JCS 281924Z Apr 61 to CINCPAC (TS)

~~SECRET~~

On 21 March, the JCS advised CINCPAC that the U. S. Ambassador to Thailand did not consider it prudent to push Prime Minister Sarit at that time for the four artillery batteries and crews. The JCS on the same date had concluded that future operations in Laos depended upon recapturing the road junction that had been lost on 7 March, and thereafter the Plaine des Jarres. They asked CINCPAC if he considered the four batteries and Thai personnel critical to these tasks, and also his estimate of the FAL ability to use four additional batteries without personnel from Thailand.^{1,2} Admiral Felt answered this message from Thailand where he recently had discussed with Prime Minister Sarit the situation in Laos. He expressed his opinion that four batteries wouldn't help unless Phoumi and the FAL were resolved to counter attack and fight for the recapture of the road junction and the PDJ about which there existed serious doubt.³

Instead of pressing Thailand, CINCPAC directed his staff to furnish some 75mm pack howitzers to the CHPEO as soon as possible, regardless of the estimated dates when FAL personnel could be trained to use them.⁴ Secured from Taipei, 24 pack howitzers and 10,000 rounds of ammunition were delivered to CHJUSMAG Thailand and airlifted to Laos by 2 April.⁵ Soon after this, when it appeared that the FAL would abandon Paksane and Thakhet unless some heroic action was taken, CINCPAC decided it was time to convince Sarit of the need for Thailand's batteries. CINCPAC also authorized CHJUSMAG Thailand to make a firm commitment that the U. S. would replace the howitzers sent to Laos. The U. S. Ambassador to Thailand arranged for the transfer, and the howitzers and personnel arrived in Laos on 20 April and thereafter were employed extensively.^{6,7,8,9}

1. JCS 210312Z Mar 61 to CINCPAC (TS)
2. JCS 210317Z Mar 61 to CINCPAC (TS)
3. CINCPAC 211730Z Mar 61 to JCS (TS)
4. CINCPAC 260649Z Mar 61 to ADMINO CINCPAC (TS)
5. CINCPAC 050200Z Apr 61 to JCS (TS)
6. CINCPAC 070017Z Apr 71 to JCS (TS)
7. CINCPAC 132340Z Apr 61 to CHJUSMAG Thailand (TS)
8. VIENTIANE 540, 171700Z Apr 61 to Bangkok (TS)
9. CINCPAC 210330Z Apr 61 to JCS (TS)

Attempts to Use T-6 Aircraft for Bombing

After making a slow and reluctant start during early January, Phoumi's T-6 pilots had increased their proficiency and value to the FAL. At the same time that CHPEO Laos and CINCPAC were trying to get authorization to use the B-26s, they were also trying to get permission to use the T-6 planes for bombing. The U. S. Ambassador to Laos had refused to let the planes carry bombs or to let the bombs be stockpiled in Laos. On 12 March CINCPAC appealed this decision to the JCS who authorized him to go ahead and make all preparation, including positioning of bombs (except napalm) in Vientiane.^{1,2} CINCPAC also urged CHPEO Laos to maintain discreet secrecy in movement of the bombs to conceal planned future operations.³ By 19 March bombs for the T-6 aircraft were in Vientiane, but there was no authority to use them. Despite several requests, permission to release bombs to Phoumi was not received until 29 April when a joint State-Defense message authorized the T-6 aircraft to deliver bombs until the time an effective cease-fire was actually realized.⁴ When this message reached Vientiane, the U. S. Ambassador again objected. CHMAG Laos appealed to CINCPAC asking that he be allowed to go ahead with the bombing. However, the decision was reversed in Washington, and the T-6s never got off the ground in a role of bombers.^{5,6}

U. S. ACTIONS DURING SPRING OF 1961 TO IMPROVE FAL CAPABILITYActivation of JTF-116

Following the loss of the road junction, the enemy seized Moung Kassy on the road toward Vang Vieng and pursued other FAL troops that continued to fall back toward Luang Prabang.^{7,8,9} Discouraged by

1. CINCPAC 122357Z Mar 61 to JACS (TS)
2. JCS 140156Z Mar 61 to CINCPAC (TS)
3. CINCPAC 140349Z Mar 61 to CHPEO Laos (TS)
4. State 1192, 29 Apr 7PM 61 to Vientiane (TS)
5. CHMAAG Laos 301645Z Apr 61 to CINCPAC (TS)
6. JCS 010221Z May 61 to CINCPAC (TS)
7. CHPEO 091305Z Mar 61 (S)
8. CHPEO 101603Z Mar 61 (S)
9. CINCPAC Daily Intelligence Summary No. 32-61, 16 Mar 61 (S)

the continued losses, Phoumi wanted to revert to a defensive role, dig in and hold what he still had, committing even his newly organized and untrained battalions, a plan that did not meet with CHPEO's favor. Phoumi was afraid that the communists were out to capture Luang Prabang to delay the national festivities connected with the planned cremation of the former king's body, which had been preserved in formaldehyde since 1959. The CHPEO, seriously doubting that even the Pathet Lao forces would risk an act of blasphemy against the spirits defending the uncremated body of King Sisavang, attempted to persuade Phoumi to take aggressive action. Phoumi designated new commanders for GM 11 and GM 12 and then, after satisfying himself that his troops were preparing to attack to regain Moun Kassy and the road junction, he abandoned his military responsibilities by embarking on a seven day junket escorting King Savang to a series of ceremonial functions.^{1,2,3}

On 20 March, CINCPAC notified the Commander Joint Task Force 116 (CG 3d Marine Division on Okinawa) to assemble and activate his staff. He also directed his Component Commanders to have staff personnel earmarked for the CJTF 116 report for duty with it, directed CINCPACFLT to move the Marine Battalion Landing Team then afloat to a position nearer Bangkok to shorten the reaction time if it should be committed, and, on the following day, placed in defense condition 2 all PACOM troops earmarked for or in direct support of JTF-116, SEATO Field Forces in SFF OPLAN 5/61, and of the Multilateral Task Force Laos.^{4,5} He also notified the Commander of JTF-116 that Lt. Gen. Paul D. Harkins, Deputy CINCUSARPAC, would be designated soon as SEATO Field Force Commander and would move his staff to Okinawa. Soon thereafter, JTF-116 would be deactivated, part of its staff absorbed by General Harkins' headquarters, which then would be in a position to move quickly and assume command of SEATO Field Force if the order to execute SEATO Plan 5 was given.⁶

1. CINCPAC Daily Intelligence Summary No. 34-61, 21 Mar 61 (S)
2. CHPEO Laos 180305Z Mar 61 to CINCPAC (TS)
3. CHPEO Laos 271120Z Mar 61 (S)
4. CINCPAC 202106Z Mar 61 (TS)
5. CINCPAC 212235Z Mar 61 (TS)
6. CINCPAC 050540Z Apr 61 to CJTF (TS)

CINCPAC Outline OPLAN X-61

Admiral Felt left his headquarters on 19 March to attend the SEATO Military Advisers Fourteenth Conference. Before departing he directed his staff to prepare a plan based upon the assumption that the RLG would appeal to SEATO for military assistance; that entry into Laos would be an administrative movement by friendly forces into key cities to free FAL forces for combat operations; and that the U. S., Thailand, the Philippines and Pakistan would join their forces for military action in Laos in response to their SEATO obligations. The plan, a combination of CINCPAC OPLAN 32-59, and parts of the SEATO Field Forces OPLAN 5/61, was called the Outline Plan for Multilateral Military operations in Laos, or OPLAN X-61. The first version was forwarded to the JCS on 21 March. It was then revised to provide for employment of additional U. S. forces and to delay commitment of the U. S. Army airborne battle group until after the initial deployments, at which time it was to deploy from Okinawa to Clark AB, prepared for airborne assault as directed.¹

Friendly forces included in the revised plan were:

U.S.

3 FMFPAC BLTs

1 FMFPAC Marine Air Group (-)

1 USARPAC A/B BG (reinf)

1 PACAF Mobile Strike Force

1 USARPAC Brigade Task Force (to be held in reserve and phased in when and if directed by CMTF)

U. S. Army Log Command (from PACOM augmented from CONUS)

Supporting elements of above units

PACOM forces to support MTF Laos

2 PACFLT CVA Task Gps

PACAF 315th Air Div (augmented by 1 C-130 Sqdn from CONUS)

1. CINCPAC 240658Z Mar 61 (TS)

THAILAND

2 Infantry Bns
1 Ranger Company
1 Fighter Bomber Sqdn
1/2 Transport Sqdn
1 RCT (-2 Bns) (to be held in reserve until directed by CMTF)

PHILIPPINES

1 Medical Det
1 Engineer Co

PAKISTAN

1 Brigade Group
1 Fighter Sqdn (Both Pakistan units to be held in reserve and phased in when and if directed)

AUSTRALIA

1 Infantry Bn (Included because of possibility she would respond to RLG appeal)
1 Fighter Sqdn

The U. S. Forces to participate were to deploy rapidly and secure certain key cities and Mekong River crossings, then be prepared for deployment to other key areas if directed. Simultaneously with the initial deployment of U. S. forces, Thailand infantry units would move by land into Laos. Other forces of the Task Force would be phased in later. Command arrangements provided for the CG 3d Marine Division to be overall commander and have operational control of all assigned or attached forces. The U. S. was to provide the ground and air component commanders; Thailand was to furnish the deputy CMTF Laos and the deputy ground and air commanders. National integrity of units would be maintained under national commanders.¹

A day or two after CINCPAC's plan for multinational action reached the JCS, the Department of State sent a message to CINCPAC and to its personnel in Vientiane and Bangkok stressing the need for detailed planning for any military action that contemplated moving troops into Laos in response to an RLG appeal for military help to either SEATO

1. Ibid

or the UN. Particularly, the State Department wanted to be sure that those countries involved had reached firm decision prior to an appeal for help that was then considered imminent, and that forces would be positioned in advance so that the movement could be completed within 12 hours, and before the Communist Bloc could appeal to the Security Council in an attempt to block the movement. Afraid that the action could stutter to a Suez type of confusion, the State Department wanted to be sure that all decisions and plans were firm and well greased prior to the RLG appeal.¹

The JCS approved CINCPAC's OPLAN X-61 for planning but, in view of the above State Department message, asked that the reaction time be compressed to the very minimum, and urged that any force going into Laos be given Asian flavor and appearance through the conspicuous use of forces from the Asian countries and by modifying the command relationships in line with those for SEATO plans.²

While his planners were preparing OPLAN X-61, CINCPAC was attending the SEATO Military Advisers Fourteenth Conference in his capacity as U. S. Military Adviser. When he departed for the meeting, Admiral Felt's appraisal of the SEATO organization was that divergent national interest could rupture its unity and weaken its capability to react in a crisis. It was upon this assumption that he directed the preparation of OPLAN X-61, a plan that did not anticipate U. K. or French participation. On 2 April and before his return to Hawaii, CINCPAC advised the JCS and his three Component Commanders that his assumptions prior to the SEATO meetings had been too pessimistic and that OPLAN X-61, drawn on the basis of those assumptions, did not adequately meet the situation. At the conclusion of SEATO meetings, Admiral Felt reported that "SEATO has stood trial this week and came through with a meeting of minds. The Resolutions of the Council represents the unity which was preserved."³

