

CHRONOLOGICAL SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT
EVENTS CONCERNING THE LAOTIAN CRISIS,
THIRD INSTALLMENT: 1 APRIL TO 31 MAY 1961

HISTORICAL DIVISION
JOINT SECRETARIAT
JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF
2 AUGUST 1961

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1 Apr The JCS reported to the Secretary of Defense that arms had been delivered for 3,800 of the 4,000 Meo directed to be armed by the 9 March decision (see item).
(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 993224, 1 Apr 61.

1 Apr US Ambassador to the USSR Llewellyn Thompson transmitted to the Secretary of State a copy of the text of an aide-memoire on Laos handed him by Khrushchev. The original of this aide-memoire had been addressed to the British Government in response to their aide-memoire of 23 March (see item).

The Soviets, after expressing satisfaction with the willingness of the British Government to agree to the convening of an international conference on Laos, proposed that such a meeting convene at the beginning of April.

The Soviet Government also agreed with the British proposal that the co-Chairmen of the Geneva Conference appeal for a cease-fire in Laos. In addition, the Soviets agreed to a British proposal that the ICC should be convened for "observation and control in Laos." As soon as possible, therefore, the ICC should meet in New Delhi and prepare a report for the co-Chairmen of the Geneva Conference. Renewed activity by the ICC should not, however, delay holding of the proposed international conference on Laos.

In response to the earlier British reference to the need to solve the "question of [a] neutral government of national unity in Laos," the Soviet Government pointed out that such a regime existed in the "legal government of . . . Souvanna Phouma." The Soviet Government would, however, "regard with sympathy" negotiations among Laotian political factions "for strengthening [the] national unity of [the] country." If the "necessary agreement" among the political factions could not be reached before the convening of the proposed international conference, "the Soviet Government does not exclude that" the Conference would render "help to [the] Laotians in reaching agreement."

(S) Msg, Moscow to SecState, 2358, 1 Apr 61.

1 Apr The JCS Laos Situation Report reported the fall of Tha Thom, the FAL base of operations on the southern approach to the Plaine des Jarres, to a Pathet Lao attack. The FAL withdrawal had been "completely uncontrolled." (However, the enemy did not follow up his advantage, and the Government troops were able to reassemble at Ban Nam Gap, some 10 miles south of Tha Thom. Control over these troops was re-established on 4 April.)
(TS) JCS Laos Sitreps 87-61 to 90-61, 1-4 Apr 61.

2 Apr CINCPAC cabled to the JCS a lengthy "appreciation" of the recently concluded SEATO Conference (see item 29 March). According to CINCPAC, SEATO had "stood trial," and had come through "with a meeting of minds." The SEATO Council resolution represented the unity thus preserved. Also, it made clear, according to CINCPAC, that consultations would continue, that SEATO harbored no aggressive intention, and that SEATO might take military action if the Communists did not desist from their attempt to capture Laos by force of arms.

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All SEATO military advisers had agreed, stated CINCPAC, that SEATO Plan 5 was "a good plan, adequate for the situation as it exists today and flexible enough to be executed in its entirety or in part." Concerning the force commitments in support of the plan, CINCPAC supplied a country-by-country analysis, as follows:

1. CINCPAC had felt at the beginning of the conference that the UK was reluctant to commit its combat forces and desired to limit its role to moral and logistical support. Had this tendency developed into a fixed UK position, Australia and New Zealand would have been "in a box," since the Commonwealth Brigade at Malaya comprised the joint military commitment of the three Commonwealth nations to SEATO Plan 5; the withholding of the UK contingents of the Brigade would have rendered politically difficult the deployment of the Australian and New Zealand contingents to Laos. However, CINCPAC reported, the US, Australian, and New Zealand military advisers had worked in concert and separately upon the UK adviser. The spirit of unanimity prevailing in the Council of Ministers had apparently had its effect also. For CINCPAC could now say "with some assurance" that the UK/Australian/New Zealand contribution to Plan 5 could be counted upon.

2. The French position was not "obstructionist," CINCPAC reported. Their commitment to Plan 5 was conditioned, however, upon their ability to transport troops from France and Africa to Laos; French forces, therefore, were committed to the reserve force of Plan 5.

3. CINCPAC believed that a Pakistani commitment of one battalion could be counted on, if the US would supply the necessary airlift. The remainder of the Pakistani forces, one fighter squadron and one brigade group (-), should be held in reserve.

4. The Philippines could be persuaded to contribute a battalion, CINCPAC stated, but the US would have to supply both airlift and logistical support. The current Philippine commitment, one medical unit and one engineer company, also contingent upon US lift and support, was sufficient.

5. Thai participation was a foregone conclusion and would probably increase "naturally" as events unfolded.

The actual commitment of all these forces remained dependent upon a unanimous political decision by the SEATO nations--a decision had not yet been made. Secretary Rusk had suggested to the Council of Ministers that the Council Representatives "be instructed in such a manner that the political assumptions necessary to implement Plan 5 be taken immediately" (see item 13 April). Further, Prime Minister Menzies of Australia had suggested, CINCPAC reported, that the US Military Adviser to SEATO (CINCPAC) alter Plan 5 as he thought necessary and then call a special military advisers' meeting to obtain approval of the change and to prod the Council of Ministers into "quick consultation" and

a "SEATO decision to act." CINCPAC had already begun to review and alter SEATO Field Force Plan 5; he intended to present his recommended changes directly to the various military advisers, as well as through the normal SEATO Council channels.

CINCPAC stated his conviction that SEATO Field Force Plan 5 was the "best basis for multi-national action." Accordingly, he was planning to put CINCPAC OPlan X-61 (see items 24 and 29 March) "on ice." However, CINCPAC stated, tactical flexibility must be maintained to cope with the fluid situation in Laos; CINCPAC would preposition units only as events unfolded. The SEATO Field Force Command must, moreover, become as well organized as the JTF 116 had been.

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 020330Z Apr 61.

2 Apr

Ambassador Brown reported to the Secretary of State that Admiral Felt, in his talks with Phoumi (see item 29 March), had taken up the question of possible collaboration between the FAL and South Viet Nam against Communist units in Southern Laos. Phoumi had replied that he had no objection in principle to such activities. In a subsequent talk with CHPEO Phoumi stated that he had an agreement with South Viet Nam under which one South Vietnamese division would enter Laos to assist the RLG in the event such intervention was required.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1803, 2 Apr 61.

3 Apr

The US Ambassador to Laos responded to questions put to him by the Secretary of State concerning reorganization of the Royal Laotian Government (see item 31 March). To be of any value in the existing situation, said the Ambassador, a new Laotian Government "must have a reasonable chance of being acceptable to both sides and eliminating the Souvanna 'government.'" Three types of governments would meet the terms of reference (no Pathet Lao and no early elections) laid down by the Secretary of State: 1) a caretaker government of non-political figures under the King; 2) a government of former prime ministers and established personalities, including Souvanna but not Boum Oum or Phoumi either with or without the King as prime minister; and 3) a government of second-line political figures representing the Souvanna and Phoumi groups, either with or without the King as prime minister.

Of the three alternatives, the Ambassador preferred the last on the ground that it would provide a greater level of competence than the existing Government. On the other hand, it would be the most difficult to achieve because of its lack of appeal to the Soviets and Souvanna.

Both the other two alternatives, in the Ambassador's opinion, had serious drawbacks: the first would have little influence and its mandate would probably be to prepare for elections as soon as possible; the second, as a repudiation of Phoumi and Boun Oum would have serious repercussions on the morale and leadership of the FAL.

In response to the specific questions put to him by the Secretary of State, the Ambassador replied as follows:

1. There was a chance that the King might head a government, but heavy US pressure would be required to persuade him to do so.

2. Souvanna might be invited to participate in a royal government by the French, but a responsible US representative should talk to him as well.

3. A federal system would be unworkable because of a lack of trained personnel and would lead to a de facto partition of the country.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1806, 3 Apr 61.

3 Apr

In a message to the Secretary of State, US Ambassador Johnson said that he and Thai Foreign Minister Thanat Khoman had briefly discussed the Soviet reply to the British proposal for a solution of the crisis in Laos (see item 1 April). Thanat had informed the Ambassador of Prime Minister Sarit's concern over the deteriorating military situation in Laos, and of Sarit's concern about going into a conference under these circumstances. Ambassador Johnson replied that the US also was worried about Phoumi's "passive defensive" posture and the seriousness of the Pathet Lao's victories in Laos. He told Thanat that the US had repeatedly called upon Phoumi to undertake, at least, some tactical offensive movements. Furthermore, Ambassador Johnson declared, the 1 April Soviet response to the British appeal had now increased the urgency of some offensive measures. In response to Ambassador Johnson's strong recommendation, Thanat had agreed to recommend to the Prime Minister that he send a message to Phoumi on the subject immediately.

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1784, 3 Apr 61.

3 Apr

The JCS reported to the Secretary of Defense the following progress on the courses of action approved on 9 March (see item):

1. The delivery of arms "sufficient" for 3,800 of the 4,000 Meo tribesmen (see item 1 April) had not made those 3,800 tribesmen effective fighting forces, inasmuch as resupply was included in the armament totals. [REDACTED] 3,200 Meo had been armed by these deliveries. A plan had been prepared for the arming of a fifth thousand; [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] (Not included in this 5,000 total were 1,500 Meo previously armed by PEO [REDACTED])

2. Four C-130 aircraft were now [REDACTED] at Takhli. Two crews were in place and two more crews were on 36-hour call, an arrangement in accordance, the JCS stated, with the requirements established by the Joint Operational Center (JOC) (approved action 5).

3. The Joint Operational Command had set a 10-plane requirement [REDACTED] and a 15-plane requirement for "all-out" operations. [REDACTED] 12 planes on hand and, by agreement with the JOC, had three more "on call" (approved action 7).

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 993269, 3 Apr 61.

3 Apr In a circular message to US diplomatic Missions, the Secretary of State issued guidance and instructions for action intended to "achieve complete coordination at all stages preparatory to [the] possible convening of [a] 14-nation conference on Laos."

The Secretary noted that the Soviet reply to the British proposal of a solution to the Laos situation (see item 1 April), by agreeing to issuance of a call for a cease-fire by the Geneva co-Chairmen, implied "assent to our essential conditions, namely cessation of hostilities." The Soviet reply, however, called for the reconvening of the ICC, negotiations between the Laotian factions aimed at "strengthening [the] national unity of the country," and the convocation of an international conference, in addition to a cease-fire. The various procedures were proposed, moreover, without reference to timing.

The US position with regard to the Soviet proposals was that an observable and verifiable de facto cease-fire would be a prerequisite to US participation in an international conference. The US should, therefore, be prepared to "carry out stiff measures required [to] redress [the] situation militarily if [a] de facto cease-fire is not effective."

The US hoped that the sequence of events leading to an international conference would be as follows: 1) issuance of a call for a cease-fire by the Geneva co-Chairmen; 2) reactivation of the ICC in New Delhi; 3) entry of the ICC into Laos to observe the cease-fire; 4) negotiations between the FAL and the Pathet Lao on details of a cease-fire once it had been accepted in principle; and 5) resumption of talks between the Laotian Government and Souvanna aimed at creating a "broader" government to represent Laos at the international conference.

Recognizing that the cooperation of the Laotian Government was of "paramount importance," the Secretary recommended to the US Ambassador to Laos that he explain the US position as described above to Phoumi and the King and request their endorsement of it. The Ambassador was also to emphasize to Phoumi the necessity for maintaining a strong military posture so that the RLG would not come to the conference table in a weak position to negotiate.

(S) Msg, SecState Circular, 1510, 3 Apr 61.

4 Apr In a message to the Secretary of State, the US Ambassador to Laos reported that the British Ambassador had explained to Phoumi in detail the timetable and procedural steps involved in achieving a cease-fire and international conference (see item 3 April).

At a press conference later in the day, reported the US Ambassador, Phoumi had 1) expressed approval of the UK/USSR efforts to achieve a cease-fire, 2) stated that an international conference was desirable "to control [the] cease-fire and guarantee Lao neutrality," and 3) expressed willingness to meet any Lao leader for the purpose of forming a "representative union government within [the] framework [of the] constitution and present laws."

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1812, 1815, 4 Apr 61.

4 Apr

Ambassador Brown, stating his belief that the next few days might see an acceleration of enemy efforts to secure key terrain in Laos, requested as a matter of "utmost urgency" that a US RT-33 be authorized to perform reconnaissance over Laos. The flights would have to originate from Thailand, said Brown, since no Laotian airfield could accommodate the RT-33. The need was so pressing however, according to Ambassador Brown, that "such niceties as accreditation" to the Bangkok attache were "somewhat irrelevant."

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1811 and 1814,
4 Apr 61.

4 Apr

CINCPAC supplied to the JCS his comments upon General Trapnell's recommendations (see item 31 March), as follows:

1. CINCPAC concurred in the recommended bombing of the Plaine des Jarres, stating that the strike priorities should be: first, supply dumps, convoys, and transport; and second, heavy weapons, troop concentrations, and command posts.

2. [REDACTED]

3. The desirability of converting the PEO to a MAAG was concurred in by CINCPAC.

4. Although CHPEO had US authority and RLG permission to place advisors at the battalion level, it had not been possible to place US advisors at a lower level than the group mobile, because of the reluctance of FAL field commanders to have their shortcomings exposed. When and if this disinclination could be overcome, CINCPAC stated, advisors should be placed down to the company level, where "stiffening" would be most effective.

5. Although CINCPAC did not reject the use of armed helicopters for reconnaissance and air support, he believed that these craft could be more advantageously used as utility aircraft. Moreover, CINCPAC's Army advisers had stated that the development of armed helicopter techniques were still in a "highly experimental stage" and not ready for effective operational use.

6. CHPEO was progressing, CINCPAC reported, in placing PEO advisors on FAL staffs.

7. CHPEO would continue efforts to improve PEO intelligence capability and would, according to CINCPAC, make further recommendations "appropriate to developing situations."

8. CINCPAC reported that, of the nine additional battalions for which General Trapnell had recommended US support, seven were already in being, and CHPEO had recommended to Trapnell that their support be authorized. CINCPAC surmised that Trapnell had added two battalions to increase flexibility in training and rotation. However, CINCPAC continued, there was no

known plan for activating more than seven. The support of these seven had been requested by Phoumi in a letter to CHPEO requesting an increase in the FAL troop ceiling from 62,322 to 70,616, to cover the following requirements:

6 special battalions	2,520
1 paratroop battalion	800
replacements undergoing training	1,654
service troops	<u>3,320</u>
Total	8,294

CINCPAC and CHPEO recommended that the service troops authorization be reduced to 982 and that the modified increase of 5,956 be approved, at an estimated cost for May and June of \$652,000.

9. With regard to the establishment of a Joint Unconventional Warfare Task Force (JUWTF) CINCPAC, presuming this to be a long-range measure not directly connected to the immediate problem of retaking the Plaine des Jarres, concurred in Trapnell's recommendation provided that the priority placed upon such a project would not be higher than that assigned to other recommendations.

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 042325Z Apr 61.

4 Apr

The JCS reported to the Secretary of Defense the following progress on the development of the 9 March approved courses of action (see item):

1. In view of the current political situation permission to fly USAF transport aircraft into Laos must in the future receive the prior approval of the President (approved action 8).

2. Action had been completed on the supply of artillery batteries by the delivery to Bangkok of the 75mm pack howitzers to be manned by FAL personnel (approved action 9).

3. The Secretary of Defense had ordered, on the previous day, that the two reconnaissance-configured B-26s (approved action 11, see item 13 March) be moved to Thailand as soon as possible.

4.



5. In addition to the 17 approved courses of action, the Secretary of Defense had ordered that the Department of State be requested to secure the approval of the RTG for the initiation from Thailand of B-26 operations over Laos (action 18, added to the project on this date).

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC. JCS 993343. 4 Apr 61.

5 Apr

The JCS informed the Secretary of Defense of the progress on the approved military courses of action (see item 9 March):

1. [REDACTED] arming of at least 3,500 Meo tribesmen, in addition to the 1,500 previously armed by PEO. [REDACTED] the arming of a sixth thousand; the supplies were available for this arming (approved action 1).

2. [REDACTED]

(approved action 3).

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 993426, 5 Apr 61.

5 Apr

The British Ambassador to the USSR delivered to the Soviet Deputy Minister Responsible for Southeast Asia the draft texts of 1) an appeal for a cease-fire in Laos, 2) a request to Nehru that he convene the ICC, and 3) an invitation to 12 nations to participate in a conference on Laos. (Fourteen nations would participate, but the UK and USSR, as co-Chairmen, would not have to invite themselves.) The position of the British Government, as expressed in the draft texts and modified orally in accordance with instructions by the Foreign Secretary, was as follows:

1. The Foreign Secretaries of the United Kingdom and the USSR, acting as co-Chairmen of the Geneva Conference, should call for a cease-fire in Laos. As a practical first step, "emissaries appointed by the authorities in Vientiane and Xieng Khouang" should meet at an agreed-upon time and place to formulate orders to be issued to the troops under their respective control.