1. STATE 1025, 260550Z Mar 61 to VIENTIANE (TS)
2. JCS 291841Z cite 992897, Mar 61 to CINCPAC (TS)
3. CINCPAC 020330Z Apr 61 (TS)

SEATO members had agreed that SEATO Field Forces OPLAN 5/61 was adequate for the existing situation and flexible enough to be executed in its entirety or in part. SEATO members also expressed their firm intent to preserve Lao independence by military action if necessary, and to contribute the military forces for which each country was committed.¹

As a result of the SEATO conference, CINCPAC shifted planning emphasis from the multinational plan to SEATO Plan 5. Immediately upon his return to Hawaii he met with his Component Commanders and members of his staff to reorient planning to the concept of SFF Plan 5/61. He instructed General Harkins to assemble a portion of his SFF staff and, on 5 April, directed that Harkins move this portion of his staff to Okinawa as soon as possible. When assembled, this staff would be the CINCPAC Field Force Staff Element and CINCPAC would deactivate JTF-116 (Phase II- Laos) and put his OPLAN X-61 on the shelf.²

To align the draft of SFF Plan 5/61 with thinking expressed at the SEATO meeting, CINCPAC recommended to the other SEATO Military Advisers the following changes: That the Pakistan Infantry battalion, previously a part of the Central Force Reserve, be deployed initially into Laos to become a part of Force Alpha; that the U. S. airborne battle group, a part of Force Alpha, be replaced by a second U. S. Marine BLT, permitting the airborne battle group to be held in ready status on Okinawa or Clark Air Base; and that Thailand should plan to deploy, in addition to one infantry battalion to Vientiane, a second battalion to go initially to Paksane as part of Force Alpha. He also requested that other SEATO forces be prepared for deployment, explaining that U. S. forces stood ready to move on a short notice.³

On 5 April, CINCPAC advised his Component Commanders that he considered the next few days critical. Despite negotiations that were getting underway both in Geneva and in Laos, CINCPAC warned that

1. Ibid.

2. CINCPAC 050910Z Apr 61 (TS)

3. CINCPAC 050206Z Apr 61 (TS)

military forces might be needed in a hurry should negotiations in the political arena fail. In this event, PACOM forces were ready with scheduled units standing by or afloat and able to make landings within 36 to 48 hours after receiving the order to execute. These forces would be involved in the execution of either the U.S. unilateral OPLAN 32-59 or, by an easy transition, in the execution of SEATO Plan 5.¹

Redesignation of Programs Evaluation Office as Military Assistance Advisory Group

Another method whereby CINCPAC hoped to bolster RLG morale and stiffen FAL leadership was by placing U.S. advisers in Laos in military uniform and status. The six-year-old Programs Evaluation Office had been staffed by men in civilian clothes, a restriction that CINCPAC considered a self-imposed hobble on PEO's ability to provide leadership and guidance to FAL forces. On 14 April 1961, using authority derived from the JCS, CINCPAC directed his CHPEO Laos to lift restrictions against wearing military uniforms, and all restrictions against participation by PEO personnel as individuals, in combat operations. The change, however, was not to be taken until the RLG made an appropriate request for MAAG personnel, thereby establishing a legal basis for the change.^{2,3}

On 17 April, CINCPAC submitted for JCS approval his proposed Terms of Reference for CHMAAG Laos. The proposed Terms of Reference followed the general format used for other PACOM MAAGs, but included authority for MAAG personnel, permanently assigned or on temporary duty, to participate fully with FAL combat elements at all levels and to participate in combat operations as individuals, should the situation require.⁴

An exchange of notes between the RLG and the U.S. Embassy took place on 19 April by which the RLG requested the establishment of a

1. CINCPAC 052048Z Apr 61 (TS)
2. CINCPAC 142005Z Apr 61 (TS)
3. CINCPAC 142255Z Apr 61 (TS)
4. CINCPAC 172120Z Apr 61 (TS)

U. S. Military Assistance Advisory Group in Laos, an act that pleased neither the British nor the French Ambassadors, particularly because of the timing.¹ This action included permission for U. S. military men in uniform to engage in tactical training, advise units facing or engaging in combat, and to carry arms and use them in combat if necessary.²

The JCS asked CINCPAC to examine the desirability of retaining in civilian guise approximately 25 PEO personnel who might be used later as a nucleus of a future PEO in the event that the political negotiations over Laos resulted in the withdrawal of all military personnel. As an additional advantage, a number of civilians remaining after the redesignation would lend credence to the cover story that reserve military personnel of PEO were being recalled to active duty.³ Accordingly, the RLG announced on the afternoon of 19 April that the PEO had been designated as MAAG Laos and the following morning all MAAG personnel appeared in military uniform, except for twenty-five selected to maintain their civilian status, and a few bona fide civilians.⁴ Brigadier A. J. Boyle, USA, was named CHMAAG Laos.⁵

PLANS FOR CEASE FIRE AND FOR MILITARY INTERVENTION

By the end of March, although the RLG had failed to interest its neighbors in a Neutral Nations Committee or to fence off the Pathet Lao by setting up Souvanna in a glorified position within the Boun Oum Government, it was apparent that international pressure was building up in favor of compromise through international intervention. Afraid that the already demoralized FAL might give up and wait for the Big Powers to rescue it at the conference table, CINCPAC warned that a cease-fire could be a long time in coming. He urged his PEO personnel to apply pressure and arouse the RLG and the FAL to take offensive action, particularly toward recovery of Muong Kassy and the junction of Routes 7 and 13.⁶

1. CAS Sitrep No. 37 of 19 Apr 61 (TS)
2. CINCPAC 170435Z Apr 61 (TS)
3. JCS 180026Z Apr 61 to CINCPAC (TS)
4. CHPEO Laos 181207Z Apr 61 (TS)
5. CINCPAC 210214Z Apr 61 (U)
6. CINCPAC 080401Z Apr 61 (TS)

The FAL, however, appeared to be stricken with despair and discouragement. U. S. personnel helped in planning an attack against Muong Kassy, and in delivering with helicopters troops for what turned out to be a well executed vertical envelopment. But the operation failed because the troops were reluctant to engage the enemy, and the PEO personnel lamented their inability to influence the action at the combat stage.¹ On 15 April the commander of GM 14 lost important terrain, and control of his troops, after some inaccurate artillery near his position. On 23 April the FAL gave up Vang Vieng, and three days later Muong Sai fell to the rebels. These FAL losses placed the enemy in position to threaten Luang Prabang, Thakhek, Paksane and Vientiane. With Lak Soo and Tchepone, which fell early in May, the communists could screen future operations along the old Ho Chi Minh trail into South Vietnam. It was an ideal position prior to a peace conference.²

The situation that was critical at the beginning of April was worse at the end of the month. The U. S. Ambassador, who consistently had opposed any U. S. action that had the effect of increasing the risk, asked for State Department approval to use bombs in the event that a cease-fire tentatively agreed upon for 24 April should be delayed, or if the enemy threatened Vientiane or other major objectives.³ A few days later and after the communists had stalled on the cease-fire proposal, the Ambassador urged the use of B-26 aircraft and U. S. or SEATO troops if necessary to stop enemy action threatening the capital cities and other important areas still held by the FAL. Even though he thought the action he recommended would blow the cease-fire negotiations wide open and probably involve the immediate intervention of U. S. or SEATO forces, he could see no alternative if the enemy offensive rolled forward. The Ambassador suggested that SEATO begin preparation to respond to an appeal from the RLG.⁴ CHMAAG Laos asked CINCPAC for permission to use bombs if the PL forces moved south of the Nam Lik River,

1. CHPEO Laos 090405Z Apr 61 (TS)
2. CHMAAG Laos ML 1634 and ML 1670, Sitreps for 22 and 23 Apr 61(S)
3. AMEMB Vientiane 230910Z Apr 61 to CINCPAC (TS)
4. AMEMB Vientiane 261434Z Apr 61 to STATE (TS)

authority to use RB-26s and RT-33s immediately, and recommended that SEATO allies be advised that an RLG appeal for help was probable.¹

Preparations for U. S. Intervention

On 26 April, CINCPAC moved to permit a rapid execution of SEATO Plan 5, should it become necessary. He directed that the Command of the U. S. element of SEATO Field Forces move his headquarters, Force Alpha, and his component staffs to Clark Field; that a Marine BLT from Okinawa and remnant of the Marine Air Group move to Cubi Point; and that the Airborne Battle Group move to Clark Field.² In Washington, conferences with the British and French were underway to determine a course of action to support a possible RLG request for SEATO intervention. In addition to the pre-positioning moves CINCPAC had already taken, the JCS directed CINCPAC to move Naval carrier forces to support SEATO Plan 5, to move amphibious forces into the Gulf of Siam but not to land unless further ordered, and to be prepared to land troops in Southern Laos, South Vietnam and Thailand in case Vientiane should have fallen before Plan 5 was executed. In view of the Red Chinese threat, CINCPAC was also directed to be prepared to stop Red Chinese intervention through the use of strikes on intermediate bases in North Vietnam and, if necessary, strikes on Chinese bases that supported operations against Laos.³

On 29 April, U. S. Government officials met in Washington to consider implementation of SEATO Plan 5. Although failing to reach a decision on that, there was consideration of a plan to move a force of approximately 5,000 men to Thailand and another thousand to areas near Tourane in South Vietnam. JCS asked CINCPAC to prepare plans for this possibility.⁴ On the same day, CINCPAC proposed to the JCS a course of action intended to force the communists either to fight for any gains in Laos, or seriously to discuss a cease-fire agreement.

1. CHMAAG Laos 261635Z Apr 61 to CINCPAC (TS)
2. CINCPAC 262130Z Apr 61 (TS)
3. JCS 270256Z Apr 61 to CINCPAC (TS)
4. JCS 292003Z Apr 61 to CINCPAC (TS)

This proposal included the following steps:¹

1. Announce to other SEATO members that the U. S. was moving immediately under Plan 5 and expected other members to join.
2. Move two U. S. battalion landing teams and one Thai battalion to Vientiane. Advance elements of these units could be in Laos within 24 hours after ordered.
3. Move one Thai battalion to Thakhet within 24 hours.
4. Move one U. S. battalion landing team into Seno within three to four days to cover the area until arrival of Commonwealth Forces.
5. Deploy Air Forces to Thailand.
6. Tell the Russians the U. S. is not prepared to see Laos overrun, but is still prepared to see a cease-fire and the establishment of a neutral government.
7. Be prepared to have SEATO forces remain in Laos until the situation is restored.
8. Be prepared to counter any subsequent moves by the Chinese Communists, the Soviets, or by North Vietnam.

CINCPAC also asked the JCS for authority to pre-position on a temporary basis a 25th Infantry Division battle group from Hawaii to Okinawa, and asked that MATS be directed to provide the lift from Hawaii. At the same time, he directed CINCUSARPAC to make initial preparations for the move. JCS delayed a firm answer on the request pending a decision on the basic issues.^{2,3,4}

For a period of at least six days at the end of April and the beginning of May, the question of intervention in Laos remained undecided before the National Security Council. In the high level discussions, the British expressed concern over what they considered an automatic extension of military operations implicit in the wording of SEATO Plan 5/60. This feeling was balanced against an opinion that only Vientiane, Seno and possibly Pakse should be secured by SEATO forces.⁵ While

1. CINCPAC 290125Z Apr 61 to JCS (TS)
2. CINCPAC 010601Z May 61 (TS)
3. CINCPAC 010602Z May 61 (TS)
4. JCS 052031Z cite 995487 May 61 (C)
5. JCS 030232Z May 61 to CINCPAC (TS)

the U. S. delayed a decision, the Pathet Lao continued to take critical terrain from RLG forces whose determination to fight had been softened up by communist cease-fire promises. By 3 May the situation north of Luang Prabang had became critical, in the south the enemy threatened the route to Paksane, and FAL troops in Tchepone were surrounded by troops consistently reported as North Vietnamese. Although a large scale involvement of foreign troops was never proved, FAL willingness to believe the claims was an indication of the defeatist attitude then prevalent.¹ The troops were in position, the ships were loaded and the transport aircraft were standing by waiting for an execution order that seemed imminent during the first few days of May. But the decision was never made and by 6 May, with the situation still critical, CINCPAC suggested to CHMAAG that he and Phoumi develop plans to evacuate military supplies from Vientiane, although Phoumi planned to fight to hold the city if necessary.² Phoumi had already requested permission of Thailand's Marshal Sarit to evacuate the Vientiane population to Thailand, and had claimed to the CHMAAG that he would have to plan to set up his capital in Savannakhet unless he got relief by a cease-fire or U. S. intervention.³

Cease-Fire Negotiations

Arrangements for a cease-fire appeal and an international conference progressed with the active participation of the UK and Russia, the two former co-chairmen, and with the support of other interested nations. The cease-fire call was issued a declaration of acceptance by mid-afternoon on the same day.⁴ Although there was an announced agreement among the RLG, Souvanna, the Pathet Lao and the North Vietnamese favoring the cease-fire call from the Geneva Co-chairmen, this single point represented the full extent of the agreement at that time. The RLG had suggested a meeting on 28 April in Luang Prabang between representatives of the PL and the RLG. The PL at once countered with the

1. CINCPAC Laos Diary 2 - 4 May 61 (S)
2. CHMAAG Laos 060737Z May 61 to CINCPAC (TS)
3. VIENTIANE 1986, 011540Z, 356/1 May 61 to STATE (S)
4. CAS Laos Sitrep No. 43, of 25 Apr 61 (S)

suggestion that the FAL representatives meet them in Xieng Khouang.¹ In the end, nothing happened. Most RLG officials had left Vientiane to attend the funeral festivities in Luang Prabang, leaving only utter calm in Vientiane as the day came and went without any Pathet Lao reaction to the RLG proposal that the cease-fire become effective on that date.² That evening the RLG broadcast a proposal that the meeting take place on the following morning under the flag of truce to be placed near the village of Ban Vang Khy on Route 13. Carrying a white flag, the RLG officer waited at the designated place but the opposition representative failed to appear. From Xieng Khouang, Souvanna insisted that FAL representatives would have to come to the Plaine des Jarres.³

Although the communists had been the first to ask for a cease-fire, by the end of April they were in a position to exploit their military advantage. U. S. military observers believed communist failure to follow up their successes could be attributed to their concern that to do so would trigger SEATO or other U. S. sponsored military reaction. After appearing indecisive during February and mid-March, the U. S. and other SEATO nations began to display a disposition to react militarily to settle the Laos problem. This firmer attitude was reflected in SEATO statements released in Bangkok; by U. S. helicopters introduced into Laos; the establishment of a Marine-manned helicopter base at Udorn; by reinforcing the FAL with Thailand personnel and equipment; activation of the U. S. element of SEATO Field Forces and the assembly of that element in the Philippines; concentration of U. S. fleet units in the South China Sea area; the stand-down of airlift planes in the Philippines; designation of PEO Laos as MAAG Laos; and by assigning MAAG Laos personnel as advisors to the FAL tactical units. All of these events took place during a period of approximately five weeks that ended in late April. On 3 May the communists agreed to a cease-fire even though at the time they still had the military advantage.⁴

1. CINCPAC Laos Diary 26-28 Apr 61 (S)
2. CAS Laos Sitrep No. 46 of 28 Apr 61 (S)
3. STATE 300530Z to CINCPAC, Circ 1709, 314/30 Apr 61 (S)
4. Memo from Bowman to Admiral Felt, 11 Aug 61, Subj: "Probable Commie Reaction to Further Hardening of U. S. Position re Laos" (TS) In J3 files under J3 Serial No. 00094-61.

Haggling over a meeting place continued until 8 May before there was even slight progress. RLG representatives kept trying to arrange a meeting, and frequently waited for enemy representatives who failed to show. The Pathet Lao was in a position to delay, argue and procrastinate. On 8 May the first elements of the ICC arrived at the Vientiane airport and the chairman immediately announced a desire to meet with both sides as soon as possible. There were 21 people in the initial party -- three Canadians, four Poles, and 14 Indians. Another ICC group landed at Xieng Khouang.¹ On the same day, delegations from the PL and RLG met to discuss where to meet again, and to establish what turned out to be the main point for arguing at following meetings: The RLG was anxious to first negotiate problems and then discuss political matters, the PL insisted that military and political talks had to take place concurrently at the same locale.²

Temporary End to the Crisis.

The appearance of the ICC teams in Laos, and the first meetings between delegates from the opposing forces in Laos as well as the gathering of delegates for the international conference in Geneva raised hopes that, temporarily at least, the disputants would contest their differences at conference tables. In any case, the time and occasion for U.S. or SEATO intervention had passed, thus eliminating the need for a decision. On 14 May CINCPAC notified the CSFF Designate that the situation in South East Asia permitted relaxing reaction times and that he could anticipate an order to inactivate the U.S. elements of the SFF that had already reported to Okinawa. He was asked to prepare a plan for inactivation and a return of his personnel to their parent organizations, and to turn the watch back to CJTF-116. DEFCON 3 was established for all U.S. forces earmarked for and in direct support of SFF OPLAN 5/61 and JTF-116.³

1. VIENTIANE 2039, 081240Z, 618/8 May 61 to STATE (C)
2. CAS Laos Report, TDGS-3/473, 841, 8 May 61 (C-NOFORN)
3. CINCPAC 142254Z May 61 to CSFF Designate (TS)

On 26 May CINCPAC directed CSFF to commence moving units and headquarters elements to home stations on or about 29 May, and CJTF-116 to report when he had assumed the responsibilities involved and was ready to react on short notice to support CINCPAC OPLAN 32-59 (Phase II - Laos).¹ The JCS halted the movement by a message received the following day. Although agreeing with CINCPAC's objective, the JCS thought that changing any element of the U. S. military position would be contrary to U. S. interests in the period before or during the meeting between President Kennedy and Premier Khruschev then scheduled early in June in Vienna.² Accordingly, CINCPAC directed that his instructions be held in abeyance until further notice, and then on 10 June he directed that they be carried out.^{3, 4}

Plans in Event of a Failure of the Laos Conference

Before any conference was seriously underway, the JCS warned CINCPAC that the U. S. had to be prepared for a failure of the Geneva Conference and that plans should be drawn by which the political and military position of the RLG could be consolidated in Southern Laos. The JCS asked for recommendations for a plan to hold Southern Laos by using the RLG forces alone or supported by some or all of the SEATO allies. The JCS doubted that offensive operations would be authorized to seize territory then under enemy control, or that the FAL would be able to continue to hold its positions without help if the fighting resumed. This would mean use of SEATO forces to initially occupy and secure key areas in southern Laos.⁵

At CINCPAC's request, CHMAAG Laos submitted a plan to bolster the FAL in the event the cease-fire became a reality. This proposal provided for increased use of training facilities in Thailand, additional officer, NCO and specialist schools, English language training to prepare additional students for CONUS training, revamping of the FAL logistic system, and greater use of Meo tribesmen.⁶ ~~(SECRET)~~

1. CINCPAC 261940Z May 61 (TS)
2. JCS 271830Z cite 755-61 May 61 to CINCPAC (TS)
3. CINCPAC 271955Z May 61 (TS)
4. CINCPAC 100138Z Jun 61 (TS)
5. JCS 131948Z cite 995920 May 61 to CINCPAC (TS)
6. CHMAAG Laos 080400Z May 61 to CINCPAC (S)

Prolonged Truce Talks

Attempts to arrange a cease-fire dragged on but without progress toward the announced objective, although by failing to appear for meetings, by delaying, and by haggling over unimportant details the Pathet Lao successfully drove home their point that Phoumi's position of strength was as washed up at the conference table as it was on the battle-fields. Negotiations for selecting a place to meet and for deciding what should be discussed if the meeting took place were carried on with the usual suspicions, distrust, and lack of sincerity. In the presence of military members of the ICC, the RLG and PL representatives verbally agreed to meet on 10 May, but the PL failed to confirm the agreement, and no meeting occurred. Finally, on 11 May, RLG delegates carrying instructions to say that Phoumi was willing to meet the two princes, Souvanna and Souphanouvong, anywhere and at any time met with PL representatives in the presence of ICC members. The ICC chairman expected the cease-fire agreement to be signed and political discussions to get underway, but the PL refused to discuss anything but a meeting place for later discussions. The 90-minute meeting ended without any agreement.^{1,2}

In the end, the RLG was forced to yield to PL intransigence. The RLG cease-fire committee met delegates from Souvanna Phouma and the PL on the morning of 13 May, this time prepared to accept the agenda proposed by the PL. The first move was to recognize that a cease-fire had been in existence since 3 May except for a few incidents -- an act that illustrated the lack of sincerity on the part of all delegates, if not their willingness to perpetrate actual fraud. They also agreed to issue to the opposing forces a renewal cease-fire order. Another meeting occurred on 14 May at which the three delegations representing the RLG, the PL and Souvanna stated their separate positions, an unwitting error since the recognition of three separate groups in Laos tended to strengthen the Russian position at the concurrent Geneva meetings where the RLG

1. VIENTIANE to STATE 2052, 110713Z, 336/11 May 61 (C)
2. CINCPAC Laos Diary 12 May 61 (S)

and U.S. delegates were opposing the communist plan to seat both PL and Souvanna delegates.¹

Despite the lack of hope or progress, the truce talks in Laos continued without appreciably narrowing the area of disagreement that existed among the disputants. The RLG delegates were originally anxious to arrange an effective cease-fire, a topic the other delegates steadfastly refused to discuss until there was agreement on a new coalition government. On 18 May Phoumi agreed to the principle of a coalition government, not because he was willing or because he considered it feasible, but because he wanted to give the impression that the RLG was trying to be reasonable.² Military activity continued almost as usual and PL attacks increased noticeably during the middle of May, a fact that all delegates at first tactfully ignored. When the RLG delegates did complain on 19 May, the meeting broke up after arguments and accusations.³ A few days later the PL cease-fire delegation announced that the PL would not permit any ICC team to be stationed at any fighting front until a coalition government had been formed.⁴

It was not until 26 May that the truce delegates reached their first agreement, a decision to organize a sub-committee to deal with all military matters to include working with the ICC. The PL, however, insisted that reports of cease-fire violations would be accepted only by the unanimous vote of the military sub-committee.⁵ After this there was an almost uninterrupted stalemate for the following two months with the ICC, at the PL insistence, effectively barred from the truce meetings and the areas where the fighting continued.