2. The co-Chairmen should also request the Prime Minister of India to arrange for the reassembly at New Delhi of the International Control Commission. The purpose of the reconvened Commission should be to report to the co-Chairmen when, in the opinion of the Commission, the cease-fire in Laos was fully effective.

3. The co-Chairmen were to issue an invitation to the governments of Burma, Cambodia, Canada, Communist China, France, India, Laos, North Viet Nam, Poland, South Viet Nam, Thailand, and the US to attend a conference "on the permanent settlement of the Laotian question." The British Government announced it would be willing to begin the Conference on 24 April, but, because of the royal funeral in Laos scheduled to start the day before, preferred that the Conference start on 2 May. (See item 1 April for the Soviet recommendation on the opening date of the conference.) As to the Conference site, the British were opposed to Phnom Penh because of the lack of the necessary facilities. They preferred New Delhi but were willing to accept Geneva.

The British stated that, while they were willing to issue these appeals and invitations simultaneously, they would not consent to the holding of a conference until the cease-fire had become effective.

(S) Msgs, SecState, Circulars, 1521, CG-860, and 1533, 5, 6 and 7 Apr 61.

5 Apr

In a message to the Secretary of State, the US Ambassador to Laos proposed specific measures to achieve a new and broadened RLG. These measures were as follows:

1. The King would summon a special session of of the National Assembly and call on it to form a government of national unity to represent Laos at the impending 14-Nation Conference.

2. The Assembly, "properly rehearsed," would call on the King to head the government.

3. Boun Oum would then offer the resignation of his government.

4. Next, Souvanna, fully briefed and ready in Phnom Penh, would come to Vientiane as a simple deputy.

5. After a 24 hour recess, the King would reconvene the Assembly and announce the new government, either headed by himself or by a previously agreed upon political figure.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1818, 5 Apr 61.

5 Apr

In reply to a request by the JCS (see item 29 March) CINCPAC supplied to the JCS information on the deployment of US forces to execute SEATO Plan 5. CINCPAC declared that PACOM forces were in a position to begin landing in Laos within 48 hours of the order to execute and this reaction time could be reduced to within 24 hours by the movement of forces to closer stand-by positions. CINCPAC forecast that, to effect this additional pre-positioning, he would require that the full resources of the 315th Air Division be "loaded and cocked" in the Philippines. These actions could be taken "on short notice," CINCPAC stated.

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 050446Z Apr 61.

5 Apr

A combined assault wave of FAL paratroop and infantry forces in C-47s and helicopters was airdropped and airlanded north of Muong Kassy, as the FAL launched its offensive to retake that town (located on Route 13 between Vang Vieng and RJ 7-13). All phases of the operation reportedly worked "very efficiently, with skilled American technicians located at key positions during the execution." One paratroop and one infantry battalion were successfully assembled in the drop area, a road block of Route 13 was quickly established, and patrols were probing southward. However, the GM 12 offensive north toward Muong Kassy, to join with the airlifted force, made no progress.

(On 4 April, as the FAL drop force was leaving Vientiane, Ambassador Brown had questioned the use of the C-47s and helicopters, citing the possible effect upon diplomatic negotiations. Although the Ambassador acquiesced in the departure of the force as scheduled, CINCPAC stated that this last minute hesitation was "indicative of indecision and lack of complete support of Phoumi." Avowing that it was "vital" that JCS and CINCPAC have full knowledge through military sources of all "important problems involving military matters," CINCPAC on 5 April requested CHPEO to "parallel promptly

any State ~~message~~ message pertaining to urgent or emergency military matters by military channels to [CINCPAC] with info to JCS.")

(TS) JCS Laos Sitreps 91-61 - 92-61, 5-6 Apr 61;
(TS) Msgs, CHPEO Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 101085, 6 Apr 61;
CINCPAC to CHPEO Laos, 052241Z Apr 61; CINCPAC to JCS, 042011Z Apr 61.

5 Apr According to a circular message from the Secretary of State to US diplomatic missions, the British Foreign Secretary was instructing the British Ambassador to France to tell Souvanna that, if he were able to come in a "private capacity," the Secretary of State would be pleased to see him in Washington in the near future.
(S) Msg, SecState Circular, 1523, 5 Apr 61.

5 Apr The US Charge d'Affaires in Hong Kong informed the Secretary of State that, in the presence of Premier Chou En-lai, Chinese Communist Deputy Premier Lu Ting-yi, had proclaimed his country's support for the Soviet proposals on Laos (see item 1 April). Speaking at a diplomatic reception in Peiping the previous day, Lu had declared that the early convocation of an enlarged Geneva conference was the "key" to a peaceful settlement of the crisis in Laos. Lu had also asserted that "serious setbacks" of pro-US forces had compelled US imperialism to profess an interest in such a settlement, although this had been belied by US military moves.
(C) Msg, Hong Kong to SecState, 1587, 5 Apr 61.

5 Apr In an official communique, the Chinese Nationalist Government Information Office declared that the completion date for evacuating anti-Communist Chinese escapees from the Burma-Laos-Thailand border area to Taiwan had been extended from 7 to 12 April. According to the communique, the original date had been postponed in order to enable the Chinese who were living in more remote areas to take advantage of the opportunity for voluntary evacuation.
(U) Msg, Taipei to SecState, 608, 6 Apr 61.

5 Apr CINCPAC informed all SEATO military advisers and the Commander of the SEATO Field Force that, because of the current military situation in Laos and the recent SEATO military advisers conference (see item 2 April), he had reviewed SEATO Field Forces Plan 5 and had concluded that the plan required some "up-dating," particularly with regard to "realigning" the deployment of the SEATO nations' military contingents. CINCPAC proposed the following composition and deployment of forces:

1. Force A (Vientiane)
 - 2 US BLT's
 - 2 Thai battalions
 - 1 Pakistani battalion
2. Force B (Seno-Savannakhet)
 - 1 Australian battalion
 - 1 New Zealand battalion
 - 1 UK battalion

3. Base Area Command

Commonwealth, Thai, Pakistani,
Philippine and US support forces

4. Air Component Forces

Commonwealth, Thai and US air components

5. Central Force Reserve

- 1 Thai RCT (less 2 battalions)
- 1 Thai paratroop ranger/SAS company
- 1 US airborne battle group

6. General Reserve

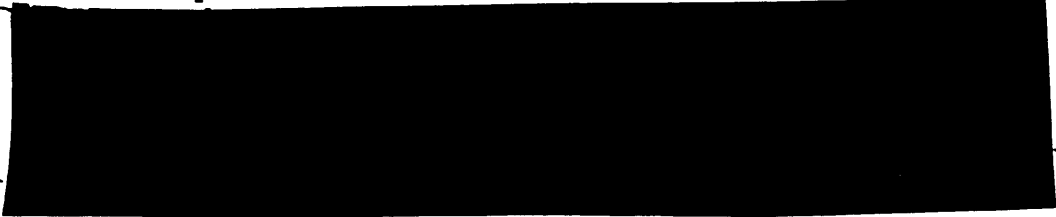
- 1 Pakistani brigade group (-)
- 1 French infantry battalion
- 1 Philippine engineer company

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to Defense Canberra, et al.,
DA IN 100585, 5 Apr 61.

6 Apr

Ambassador Johnson reported to the Secretary of State that Prime Minister Sarit had agreed "in principle" to the conduct of operations in Laos by 3-26s based in Thailand (action 18 of military courses of action, see item 4 April). The only Thai stipulation had been that they be consulted before the execution of such attack.

During the interview in which this approval was secured, Phoumi had entered the discussions, painting a "black picture of massive Viet Minh . . . invasion."



Ambassador Johnson stated that Phoumi had "succeeded in communicating to Sarit his apparent present mood of extreme pessimism" and that Sarit was "genuinely alarmed."

(TS) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 1806 and 1807,
6 Apr, 1809, 7 Apr, CINCPAC to JCS, 070147Z Apr 61.

6 Apr

~~_____~~
authorizing, with the approval of the Departments of State and Defense, the integration of the Meo irregulars into the FAL.

~~_____~~ the concurrence of Ambassador Brown, CHPEO, and the US Military Attache in Laos, had proposed this integration in the form of an increase in the authorized FAL force levels sufficient to permit the FAL to assume command of all Meos ~~_____~~

~~_____~~ According ~~_____~~ the following advantages would accrue from this proposal:

- 1. The RLG could claim occupation and therefore control of large areas in Xieng Khouang province, areas they could not claim to control if the Meos continued in an irregular status.

2. Supply of, and overt relations with, the Meo forces would be legalized. These contacts could be maintained covertly only with difficulty.

3. The basis for a larger measure of future RLG control of the Meos would be established; thereby, the apprehensions of the RLG with respect to arming Meos should be dispelled.

In granting US Government approval to this proposal, [REDACTED] the FAL force ceiling in the auto-defense category would be raised to permit the integration of up to 6,000 Meos. (This raise was separated explicitly from the increases recommended by General Trapnell; see item 31 March). The integration should take place at the earliest possible moment, without publicity. The enemy must not be given grounds to charge that this move was simply a ruse to complicate the status of Xieng Khouang province. [REDACTED] "entire affair can be handled in a way that will make it look as if these Meos were always part of the FAL auto-defense complex." [REDACTED]

6 Apr CINCPAC directed that CJTF 116 and staff revert to planning status (see items 16-17 December, 7 January, 15 February, 22 March). At the same time, CINCPAC designated the Deputy CINCUSARPAC as the Commander (Designate) of SEATO Field Forces under SEATO Field Forces Plan 5. The Deputy was to assemble and activate his staff at Okinawa.

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to CJTF 116, Deputy CINCUSARPAC, et al., 062320Z Apr 61.

6 Apr According to the Chinese Communist Press, Marshal Chen Yi, at a news conference in Djakarta on 2 April, had declared that, if SEATO nations sent troops to take part in the civil war in Laos, the Chinese Government, if requested by the 'legal government headed by Prince Phouma,' would not 'remain idle.'

(OUO) Msg, Hong Kong to SecState, 1597, 7 Apr 61.

6 Apr CHPEO reported to CINCPAC that Phoumi had requested the following:

1. One Thai artillery battery.
2. Five replacements for T-6s lost in action.
3. Authority to drop bombs from T-6s.

CHPEO considered that the requested artillery could be used; in fact, two batteries of 105mm howitzers were needed. Since, however, the most that CHPEO could say for the effectiveness of the T-6s was that they were "better than nothing," he recommended that the T-6s be replaced only "if it is decided that it is not advisable to furnish better aircraft and it is desired to get as much material as we can into Laos prior to a possible ceasefire." With regard to the arming of the T-6s with bombs, CHPEO stated his continued indorsement of this course (see item 18 January).

(For CINCPACs comments to the JCS see item 7 April.)
(TS) Msg, CHPEO Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 101123, 6 Apr 61.

6 Apr

The JCS notified CINCPAC of the US Government approval of RT-33 photo reconnaissance flights over Laos (see item 4 April). The JCS considered, however, that RF-101 aircraft based in Thailand or upon carriers were better suited to the mission. CINCPAC was authorized, therefore, to conduct photo reconnaissance over Laos with either of the two types of aircraft, as he considered appropriate. The JCS placed two restrictions on the flights, as follows:

1. Reconnaissance flights utilizing US aircraft and crews must be conducted in response to an RLG request.
2. Flights would enter and exit Laos from Thailand or South Viet Nam and would avoid the northern and eastern boundaries of Laos.

The following day, CHPEO reported to CINCPAC that Phoumi had made an official request for reconnaissance flights within Laos by US aircraft with US crews.

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 993538, 6 Apr 61;
(TS) Msg, CHPEO Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 101477, 7 Apr 61.

7 Apr

CINCPAC commented to the JCS upon Phoumi's request to CHPEO for artillery, aircraft, and permission to bomb with T-6s (see items 6 April). CINCPAC recommended that negotiations be instituted to acquire two 105mm batteries for the Thakhek and Paksane areas. Also, CINCPAC urged in strong terms that Ambassador Brown be instructed to remove his restriction on bombing by Laotian aircraft, and that Phoumi's request for permission to use his aircraft for bombing be approved.

CINCPAC recommended that additional T-6 aircraft be provided to the RLG as the Laotians acquired the capability to "absorb and fly them"; CINCPAC also broached the subject of supplying to the Laotians F8F fighters currently in the possession of Thailand, suggesting that as a quid pro quo the US accede to recent Thai requests for improved air defense systems.

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 070017Z Apr 61; (S) Msg, CHJUSMAG Thailand to CINCPAC, DA IN 101110, 6 Apr 61;
(TS) Msg, CHJUSMAG Thailand to CINCPAC, DA IN 101083, 6 Apr 61.

7 Apr

[REDACTED] (see items 13 and 15 April).

(TS) JCSM-233-61 to SecDef, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] 7 Apr 61, derived from (TS) JCS 1992/954, 7 Apr 61.

~~TOP SECRET~~
7 Apr

CHPEO submitted a periodic intelligence report on the enemy situation in Laos for the period 13 March to 3 April. The report contained, inter alia, the following observations and conclusions:

1. At the end of the period, the enemy retained full control of the western approach to the Plaine des Jarres and had, by the capture of Tha Thom (see item 1 April) effectively denied FAL forces access to the southern approach to the plain.

2. By the use of propaganda, subversion, and rumors, the enemy had reduced FAL morale, encouraging defections and unnecessary withdrawals.

3. The enemy had continued to build up his logistical base in the Plaine des Jarres; both airlift and truck convoy had continued with only minor harassment by either the FAL or Meo guerrillas.

4. The enemy numbered approximately 14,100 troops, whose morale and combat efficiency were both rated "good."

5. The enemy could maintain and reinforce his positions in contact with the FAL; after reinforcing at any one location, he could "counter-attack from that position at a time of his own choosing."

(S) Msg, CHPEO Laos to CINCPAC, et al., DA 101693, 8 Apr 61.

8 Apr

Ambassador Gavin informed the Secretary of State that British diplomats in Paris had, on the previous day, urged Prince Souvanna to visit Washington and to curtail his trips to "Iron Curtain" capitals. According to a report from the British Embassy, Souvanna had stated that, although he had not rejected the idea of a visit to the US at a later date, "he would have to think about it."

In a later message, Ambassador Gavin reported that the British Parliamentary Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs had expressed the opinion that Souvanna wanted a "definite official" invitation from the US Ambassador in Paris. Furthermore, the Under Secretary and the British Ambassador had strongly urged that Ambassador Gavin extend a definite invitation to the Laotian Prince for 18 April. Both British diplomats believed, Gavin said, that "this would do the trick."

In reply to Ambassador Gavin's message, Secretary Rusk instructed the US Ambassador to follow the British recommendation and extend the invitation directly to Souvanna for a visit to Washington on 18 April.

As further background on the Souvanna Phouma invitation, US diplomats in Paris were advised that, if Souvanna's "deportment" in the immediate future should warrant his seeing the President, the Secretary of State believed that the Laotian Prince would undoubtedly be received at the White House.

(S) Msgs, Paris to SecState, 4279, 4289, 8 Apr 61;
(S) Msgs, SecState to Paris, 4218, (no date), 4216,
8 Apr 61.

~~TOP SECRET~~ ~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

8 Apr The Secretary of State directed the US Ambassador to Laos to explore further with the King the Ambassador's proposals for reorganizing the RLG (see item 5 April). The Secretary's instructions were implementations of a decision, based on discussions between the US and the United Kingdom at the highest level, to have a "broader based provisional government in office prior to [the] convening of [an] international conference."

The Ambassador was instructed to stress, in his discussions with the King, the need for a broadly representative provisional government but to point out "the extremely difficult position" of Laos at the conference table should its delegation be headed by a "leftish-inclined" premier such as Souvanna. The Secretary stressed particularly the need to avoid placing too much reliance on Souvanna, as the "key" to the entire situation in Laos.

(S) Msg, SecState Circular, 1547, 8 Apr 61.

8 Apr Ambassador Brown reported to the Secretary of State that on the previous day Phoumi had "poured out his fears" to a US Embassy officer. According to the report, Phoumi depicted himself as desperately fighting a "last ditch" battle to keep his "tough" policy alive. He still believed that only through military action could peace be brought to Laos, and that, if properly armed and if given "outside help" commensurate with that given the PL by the Viet Minh, the RLG could achieve victory.


Phoumi stated that he did not believe in a political solution; that Sarit did not want it; and that the Pathet Lao would not respect it. (See item 13 April for JCS action stemming from this message.)

(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1837, 8 Apr 61.

8 Apr The Secretary of State, in compliance with a decision by President Kennedy and Prime Minister Macmillan, directed the US Delegate to the UN to begin contingency planning with the British Delegate for a possible referral of the Laos question to the UN. Planning was to be undertaken on the basis of two major assumptions: 1) a simultaneous appeal by Laos to SEATO and the UN for assistance in protecting the country's independence, territorial integrity and neutrality, resulting in a SEATO military intervention; and 2) referral of the Laos question to the UN in the absence of any SEATO intervention and as the result of an unsatisfactory outcome of current political negotiations.

(TS) Msg, SecState to USUN, 1955, 8 Apr 61.