TRAINING AND OTHER ACTIVITIES TO IMPROVE THE FAL

Soon after the truce talks, if not the truce itself, got underway, Admiral Felt sent a message to CHMAAG Laos to outline a program to rehabilitate and train the FAL during the period of conferences. "We will proceed," CINCPAC said, "on the assumption that the U.S. will

1. CINCPAC Laos Diary 12-16 May 61 (S)
2. VIENTIANE to STATE 2099, 180445Z May 61 (S)
3. VIENTIANE to STATE 2116, 191353Z May 61 (C)
4. CAS Rpt, FOV 4471, (F-3) May 61 (C)
5. CAS Rpt, Sitrep Nr. 74, 26 May 61 (S)

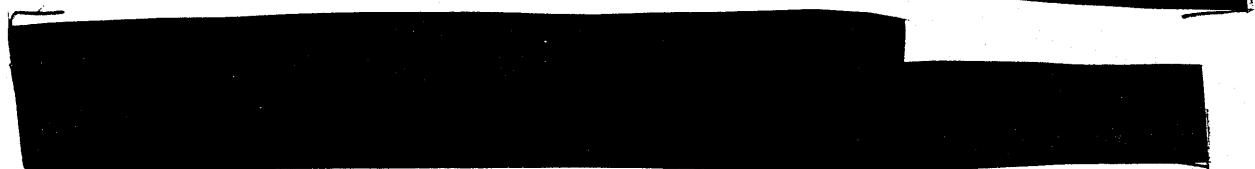
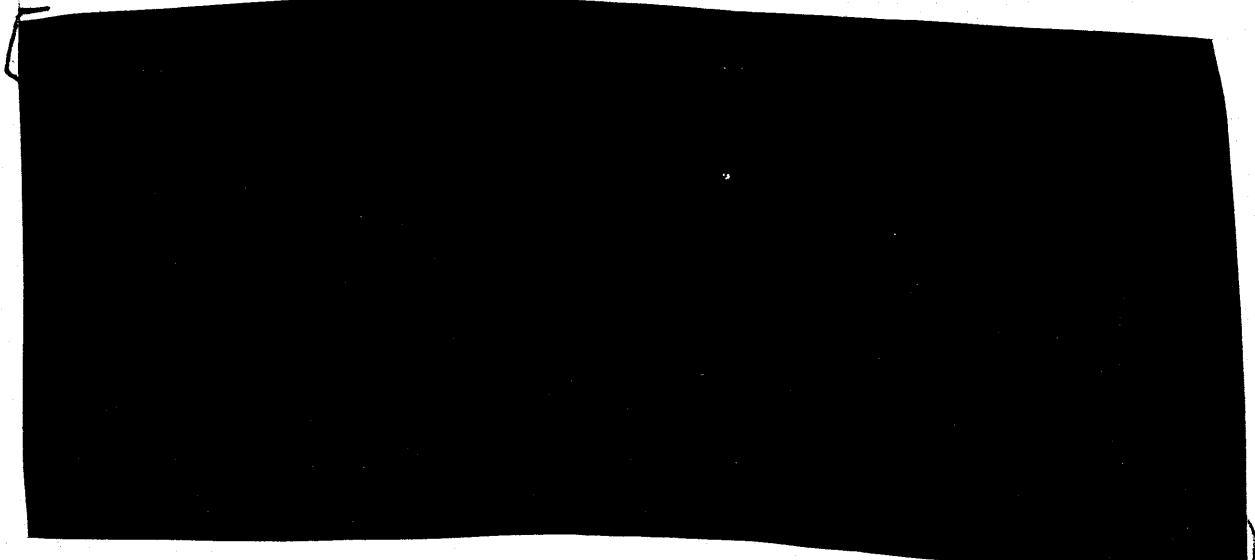
not write off Laos as a total loss to the communists. As events unfold, we must provide the support which will enable the FAL to fight the Pathet Lao. If we proceed otherwise, we will have conceded that the Pathet Lao will gain control of the entire country." CINCPAC was concerned about the lack of leadership and confidence from General Phoumi to all subordinate levels, and wanted CHMAAG Laos to use his influence to persuade Phoumi to give up his political activities and return to his role as a field commander. CINCPAC wanted a program to reorganize and re-train units that had spent prolonged periods in combat, schools on the NCO and OCS level, and an overhaul of the logistic system to determine the exact status of supplies and equipment in Laos. CINCPAC recommended that psychological warfare, which in the past had been aimed at enemy and civilian populations, be directed as well toward troop indoctrination to create motivation and fighting spirit. CINCPAC also recommended that CHMAAG Laos consider a concept of civil affairs and psychological warfare practiced by the South Vietnam Army, a program aimed at military personnel to create motivation and fighting spirit, and at civilian populations to gain their understanding and support.¹ Acting on this suggestion, CHMAAG Laos sent his PsyWar officer to Saigon to review the organization, training and operations of the South Vietnam PsyWar Battalion, and to discuss with MAAG Vietnam representatives the possibility of training FAL PsyWar personnel in South Vietnam.²

CHMAAG Laos held the opinion that the reverses suffered by the FAL could be attributed almost entirely to a lack of training, for which the French had responsibility for all except some technical training. Therefore, he planned to embark on an all-out training effort.³ This accelerated training program had been initiated in May and it included the expanded use of Mobile Training Teams, Filipino Technical

1. CINCPAC 241938Z May 61 to CHMAAG Laos (TS)
2. CHMAAG Laos 061025Z cite ML-BPT 4699, Oct 61 (S)
3. CHMAAG Laos 100420Z Jun 61 to CINCPAC (S)

Representatives, accelerated training efforts in Laos, increased CONUS training and training on U. S. installations overseas, and expanded FAL training in Thailand.^{1,2,3}

As described in the following paragraphs, CHMAAG Laos and the RLG conducted an extensive training and retraining program for those troops made available. But behind the entire problem there remained at the end of 1961 the chronic lack of FAL leaders necessary to conduct successful operations, and behind this was the failure of the national government to appreciate the consequences of weak leadership. At the end of the year no responsible U. S. officer considered the FAL as adequately trained or capably led, or expected that the basic weaknesses could be corrected with anything short of a long term program. The 1961 improvements within the FAL were offset by improvements within the enemy force, so that the relative strengths of the two forces remained the same during the year.



1. CHMAAG Laos 060445Z cite ML-OPT 1916 May 61 (S)
2. DEPTEL 64, 12 May 61 (TS)
3. CHMAAG Laos 100420Z cite ML-OPT 2513 Jun 61 (S)
4. CHMAAG Laos 141435Z cite ML-OPT 4275 Sep 61 (C)
5. CHMAAG Laos 231240Z cite ML-OPT 4451 Sep 61 (C)

1. JCS 182219Z cite JCS 988936, Jan 61 (TS)
2. CINCPAC 202340Z Jan 61 (TS)
3. CHJUSMAG Thailand 231000Z cite MAT 10230, Jan 61 (TS)
4. CHPEO Laos 160550Z cite PEO-OPT 673, Feb 61 (S)
5. CHMAAG Laos 151721Z cite PEO-OPT 1522 Apr 61 (S)
6. CHMAAG Laos 170828Z cite PEO-OPT 1561 Apr 61 (S)
7. CHMAAG Laos 301050Z cite ML-OPT 1820, Apr 61 (S)
8. CHMAAG Laos 060445Z cite ML-OPT 1916, May 61 (S)
9. CINCPAC 070001Z May 61 (S)
10. CHJUSMAG Thailand 290410Z cite MAT 11763, Jul 61 (S)

Training Conducted in the CONUS

The CONUS and overseas training programmed in the FY 61 Military Assistance Training Program for U. S. installations was interrupted by the Kong Le Coup and subsequent events. For FY 1961 the MAP training program for FAL contained 181 CONUS spaces and 228 spaces for training at U. S. overseas installations of which only a few were used. Many of these courses were rescheduled on the Laos FY 62 MATP including approximately 135 students scheduled for CONUS training and approximately 150 students scheduled for training in Hawaii, Okinawa or other U. S. installations. A major problem experienced by MAAG Laos in the off-shore school program was caused by FAL reluctance to select and assign sufficient students to fill the quotas available, which stemmed from the general feeling that an untrained soldier on hand was of more value than a trained soldier at some future date.¹

1. Cold War Rpt. 1 Jan - 30 Jun 61, Hq MAAG Laos, 14 Aug 61, p. 8.
(S)
2. CHJUSMAG Thailand 110200Z cite MAO 12096, Oct 61 (S)
3. CHMAAG Laos 160915Z cite ML-OPT 4309, Sep 61 (S)

Program for School Training

During the summer of 1961, CHMAAG Laos established schools in Laos to conduct the following types of training:¹

Officer Schools:

Civil Affairs
Military Intelligence
English Language Training

NCO Schools:

Two NCO Academies
Transportation Corps Supply and Maintenance
Basic Aidman Course
Ordnance Training
Radio Operator
Telephone Lineman
English Language Training

Other Enlisted Training:

Recruit Training
Transportation Corps Supply and Maintenance
Signal Corps Training
Ordnance Corps Training
Drivers School
Generator and Transmitter Course
Military Academy Prepatory Course

These schools commenced with 330 officer students, 361 NCO students, and 2,036 other soldiers in attendance. During October an Officer Candidate School opened with approximately 400 students, a Counter Intelligence School with 15 students, and an Officer Refresher Course with a capacity of 35 students.

FAL Pilot Training in Thailand

Early in 1961 when CINCPAC hoped to use T-6 aircraft in Laos to stop or interfere with the Soviet airlift to the rebel forces, he proposed a training program in Thailand to train FAL pilots. He asked CHJUSMAG

1. CHMAAG Laos 160915Z cite ML-OPT 4309, Sep 61 (S)

Thailand, CHPEO Laos, and PACAF to comment on a three-month program that would offer 60 to 70 hours of flight instruction and two to three weeks of ground school.¹ The three responses indicated favorable reaction to the idea, but that the number of training hours was insufficient. To arrive at an acceptable program, CHJUSMAG proposed a meeting of representatives of CHPEO, RTAF, RTA, FAL and his own office.² With additional guidance from CINCPAC, the representatives met on 3 March and developed a program to provide to the 15 best qualified candidates 45 flying hours in a 10-week course. Upon completion of this course, the trainees would receive 40 flying hours during a one-month transition T-6 course, and then remain with the RTAF for two and a half additional months for 90 flying hours in advanced T-6 training.³ A second class of pilots could enter training approximately three and a half months after the first group.