8 Apr



(see item 15 April).

(TS) Msg, SecState to Bangkok, 1561, 8 Apr 61.

TOP SECRET
9 Apr

In response to instructions from the Secretary of State (see item 8 April), the US Ambassador to France invited Souvanna to visit the US. According to the Ambassador's report to the Secretary of State, Souvanna had expressed a desire to accept the invitation and to talk with US officials, if he could make the necessary rearrangements in his schedule of visits to Iron Curtain countries.

Later in the day, reported the Ambassador, Souvanna had called an Embassy officer and had accepted the US invitation for the period 18-20 April.

The following day, in a message to US diplomatic missions, the Secretary of State explained why the US Government had invited Souvanna to visit Washington and the conditions under which the visit would be made. The Secretary emphasized that the Laotian leader was coming in a "private capacity" and that his visit in no way implied US recognition of him as Laotian Prime Minister or endorsed a future for him in Laotian affairs. Nor did it imply any change in the US policy of support for the Boun Oum Government. Nevertheless, Souvanna was an important figure in the Laotian crisis. Although he wielded little effective power at the present and his claims of popular support were questionable, the Secretary noted that Souvanna's consistent advocacy of a neutral Laos had tended to identify him with that policy. Furthermore, as a Royal Prince, Souvanna remained a major figure on the Laotian scene, and his present tour of world capitals had, unfortunately, raised his stature internationally.

By inviting Souvanna to Washington, said the Secretary, the US Government hoped to ascertain the Prince's views on "details" of the Laotian situation. In particular, US officials wanted to evaluate 1) the degree of Souvanna's determination to preserve the integrity of his country, and 2) the extent to which he realized the difficulties of maintaining the independence of Laos in the face of continuing subversion. Furthermore, US officials would be able to emphasize the determination of the US to take action that would prevent the Communists from gaining control of Laos.

The US Government, however, had serious reservations concerning Souvanna, stemming from the Prince's apparent complete lack of understanding of Communist purposes and methods, and his "self-delusion" which made him "naively confident" that he could control Communist subversion in Laos.

(S) Msgs, Paris to SecState, 4290, 4291, 9 Apr 61;
(OUO) Msg, SecState Circular, 1554, 10 Apr 61.

10 Apr

[REDACTED]

(see items 6 and 15 April).

(TS) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1828, 10 Apr 61,
(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to PACAF, 110113Z Apr 61.

~~TOP SECRET~~
10 Apr

CHPEO forwarded to the Joint Chiefs and the Secretary of Defense, for information, a copy of his 9 April recommendation to CINCPAC that two RB-26 aircraft be made available immediately for tactical reconnaissance in Laos. CHPEO had stated that, although RF-106, RT-33, and RF-101 aircraft would augment the present aerial reconnaissance capability, these jets would not provide "adequate and timely tactical ground information." CHPEO felt that, because the enemy was mounting operations less than 75 miles from Vientiane, he required aircraft based in Laos that could act to meet intelligence requirements in a matter of minutes. Moreover, CHPEO desired to use experienced PEO observers, familiar with the ground on which the enemy was operating; these observers required an aircraft that could "get down on the deck" to locate enemy troop movements over jungle trails.

In a message of the same date, Ambassador Brown informed the Secretary of State of his full concurrence with the CHPEO's recommendation.

(TS) Msg, CHPEO Laos to JCS, SecDef, DA IN 102248, 10 April 61; (TS) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1846, 10 April 61.

11 Apr

The JCS followed up their memorandum of 31 March 1961 to the Secretary of Defense (see item) with another, in which they gave their approval, subject to certain comments, to those recommendations made by General Trapnell concerning Laos that had not been previously approved. These recommendations had been referred by the JCS to CINCPAC for his comments and recommendations prior to final decision by the Joint Chiefs. Following receipt of CINCPAC's views (see item 4 April), the JCS commented on the Trapnell recommendations concerned as follows:

1. 

2. Provide armed helicopters. The development of armed helicopters in an "armed reconnaissance and suppressive fires role," the JCS conceded, was still in an experimental stage. Therefore armed helicopters should not be indiscriminately used. However, the provision of such helicopters to the FAL would, in the opinion of the JCS, furnish a basis for further evaluation of the entire concept of armed-helicopter employment because of the operational environment involved. Hence, the JCS recommended that the use of up to six US armed helicopters be authorized if requested by CINCPAC, the crews to be furnished in the same manner as B-26 crews. CINCPAC's further views on this subject, the JCS added, would be forwarded to the Secretary (see item 20 April).

3. Provide PEO an organic intelligence-production and counterintelligence capability. The JCS stated that they would submit appropriate and timely recommendations to the Secretary in line with the developing situation.

4. Authorize support for nine additional FAL battalions. The JCS requested the Secretary of Defense to authorize, in addition to the increase in the FAL troop ceiling recently authorized, an increase of 5,956, distributed as follows: six infantry battalions (2,520), one parachute battalion (800), replacements undergoing training (1,654), and service troops (982). The JCS also requested that Defense Support funds in the amount of \$652,000 be provided for the pay of these forces for the months of May and June (see item 18 April).

5. Establish JUWTF for unconventional warfare and psychological warfare campaign. Noting that this recommendation had long-range aspects, the JCS stated that they would submit appropriate and timely recommendations on it separately.

(TS) JCSM-232-61 to SecDef, "Laos (U)," 11 Apr 61, derived from (TS) JCS 1992/952, 6 Apr 61, as amended by (TS) Dec On JCS 1992/952, 11 Apr 61.

11 Apr

The JCS replied to a memorandum from the Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA), dated 29 March 1961. The Secretary had requested recommendations regarding the composition, terms of reference, operating procedures, and forces and logistical requirements for an international commission for supervision and control (ICC) in Laos, should such a body, or a similar one, be established.

From the military point of view, the JCS said, it would be inimical to US interests to re-establish the Geneva-constituted ICC under its old terms of reference. That body had been rendered ineffective because of five basic limitations: 1) The field inspection teams had been required to obtain permission from the two antagonists prior to conduct each inspection. 2) The Commission had been composed of one member nation that was definitely pro-West, another that was definitely pro-Communist, and a third that was reluctant to offend either of the other two; thus the Commission had not been able to act as a unit. 3) Nevertheless, on questions concerning violations or threats of violations possibly leading to a resumption of hostilities, recommendations had required a unanimous vote. 4) The ICC had lacked the authority and means to enforce its decisions. 5) The inspection teams had lacked sufficient personnel and logistical support.

The JCS feared that re-establishment of the ICC under the 1954 terms of reference might occur as a consequence of the political decision to couple a de facto cease-fire with an invitation to Prime Minister Nehru to summon the ICC to reconvene in New Delhi. If this re-establishment under the 1954 terms of reference did occur, two serious disadvantages for the West would result. First, a subsequent agreement on adequate revision of the terms of reference would be more difficult to achieve; and second, ineffective as the Commission might be in inspecting and supervising the importation

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of arms, it would still seriously hamper US efforts to stockpile an adequate supply of material for the RLG; at the same time, it would be unable to slow the flow of Communist-bloc assistance to the Pathet Lao.

The JCS recommended, therefore, that US policy should be 1) to require the responsibilities of the ICC (Laos) to be limited, initially, solely to confirming that a de facto cease-fire existed, and 2) to refrain from agreeing to any expansion of the mission of the ICC to embrace over-all supervision, inspection, and reporting on the entry of military personnel and equipment into Laos until its terms of reference had been revised by the international conference. Even under completely new and improved terms of reference the ICC would not be able to compel even grudging compliance with its recommendations or with decisions approved by the conference; moreover, it was doubtful that the Commission could eliminate covert Communist-bloc assistance to the Pathet Lao. Nevertheless, the JCS continued, new terms of reference could enable the Commission to "police" Laos more effectively than had been done previously, by publicizing violations and subjecting violators to adverse world opinion.

The two essential improvements the new terms of reference should incorporate, as compared with the old, therefore, should be elimination of the need for field inspection teams to obtain permission from the two antagonists before conducting inspections, and substitution of a majority vote for unanimity on the part of the Commission in making recommendations concerning violations or threats of violations that might lead to resumption of hostilities.

As for the composition of the Commission, despite their criticism of the 1954 arrangement the JCS did not believe it was realistic to expect that that arrangement could be improved from the point of view of the West. Incorporation of additional neutralist countries like Cambodia and Burma, they thought, would only promote unwieldiness and make agreement more difficult. They therefore recommended that the US favor the continuation of India, Canada, and Poland as the member nations of the Commission. At the same time, however, they recommended that the US represent to Nehru its concern regarding the quality and political leanings of the individuals India might subsequently provide to the ICC, particularly the chairman, emphasizing the importance of the Commission's task as a "test case" in settling disputes between the West and Communist powers.

The questions of operating procedures and force and logistical requirements, the JCS thought, could be left to the Commission itself so far as details were concerned, provided that the terms of reference contained comprehensive language ensuring that the Commission would be provided with sufficient personnel funding and logistical support to accomplish its mission.

As a matter separate from but related to the foregoing, the JCS also recommended that the US urgently prepare plans to provide for the aggressive and continuing exploitation of whatever opportunities might develop for using news media to focus world-wide attention on violations of whatever agreements might be reached by an international conference and on obstructions in the way of the effective operation of whatever control mechanism might be established.

On 24 April 1961 the Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA) forwarded the foregoing views and recommendations of the JCS to the Secretary of State, recommending that they form the US position in the matter.

(S) JCSM-222-61 to SecDef, "Activities of International Commission in Laos (C)," 11 Apr 61, derived from (S) JCS 1992/950, 6 Apr 61, as amended by (S) Dec On JCS 1992/950, 11 Apr 61; (S) 1st N/H of JCS 1992/950, 27 Apr 61; (S) JCS 1992/944, 30 Mar 61.

11 Apr

The Thai Ambassador to the US delivered two nearly identical notes from Prime Minister Sarit to the President and the Secretary of State. As reported by the Secretary of State to the US Ambassador to Thailand, these notes made the following major points: 1) Thailand supported the efforts to find a peaceful solution to the Laotian problem; 2) such a political solution should not, however, result in partition or dismemberment of Laos; 3) Thailand would not be able to support any solution permitting Communist elements to assume control of Laos; 4) the optimum solution would be a genuinely neutral regime with wider representation but excluding Communist factions subservient to outside control; 5) if a peaceful solution was not possible, Thailand would cooperate with the US in any appropriate action to "preserve peace, freedom and well-being of our people."

(S) Msg, SecState to Bangkok, 12 Apr 61.

11 Apr

In reply to the Secretary of State's request for information that would be pertinent to the Department's discussions with Souvanna upon his arrival in Washington (see item 9 April), the US Ambassador to South Viet Nam reported the following:

1. The South Vietnamese Government was convinced that, if Souvanna Phouma resumed his former position as the Laotian Prime Minister, Laos would be lost to the Communists through a political takeover of the country.
2. In that event, South Viet Nam would feel itself seriously endangered. Viet Cong activities in and through Laos would undoubtedly be intensified in order to accelerate the Communist campaign to take over South Viet Nam.
3. Under a Souvanna Premiership, the status of South Viet Nam's diplomatic mission in Vietiane would probably be seriously lowered, and the government of North Viet Nam would be recognized. This would cause South Viet Nam to lose face in Asia at the very time it was losing ground in the diplomatic struggle in Africa to maintain its status as the only legal government in Viet Nam.
4. The Vietnamese Government would probably not object if Souvanna were placed in an important position in the Laotian cabinet, provided that his influence could be effectively restricted by strong non-Communist Laotians. The Government of Viet Nam also would probably hope that the new RLG, in

addition to having the King as Prime Minister, would have Phoui Sananikone as its "center axis," rather than Souvanna.

(S) Msgs, Saigon to SecState, 1590, 11 Apr 61; SecState Circular, 1548, 8 Apr 61.

12 Apr

In response to a directive from the Secretary of State (see item 8 April), the US Ambassador to Laos obtained an audience with the King in which he inquired as to His Majesty's views on 1) a unified government to represent Laos at the 14-Nation Conference, and 2) the role of Souvanna in such a government. The King expressed the opinion that, if Souvanna would come back as prime minister of a government in which he was counterbalanced by strong anti-Communists, "something useful could be accomplished." The King was, however, firmly opposed to becoming prime minister himself.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1859, 12 Apr 61.

12 Apr

In a message to the Secretary of State, the US Ambassador to France reported the attitude of the French Government on the Laos situation as described by the Political Director of the Foreign Office. According to the Political Director, the "most desirable future status" of Laos would be the "pro-Western framework of [the] Geneva Accords." If this status was not possible, another formula would have to be found to "keep Laos free from foreign domination but permit it to belong to the UN" and provide for legitimate defense. A unilateral Laotian declaration, of which the international conference could take note, would be the best way of achieving this status. The French were opposed to "guaranteed neutrality" because it offered too many opportunities for outside interference.

With regard to military aid to Laos, the French believed that the provisions of the Geneva Accords should be maintained. Once a conference was convened, arms deliveries should be suspended until a new Laotian Government chose its own supplier. The US would have to withdraw its military personnel, but a "western military presence" would be maintained. The French preferred that economic aid be furnished by bilateral arrangements, but were "interested" in the British proposal for a multilateral agency.

As for the means of "controlling" the foregoing, the French preferred a new neutral commission composed of Burma, Cambodia, and India to the existing ICC.

Finally, the French were of the opinion that a new Laotian Government of national union under Souvanna should be formed. This government would have to include members of the Pathet Lao, but it was hoped that these members could be denied the more important cabinet posts.

(S) Msg, Paris to SecState, 4369, 12 Apr 61.

12 Apr Ambassador Drumright informed the Secretary of State of further developments in the KMT evacuation program. According to Foreign Minister Hsu, if definite evidence developed that more irregulars were willing to accept evacuation, Hsu had been authorized to continue evacuating them until 20 April (see item 5 April).
(S) Msg, Taipei to SecState 625, 12 Apr 61.

12 Apr CHPEO reported to CINCPAC that, in an intensification of the psychological warfare program and in conjunction with the airborne assault on Muong Kassy (see item 5 April), the FAL had dropped 21,000 surrender leaflets over the enemy deployments in the Muong Kassy area.
(S) Msg, CHPEO Laos to CINCPAC, 120250Z Apr 61.

13 Apr At a top-level meeting in Washington the President authorized action to render PEO and LTAG personnel in Laos comparable in all respects to MAAG personnel. This was to be done by removing all restrictions on their participation in combat operations, use of rank, and wearing of uniforms. The consensus of the meeting was that such action, by enabling US military personnel to provide the leadership and guidance essential to the successful conduct of operations, would bolster the military position of the FAL and improve the morale of the RLG.

On the same date the JCS informed CINCPAC of this decision, and the State Department informed the US Ambassadors at Bangkok, Vientiane, London, and Paris. The State Department indicated further in its message that the British and French Ambassadors in Washington would be informed the next morning, at which time the approval and cooperation of their countries would be requested. In addition, the two Ambassadors were to be advised that if the Communists used this US action, which would be within the scope of actions indulged in by the Communists themselves, as a pretext for retaliation, the US would then consider appropriate SEATO action and would expect British and French support.

Ambassador Brown, the State Department message continued, was to inform the Laotian Prime Minister and Phoumi, and if possible the King, of the US decision; at the same time he was to request the RLG to make an appropriate request to the US in order that the military assistance would be covered by a US-Laotian agreement. Further, he was to urge as vigorous military action as possible upon Phoumi, emphasizing the President's view that Phoumi must give the US something to support (see items 16 and 17 April).

The US Ambassador in Bangkok was instructed to inform Sarit of the US decision immediately

The Ambassador was also to suggest that Sarit might wish to help spur Phoumi to action by a personal communication (see item 15 April).

The US Ambassadors in London and Paris were to inform the governments at those capitals that the US was fully aware its projected action regarding the PEO and LTAG personnel would be in technical violation of the Geneva Accords; but this action, they were to point out, would only redress in small measure the imbalance caused by massive violation of those Accords by the Communist Signatories and by one of the co-Chairmen over an extended period. The Ambassador in London was to point out further that the US action was in line with the paramilitary steps preceding formal SEATO action already discussed with the principal SEATO allies. (For British reaction, see item 14 April; for French reaction, item 20 April.)

In a subsequent message (date not precisely known but not later than 15 April), the State Department informed Ambassador Brown that the Laotian request should be couched in language requesting establishment of a MAAG, since this would be the "neatest" way of handling the change of status of the PEO personnel under the circumstances.

(TS) Msg, SecState to Bangkok (1587), Vientiane (1100), London (4844), and Paris (4316), 13 Apr 61; (TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, 994079, 13 Apr 61; (TS) Msg, SecState to Bangkok (1598) and Vientiane (1113), date not precisely known but not later than 15 Apr 61.

13 Apr

The JCS recommended by memorandum to the Secretary of Defense a list of measures "which would aid in counteracting the adverse military implications of a political settlement in Laos." They considered these measures necessary because the establishment of a neutral government in Laos could result in even greater military disadvantages from the US point of view than had obtained under the regime of the International Commission for Supervision and Control (following the 1954 Geneva Accords). Under the ICC the precedent had been established that foreign forces and personnel could not legally remain in Laos or be introduced except under very rigid inspection and control. The degree of difficulty for the US under a neutral government would of course depend upon whether that government was oriented toward the free world or dominated by the Communists. If the Pathet Lao threat were not eliminated from such a government, that government's establishment might result in intensified pressures from Laos against the borders of Thailand and South Viet Nam, with growing difficulty on the part of those two countries in securing their frontiers. Insurgency problems would also be intensified in Thailand and South Viet Nam.

The following were the counteractive measures recommended by the JCS. (Comments or suggestions regarding their implementation were included):

1. Improve intelligence collection in Laos and adjacent areas.
2. Establish stay-behind capability for resistance to a Communist coup.

3. Recruit, organize, and train, outside of Laos, cadres for later infiltration into Laos for specific missions.

4. Plan and prepare to infiltrate personnel and supplies required by item 3 above.

5. Continue to review adequacy of US support for counterinsurgency activities in SEA.

6. Plan for continued logistic support of pro-Western military elements within Laos (on a covert basis if necessary).

7. Plan for continued training support of pro-Western Lao military elements by other than US personnel if necessary.

8. Accelerate unconventional- and psychological-warfare activities in North Viet Nam and South China, and ensure a fully co-ordinated effort involving all (concerned) agencies of the US Government.

(On 25 April 1961 the Deputy Secretary of Defense informed the Chairman of the JCS that the foregoing recommendations had been referred to the Inter-departmental Task Group on Laos, operating under direction of the Acting Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs;

[REDACTED]

(TS) JCSM-242-61 to SecDef, "Military Implications of a Political Settlement in Laos (C)," 13 Apr 61, derived from (TS) JCS 1992/953, 10 Apr 61, as amended by (TS) Dec On 1992/953, same date; (C) 1st N/H of JCS 1992/953, 1 May 61; (S) 2d N/H of JCS 1992/953, 3 May 61.

3 Apr

In a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense the JCS noted that the military situation in Laos was continuing to deteriorate, that the Communist bloc was delivering supplies and equipment in increasing amounts to the Plaine des Jarres area, and that Communist-bloc technicians were continuing to operate with the Pathet Lao/Kong Le forces. Immediate action was required, the JCS believed, to improve the morale of Laos Minister of Defense Phoumi (see item of 8 April) and generally to improve the military situation so as to give the West a better negotiating position prior to any cease-fire between the opposing forces.

The JCS recommended, therefore, that CINCPAC be authorized to take the following measures immediately:

1. Authorize the operational employment of all available (about 15) B-26 aircraft present in Thailand against appropriate military targets in Laos, using machine guns, rockets, high-explosive munitions, and napalm.

2. Authorize Laos Army T-6 aircraft to employ high-explosive munitions.

3. Authorize the conversion of the PEO to a MAAG.

In addition, the JCS stated that the following previously recommended measures should be implemented as soon as possible:

1. Authorize and provide logistic support and pay for seven additional Laos Army battalions and supporting service troops.

2.



(TS) JCSM-244-61 to SecDef, "Situation in Laos (U)," 13 Apr 61, derived from (TS) JCS 1992/955, 11 Apr 61, as amended by (TS) Dec On JCS 1992/955, 13 Apr 61.

13 Apr

The FAL, admitting that the airborne assault on Muong Kassy (see item 5 April) had been only "partially successful," ordered the withdrawal of the airdropped troops to Luang Prabang.

(TS) JCS Laos Sitrep 99-61, 13 Apr 61.

13 Apr

In a message to the Secretary of State, the US Charge d'Affaires in Bangkok 1) described the progress made to date by the SEATO Council of Representatives in completing political actions required for intervention in Laos under SEATO Plan 5, and 2) recommended specific steps for completing these actions. Progress to date was as follows:

1. The Council of Representatives had accepted the UK/Australian definition of Communist insurgency: "armed action against [the] established government of [a] country by organized bands or groups, under conditions which do not permit such action to be identified as overt and direct external aggression, but subject to such degree of foreign control, direction or support as to amount to indirect external aggression."

2. Thailand had agreed to serve as "appointed nation," but contingent, apparently, upon a satisfactory cost sharing agreement.

3. The Council of Representatives had agreed that the SEATO Force Commander and deputy commander would be Thai, the Field Force Commander would be American, and the Deputy Field Force Commander would be Australian or British.

4. The Council had also agreed on the directive to the SEATO Force Commander.

5. The US had suggested an Australian be named political adviser, but no decision had been made as yet.

6. The Council of Representatives had reached an understanding that it would issue, upon specific instructions from the SEATO Council of Ministers, 1) assessments of the situation in Laos describing the existence of a state of insurgency as defined in Plan 5, and 2) the warnings called for by the plan.

7. Little progress had been made on cost-sharing. The US Charge d'Affaires requested guidance from the Department of State on this matter.

8. The Council of Representatives had not acted on a status of forces agreement; the US had opposed such an agreement.

9. On the more general question of contacts with the RTG and RLG, the Military Programs Office had suggested that all direct contacts be carried on by the "appointed nation." This proposal had not been discussed in the Council.

10. The Council of Representatives had not "specifically" considered the "mission and concept" of the SEATO force; the US Charge recommended that understandings on these points between SEATO and the RLG would be necessary upon implementation of Plan 5 and should be reached by the "appointed nation" through the Field Force Commander, with political guidance from the Council of Representatives.

11. The US Charge understood that arrangements for contributions to the SEATO forces were being made by the Military Advisers.

(See item 28 April for action on these political measures.)

The US Charge recommended that, in view of the likelihood of a SEATO intervention, the following actions be taken:

1. The US Representative on the SEATO Council of Representatives should request written confirmation in the Council of Representatives of agreements already reached on the items listed above.

2. The US Representative should submit a written request to the Council of Representatives for appropriate action leading to decisions on all outstanding matters listed above.

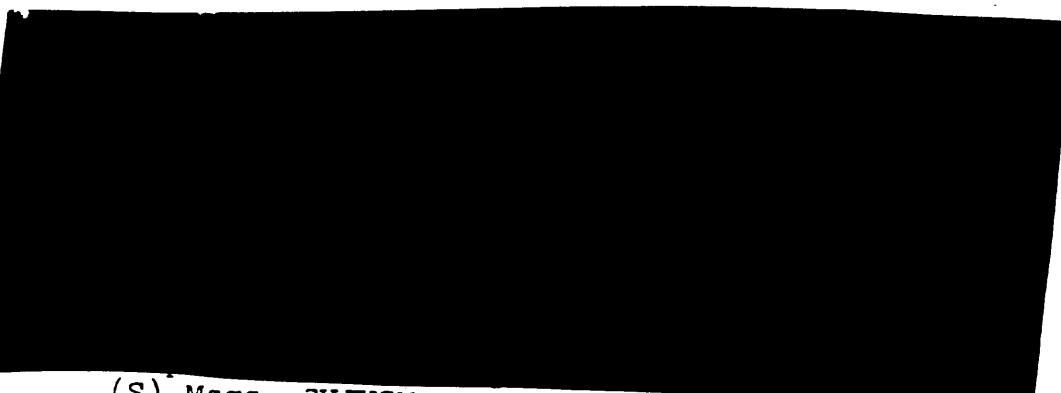
3. Unless a cease-fire had been achieved meanwhile, the US Representative should request the issuance of the "Charter Yellow" warning called for in SEATO Plan 5.

(The Secretary of State approved these three recommendations on 15 April.)

(TS) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1846, 13 Apr 61;
(S) Msg, SecState to Bangkok, 1600, 15 Apr 61; (TS)
Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1892, 26 Jan 60.

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13-14
Apr

CHJUSMAG Thailand, having been informed that the EKARAD training program had been deferred indefinitely, urged CHPEO Laos to cause Phoumi to reconsider this decision. CINCPAC, in a message supporting CHJUSMAG's plea, requested CHPEO to exercise his "full influence" on Phoumi to achieve the continuation of the training program. CINCPAC authorized CHPEO to tell Phoumi that it would be difficult for CINCPAC to continue to support Phoumi in the present manner unless Phoumi made a "reasonable effort to give his soldiers training they must have for surviving in combat."



(S) Msgs, CHJUSMAG Thailand to CHPEO Laos, 131115Z Apr 61; CINCPAC to CHPEO Laos, 140054Z Apr 61; CHPEO Laos to CHJUSMAG Thailand, 140510Z Apr 61; CHPEO Laos to CINCPAC, 141554Z Apr 61.

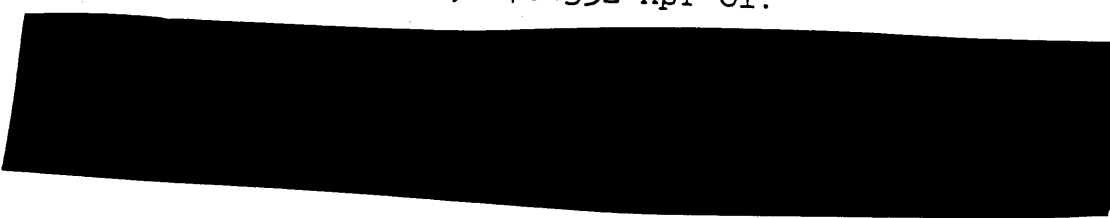
14 Apr

Referring to the JCS message of 13 April, CINCPAC directed CHPEO Laos to lift the restrictions on his PEO and LTAG personnel in regard to uniforms, rank, and participation in combat. Later the same day, having been informed by the JCS that implementation of their message of 13 April should follow receipt by Ambassador Brown of an appropriate request from the RLG, CINCPAC amended his instructions to CHPEO accordingly.

On 17 April CINCPAC amplified the foregoing by confirming CHPEO's understanding that LTAG personnel would no longer be restricted to the level of battalion headquarters, and by the further statements that, after the change to uniformed status, all former PEO and LTAG personnel would be armed while in the field, that their primary function would be to serve as advisers though they would not be restricted from participation in combat when necessary, and that after the establishment of the MAAG Laos there should be no further distinction between PEO and LTAG. The LTAG personnel, he explained, would become MTTs, part of the MAAG staff (see item 17 April).

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to CHPEO Laos, 142005Z Apr 61; (TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, 994116, 14 Apr 61; (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to CHPEO Laos, 142255Z Apr 61; (TS) Msg, CHPEO Laos to CINCPAC, 161010Z Apr 61; (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to CHPEO Laos, 170435Z Apr 61.

14 Apr



1)



(TS) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1843, 13 Apr 61;
(TS) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1859, 14 Apr 61;
(TS) Msg, SecState to Bangkok, 1591, 14 Apr 61.

14 Apr

Upon learning of the US decision to put the PEO military personnel in Laos into uniform and to permit them to participate in combat operations, the British Government expressed the hope that the implementation of this decision could be delayed "for a few more days." An advance draft of the British message containing this hope was furnished the US Ambassador in London, who cabled it to the State Department. The British took the line that the Soviets appeared to be relaxing Communist military activity in Laos and that there were other indications that a Soviet reply to the West concerning a cease-fire in Laos was imminent. What worried the British was the possibility that the US action, if taken before a Soviet reply had been received, might be seen by world opinion as direct military action and might be considered by such opinion, "however unreasonably," as having torpedoed the chances of a settlement just when they appeared favorable. It was obviously legitimate for the US to take paramilitary action, the British reply continued, but the British Government proposed that the Soviets be given until the middle of the following week to reply. If they had not done so by then, they could be put completely in the wrong by the focusing of public attention on the situation at that time (see item 15 April).

(TS) Msg, London to SecState, 4189, 14 Apr 61.

14 Apr

CHPEO: [redacted] reported that 40 auto defense units of 100 men each could be formed from available minority tribes in Laos (in addition to the 600 Meo whose regularization was authorized on 6 April; see item). The resulting larger number of auto defense units deployed before ICC inspections commenced would reinforce RLG claims and weaken Pathet Lao claims to control or possession of the territories thus organized, according to the US officials. They therefore recommended that the formation of the additional units be authorized; that the personnel recruited be included on the FAL troop lists and paid through normal FAL channels; [redacted] (see item 18 April).

15 Apr

[REDACTED]

Replying to the British Government's comments concerning the projected change of status of PEO personnel in Laos (see item 14 April), Secretary Rusk pointed out in a letter to Lord Home that the US move was premised on an assessment of the Laotian situation different from that of the British. Whereas the British saw a de facto Soviet cease-fire in the making, and a Soviet reply on a formal cease-fire imminent, the US saw the Western position in Laos deteriorating dangerously while the Soviets procrastinated in their reply.

Militarily, although there were no major battles being fought, the Communist buildup was continuing. There were at least three critical areas where the West could be faced overnight with virtual collapse: 1) in the area five miles northeast of Nhommarath, to the rear of Thakhek; 2) on the Tha Thom-Paksane road, where a breakthrough could sever Laos at the narrow waist; and 3) around Muong Kassy, farther to the north, where the situation might rapidly result in a serious threat to Luang Prabang or even its being overrun.

Politically, the decay of the RLG was still more serious. The leaders lacked the united determination they should have in the face of national danger.

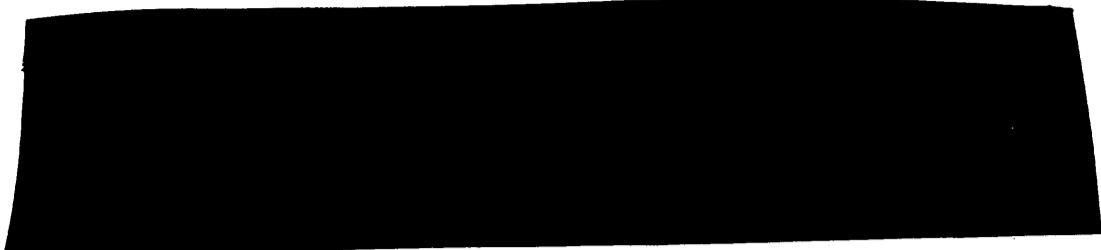
The steps being taken by the US were designed to provide at least some stiffening of the RLG backbone, both militarily and politically. These steps were wholly within the methods of operation on the other side and could not "torpedo" any conference if there was the slightest Soviet interest in a neutral Laos.

[REDACTED]

(TS) Msg, SecState to London, 4874, 15 Apr 61.

15 Apr

[REDACTED]



(TS) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1861, 15 Apr 61.

15 Apr

In response to a request from OASD (ISA), CHPEO reported upon the status of all Laotian training, other than pilot training, in [redacted] Laos, as follows:

1. EKARAD had been temporarily suspended because of the tactical requirement for all available troops (see item 13-14 April). [redacted]

2. The training being given in Laos included:

a. English language instruction to 393 FAL personnel.

b. A two-year program, initiated in March 1961, for 170 cadets at the FAL military academy.

c. PEO training for 2,835 troops.

d. In addition to c, above, the deployment of LTAG elements to various FAL units.

e. On-the-job training and formal courses of instruction by the technical services.

(S) Msg, OSD to CHPEO Laos, DEF 993964, 12 Apr 61; (S) Msg, CHPEO Laos to SecDef, DA IN 104384, 16 Apr 61.

15 Apr

CINCPAC informed Commander PACAF that Sarit had revoked the authorization to base RF-101s at Takhli for reconnaissance missions over Laos (see items 6 and 10 April). CINCPAC considered it infeasible to use Korat for RF-101s and therefore cancelled their deployment to Thailand and approved the alternative course calling for the use of RT-33s.

(S) Msg, CINCPAC to PACAF, 151925Z Apr 61.

15 Apr

The US Ambassador to Nationalist China informed the Secretary of State that Nationalist General Lai Ming-Tang, who had just returned from a visit to Thailand, had estimated that there were 600 to 700 KMTs in Laos including those in the Thailand border area. Some of these escapees, the General had added, appeared to have merged into the civilian economy of Laos.

(S) Msg, Taipei to SecState, 628, 15 Apr 61.

16 Apr

Soviet Foreign Secretary Andrei Gromyko handed the British Ambassador to the USSR three draft messages on Laos which constituted the Soviet reply to the British drafts delivered to them on 5 April (see item). The Soviets, in their drafts, agreed to the British views on the time and place for holding an international conference on Laos. The conference was to open in Geneva on 5 May.

The Soviet drafts, while providing that the Geneva co-Chairmen "call on all military authorities, parties and organizations in Laos to cease fire before convening of the international conference," did not make the cease-fire a prerequisite to the convening of the conference. (See item 19 April, for the resolution of this point.)

(C) Msg, SecState Circular, CG-895, 19 Apr 61.