There was sufficient slippage in the PACOM Army MATPs (from the Korea NIKE/HAWK and the Japan NIKE training packages) to cover costs of the entire program, including Air Force requirements. Accordingly, CINCPAC requested that OSD/ISA approve funding from these slippages, to include attrition aircraft. The estimated cost was \$300,000.⁴

Twenty FAL pilot candidates arrived at Don Muang, Thailand on 20 March. During the processing there, 13 were selected to commence the L-19 training that commenced 27 March.⁵

In April CHJUSMAG Thailand requested that the FAL pilot training in Thailand be considered an arrangement between the Governments of Thailand and Laos, a method that would be less expensive than third country training.⁶ CINCPAC approved this suggestion.⁷

In response to CINCPAC's request for estimates on the cost of the program, CHJUSMAG Thailand computed the cost of training and 13 pilot

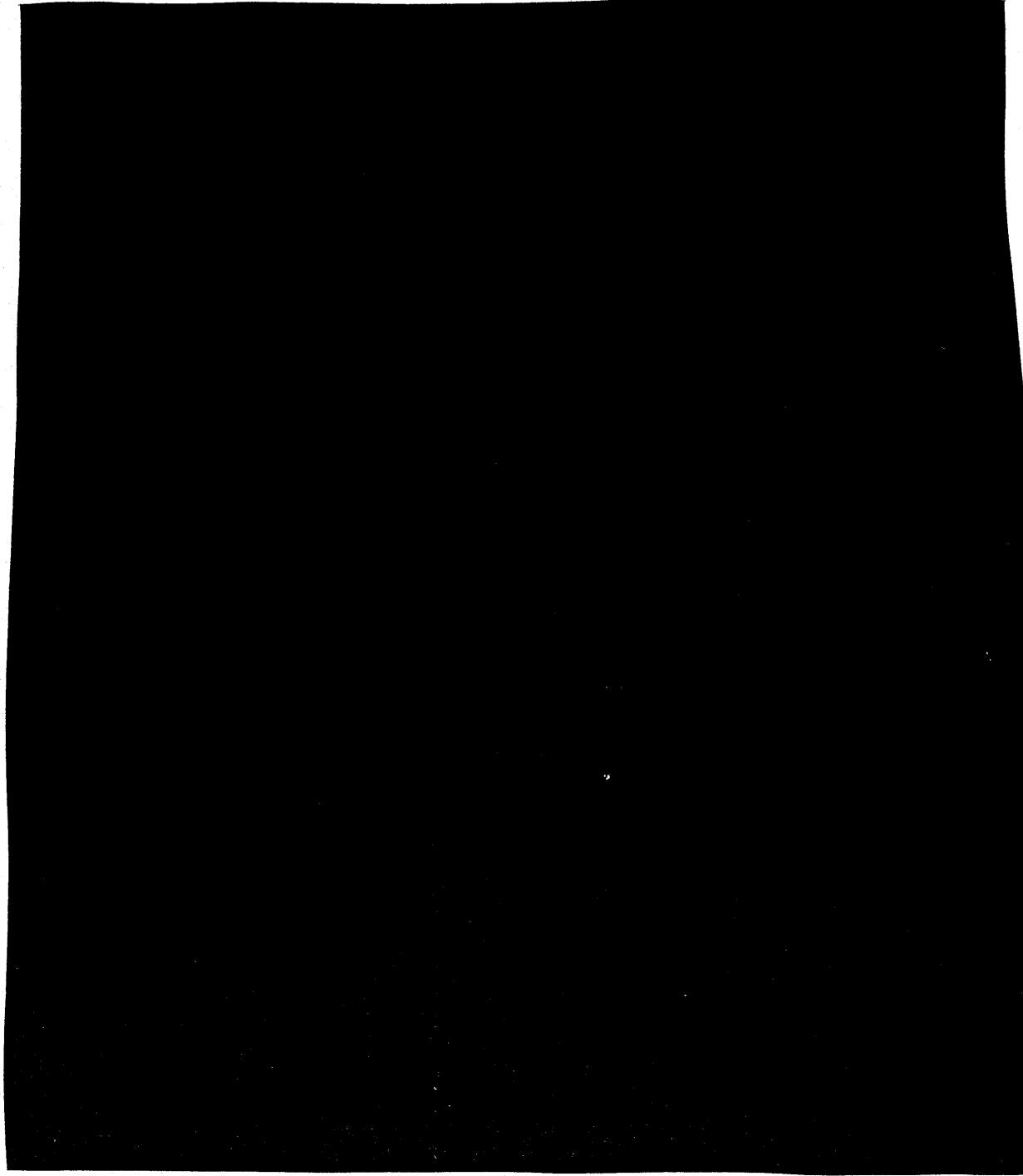
1. CINCPAC 130226Z Jan 61 (S)
2. CHJUSMAG Thailand 250640Z Feb 61 (S)
3. CHJUSMAG Thailand 031240Z Mar 61 (S)
4. CINCPAC 020015Z Feb 61 (S)
5. CHJUSMAG Thailand 150950Z cite MAZ 10694 Mar 61 (S)
6. CHJUSMAG Thailand 060250Z cite MAA 10966 Apr 61 (S)
7. CINCPAC 070046Z Apr 61 (S)

in the L-19, the T-6, and in gunnery to be \$102,750, a figure that did not include training ammunition, attrition aircraft, or third or fourth echelon maintenance for the L-19 aircraft. On the basis, the cost for 17 additional pilots then considered for training would be \$131,000.¹ CINCPAC re-affirmed to CHJUSMAG Thailand that the original \$300,000 planning figure included estimates for ammunition, maintenance and attrition aircraft.² He also directed that plans for training a second group of pilots be delayed because of the existing uncertain situation in Laos.³ Both CHJUSMAG Thailand and CHMAAG Laos urged CINCPAC to reconsider this directive, whereupon CINCPAC agreed that selected trainees could proceed with processing provided that CHMAAG Laos would not commit the U. S. to a specific training program.⁴ Arrangements were completed during June to train this second group of pilots, not to exceed 15, but CHJUSMAG Thailand recommended that any further FAL pilot training be done in the U. S.⁵ ~~(SECRET)~~



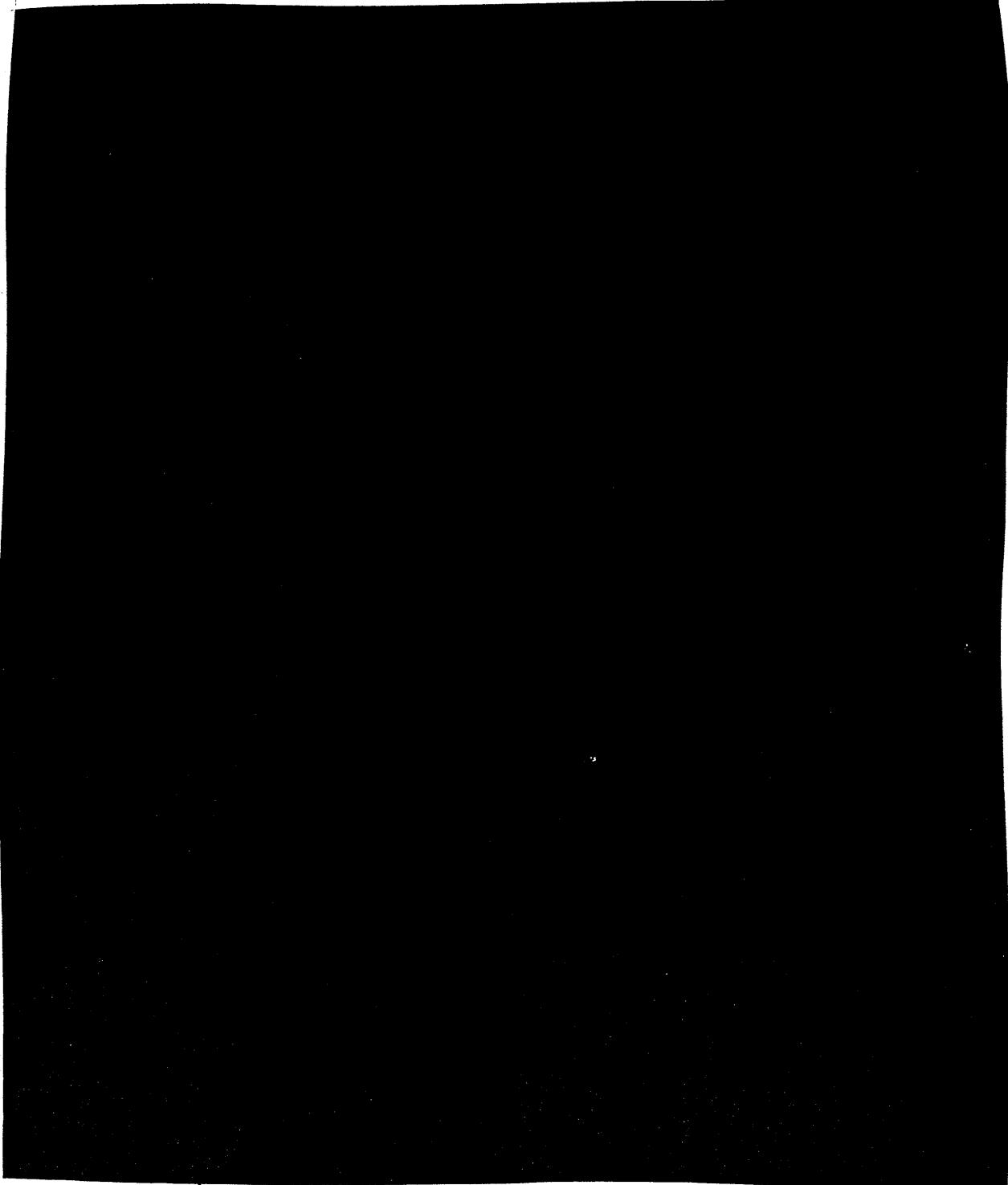
1. CHJUSMAG Thailand 140915Z Apr 61, cite MAO 11053 (S)
2. CINCPAC 182025Z Apr 61 (S)
3. CINCPAC 050010Z May 61 (S)
4. CINCPAC 112343Z May 61 (S)
5. CHJUSMAG Thailand 110505Z Jun 61 (S)
6. CINCPAC 130420Z Jan 61 (TS)

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1. CINCPAC 312236Z Jan 61 (TS)
2. JCS 102224Z cite 990154, Feb 61 (TS)
3. DA 210001Z cite DA 994563, Apr 61 (S)
4. CINCPAC 080006Z Aug 61 (S)
5. CHMAAG Laos 090705Z cite ML-OPT 3440, Aug 61 (S)
6. OSD 301909Z cite DEF 901800, Aug 61 (S)
7. JCS 121239Z cite JCS 1850, Oct 61 (S)