16 Apr

Ambassador Brown reported from Vientiane that Phoumi had shown disappointment upon seeing the text proposed by the Department of State for use by the RLG in requesting the US to establish a MAAG in Laos. This disappointment had contrasted with Phoumi's apparent pleasure on the previous day, when Ambassador Brown and the Chief of the PEO had first conveyed to Phoumi the US Government's decision to lift restrictions on the presence of PEO and LTAG personnel in combat operations and on their wearing uniforms. On the earlier occasion Phoumi had apparently gotten the erroneous impression that the US was going to send troops into Laos. Having been disabused of this notion by the State Department's suggested text, Phoumi had conceded that the presence of US personnel in uniform in combat zones would be helpful tangible evidence of US support; but he had also raised the fundamental question whether LTAG personnel attached to the prospective MAAG were to be field advisers in uniform or were to participate in fighting as combat individuals. Ambassador Brown requested State Department clarification on this point. In addition, Phoumi had expressed a wish to make certain revisions in the text after consulting with the Prime Minister and the King.

Later in the day, the Department of State clarified for Ambassador Brown the role contemplated for LTAG personnel in Laos after establishment of a MAAG there. The LTAG personnel were to have the functions of 1) training FAL personnel, and 2) acting as technical and tactical advisers in the field at all levels and in all types of operations. They were not to be restricted from participating in combat as individuals should the situation require this; but in the combat areas they were to carry out their primary function as advisers, and this responsibility in itself would require that they not seek individual combat roles.

The foregoing, the Department said, should be the understanding of the US with Phoumi, but it should not be spelled out in the request of the RLG for a MAAG or in the reply of the US.

(TS) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1871, 15 Apr 61; (TS) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1873, 16 Apr 61; (TS) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 1118, 16 Apr 61.

16 Apr

In a report to CINCPAC, CHPEO described the situation east of Thakhek as having deteriorated since the loss of the village of Nhommarath on the previous day. The FAL commander in the area had been unable to "reestablish control of his demoralized troops" who had become, in the opinion of CHPEO, "an ineffective fighting force."

To retrieve the situation, CHPEO planned to advise Phoumi to commit an FAL paratroop battalion to the Thakhek area. CHPEO also requested CHJUSMAG Thailand to expedite the movement of Thai artillery units (see item 15 April) to Thakhek.

(S) Msg, CHPEO Laos, to CINCPAC, DA IN 104395, 16 Apr 61.

17 Apr

CINCPAC cabled to the JCS recommended terms of reference for the MAAG Laos. As set forth in these terms of reference, the primary mission of the MAAG was to assist the RLG armed forces and auto-defense forces in attaining the capability to 1) maintain internal security against Communist-inspired subversion and insurgency, and 2) provide maximum feasible initial resistance to Communist-inspired external aggression.

Having set forth the standard provisions for the organization and operation of a MAAG, CINCPAC included in the recommended terms of reference certain special provisions applying uniquely to the MAAG Laos. These special provisions permitted CHMAAG Laos to authorize personnel either permanently or temporarily attached to his MAAG to "participate in combat operations to provide leadership and guidance" for the FAL, and to "participate fully with FAL combat elements at all levels." It was "axiomatic," this portion of the terms of reference stated, that such personnel would be armed when in the field, and they "should not be restricted from participating in combat operations as individuals should the situation so require," but their primary function was that of advisers.

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 172120Z Apr 61.

17 Apr

The Laotian King appeared "markedly unenthusiastic" and somewhat apprehensive of the consequences when Ambassador Brown informed him of the US decision to establish a MAAG in Laos. He would consider the proposal a good thing, the King said, if he thought it would scare the Soviets, but he was sure it would not. It would certainly lead to charges of intervention, belligerence, and imperialism, he went on, and possibly bring on a heavy counter-attack. Nevertheless, since Laos was tied to the US, Laos could only agree to what the US wanted.

Commenting on this interview in his report later the same day, Ambassador Brown observed that the King had been depressed by the unfavorable military situation, the weakness and ineptitude of the FAL and Boun Oum's Government, and the general prospects for the future.

(TS) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1884, 17 Apr 61.

17 Apr

Ambassador Brown and the Chief of the PEO were informed by Phoumi following the latter's consultations with the Prime Minister and the King, that the idea of requesting a MAAG in Laos had been approved in principle but required further consideration. The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Sopsaisana, who was present, agreed. The two Laotians promised their government's revisions of the State Department's suggested text by noon the next day.

In reporting this information, Ambassador Brown commented that both Phoumi and Sopsaisana had obviously been hedging and seeking to delay the proposed action. When the Ambassador had asked Phoumi point-blank if he had doubts about the proposal, Phoumi had replied in the negative but had said that the situation "might change to our advantage and it might be better to do it later." Both men had insisted that no public action be taken without their agreement. Noting the consistency of this attitude with the King's reaction and Phoumi's previously expressed disappointment, Ambassador Brown conjectured that it reflected the feeling that the establishment of a MAAG would expose Laos to greater risks without adequate guarantees at a time when its ability to resist was at the lowest ebb.

(TS) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1886, 17 Apr 61.

17 Apr

In a message to the Secretary of State, the US Charge in Bangkok reported that he had called a Special Meeting of the SEATO Council of Representatives (see item 18 April) to acquaint them with the Pathet Lao military threat to Thakhek (see item 16 April) and to prepare for an early appeal from the RLG and a call for SEATO action under Article IV, paragraph 2. In addition, the Charge reported that he was coordinating with the Secretary General on a request for issuance of the Charter Yellow warning of Plan 5.

The Secretary of State approved this course of action later on the same day.

(TS) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 1868, and SecState to Bangkok, 1608, both 17 Apr 61.

17 Apr

On behalf of the State Department the JCS requested CINCPAC to examine the desirability of retaining in civilian guise approximately 25 of the PEO military personnel when the MAAG Laos was activated, for the following reasons:

1. If all foreign military personnel should be withdrawn from Laos as a result of negotiations, it would be desirable to have a nucleus of experienced PEO personnel who could be retained as civilians.

2. The cover story for "surfacing" the PEO personnel by ostensibly recalling to active duty those who were reserve military personnel would in this way be more plausible than if the whole PEO organization (less genuine civilians) suddenly donned uniforms.

On 18 April CINCPAC commented that the first of the two reasons seemed a non sequitur in that there would be no purpose in maintaining PEO personnel in Laos, whatever kind of clothing they might wear, if military assistance were discontinued. As for the second reason, CINCPAC saw little merit in trying to create a cover story inasmuch as the true status of the military personnel

...
serving with the PEO had been known to "everybody" for a long time. Further, if part of the MAAG were civilian and part military, great confusion would result in its dealings with the Lao Ministry of National Security. Therefore, unless better reasons could be given than those already advanced for leaving part of the MAAG in civilian dress, CINCPAC preferred conversion of the entire military complement of the MAAG to uniformed status at the same time.

(On 19 April the JCS directed this latter course.)
(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, 994286, 17 Apr 61; (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 181941Z Apr 61; (TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, 994471, 19 Apr 61.

18 Apr

The Secretary of State called in the representatives of the SEATO powers separately to inform them of the "serious concern" with which the US viewed the Pathet Lao threat to Thakhek (see item 16 April). The fall of this strategic location would cut Laos in half at its narrow waist and bring Communist forces to the Thai border along the Mekong River. The Secretary also informed the SEATO representatives that he had approved the calling of a special meeting of the SEATO Council of Representatives by the US Representative. At the meeting, the US Representative was to propose the declaration of the Charter Yellow warning phase of SEATO Plan 5 (see item 17 April).

On the same day, the US Representative to the SEATO Council reported to the Secretary of State that the British Representative had circulated at the special Council meeting the text of the Soviet reply to the British cease-fire proposal (see item 16 April). In view of the last-minute receipt of this reply and the uncertainty as to Soviet intentions pending study of the text, the US Representative agreed with the Secretary-General of SEATO not to request a declaration of Charter Yellow for the time being.

(S) Msg, SecState Circular, 1617, 18 Apr 61; (S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1878, 18 Apr 61.

18 Apr

The Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA) informed CINCPAC that the "current status of political negotiations and uncertainty as to US ability to provide adequate supervision," had led to the conclusion that the formation of an additional 40 auto-defense companies among Laotian minority groups (see item 14 April) "should be deferred at this time."

(S) Msg, OSD to CINCPAC, DEF 994458, 18 Apr 61.

18 Apr

According to the New York Times, Prince Souvanna Phouma "abruptly" canceled his trip to Washington. The cancellation apparently arose out of a conflict of schedules. Originally, Souvanna had planned to be in Washington on the 18th but, in order to confer with Khrushchev at his villa on the Black Sea, he had postponed his arrival until the evening of the 19th. This one day postponement meant that Souvanna would have been in Washington for consultations only on 20 April.

Although it had been "expected," the Times article continued, that President Kennedy would see Souvanna during his visit, there had been no advance commitment made in the formal invitation, nor in the subsequent

messages pointing out that Mr. Rusk would be away on a speaking engagement on 20 April. State Department officials said that when the 20 April conflict developed, they had made "discreet" suggestions to Souvanna that he finish his talks in Moscow and then come to Washington. The Prince had replied, in effect, that since Mr. Rusk would be out of town, and since there had been no assurance that President Kennedy would receive him, then it would be "best to cancel the trip entirely."

(C) Msg, Moscow to SecState, 2555, 18 Apr 61; (U) NYT, 19 Apr 61, 1, 4.

18 Apr In a joint State-Defense message, the Secretary of State informed Ambassador Brown of US Government approval of an increased ceiling for MAP-supported FAL forces (as recommended by the JCS - see item 11 April). Under the new ceiling, authorized strength of the FAL was 38,478.
(TS) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 1134, 18 Apr 61.

18 Apr Ambassador Brown transmitted to the Secretary of State the text of the RLG request for a MAAG. This text, originally supplied by the State Department (see item 16 April), had been revised by the RLG. The Ambassador had accepted it as satisfactory. Arrangements had been made, the Ambassador continued, for the Laotian Government to make the request public on 19 April. PEO military personnel would go into uniform on 20 April.
(TS) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1891, 18 Apr 61;
(TS) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1893, 18 April 61.

19 Apr The British Ambassador to the USSR presented to Soviet Foreign Secretary Gromyko a proposed amendment to the Soviet draft proposals on Laos, an amendment intended to assure that the proposed cease-fire would become effective before the convening of the 14-Nation Conference on Laos and would be certified by the ICC. (See item 16 April for the Soviet proposal on this point.)

Gromyko objected to changes in the Soviet draft proposals, claiming they already clearly stated that a cease-fire should precede the holding of a conference. To the British objection that the Soviet draft did not provide for the ICC to certify the cease-fire, Gromyko replied that, once the Laotian antagonists had agreed to stop fighting, the ICC should be instructed by the Geneva co-Chairmen to go to Laos to supervise the cease-fire. These steps, insisted Gromyko, should be completed before the proposed conference met.

In an instruction to his ambassador to the US, the British Foreign Secretary stated that he felt strongly that the Soviet draft proposals should be accepted. Admittedly, the British position that there could be no negotiations until a cease-fire had become effective would not be safeguarded in writing if the Soviet texts were accepted. The USSR would, however, be committed to an immediate call for a cease-fire.

The alternatives to acceptance of the Soviet drafts, continued the Foreign Secretary, "were very unpleasant to contemplate." Any further negotiation over texts would probably have to be referred to the Chinese and North Vietnamese Communists and would lead to long delays. The Royal Laotian Army was no longer reliable, with the

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result that the Soviets could apply great pressure for further concessions by launching a new PL offensive. Such an attack could probably only be contained by a SEATO intervention.

US Secretary of State Rusk, in an "informal statement of understanding" addressed to the British Government, stated that the US would have no objection to the British accepting the Soviet proposals. There were, however, "certain considerations . . . with respect to our position" that Her Majesty's Government should have clearly in mind. These were as follows:

1. The US would feel free "to act vigorously along present lines" until the cease-fire became effective.

2. To protect its own position, the US would probably want to make its position clear in a public statement following public announcement of the UK/USSR agreement on a cease-fire.

3. If the cease-fire was violated, the US would expect immediate consultations, including an approach to SEATO to take appropriate action.

4. The US wished to "register some concern" with regard to an apparent Soviet suggestion that, if the ICC failed to verify a cease-fire, the co-Chairmen would do so. The US would not agree to this arrangement because it would put the USSR in the position of judging the effectiveness of its own cease-fire.

(S) Msg, SecState Circulars, 1614, n.d.; and 1631, n.d.

19 Apr In a joint State-Defense message, the Secretary of State requested the US Ambassador to Thailand to discuss with Sarit the preparation of Thai troops for rapid deployment into the Thakhek or Paksane areas of Laos if the threat to Thakhek (see item 16 April) made a SEATO military invasion desirable.

(TS) Msg, SecState to Bangkok, 1621, 19 Apr 61.

19 Apr The US Department of State officially announced to the press that the Government of Laos had requested the establishment of a MAAG to assist in organizing the defense of Laos more effectively, and that the US was complying with this request. The US had been supplying military materiel to the Royal Lao forces, the announcement continued, and the additional assistance to be supplied through the MAAG "should help to redress the military imbalance in the country which has resulted from the continuing flow of materiel and personnel to the rebel forces over an extended period."

(TS) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1903, 19 Apr 61;
(TS) Msg, SecState to USUN New York, 2074, 19 Apr 61.

19 Apr Ambassador Bruce reported further on the reactions of Lord Home to the conversion of the PEO in Laos to a MAAG, scheduled for that date. Lord Home, Bruce said, was concerned on two grounds.

First, Home felt that the US action was scarcely in accordance with the mutual understanding Home considered

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to exist between the US and Britain to consult at every stage in regard to steps taken in Laos. He said that if matters ever reached the point at which implementation of SEATO Plan 5 became necessary, he must be in a position to demonstrate to both the British Cabinet and public that Britain had been consulted at every stage in the escalation of countermeasures in Laos; otherwise he would have trouble with the well-known British reluctance to become involve in military operations in that country. He hoped that paramilitary measures could prevent the need to implement the SEATO plan. In the British view, he said, an allied military venture in Laos had dismal prospects. He regretted the US-British differences in assessing the existing military situation there, stating that though the Pathet Lao had the capability to cut Laos in two, there was no evidence that it intended to do so.

His second ground of concern was what he considered to be the questionable logic of characterizing the conversion of the PEO to a MAAG as a purely paramilitary move. Nevertheless, he would argue strongly, if necessary, that the move was in fact paramilitary, and he hoped the US "could get away with this."

(TS) Msg, London to SecState, 4251, 19 Apr 61.

20 Apr

The Deputy Secretary of Defense furnished the Chairman of the JCS a written review of the status of the recommendations on Laos made by the JCS on 7, 11, and 13 April (see items). "As you are aware," the Deputy Secretary wrote, "favorable decisions have been made" on the following recommendations:

1. To provide additional T-6 aircraft in Laos.
2. 
3. To augment the Lao Army by seven battalions plus service troops.
4. To convert PEO personnel in Laos to an overt status.

The recommendation concerning the use of B-26s "at this time," the Deputy Secretary continued, had been disapproved (see next item).

The following recommendations were under consideration by the State Department:

1. To authorize Lao T-6s to use bombs.
2. To initiate discussions with the Government of Thailand for the establishment of a two-regiment reserve for use if necessary before the arrival of committed SEATO forces

With regard to the JCS recommendation for the use of armed helicopters (see item 11 April), the Deputy Secretary requested more information. (See next item for a JCS recommendation on the subject which evidently crossed in the mail the memorandum of the Deputy Secretary.)

(TS) Memo, Dep SecDef to CJCS, "Laos (U)," 20 Apr 61, Encl to (TS) JCS 1992/966, 25 Apr 61.

20 Apr

In a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense the JCS in effect withdrew their recommendation of 11 April for the use of armed helicopters in Laos. They did so in the light of views furnished by CINCPAC. CINCPAC had stated that 1) helicopters could be most profitably used in a utility-airlift capacity; 2) addition of armament would reduce helicopter payload without compensating advantage; 3) augmentation of the helicopter complement at Udorn, whether armed or unarmed, would require personnel in excess of the 300-man ceiling currently imposed by the Government of Thailand upon the service unit at Udorn; and 4) armed air capability could be provided by B-26s better than by armed helicopters (see previous item).

(TS) JCSM-257-61 to SecDef, "Laos (U)," 20 Apr 61, derived from (TS) JCS 1992/964, 18 Apr 61; (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 152107Z Apr 61.

20 Apr

Ambassador Gavin reported from Paris that the French Foreign Minister, according to a Foreign Office spokesman, had the strongest reservations concerning the transformation of the PEO in Laos into a MAAG. Statements in the French press had alleged that the move had been co-ordinated with the French Government, and this circumstance, the spokesman had said, had forced France to say it had been informed but not consulted.

In regard to the 14-Nation Conference, the spokesman expressed the hope that the Western Powers would coordinate their views as soon as possible; otherwise, they would be at a serious disadvantage vis-a-vis a unified Soviet-bloc point of view. The latter, the spokesman thought, would probably prove an irresistible magnet to neutrals if the West were in disagreement.

(S) Msg, Paris to SecState, 4519, 20 Apr 61.

21 Apr

The British informed the Department of State that the Soviets had agreed to the issuance of the cease-fire appeal on 24 April, the request to Prime Minister Nehru to reconvene the ICC, and the invitations to an international conference.

At the request of Prince Sihanouk of Cambodia, the opening date of the conference might be 12 May instead of 5 May. (The US agreed to this point.)