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- 1. CINCPAC 200153Z Oct 61 (S)
- 2. JCS 231839Z Dec 60 (S)
- 3. CHPEO Laos 051347Z Jan 61 (S)
- 4. CHPEO Laos 272000Z Jan 61 (S)

Increase in FAL Force Structure

On 15 February Phoumi was given temporary authority to increase the FAL from 29,000 to 32,522 troops, but at the same time was advised not to make commitments for additional increases without U. S. approval.¹ However, after serious military reverses during the following months, Phoumi again tried to strengthen his forces by adding men. On 23 March, CHPEO advised CINCPAC that without U. S. approval Phoumi had organized six special battalions and was in the process of organizing another paratroop battalion. Three of these battalions already were committed, and Phoumi planned to use all seven units in his campaign to recapture the PDJ. Since MAP equipment was being diverted to these units at the expense of authorized units, CHPEO recommended that they be recognized as a temporary augmentation.² On 4 April, CINCPAC concurred in, and passed to the JCS, CHPEO's recommendation that the FAL troop ceiling be increased by 5,956 spaces to provide 2,520 for the six special battalions, 800 for a paratroop battalion, 1,654 for replacements in training and 982 for service troops to improve logistical forces and to support the increased combat structure.³

The JCS approved use of MAP support for the seven additional FAL battalions, and authorized the airlift of certain supplies (Hot Shot Cargo) directly into Laos in support of these battalions.⁴ As a result, 200,000 pounds of cargo were moved from CONUS to Clark by MATS and transshipped to Laos on C-130 aircraft of the 315th Air Division.^{5,6}

1. STATE 868 to VIENTIANE 15 Feb 2PM 61 (S)
2. CHPEO Laos 231312Z cite PEO 1149 Mar 61 (TS)
3. CINCPAC 042325Z Apr 61 (TS)
4. JCS 200024Z cite JCS 994462 Apr 61 (TS)
5. CINCPAC 270326Z Apr 61 (S)
6. CINCPAC 210035Z Apr 61 (S)

Soon after this, CHPEO Laos recommended to CINCPAC that 6,000 Meo who were then supported by CAS be included as 60 additional Auto Defense Choc companies in the FAL strength, and that another 4,000 Meo and other minority tribesmen living in Sam Neua, Luang Prabang and Phong Saly Provinces be included as 40 additional AD Choc companies. (Auto Defense Choc units were distinguished from Auto Defense Ordinaire units because the former units were made up of more experienced men who were better equipped and paid.)^{1,2} This recommendation was forwarded to the JCS with CINCPAC's concurrence. By Joint State/Defense action, integration of 6,000 Meo into the Auto Defense force was approved, but action was deferred on the request for the 40 additional ADC companies.³ This action did not affect the structure of FAL forces but only served to identify the CAS supported Meo units and the areas under their control as part of the RLG forces. As a result of this paper transaction, the authorized force ceiling was 38,478 for the FAL and 35,800 for the Auto Defense, of which 19,800 were on full time active duty in AD Choc status.

Seeking another increase, on 19 August General Phoumi made a formal request to CHMAAG Laos for an augmentation for wartime operations. Basically, the RLG wanted to eliminate 16,000 Auto Defense Ordinaire, increase the authorized FAL strength by 17,456, and increase the Auto Defense Choc -- representing an increase of total authorized MAP-supported strength from 68,278 to 71,334, or 3,056.⁴ Because of existing and acute FAL leadership and training problems, CINCPAC did not agree that the number Phoumi requested was necessary, but indicated to CHMAAG Laos that he would favor an increase to approximately 60,000, including 46,200 regulars and 13,800 ADC troops.⁵ CHMAAG Laos agreed with CINCPAC's appraisal with the exception of 16 additional ADC companies, which he felt should be supported, and recommended a total strength of 62,321 composed of 46,921 regulars

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1. CHPEO Laos 140850Z cite PEO COMPT 1506 Apr 61 (S)
2. CHPEO Laos 141130Z cite PEO 1512 Apr 61 (S)
3. OSD 201955Z cite DEF 994513 Apr 61 (TS)
4. CHMAAG Laos 210415Z cite ML 3758 Aug 61 (S)
5. CINCPAC 291811Z Aug 61 (S)

and 15,400 ADC.¹ On 9 September CINCPAC recommended to the JCS the force size and structure augmentation recommended by CHMAAG Laos.² The JCS agreed and, on 4 October, forwarded to SECDEF a memorandum recommending approval. By memorandum on 19 October, OSD asked the State Department to approve the recommendation and to include a special allocation by AID (successor to ICA) of \$4.5 million to USOM Laos to support RLG forces for the remainder of FY62.³ The action to support Phoumi's revision and increase in the FAL encountered opposition at the State Department level and some reluctance within the Department of Defense because of Phoumi's past record of presenting the U.S. with a fait accompli and his reluctance to consult with U.S. military representatives in Laos about the organization of the FAL. In the end, the State Department turned down the request on the grounds approval would also constitute approval of Phoumi's unilateral increase in FAL force levels, an action that would appear out of place while conferences on three fronts were supposedly searching for a peaceful solution in Laos. The State Department indicated, however, that if General Phoumi would abolish his unauthorized forces and demonstrate his willingness to follow U.S. policy guidance, the question of additional support could be opened for reconsideration.^{4,5} No further action was taken on this problem during the year.

Increase of Filipino Technical Representatives in Laos

Since 1956 the U.S. has employed Filipino Technical Representatives to assist in the training of the FAL. At the end of 1960 there were 185 Filipinos provided under the PACOM MA Training Programs and used for training, supply and maintenance training for the technical services.

At the beginning of 1961, CHPEO Laos requested an additional 121 Filipino tech reps required to help with an increased logistical buildup,

1. CHMAAG Laos 020858Z cite ML 4043 Sep 61 (S)
2. CINCPAC 090127Z Sep 61 (S)
3. JCS 2344/13 Oct 61, with N/H 23 Oct 61 (S)
4. JCS 222059Z Nov 61 to CINCPAC (S)
5. SECSTATE 300155Z Nov 61 to CINCPAC (S)

and because of the diminishing French training effort.^{1,2} CINCPAC recommended the increase to OSD which gave approval on 3 February.³ There was a delay, however, caused by difficulties in funding and in preparing the necessary contracts, and it was the end of April before all of the new technicians were in Laos. ~~(SECRET)~~

CHMAAG Laos submitted during July a request for 76 Filipino tech reps, and requests during August for a total of 37 additional men.^{4,5,6,7} These requests were approved during September, making a total of 419 Filipino Technical Representatives in Laos at the end of 1961.^{8,9} ~~(SECRET)~~

A Plan for the Use of Thai Military Volunteers in Laos

A group of planners at the State-Defense level met on 20 January to conduct a review of the Laos situation and report to the incoming Secretary of State. Among the steps considered was the use of 300-400 Thai military personnel as volunteers.¹⁰ Although considerable effort was given to this project, it encountered funding difficulties and was suspended after approximately 60 volunteer specialist type personnel had been furnished.

The proposal was forwarded to the Laos and Thailand country teams with the recommendation that arrangements should be made between the two countries.¹¹ After discussing the plan with General Phoumi, CHPEO Laos indicated requirements for a total of 390 volunteers to include doctors and medical aid men; radio operators and code clerks; pilots, parachute riggers, and other aircraft crewmen and mechanics; training instructors; and ordnance and engineer support personnel. CHPEO asked for funds to support this group. CINCPAC concurred in the composition

1. CHPEO Laos 200520Z cite PEO-LOG 347 Jan 61 (S)
2. CHPEO Laos 251013Z cite PEO-OPT 489 Jan 61 (S)
3. OSD 031914Z cite DEF 989759 Feb 61 (S)
4. CHMAAG Laos 191715Z cite ML-LOG 3207 Jul 61 (S)
5. CHMAAG Laos 080610Z cite ML-OPT 3532 Aug 61 (S)
6. CHMAAG Laos 230948Z cite ML-LOG 3807 Aug 61 (U)
7. CHMAAG Laos 300825Z cite ML-OPT 3472 Aug 61 (C)
8. OSD 282230Z cite DEF 999725 Jul 61 (C)
9. OSD 112303Z cite DEF 903367 Sep 61 (C)
10. CAS Washington cite 21663 Jan 61 (TS)
11. CAS Washington cite 21983 Jan 61 (TS)

of the group as proposed, and recommended that the project be funded from NIKE slippage in Japan FY 61 MA Training Program.^{1, 2, 3}

Thailand was willing to fill most, if not all, requirements for specialists and on 22 February, CHPEO Laos advised CINCPAC that all arrangements had been completed concerning contracts, pay, furnishing of personnel and agreements by Phoumi, and that only firm authorization to proceed and funding instructions were needed.^{4, 5} There was a two week delay until several questions concerning medical benefits, death benefits and associated problems could be settled to the satisfaction of the Office of the Secretary of the Defense (OSD). However, on 8 March OSD notified CINCPAC that the recommended funding solution was considered impracticable because of legal difficulties surrounding inter-departmental fund transfers.⁶ OSD wanted the recruiting of the volunteers by the FAL to appear to be a Laos project in which the U.S. was not involved.

Meanwhile, the first shipment of volunteers was made on 2 March. After that, further shipments were withheld because of limited facilities for billeting and transportation.

Since the technicians were widely scattered, CHMAAG Laos felt that the danger of identification by the ICC would be reduced to an acceptable risk.^{10, 11}

1. JCS 261933Z cite JCS 989331 Jan 61 (TS)
2. OSD 072314Z cite DEF 989937 Feb 61 (TS)
3. CINCPAC 232330Z Feb 61 (TS)
4. CHJUSMAG Thailand 151125Z cite MAO 1044 Feb 61 (S)
5. CHPEO Laos 220430Z cite PEO-OPT 745 Feb 61 (S)
6. OSD 081957Z cite DEF 991467 Mar 61 (S)
7. CHJUSMAG Thailand 280745Z Feb 61 (S)
8. CHJUSMAG Thailand 080435Z Mar 61 (S)
9. CHJUSMAG Thailand 260935Z Apr 61 (TS)
10. CHMAAG Laos 270858Z Apr 61 (TS)
11. CHJUSMAG Thailand 300615Z Apr 61 (TS)



THE THREE PRONGED STALEMATE OF 1961

The only basic issue under discussion at Geneva and at Ban Namone was whether Laos would have a free or a communist government, although it was never stated in these concise or blunt terms on the conference agendas. Frequently the disagreement concerned absurd issues such as the time and place of meeting, or the shape of the table. But these and other more fundamental issues served as conference table probing actions to determine the opponent's strength and determination.

At Ban Namone, the conference disagreed over whether a genuine cease-fire should be enforced before the establishment of a coalition government. In Geneva, the foreign ministers spent most of the summer avoiding the main question of who would control the "neutral" government which everyone agreed should be established. Faced with solid disagreement, the interested governments attempted a flanking maneuver by arranging a conference among the three princes concerned - Boun Oum, Souvanna Phouma, and Souphanouvong. The meeting finally took place from 20-23 June at Zurich, Switzerland, but when it ended the question of which one of the three would head the next government was neither

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1. CINCPAC 230011Z Jul 61 to JCS (TS)
2. JCS 101920Z Aug 61 to CINCPAC (TS)

resolved nor better defined. The communique at the conclusion of the meeting promised coalition government, consisting of representatives from the three factions, would be formed through a "special procedure" of designation by King Savang. The only genuine agreement at the meeting was between the half brothers, both of whom favored Souvanna as the next prime minister, and between Boun Oum and Souphanouvong who appeared to agree that a "neutral" government under Souvanna would lead to a communist government. At Zurich, Souvanna's actions impressed Boun Oum's group as that of a victor over the vanquished, an attitude that offended Boun Oum, but one that was based upon the support he received from all communist elements and, to a lesser degree, from the French and British.

Souvanna Phouma's Position

Of those countries that shared an interest in the internal affairs of Laos, only Thailand and the U. S. opposed him and, as the conferences dragged on, only Thailand remained firm. Early in the summer, U. S. officials began reasoning that the choices available to them were either to oppose Souvanna directly, which they calculated would end negotiations and renew fighting, or to try positively to make something to him. Since the trend of negotiations favored him, the idea gained favor in State Department circles to reach an early understanding with Souvanna and establish a basis for common support.¹ In the past it had been difficult to reconcile Souvanna's vaguely phrased statements with his complex actions, a characteristic the communists had found equally puzzling.²

In spite of Souvanna's vague and contradictory statements, the U. S. Secretary of State, and the United Kingdom and French Foreign Ministers agreed on 7 August 1961 to reach, if possible, a prior understanding with Souvanna on matters of major concern, of which the more important were the composition of a neutral Lao Government, and the

1. AMEMB VIENTIANE 240747Z Jun 61 to CINCPAC (S)
2. "The Russians in Laos," Time, Vol LXXVII, 10 Mar 61, p. 26

size of the Laotian army and the problem of the PL forces. The French Government made the first attempt to secure from Souvanna reasonable assurances that under his premiership Laos would not fall under communist control.¹ On the important matter of composition of the Lao cabinet, as explained to the French Ambassador to Laos, Souvanna contemplated a 16-member cabinet, made up of four PL members, four to represent the Phoumi-Boun Oum right, and eight "neutral friends" of Souvanna's.² His friends included Quinim, an out-and-out communist and Kong Le supporter, and other left-leaning individuals from Xieng Khouang, none of whom could be counted to resist communist pressures. The U. S. was discouraged both by this evidence of Souvanna's concept of a "neutral" center and by the failure of the French Ambassador to reject the proposal as completely unacceptable. When questioned on his ideas of the future Lao army,^{3, 4} Souvanna obscured the issue in vague statements.

Souvanna also indicated that Souphanouvong would not be included in the government. This fact aroused a State Department suspicion that Souphanouvong intended to use the communist tactic of opposing the government from a position on the outside, while communist members of the government disrupted and destroyed it from within. In another sudden turn, the State Department considered applying pressure on Souvanna to force Souphanouvong to serve as a member of the cabinet so that he would share the responsibility and blame should the new government fail.⁵ It was an idea that gained no favor, especially with the U. S. Ambassador in Saigon, who said that to force Souphanouvong into the government because he would be too dangerous outside was incredible to himself and would be to the Government of South Vietnam, which was still smarting from the concessions the U. S. had made in switching its support to Souvanna.^{6, 7} In fact, although the State Department had hastened to explain to Prime Minister Sarit of Thailand and President

1. CINCPAC Laos Diary, 1-15 Aug 61, p. 947 (TS)
2. NAVCOM R300740Z relay from Zurich to CINCPAC, Jun 61 (TS)
3. AMEMB VIENTIANE 291230Z Aug 61 to CINCPAC (S)
4. CINCPAC Laos Diary 16-31 Aug 61, pp 950-952 (TS)
5. SECSTATE 140147Z Sep 61 to CINCPAC (S)
6. CHMAAG Vietnam 120927Z Sep 61 to CINCPAC (TS)
7. AMEMB Saigon 141255Z Sep 61 to SECSTATE (S)

Diem of South Vietnam the reasons behind the U. S. switch to Souvanna, and to assure them that the U. S. was taking additional steps to strengthen the military posture of the RLG, the leaders of both countries were fearful a communist dominated Souvanna government would let Chinese Communist power advance to their frontiers.¹

The U. S. special Ambassador, Averell Harriman, met with Souvanna Phouma during the middle of September at several meetings held in Rangoon. Although Souvanna said he would welcome U. S. support and although he maintained his determination to prevent a communist take-over of Laos, the meetings produced no grounds for agreement.² Harriman explained the absolute necessity that the center group contain at least three, and preferably four moderates chosen from sections of Laos other than Xieng Khouang, an area of Souvanna's strongest support. Harriman suggested a ratio of 4-9-4, with four moderates in the neutral center -- a proposal that Souvanna said "would be very difficult."³ From Rangoon Harriman went to King Savang and then to Boun Oum and Phoumi to give them a full account of his discussions with Souvanna and to stress the fact that the U. S. was not prepared to support an RLG military attempt to recapture lost areas.⁴ The basic issues remained unchanged.

~~(SECRET)~~

Phoumi's Position

Although Phoumi's military strength had been no match for the Pathet Lao, he enjoyed the support of King Savang, some support from the U. S., and he had a plan for turning control of the government over to the King, thus reducing communist influence. After the Zurich meeting, General Phoumi had visited Washington and conferred with President Kennedy and military leaders. Returning to Laos in an optimistic mood, he explained that his only purpose at Zurich was to get the other princes to pledge their support for the King and constitution, and to agree that the King should choose not only the prime

~~(SECRET)~~

1. CINCPAC Laos Diary 16-30 Jun 61, p. 933 and 1-15 Sep 61 p960 (TS)
2. AMEMB RANGOON 151744Z Sep 61 to CINCPAC (S)
3. AMEMB RANGOON 161243Z Sep 61 to CINCPAC (S)
4. AMEMB VIENTIANE 201030Z Sep 61 to CINCPAC (S)

minister but other members of the government, a venture in which he believed he had been successful. He also believed that the King would accept these powers and either form and head a new government himself, or designate the members. Phoumi's next project was to persuade the deputies and the members of the King's Council to grant full powers to the King, and persuade the King to accept them.^{1, 2} ~~(SECRET)~~

In Washington Phoumi gained the impression that the U. S. would make no more concessions in Laos to the communists; that even in the event of a coalition government the U. S. would support the FAL in its existing size for the foreseeable future; that the U. S. was prepared to support Laos in the event it became really necessary; and that in the event of renewed hostilities, the U. S. would intervene to maintain his military position. He reported that he also was told to hold out for the position of Minister of Interior as his minimum demand in a new government, and told not to be afraid to continue negotiations but to continue to use peaceful means which would not exclude other actions later.^{3, 4}

Thus encouraged, Phoumi made plans to reorganize and concentrate the bulk of his forces in the south, where he hoped that both South Vietnam and Thailand would provide military forces if necessary to help him control the southern part of Laos. He also planned to stiffen his attitude in negotiations, in which he had neither expectation nor enthusiasm.⁵ ~~(SECRET)~~

Reports of Phoumi's interpretation of his Washington conversations caused concern within the State Department, which was wary of his convictions that the communists could be eliminated from Laos only through hostilities, and wanted to warn him against any unilateral action on his part designed to lead to the resumption of hostilities.^{6, 7}

In the meantime Phoumi discussed his plan with the King who, without rejecting entirely the possibility of Souvanna as the prime minister, indicated that Souvanna was too weak and had become too

1. AMEMB VIENTIANE 051227Z Jul 61 to SECSTATE (S)
2. CINCPAC 031845Z Jul 61 (S)
3. CHMAAG Laos 100345Z Jul 61 to CINCPAC (TS)
4. SECSTATE 090255Z Oct 61 to CINCPAC (S)
5. AMEMB VIENTIANE 181556Z Jul 61 to CINCPAC (S)
6. SECSTATE 190401Z Jul 61 to CINCPAC (TS)
7. SECSTATE 192340Z Aug 61 to CINCPAC (S)

deeply involved with the communists to be acceptable as prime minister. Phoumi also interpreted the King's comments as his willingness to accept full powers and his approval of Phoumi's program.¹ (~~SECRET~~)

On 30 July the National Congress as Phoumi had urged, amended the constitution to permit the King to designate as prime minister any individual of his choice, even himself, an act that the communists denounced and refused to recognize as valid.² (~~SECRET~~)

The U. S. Position

By late summer 1961 the U. S. position amidst the entangled events in Laos was nearly reversed from its stand at the end of 1960 when it toppled Souvanna's government by withholding U. S. aid, and was urging General Phoumi to be more aggressive in attacking the Pathet Lao. Besides the problem involved in swinging its support from Phoumi and Boun Oum to Souvanna, the U. S. was involved in the delicate problem of maintaining within the forces of the RLG morale and combat readiness, and restraining Phoumi from any course of action that could force the U. S. into a decision to intervene. Phoumi had little to lose by attempting to force a military course of action, and the most to gain if it should be successful.³ (~~SECRET~~)

Before the decision to support Souvanna had become firm, Admiral Felt argued against such a move on the grounds that one of the most "important indication to the Southeast Asians of a U. S. defeat in Laos would be the appointment of Souvanna Phouma as Prime Minister." Pointing out that he had become the chosen instrument of the Communist Bloc, CINCPAC urged to the JCS that the U. S. give its political and military support to Phoumi. He also suggested that he believed a further hardening of the U. S. position with respect to Laos would be productive and that victory there was still possible. "The major issue during these next few weeks," Admiral Felt said, "will be whether the U. S. intends to win in Laos or to surrender by compromise."⁴

1. AMEMB VIENTIANE 211445Z Jul 61 to SECSTATE (S)
2. CINCPACFLT 010231Z Aug 61 to AIG (S)
3. CHMAAG Laos 171130Z Aug 61 to CINCPAC (S)
4. CINCPAC 210500Z Aug 61 to JCS (TS)

A plan for dividing Laos into communist and free areas had been considered and was one that appealed to Phoumi whose political strength was centered in Southern Laos. In July the JCS proposed to CINCPAC an outline plan for partitioning Laos into geographical areas that would coincide generally with areas then held by the Pathet Lao and the FAL -- a plan then being developed by the JCS. The plan was based on the assumption that pockets of opposing forces within either territory could be eliminated by political or other means. Hoping to save those areas in Southern Laos and the Mekong River Valley that would be the most valuable in the defense of mainland Southeast Asia, the JCS also expected to make maximum use of the forces from Laos, Thailand and South Vietnam, thereby reducing the requirement for U.S. combat forces. The JCS asked for CINCPAC's views, especially on the impact the proposed plan would have on OPLAN 32-59 and SEATO Plan 5-61.¹

Admiral Felt did not favor the proposed outline plan for two reasons. His first objection was based on the fact that the Pathet Lao then controlled the key access routes to Southeast Asia through Nape Pass, Mugia Gap, and Lao Bao Pass, and existing circumstances that conflicted with the stated purpose of the plan to maintain control of SEAsia. As a second reason, Admiral Felt expressed his opinion that a plan for military action that was not based on SEATO Plan 5-61, but that provided for participation by the forces of the U.S., Thailand, South Vietnam and Laos would virtually destroy SEATO. If military action become necessary, CINCPAC favored a collective effort of all SEATO nations then committed to contribute military forces, or even of some member nations in fulfillment of their SEATO obligations and operating within the framework of a SEATO plan. CINCPAC also expressed his view that unless there was continued confidence in SEATO and a willingness by the U.S. to provide leadership and support for SEATO military operations, the whole of mainland SEAsia would be lost in time.²

Of particular interest to CINCPAC were agreements regarding Laos that affected adversely the security of the rest of South East Asia.