(C) Msg, SecState Circular, 1649, 21 Apr 61.

21 Apr

The JCS informed CINCPAC that, pursuant to verbal instructions from the Secretary of Defense, progress reports on the approved military courses of action (see item 9 March) had been discontinued, because of the "substantial completion of the necessary related actions."

On the previous day, the JCS had submitted what proved to be their final progress report on the approved courses of action, detailing this "substantial completion" as follows:

1. (INCREASE MEO STRENGTH FROM 3,000 to 4,000 BY 1 APRIL.) Action completed. At least 5,000 Meos had been armed (see item 5 April), [REDACTED] had authorized the arming of an additional thousand.

2. (DOD SUPPLY 16 H-34 HELICOPTERS [REDACTED] FOR CAT USE.) Action completed (see item 29 March).

3. [REDACTED]

4. (MAINTENANCE AND BASE SUPPORT PERSONNEL (300) FOR HELICOPTERS.) Action completed (see item 26 March).

5. (DOD MAKE AVAILABLE FOUR C-130s TO CAT.) Action completed (see item 3 April).

6. [REDACTED]

7. [REDACTED]

8. (IN CASE OF URGENT SUPPLY REQUIREMENTS, USAF MAY RESUME DELIVERY DIRECT TO VIENTIANE (C-130). The JCS had on this day renewed their permission for CINCPAC to initiate such flights; the original permission, granted on 14 March (see item) had been suspended on 4 April (see item).

9. [REDACTED]

Action completed (see item 4 April).

10. (AUGMENT PEO LAOS AND JUSMAG THAILAND EACH BY APPROXIMATELY 100 PERSONNEL.) Action completed (see item 23 March).

11. (DEFENSE TO MAKE AVAILABLE B-26s PLUS NECESSARY SPARES.) Fifteen B-26s were in Thailand; one was under repair on Okinawa (see Addendum 1 below).

12. [REDACTED]
Fifteen crews were in WESTPAC; three additional pilots were enroute and fourteen were in training, with completion of training anticipated by 22-23 April (see Addendum 2 below).

13. [REDACTED]

14. (STATE DRAFT INSTRUCTIONS TO AMB BROWN FOR APPROVAL BY PRESIDENT.) Action completed by a Department of State message of 11 March.

15. (CHPEO PRESS PHOUMI TO LIFT QUALITY OF FAL LEADERSHIP.) Action completed (see item 21 March).

16. [REDACTED]

Actions under these items were automatically and successively completed as the aircraft were delivered (see courses 2, 3, and 7 above).

18. (GET SARIT APPROVAL B-26 OPERATIONS FROM THAI BASES.) Action completed (see items 4 April for the

initiation of this action, 6 April for completion).

Addendum 1. In accordance with the instructions of the Secretary of Defense (see item 13 March), 16 additional B-26s had been "demothballed." Two, configured for photo reconnaissance, had arrived in Thailand, the remainder were being held in the US in flyable condition (see course 11 above).

Addendum 2. In accordance with the instructions of the Secretary of Defense (see item 3 April), sixteen additional B-26 pilots were being "recruited"; the necessary refresher training of these pilots would be completed on 22-23 April (see course 12 above).

(TS) Msgs, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 994593, 21 Apr 61, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 994500, 20 Apr 61.

21 Apr

The Departments of State and Defense, in a joint message, provided the following guidance to the US Charge d'Affaires in Bangkok on the status of political actions required in connection with SEATO Plan 5 (see item 13 April):

1. The SEATO Council of Representatives need not approve the appointment of military commanders. The Military Advisers should concur in the appointments and "reach agreement out of session."
 2. The US continued strongly to support the appointment of an Australian as political adviser.
 3. The question of cost-sharing was still under consideration in Washington. In the meantime, the US representative should seek action in the Council of Representatives to assure the Thais they would not be expected to sustain the costs of foreign troops stationed in or staging through Thailand.
 4. A skeleton status of forces agreement should be in effect at the time Plan 5 was implemented.
 5. The Military Advisers had approved force contributions under Plan 5; no further action by the Council of Representatives was required. (On 27 April, CINCPAC concurred in this guidance.)
- (TS) Msgs, SecState to Bangkok, 1634, 21 Apr 61; CINCPAC to JCS, 270300Z Apr 61.

21 Apr

Ambassador Brown requested the Department of State to pass the following information to the Army Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence. The Army Attache in Vientiane had been told by the FAL Chief of Staff and two of his commanders that: 1) with the exception of 100-200 Chinese Nationalist irregulars who had fled to more remote areas to avoid evacuation to Taiwan, all irregulars had left Laos; 2) there were no KMT in the FAL; and 3) although there was considerable movement of Chinese Communists along the Laos--Yunnan border, their forces had not entered Laos.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, G-87, 21 Apr 61.

21-22
Apr

The US Ambassador to South Viet Nam submitted to the Secretary of State two sets of recommendations for making control and supervision of a neutral status for Laos

effective. One set of recommendations was a proposed revision of the Geneva Accords prepared by the Canadian ICC delegation for the use of the Canadian Government at the international conference on Laos; the other had been prepared by the US Embassy in Saigon. Both were based on the experience with the ICC in Viet Nam.

The Canadian proposal was intended to put real teeth in the control and supervision powers of the ICC if it were called upon by the conference to supervise a cease-fire in Laos and to ensure that Laos remained completely neutral. The most significant provisions were as follows:

- (1) ICC given authority to issue instructions to High Commands of both sides who will be directly responsible to ICC.
- (2) All foreign military advisers and training cadres and all foreign troops, "regular to irregular," to leave Laos.
- (3) Introduction all armaments, munitions and military equipment of all kinds prohibited and all such items now in Laos, except as required for security forces, to be exported under ICC control. (Those foreign countries who have supplied war material may arrange recovery with ICC.)
- (4) Movement in or out of Laos of any military personnel, foreign or national, or war materials prohibited except by arrangement with ICC.
- (5) In order assure absence reprisals against persons for past activities, punishment even under civil law for acts during hostilities subject to approval of and investigation by ICC.
- (6) All prisoners of war and civilian internees of Lao or other nationality be released under supervision ICC.
- (7) There be fixed teams and mobile teams, number and location of former to be decided and changed as required by ICC. Mobile teams to be concerned with frontier regions but will have right move freely anywhere without agreement of either party or new government when it is formed.
- (8) ICC be provided with and have full control over all necessary means of transport and communication including vehicles, fixed wing aircraft, helicopters, river craft and communications equipment.
- (9) Both parties and new government obligated put at disposal of ICC any forces considered necessary to assure security of ICC and its teams.
- (10) Control, observation, inspection, investigation and supervision functions, designed insure implementation of agreement by both parties and new government, shall be exercised with regard any allegations or suspicions regarding violations of agreement.

The recommendations of the US Embassy in Saigon contained the following points which were believed to be "essential if effective control mechanism [was] to be established":

1. Control teams should have authority to inspect and control anywhere in Laos with or without permission of both sides. The control teams should also be authorized to operate with only a majority of a given team participating.

2. The Control Commission should have adequate transportation of its own to go anywhere in Laos.

3. All control teams should be mobile and be able to go anywhere in Laos at any time. The teams should be able to investigate alleged violations on the ground as well as to examine documentary evidence.

4. Terms of reference for the Control Commission should include adequate provisions relating to subversion.

5. As the weight of world opinion was virtually the only sanction available to the control mechanism, the Control Commission should be required to publish its considerations and findings once a month in order to keep world attention focused on Control Commission activities.

(S) Msg, Saigon to SecState, 1630, 22 Apr 61;
(C) Msg, Saigon to SecState, 1629, 21 Apr 61.

22 Apr

In a message to Ambassador Brown, the Secretary of State explained US views on a cease-fire in Laos. If a cease-fire became effective, the FAL should not merely return to barracks but should be prepared to react vigorously to any infraction by the Pathet Lao. In addition, the cease-fire should be considered an opportunity to 1) restore confidence and unity among non-Communist factions, 2) undertake an energetic training program for the FAL and, 3) organize "FAL-Information-Aid" teams to infiltrate territory nominally held by the Pathet Lao, "fly flag in as broad areas as possible, and to permit the RLG to claim these areas under its control."

While observance of the cease-fire would mean setting up demarcation lines, continued the Secretary of State, the RLG should avoid recognizing any division of the country and should claim as much territory as possible. Cease-fire talks should, in the opinion of the US, be limited to "just that," and avoid raising any "question of substance" prior to the 14-Nation Conference.

(S) Msg, SecState Circular 1660, 22 Apr 61.

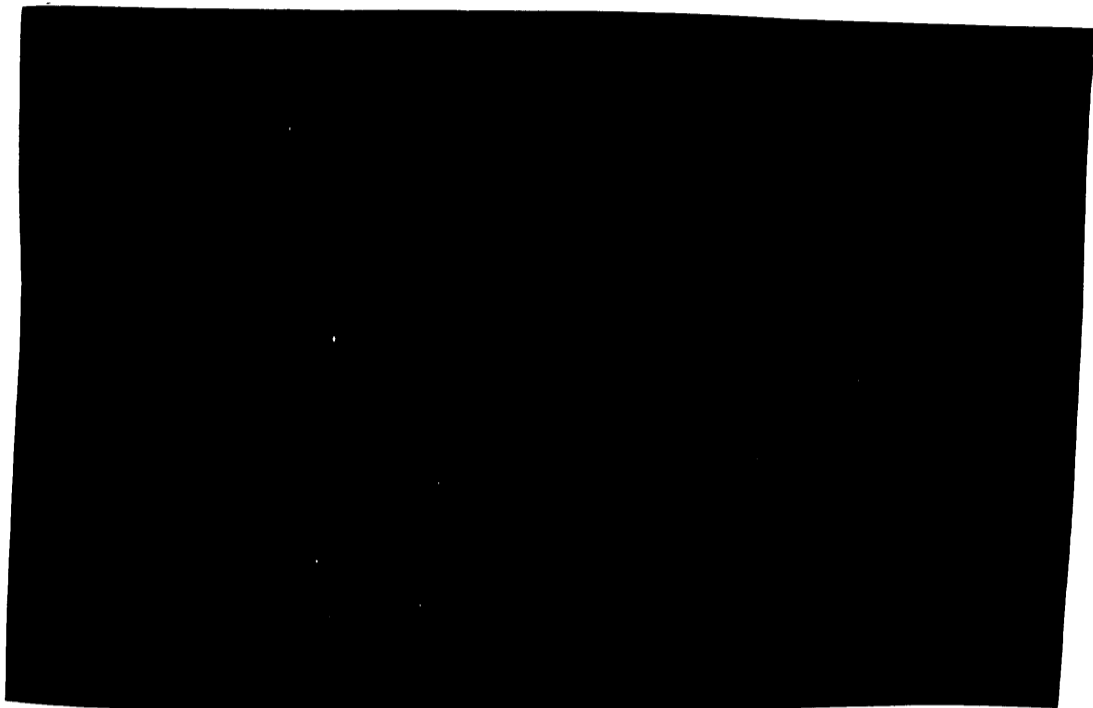
22 Apr

In a circular message to US diplomatic missions, the Secretary of State announced that US policy was now to stand "four-square behind [the] Boun Oum Government." This policy was based on evidence that the King was unwilling to assume leadership (see item 12 April) and on the fear that "further pressures" to form a new government would only undermine the morale of the RLG.

The principal preoccupation of the US, continued the Secretary, was whether a peaceful settlement could be found that would preserve Laos from Communist control, or whether military intervention would be necessary to prevent a Communist takeover. In either event, the US must have a non-Communist government of Laos that would support US positions, at least until the Communists revealed what kind of Laos they would be willing to accept.

(S) Msg, SecState Circular, 1659, 22 Apr 61.

22 Apr



(TS) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1901, 22 Apr 61;
(S) Msg, SecState to Bangkok, 1639, 22 Apr 61.

22 Apr

Embassy Counselor Edward L. Freers reported from Moscow that the press in the Soviet capital had thus far shown only slight interest in the establishment of the MAAG in Laos. Only one minor paper had contained any reference to the MAAG. This paper had printed 1) a London Tass item reporting that the British press doubted the move would help end the Laotian crisis, and 2) a New York Tass item commenting that the forthcoming appearance of uniformed American officers in Laos reflected falling morale among Phoumi's troops.

(OUO) Msg, Moscow to SecState, 2609, 22 Apr 61.

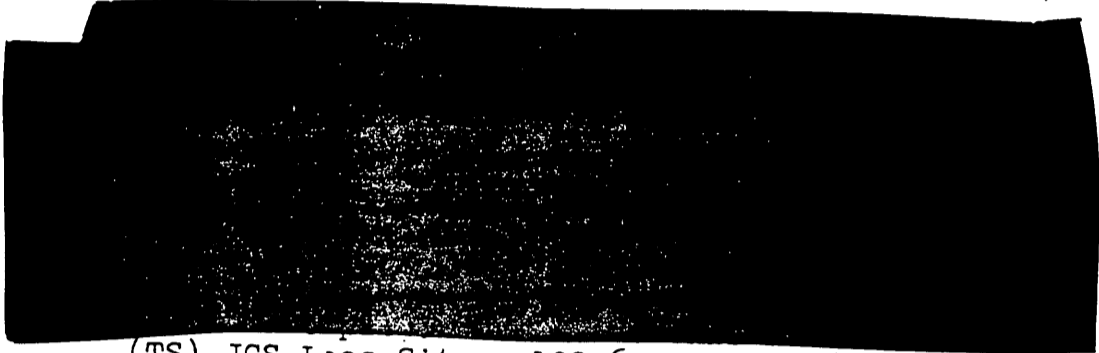
23 Apr

Vang Vieng fell to the Pathet Lao. As a result of this defeat, Phoumi requested of CHPEO, and CHPEO recommended to CINCPAC, the following: 1) permission to use bombs against the enemy troops on Route 13 and the Vang Vieng airfield; and 2) the provision of airlift to move reinforcements to the area south of Vang Vieng.

Commenting to the Secretary of State on the fall of Vang Vieng, Ambassador Brown stated that the Pathet Lao was now in an ideal position with respect to a cease-fire. The PL now threatened Luang Prabang, Thakhek, Pakxane and Vientiane. However, the PL had refrained from advancing to the banks of the Mekong, where, as the PL must know, it would meet "outside responses."

Since, however, it was not certain that the PL would continue to act cautiously, Ambassador Brown requested that Phoumi be given authority to employ bombs as requested, if the cease-fire call were delayed, or if the US officials in Laos saw "definite evidence" that the enemy proposed to move upon Vientiane or "other major objectives."

The Department of State granted this authority on the same day, stipulating only that the authority would become subject to "Washington instruction" after the RLG had issued its declaration implementing the UK-USSR call for a cease-fire (see item 25 April).



(TS) JCS Laos Sitrep 109-61, 23 Apr 61; (TS) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 106753, 23 Apr 61; Vientiane to SecState, 1921, 23 Apr 61; Bangkok to SecState, 1907, 23 Apr 61; SecState to Vientiane, 1153, 23 Apr 61.

23 Apr

CHMAAG requested that CINCPAC obtain authority for the employment in reconnaissance over Laos of the RB-26 for medium-level photographic reconnaissance and the B-26 for low-level visual and hand-camera reconnaissance.

On the same day the JCS supplied the requisite authority for the RB-26 missions. These missions, as well as the previously authorized RT-33 missions (see item 6 April), were authorized until acceptance of a cease-fire was announced by the RLG.

(TS) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 106768, 23 Apr 61; CINCPAC to CHMAAG Laos, 231845Z Apr 61; JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 994700, 23 Apr 61.

23-24
Apr

The US Ambassador to Laos submitted to the Secretary of State a summary of a memorandum outlining the procedures the RLG was to follow after receiving the appeal for a cease-fire from the Geneva co-Chairmen. The memorandum, prepared by the British Ambassador to Laos and given by him to General Phoumi, contained the following points:

1. Upon receipt of the appeal, the RLG was to issue a statement accepting it wholeheartedly, announcing that the FAL would comply as soon as agreement could be reached with the other side as to the hour and date when the cease-fire would begin, and proposing a meeting between military representatives of the two sides at a specified time and place.

~~TOP SECRET~~

2. The objectives of this first contact would be to propose a meeting of high-level military representatives to discuss general policy questions concerning a cease-fire, and to propose that, in each sector, military representatives of the two sides meet to arrange detailed application of measures agreed to at the high level in their respective areas.

3. As soon as the RLG had made its statement accepting the cease-fire appeal, it would request the British to transmit the statement to the Soviets.

In reply to the US Ambassador's message, the Secretary of State endorsed, in general, the mechanics for a cease-fire proposed by the British Ambassador and suggested that Luang Prabang be the place for the initial meeting of military representatives of the two sides.

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1923, 1924, both 23 Apr 61; SecState to Vientiane, 1156, 24 Apr 61.