1. JCS 142225Z Jul 61 to CINCPAC (TS)
2. CINCPAC 200007Z Jul 61 to JCS (TS)

CINCPAC reasoned that a so-called neutral government headed by Souvanna could not be expected to interfere with the communist line of communication from North Vietnam into South Vietnam. To choke off the mountain trails would take military action. In a 21 October message to the JCS, CINCPAC explained that from his preliminary planning he favored a plan to continue after the establishment of a Souvanna "neutral" government the CAS system of support of Meo and other guerrilla activities. This type of activity would be effective in the north. To harass the communists in the South, he suggested that the U. S. undertake, through CAS, the covert support of a clandestine non-communist army that General Phoumi contemplated creating from demobilized FAL personnel. This force could be supported with the large stocks of supplies and ammunition that had been built up in Thailand.¹

Fighting for the Cease-Fire Line

On 15 September, the term Forces Armees du Royaume (FAR) replaced Forces Armees Laotennes (FAL) as the official French language designation of the Lao government armed forces. Although the change of name didn't affect the fighting qualities, it did stress the distinctive loyalty of the government forces to the throne, in contrast to the disloyalty of the Pathet Lao rebel forces and, by implication, of Souvanna Phouma. (SECRET)

The FAR inherited from the FAL certain critical weaknesses due to troop disposition. Instead of having a neat line of separation between its forces and the Pathet Lao, the FAR was involved in fighting to establish a cease-fire line, or a main line of resistance. A year before when PL strength was confined to the Phong Saly and Sam Neua Provinces, the task of containment had been relatively simple, but after the enemy had seized the PDJ and spilled out over all of Laos, the boundaries between opposing forces were broken into small and

1. CINCPAC 210041Z Oct 61 to JCS (TS)

scattered segments that were difficult to recognize or prove. Throughout the remainder of 1961, both sides initiated attacks whenever there was an opportunity to improve a position, establish ownership, or gain an advantage.

After the heavy PL attacks in June that succeeded in breaking up the Meo strongholds in the vicinity of the PDJ, there was a six week period of fighting on a reduced scale -- a breathing period for regrouping forces and supplies. In August the RLG launched large scale operations to clear the Pathet Lao guerrillas from areas of future operations in the event of full-scale hostilities. Phoumi also commenced concentrating his forces in southern Laos, an indication of his determination to prepare for offensive or defensive actions later. There was evidence of an intensive enemy effort to build up supplies, and the Pathet Lao persisted in its attempts to eliminate the troublesome Meo guerrillas who harassed the Route 7 main supply route. Action remained relatively heavy during September and October, then tapered off a little for the balance of the year.¹

The Situation in Laos at the end of 1961

Military:

At the end of the year, the Pathet Lao controlled most of the terrain in Laos that was important to the communist cause -- a fact that influenced political discussions at three locations and levels. But at the end of December General Phoumi appeared to be well along in the implementation of his contingency plan for a military withdrawal from Northern Laos. His objectives were to relocate the preponderance of the FAR military strength and headquarters to an area generally south of the Nam Ca Dinh, to build up a capability of guerrilla warfare in the northern provinces, and establish a defense of the Mekong river line in the north. To do this, Phoumi had six of his nine

1. CINCPAC Laos Diary, see summaries of military activities for period August through December 1961 (TS)

Groupments Mobile in the southern part of the country. Of the three remaining GMs, one occupied the northeast corner of the Nam Tha Province, one was disposed to protect the eastern approaches into Luang Prabang, and a GM made up of Meo tribesmen was operating in the PDJ. Phoumi had also moved his Northern Command headquarters to the western border for a more tenable location to control the defense of the Mekong line and guerrilla operations in the north.¹

Political:

Despite political maneuvers, announcements of agreements reached, and occasional concessions, neither the communists nor the non-communists had agreed at the end of the year to let Laos fall into the hand of the opposition. And the three princes quarreled even over times and places for meeting to set up the coalition government as agreed upon at their Zurich meeting. The second meeting of the princes didn't occur until 6 October, delayed because of disagreement over a meeting place. Since neither side wished to venture into the other's camp, the meeting site was the center of a bridge over the Nam Lik River near Ban Hin Heup. When the meeting was over they announced agreement that the cabinet would consist of a neutral center of eight members, and two four-member groups representing the right and left.² Souvanna then went off to see the King who unofficially instructed him to form a new government, Souvanna explained that the three princes would next meet to agree upon the composition of the cabinet. Afterwards Boun Oum would offer his resignation to the King, clearing the way for Souvanna to be invested as the new Prime Minister. With characteristic optimism, Souvanna believed that in one meeting the three princes could settle all differences, but since agreement was prelude to resignation and the end of Boun Oum's government, Boun Oum found it easy to disagree with Souvanna's suggestion that they meet next at the communist's PDJ.³ The RLG countered with an invitation to meet in

1. CINCPAC Weekly Intelligence Digest No. 50-61 p8, 22 Dec 61 (S-NF)
2. CINCPAC Laos Diary p. 967 16-30 Sep 61 and p969, 1-15 Oct 61 (TS)
3. CINCPAC Laos Diary p. 971, 15-30 Oct 61 and pp. 974, 975, 1-30 Nov 61 (TS)

Vientiane. Souvanna proposed that Vientiane first be demilitarized and, when this was unacceptable to Phoumi, that he and Souphanouvong bring 140 men each as bodyguards. The RLG refused to accommodate more than 120 men for each. At this, Souvanna's delegate broke off negotiations and Souvanna again proposed meeting in the PDJ. Phoumi's insistence on a Vientiane meeting site gave some embassy personnel in the city the impression that he was determined to prevent a meeting and that he hoped to provoke incidents to bring about a resumption of hostilities. ^{1, 2} ~~(SECRET)~~

After several more weeks of haggling over security provisions, and with Phoumi under pressure from the three ICC Commissioners, and the Ambassadors from the U. S., the U. K. and France, agreement was reached finally on 24 December for a meeting on 27 December. It stalled before it commenced. In an arrival speech delivered at the airport, Souphanouvong castigated the Boun Oum government. Boun Oum answered by demanding that the sixteen man cabinet would have to include four of his own selectees and four "Vientiane neutrals," with the Ministries of Defense and Interior reserved for his own candidates. This torpedoed the meeting before it got underway. Souphanouvong and Souvanna returned to the Plaine des Jarres, the latter threatening to go to Paris for an indefinite stay unless Boun Oum relaxed his ³ demands.

Prolonging the disagreement was part of the Phoumi-Boun Oum strategy. Since the King had given to Souvanna the specific mission of forming a new government, Phoumi intended to agree to nothing until Souvanna presented in acceptable detail his plan for composition of the new government, the distribution of portfolios, plans on integration and demobilization of the armed forces and other important matters. Convinced that Souvanna was incapable of solving these problems, Phoumi anticipated that eventually negotiations would reach an impasse. At this ~~(SECRET)~~

1. VIENTIANE to STATE 780, 291428Z Nov 61 (S)
2. STATE to VIENTIANE 521, 020503Z 1 Dec 9PM 61 (S)
3. CINCPAC Laos Diary, pp. 977, 978, 1-31 Dec 61 (TS)

point Phoumi would play his big ace -- his plan for a government headed by the King.¹

King Savang also doubted that Souvanna could form a government. On 26 December the King told the U. S. Ambassador that there was too much distrust and bitterness between Souvanna and the Lao people. He believed all three princes had become tools of a foreign power and therefore no longer able to represent the people. The King appeared disgusted with all foreign interference.²

At the end of the year, no one but Prince Souvanna Phouma believed that the Communist Bloc and the Free World could arrive at a genuine agreement on the type of government for the Kingdom of Laos.

1. AMEMB VIENTIANE 190732Z Dec 61 to CINCPAC (S)
2. VIENTIANE to STATE 822, 261145Z Dec 61 (S)

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PART II

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

AA	Anti-Aircraft
ADC	Auto Defense Choc
AID	Agency for International Development
AMEMB	American Embassy
BLT	Battalion Landing Team
CAS	Controlled American Source
CAT	Civil Air Transport Service
CDNI	Committee for the Defense on National Interest
CHINATS	Chinese Nationalist
CHJUSMAG	Chief, Joint United States Military Advisory Group
CHPEO	Chief Programs Evaluation Officer
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CID	Current Intelligence Digest
CINCPAC	Commander in Chief Pacific
CINCPACAF	Commander in Chief Pacific Air Force
CINCPACFLT	Commander in Chief Pacific Fleet
CINCUSARPAC	Commander in Chief United States Army Pacific
CJTF	Commander Joint Task Force
CNO	Chief of Naval Operations
CONUS	Continental United States
DA	Department of the Army
DEFCON	Defense Condition
DIB	Daily Intelligence Summary (Footnote entry)
DOD	Department of Defense
DRV	Democratic Republic of Vietnam
FAL	Forces Armees du Laos (Laos Army)
FAR	Forces Armees du Royaume
FMFPAC	Fleet Marine Force Pacific
GM	Groupment Mobile
HQUSAFAF	Headquarters United States Air Force
ICA	International Cooperation Administration
ICC	International Commission for Supervision and Control

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JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
JTF	Joint Task Force
MA	Military Assistance
MAAG	Military Assistance Advisory Group
MAP	Military Assistance Program
MATP	Military Assistance Training Program
MATS	Military Air Transport Service
MEO	Laotian Tribesmen
MTT	Mobile Training Team
NIS	National Intelligence Survey (Footnote entry)
NLHX	Neo Lao Hak Xat
NNC	Neutral Nations Committee
OSD	Office of the Secretary of Defense
PACOM	Pacific Command
PDJ	Plaine des Jarres
PEO	Programs Evaluation Office
PL	Pathet Lao
POL	Petroleum, Oil, and Lubricants
PSYWAR	Psychological Warfare
REP	Representative
RLG	Royal Lao Government (Laotian)
RTAF	Royal Thailand Air Force
RTG	Royal Thailand Government
SEATO	Southeast Asia Treaty Organization
SECDEF	Secretary of Defense
SFF	SEATO Field Forces
SITREP	Situation Report
SVKT	Savannakhet
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
USAIRA	United States Air Attache
USARPAC	United States Army Pacific
USARMA	United States Army Attache
USOM	United States Operations Mission
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WSMTT	White Star Mobile Training Teams

PART II

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