24 Apr

Britain and the Soviet Union, as co-Chairmen of the Geneva Conference, appealed for a cease-fire in Laos, requested Prime Minister Nehru to reconvene the ICC for the purpose of certifying when the cease-fire was effective, and issued invitations to a 14-Nation Conference to be held in Geneva on 12 May. The texts were essentially those proposed by the Soviets on 16 April (see item).

(C) Msg, SecState Circular 1665, 24 Apr 61; NYT, 25 Apr 61, 1.

24 Apr

In a circular message, the Secretary of State described US preliminary thoughts concerning an international conference on Laos as follows:

1. At the outset there would probably be a sharp disagreement over the seating of rival Laotian delegations, with the result that none would be seated. There might then be agreement to seat the rival factions as observers only. If the Communists then moved for a coalition government, the US would be opposed and would advise the Boun Oum Government of firm US support.

2. In the event that the competence of the ICC to verify compliance with the cease-fire was questioned, the US would propose that, where military forces were in contact, the aggressor force should withdraw at least two kilometers.

3. With regard to arms deliveries, the US believed that the best approach was not to consider any limitation until after the conference had established an effective functioning mechanism for supervision of arms deliveries. The US would, in any event, retain its military advisers and trainers with the FAL until another suitable arrangement for military advice and training could be made.

4. The US was tentatively contemplating offering an "overall package" calling for disarming all but a 20,000-man internal security force, equipped and trained under the guidance of a military affairs commission.

5. The US would propose that economic assistance be planned and supervised by an enlarged UN economic mission for Laos. Another approach might be to establish a Development Assistance Agency composed of such countries of the area as Malaya, India, Thailand, Burma, and Cambodia.

6. The US would insist on an effective international control mechanism, with access to all parts of the country to investigate and report on armed subversion and illegal importation of arms or military personnel.

7. If the conference agreed to effective measures for neutralizing Laos, then the US would be willing to consider a conference recommendation for a provisional Laotian government balanced between left and right--either including both extremes or excluding them both.

8. The US opposed early elections because the Pathet Lao would be able to influence the electorate through subversion and military power. The US position might be to postpone elections until the RLG considered that an adequate degree of order had been restored.

The Secretary of State authorized the US Ambassadors to Laos, Thailand, and South Viet Nam to discuss the above points of "preliminary US thinking" with the respective governments. In making their presentations the Ambassadors were to explain the need for lining up maximum support of India, Burma, and Cambodia--the three Asian neutral participants in the Conference.

(TS) Msg, SecState Circular, 1674, 24 Apr 61.

24 Apr

The US Charge d'Affaires in Hong Kong informed Secretary Rusk that Premier Chou En-Lai, speaking at a banquet for Souvanna the previous day, had declared that the establishment of a MAAG in Laos was a "serious step" in US preparation for "direct participation in civil war."

(OUO) Msg, Hong Kong to SecState, 1670, 24 Apr 61.

25 Apr

The RLG issued a document entitled "Declaration of RLG After Receipt of Call for Cease-Fire in Laos." In this declaration, the RLG announced that the Chief of General Staff of the National Army was "ready to make contact at any time with [the] responsible chief of opposing forces to come to agreement on the day and hour of an effective cease-fire."

In spite of heavy pressure from the US and British Ambassadors, Phoumi refused to specify a time and place for the initial meeting of military

representatives on the ground that to do so would be to give the appearance of begging for a cease-fire. The most he would do was to request the British to transmit to the Pathet Lao, through the Soviets, a statement that the RLG considered Luang Prabang to be the best place for a meeting of military representatives. The RLG was prepared to meet there at any time.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1934, 25 Apr 61;
(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1933, 25 Apr 61;
(U) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1932, 25 Apr 61.

25 Apr

In a message to the Secretary of State, the US. Charge d'Affaires in Bangkok reported the views of the Thai Foreign Minister concerning the proposed international conference on Laos. The Foreign Minister had expressed doubts as to whether Thailand would be represented at the Conference. An effective cease-fire in Laos was a prerequisite to Thai attendance. The Foreign Minister was of the opinion that Thailand could not afford to be unrepresented and that attendance would not bind Thailand to accept the conclusions of the Conference.

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1912, 25 Apr 61.

25 Apr

The Secretary of State, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] informed Ambassador Brown that, subject to the Ambassador's comments, the Department of State's views on the disposition of non-Lao personnel in Laos in the event of a cease-fire were as follows:

1. In view of the threat of the PL to the "vital centers" on the Mekong River, nothing should be done to reduce FAL capabilities by withdrawing non-Lao personnel.

2. The ICC should limit itself to verification of a cease-fire; any expansion of this role, such as control of foreign personnel and arms deliveries should be taken up at the 14-Nation Conference.

3. Therefore, all non-Lao personnel should remain with the FAL until an effective control mechanism had been established by the Conference.

4. The MAAG should remain in place until the satisfactory new security system had been established. (See item 29 April for detailed recommendations of US officials in Laos concerning, specifically, Thai personnel.)

(TS) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1908, 24 Apr 61;
(TS) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 1163, 25 Apr 61.

26 Apr

The RLG having announced its acceptance of a cease-fire (see item 25 April), Ambassador Brown requested authorization to continue RB-26 reconnaissance flights as a means of determining enemy intentions until the cease-fire had been effectively established. The Department of State granted this authority on the same day.

Through military channels, CHMAAG requested that both RB-26 and RT-33 flights be continued; CINCPAC authorized CHMAAG to continue missions with both types of aircraft unless otherwise directed. (On 28 April, the JCS, with State and Defense concurrence, granted authority for both RB-26 and RT-33 missions until the cease-fire became effective.)

(TS) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 107700, 26 Apr 61; CINCPAC to CHMAAG Laos, 261835Z Apr 61; JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 995035, 28 Apr 61; (S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1938, 26 Apr 61; SecState to Vientiane, 1169, 26 Apr 61.

26 Apr

CHMAAG reported to CINCPAC that Phoumi was pleading for authorization to use his aircraft for bombing. CHMAAG's estimate of the situation was that the FAL was "on the ropes" and that the PL would be able to capture any of the major population centers held by the FAL. If the enemy should decide to exploit this capability, CHMAAG concluded, the use of B-26s and US or SEATO intervention would be necessary to stop him.

CINCPAC realized that the announcement of acceptance of the cease-fire by the RLG had removed the discretion for use of bombs from Ambassador Brown to Washington (see item 23 April). He requested, therefore, that the JCS provide immediate authorization to release bombs to Phoumi (see items 29 and 30 April).

(TS) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 107585, 26 Apr 61; CINCPAC to JCS, 261847Z Apr 61.

26 Apr

Muong Sai, an FAL outpost in northern Laos, was captured by the Pathet Lao. Ambassador Brown, relaying this intelligence to the Secretary of State, reported in addition that the FAL forces north of Vientiane were of low morale and were likely to "dissolve" if struck hard. Their "dissolution," reported Brown, would leave open the way to Vientiane.

The US could not afford, according to Brown, to allow the enemy to continue his forward movement toward key Laotian centers "beyond a certain point." There was, moreover, no way that Brown could see to stop this advance except by the use of B-26s, "probably followed by US or SEATO troops." The Ambassador requested, therefore, that he be given authority to employ B-26s if 1) the enemy moved south of Nam Lik (a river between Vang Vieng and Vientiane), or 2) the enemy threatened to occupy the terrain commanding any of the major centers near the Mekong Valley.

On the same day CHMAAG, who had earlier recommended to Ambassador Brown that authority to use B-26s be secured, stated to CINCPAC that he considered the B-26s should be employed not only against enemy troop movements toward the major centers in the Mekong Valley, but against the Plaine des Jarres installations, in order to produce the maximum effect.

The Department of State's reply to Brown was immediate. The President had decided that the request for B-26 action should be disapproved (see following item).

(TS) JCS Laos Sitrep 112-61, 26 Apr 61;
(TS) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1943, 26 Apr 61;
(TS) Msg, CHMAAG to CINCPAC, DA IN 107700, 26 Apr 61; (TS) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 1172, 26 Apr 61.

26 Apr

The Acting Secretary of State informed Ambassador Brown that, because of Brown's description of the situation in Laos (see item above), and also because of bellicose statements by the Chinese Communists and Kong Le, the situation had been assessed in Washington as "most serious." Accordingly, a meeting had been held with the President, and the following actions had resulted:

1. The President had telephoned Ambassador Bruce in London, asking him to inform Prime Minister Macmillan immediately of these developments and to seek Macmillan's views on what actions were required. Bruce had done this and Macmillan had suggested that Phoumi should immediately make public a call for a meeting on the cease-fire, stipulating time and place. If there were no response, the other side would bear the onus for continued hostilities.

2. The President had also called in the British and French Ambassadors to point out the seriousness of the situation and had dispatched a letter in the same vein to Prime Minister Nehru.

3. The President had decided the following:

a. CINCPAC would be instructed to "move naval forces into Gulf of Siam [and] South China Sea."

b. Forces earmarked for air movement into Laos under SEATO Plan 5 would be alerted.

c. The US Ambassador to the UN was authorized to explore with the UK, French, and Lao representatives the possibility of immediate Security Council action, under conditions previously agreed upon by the US & UK (see item 8 April), to reinforce the Geneva co-Chairmen's call for a cease-fire.

The Acting Secretary laid upon Brown the "difficult" task of impressing upon the RLG the "absolute need" of maintaining as advantageous a military position as possible while at the same time showing itself amenable to compliance with a cease-fire request. Although Phoumi should not, according to the Acting Secretary, acquiesce in the demands of Kong Le and Souvanna for meeting in a place or under conditions of their choosing, he should set a time when he would be willing to meet their representatives on neutral ground to fix a de facto cease-fire.

Further, it was very important that the RLG maintain its posture as the uncompromised legitimate and constitutional government of Laos, so that its credentials would not be "subject to legitimate question" in the event UN action was required. In addition, it was important that the RLG not make hasty concessions to Souvanna. If made, such concessions would undermine the RLG position at the 14-Nation Conference.

(TS) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 1172, 26 Apr 61.

26 Apr

As a result of decisions reached at a White House meeting (see preceding item), the JCS instructed CINCPAC to:

1. Deploy naval carrier forces to support SEATO Plan 5.
2. Move amphibious forces into positions in the Gulf of Siam within 12 hours steaming of Bangkok, but not to land unless further ordered.
3. Be prepared to call off SEATO exercise Pony Express.
4. Be prepared to land at Seno or other areas of Southern Laos in order to hold Southern Laos; and to land forces in South Viet Nam and Thailand, if Vientiane should have fallen before SEATO Plan 5 could be executed (see item 29 April).
5. Be prepared to take measures to stop Red Chinese intervention, including strikes on intermediate bases in North Viet Nam and, if necessary, on bases in Red China which support operations against Laos.

There was a "reluctance," the JCS stated, "to use nuclear weapons initially, and their use [was] still subject to later decision." ("Later decision remains the President's.")

(TS) Msgs, OCJCS to Chief, USELM CENTO Ankara (for CJCS), JCS 994928, 26 Apr 61; JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 994935, 26 Apr 61.

26 Apr

The Secretary of State directed the US Delegate to the UN to consult immediately with his British and French colleagues in preparation for a possible "move" in the UN Security Council on the Laotian situation. This move, if taken, would be intended to 1) apply pressure to the Communists immediately to "establish in fact" a cease-fire in Laos, and 2) improve the US position in world opinion in the event of a SEATO military intervention in that country.

In consultations with his British and French colleagues, the US Delegate was to propose the following:

1. A joint US/British (and possibly French) request for an immediate meeting of the Security Council. At the meeting these two (or three) powers would propose that the Security Council express itself "in favor of an immediate cease-fire, verified by the ICC and followed by a conference designed to bring about and maintain a neutral Laos."

2. A resolution which would call for a cease-fire verified by the ICC and the convening of the 14-Nation Conference on 12 May. (By whom and under what circumstances the resolution would be introduced is not clear from available documentation.)

(S) Msg, SecState to USUN, 2120, 26 Apr 61.

27 Apr

As an aftermath of Ambassador Brown's request for authority to employ B-26s (see item 26 April), CINCPAC, noting the disparity between the missions planned for the B-26s by the Ambassador and by CHMAAG, requested that the JCS cause an order to be sent to Brown directing that he "not interfere with the military commander once military action is joined and is being conducted in accordance with agreed objectives." CINCPAC termed it "militarily unrealistic to accept restrictions which stem from the Ambassador's interpretation of guidance received from [Washington]."

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 272037Z Apr 61.

27 Apr

In response to a directive from the Secretary of State (see item 26 April), the US Delegate to the UN met with his French and British colleagues to discuss an early meeting of the Security Council on Laos. As reported by the US Delegate, both his colleagues were opposed to such a meeting. The British Delegate had stated that his government was strongly opposed to an appeal to the UN on the grounds that such an action would negate the joint efforts of the British and the Soviets to bring about a cease-fire. The French Delegate had opposed a Security Council meeting because it 1) would not alter the military situation, 2) would allow the USSR to postpone a cease-fire by engaging in lengthy debate, 3) would provide an opportunity for agitation against the West, and 4) would provoke unwise debate on the legitimacy of the Laotian Government.

(At subsequent meetings of the three UN delegates on 28 and 29 April, the British and French reiterated their opposition to a Security Council meeting on Laos.)

(S) Msgs, USUN to SecState, 3014, 3023, 3031, 27, 28, 29 Apr 61.

27 Apr

In a message to the Secretary of State, the US Ambassador to France reported a conversation on Laos with President De Gaulle. The Ambassador had expressed the deep concern of the US with regard to Laos, pointing out that, if the Communists continued to attack, all of Laos would be

lost and there would be "nothing to negotiate at the conference table." De Gaulle agreed and said that Foreign Minister de Murville had just informed the Soviet Ambassador that the French Government would like the Soviets to "take what steps they could to have the Communist forces in Laos cease fighting."

(S) Msg, Paris to SecState, 4698, 27 Apr 61.

27 Apr

In a message to the Secretary of State, the US Ambassador to Laos reported that the RLG was broadcasting a press statement by Phoumi, announcing that the Chief of Staff of the FAL was ready to meet the responsible chief of the opposing forces at Luang Prabang at 0800, 28 April to determine the effective date of a cease-fire.

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1946 and 1951, both 27 Apr 61.

28 Apr

The ICC Laos, answering the call of the Geneva co-Chairmen (see item 24 April), reconvened at New Delhi, with Chairman S. Sen of India presiding. Prime Minister Nehru, in a welcoming address, emphasized to the delegates that a cease-fire must exist if the ICC and the Geneva Conference were to be able to function: it would be "impossible to negotiate in [an] ever changing situation." In reply, the Canadian delegate stated categorically that the cease-fire was a pre-condition for the Geneva Conference; the Polish delegate responded that he believed the cease-fire would be operative in "several days." The Pole then blamed the deterioration of Laotian conditions on "those who brought about adjournment of ICC and involvement of Laos in military pacts against socialist world."

(OUO) Msg, New Delhi to SecState, 2526, 28 Apr 61.

28 Apr

British Prime Minister Macmillan, in a letter to President Kennedy, suggested that the US bring pressure to bear on Phoumi to propose a cease-fire meeting in "no man's land." Pointing out that Luang Prabang, the place proposed by Phoumi for a cease-fire meeting (see item 27 April), was within RLG-controlled territory, Macmillan argued that such an offer was "no way to arrange [a] cease-fire between enemies." Unless an RLG offer to meet the PL in territory controlled by neither side was made and refused, it would be difficult to claim that negotiations had broken down. Macmillan informed the President that he was instructing the British Ambassador to Laos to "speak on these lines" (see next item).

In reply, the President pointed out that, in view of a demand by rebel commander Kong Le that Phoumi appear at Xieng Khouang, the RLG leader's proposal for a meeting in Luang Prabang was the logical one. In addition, the rebels had not denied their allegiance to the King, so a meeting in the royal capital might have been possible had the rebels been willing.

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 1185, 29 Apr 61.

~~TOP SECRET~~
28 Apr

In a message to the Secretary of State, the US Ambassador to Laos reported that the British Ambassador had urged Phoumi to take a further initiative in seeking a cease-fire. Acting on instructions from the Foreign Office (see preceding item), the British diplomat had proposed that, since there had been no reply to the proposal for a meeting at Luang Prabang (see item 27 April), the RIG should make a new proposal for military representatives to meet under a flag of truce at a specified point where opposing forces were in actual contact.

Acting on the British Ambassador's advice, the RIG broadcast a proposal the same day that such a meeting take place on 29 April at a point two kilometers north of Ban Vang Khi on Route 13.

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1957, 1960, 1968, all 28 Apr 61; and 1988 and 1976, both 29 Apr 61.

28 Apr

The Secretary of State requested the US Ambassadors to Cambodia, India, and Burma to begin discussions with the governments to which they were accredited for the purpose of lining up the general support of these neutral Asian Nations for the US position at the international conference on Laos. The specific purpose of these "preliminary and exploratory" discussions should be to 1) acquaint the neutral nations of the importance the US attached to their role at the conference in insuring an independent and neutral Laos, 2) determine their attitudes on Laotian problems and on the conference, and 3) prepare the way for continued discussions and liaison.

In making their presentations the Ambassadors were to stress that, in the opinion of the US, the Conference would be a turning point for uncommitted Asian Nations. If these countries could support realistic measures for a truly neutral and adequately safeguarded Laos, there would be hope for stopping the Communist advance by peaceful means. Failure to establish a neutral and independent Laos at the Conference, on the other hand, would inevitably mean a falling back on primarily military efforts to defend the area.

Effective action by the Asian neutrals to protect their own interests was becoming particularly important because the Communists appeared to be challenging the whole concept of neutrality in the cold war. They had been pushing the theory that the uncommitted nations of Asia and Africa were merely a third bloc that either supported the Communists (in which case it was tolerated) or supported the Free World (in which case it was opposed). In the US view, the conference would offer the Asian neutrals an opportunity to strengthen their position by proving they could play a vital role in an area where their own interests were directly involved.

Finally, the Ambassadors were to state that, while the US recognized the existence of different points of view with regard to the Laotian problem, it believed there was agreement on the fundamental objective of preserving the independence of Laos from Communist control. The US hoped, therefore, for a regular and frank exchange of views with regard to means for achieving the objective. Specifically, the US Government would appreciate an expression of the views of Cambodia, Burma, and India on 1) means for supervising and controlling a neutral status for Laos, 2) means for giving economic assistance to Laos without jeopardizing its neutrality, and 3) means for providing Laos with armed forces necessary for internal security.

(S) Msg, SecState Circular, 1703, 28 Apr 61.

28 Apr

CHMAAG Laos requested, and CINCPAC granted, authorization to utilize C-130s with USAF markings and crews to airlift one FAL battalion from Laos to Koke Kathiem (Thailand). CHMAAG also requested authority to use these C-130s "whenever urgency of the situation dictates," with CINCPAC to be advised of each mission after the fact. CINCPAC granted this request only for flights into Vientiane and Seno and then only after other resources were fully committed and the requirement had been established to CHMAAG's personal satisfaction.

(TS) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 108399, 28 Apr 61; CINCPAC to CHMAAG Laos, 281905Z Apr 61.

28 Apr

The US Charge d'Affaires in Bangkok reported to the Secretary of State that he had proposed at a meeting of the SEATO Council of Representatives, that the Council seek immediate instructions to issue the "Charter Yellow" alert warning of SEATO Plan 5. This action was taken because of the serious deterioration of the military situation in Laos, as reported by the US Ambassador to that country (see item 26 April).

In response to this US proposal all members of the Council agreed to seek instructions from their governments.

(TS) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 1925 and 1936, 27, 28 Apr 61.

29 Apr

According to a message from the US Ambassador to Laos to the Secretary of State, CHMAAG Laos had been informed that the FAL truce representative had attempted but failed to make contact with representatives of the opposing forces (see item 28 April).

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1969, 29 Apr 61.

~~TOP SECRET~~

29 Apr

Secretary Rusk instructed the US Ambassadors in London and Moscow to inform the British Foreign Secretary and the Soviet Foreign Minister, respectively, that US acceptance of the UK/USSR invitation to attend the conference in Geneva was contingent upon an "immediate and effective cease fire" in Laos.

(Ambassador Bruce conveyed this information to the British Foreign Office on 30 April.)

(OUO) Msg, SecState to London, 5104, and to Moscow, 1869, 29 Apr 61; (S) Msg, London to SecState, 4407, 30 Apr 1961.

29 Apr

The National Security Council 1) discussed the Laotian situation, including the considerations involved in "various alternative" courses of action, and 2) agreed to undertake "certain military and diplomatic measures" before the next meeting of the NSC (scheduled for 1 May), including consultations on the progress of the cease-fire negotiations, on the International Control Commission, and on possible action in the UN and SEATO.

(TS) NSC Action No. 2415, 29 Apr 61 (approved by President 16 May 61).

29 Apr

The JCS, in an implementation of the White House decisions of 26 April (see item), requested that CINCPAC prepare plans to move brigade-size forces of approximately 5,000 men each into Udorn (Thailand) and Tourane (South Viet Nam). The planned forces were to include all appropriate military elements and consist of US forces only (see item 1 May).

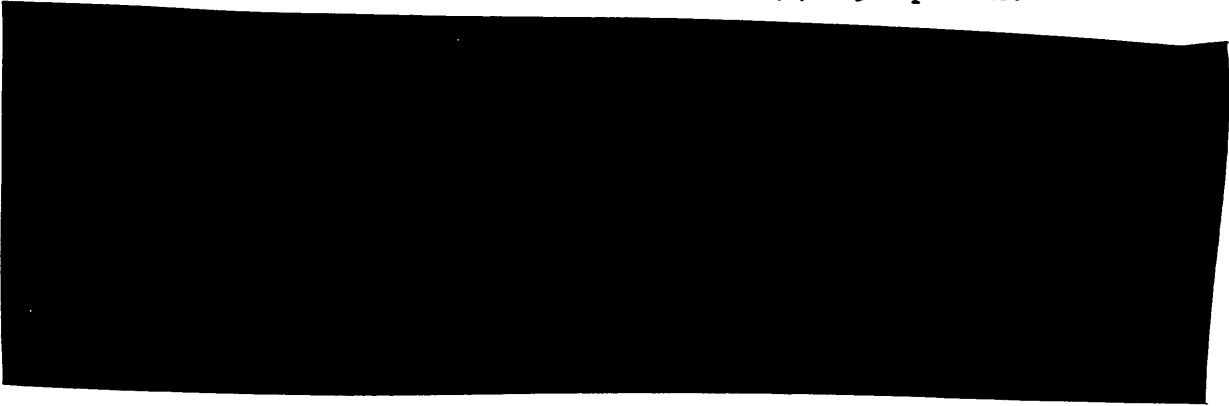
(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 995131, 29 Apr 61.

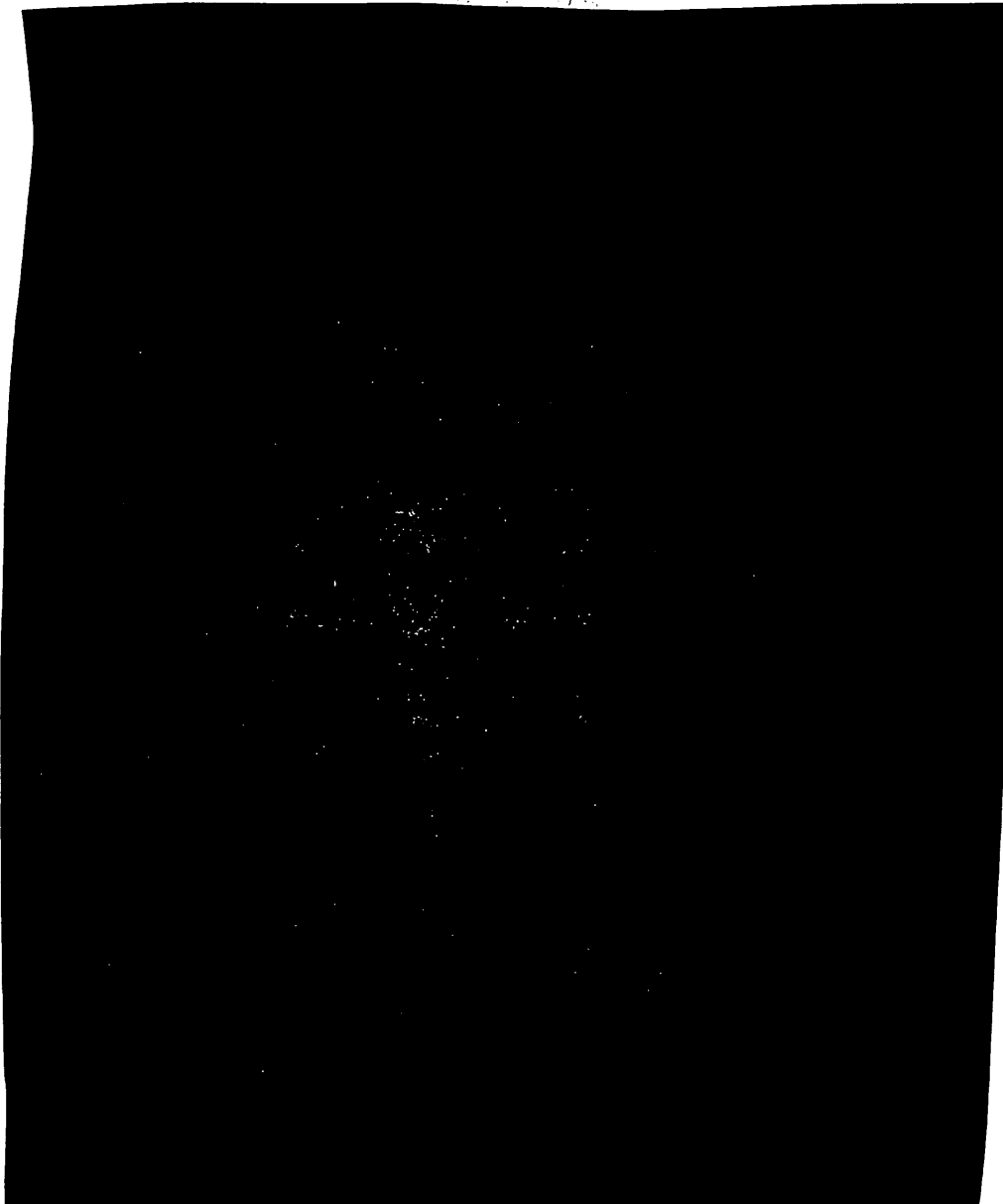
29 Apr

The JCS requested the recommendations of CINCPAC concerning possible augmentation of the MAAG Laos prior to any agreement by an international conference on new control machinery. The request assumed 1) agreement on a cease-fire would be reached, and 2) the mission of the ICC would be limited to verification of the cease-fire. The purpose of augmenting the MAAG, the JCS said, would be to intensify FAL training, stiffen and maintain the morale of the FAL and RLG, demonstrate continued US support, and, if the conference following a cease-fire should fail, place the US in as favorable a position as possible for continuing its advisory effort.

(S) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 995134, 29 Apr 61.

29 Apr





(TS) Msgs, CINCPAC to JCS, 292005Z Apr 61;
CHMAAG Laos to CHJUSMAG Thailand, DA IN 107997,
27 Apr 61; CHMAAG Thailand to CHMAAG Laos, DA IN
107816, 26 Apr 61; ~~_____~~

29 Apr

CINCPAC cabled to the JCS his assessment of Soviet intentions in Laos, and a list of proposed measures designed to thwart Soviet plans.

CINCPAC believed that the Soviet bloc, by stalling diplomatic negotiations, had demonstrated already an intent to "squeeze [the] last drop" from the military advantage enjoyed by the PL/Kong Le/Viet Minh group. CINCPAC could "see no adequate force which can be applied through RLG which will cause Sovbloc to switch to cease-fire without demand for unacceptable conditions." Further, CINCPAC believed that the Soviet bloc would continue to apply pressure in the expectation of the disintegration of the RLG and FAL prior to any cease-fire.

To prevent such a disintegration, CINCPAC concluded, military counter pressure must be applied; "further futile political demarches" would not suffice. CINCPAC therefore proposed the following series of actions by the US:

1. An announcement to other SEATO members that the US was moving immediately under SEATO Plan 5 and expected the other members to join in this action.
 2. The immediate movement of two US BLTs and one Thai battalion to Vientiane.
 3. The placing within 24 hours of one Thai battalion at Thakhek.
 4. The movement of one US BLT into Seno within 3-4 days.
 5. The deployment of air forces to Thailand.
 6. The presentation of a statement to the USSR that the US would not allow Laos to be overrun, but that the US was still prepared to accept a cease-fire and the neutralization of the country.
 7. Preparation to have SEATO forces remain in Laos "until the situation is restored."
 8. Preparation to counter any subsequent moves by Communist China, the USSR, or North Viet Nam.
- (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 290125Z Apr 61.

29 Apr

The US Ambassador in Paris reported to the Secretary of State the views of the French Foreign Office on Laos as expressed by the Director of Asian Affairs. The military situation, according to the Director, was bad but not catastrophic. No action in the UN or SEATO, which might prove irreversible once started, should be taken for a couple of days. Meanwhile, the French government was exerting all possible pressure on the Soviets, the Burmese, Sihanouk, and, "if they can locate him, Souvanna." (The previous day the French Ambassador in Washington had told the Secretary of State that the French Ambassador to Laos had been instructed to urge Souvanna to use his influence with the Pathet Lao to bring about a cease-fire.)

(S) Msg, Paris to SecState, 4734, 29 Apr 61; (C) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 1185, 28 Apr 61.

29 Apr

Ambassador Brown informed the Secretary of State that, during a conversation with the Burmese Minister to Laos on the previous evening, the Burmese diplomat had 1) reiterated his government's concern over the possibility of a Communist Laos, and 2) requested US opinions on the Conference and a possible coalition government in Laos. The US Ambassador had replied that until the US had "tested" the opposition's objectives at the Conference, and discovered what safeguards and assurances the Communists were willing to accept to provide for a truly neutral Laos, the US was opposed to any efforts to find a "compromise" government.

Ambassador Brown also reported that the Burmese Minister has expressed his government's desire to persuade

friendly Asians, for example, India, Burma, Cambodia, to "work on Souvanna elements to keep them on track."
(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1973, 29 Apr 61.

29 Apr

According to the Bangkok World, on 28 April the Thai Foreign Ministry had issued a statement concerning the participation of Thailand in the conference on Laos. The official communique declared that Thailand's acceptance of the UK/USSR invitation to participate in the 14-nation meeting depended upon the following conditions:

1. First, there must be an absolute cessation of supply by Communist countries of war materiel and technicians to pro-Communist rebels.
2. After the first step had been accomplished, there must be verified cease-fire. The cease-fire must be "lasting," and one that could definitely be checked.

If these conditions were fulfilled, the statement pointed out, then Thailand would make a decision concerning participation in the conference.

It was clear, the communique declared, that the main objective of the Communists was to expand their area of occupation in Laos with a view to gaining a "political advantage and tightening their political stand at the conference."

(U) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1945, 29 Apr 61.

29 Apr

The Secretary of State dispatched the following message to Ambassador Brown: "Authority granted to release bombs to Phoumi for use on his T-6 aircraft until effective cease-fire is realized" (see item 30 April).
(TS) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 1192, 29 Apr 61.

29-30 Apr

The Secretary of State called in the British Charge d'Affaires and the French Ambassador for consultations regarding the failure of the Pathet Lao to begin negotiations for a cease-fire. The Secretary pointed out that, not only had the Communists not contacted the RLG representative in "no-man's land," but Souvanna had announced that negotiations would be impossible unless the RLG emissary came to Xieng Khouang. In these circumstances, said the Secretary, the US was seriously considering placing the matter before the UN Security Council. A further step might be to move a SEATO composite force to Thailand.

Both the British and French diplomats urged patience in waiting for a cease-fire they believed to be imminent. Both were skeptical of the value of an appeal to the UN Security Council, and both were uneasy about moving a SEATO force to Thailand.

(S) Msgs, SecState Circulars, 1709, 1711, 29, 30 May 61.

30 Apr

In a message to the Secretary of State, the US Charge d'Affaires in Bangkok reported on a meeting of the SEATO Council of Representatives that had considered the situation in Laos.

All the Council Members except the British and French had supported the US proposal, made at the meeting on 28 April (see item), to invoke the Charter Yellow warning of SEATO Plan 5. The British representative had reported that his government had not instructed him as to its position, while the French representative had expressed opposition to Charter Yellow as "premature" and "dangerous."

The US representative then had expressed the concern with which his government viewed the deteriorating situation in Laos and had described the courses of action being considered at the "highest levels" of his government, including SEATO action under Plan 5, UN action, and the stationing of a SEATO standing force in Thailand (see items 26, 29 April). With regard to the last of these courses of action, the Australian representative had pointed out that movement of forces to Thailand should be part of a Plan 5 deployment and not a separate movement, which could not be completed in time to meet the present needs. Other representatives concurred in the Australian view, and the US representative then agreed to refer their views to Washington with the recommendation that Plan 5 be suitably modified to provide for the stationing in Thailand of forces committed under the plan.

(TS) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 1951 and 1952,
30 Apr 61.

30 Apr

The Secretary of State informed US diplomatic missions that, in response to the Department's request for British views on four subjects concerning Laos, Lord Hood (acting on instructions from the Lord Privy Seal) had made the following comments:

1. Cease-fire. The British thought that the apparent inability of the RLG forces and the PL to get together for cease-fire talks might well be the result of "confusion of communication." (The British hoped that there would be continued efforts to negotiate on a site for the cease-fire talks.)
2. ICC. The British were disturbed over the fact that the Polish delegation was unwilling to proceed to Laos until a cease-fire had become effective. The British were trying to persuade the Indians to convince the Poles that the ICC should go to Laos before the cease-fire.
3. UN Actions. The British said that their attitude on procedures in the UN would depend on circumstances. If SEATO action was to be taken, and the UN to be notified of the action, the British would want the resolution to be a joint US-UK-French resolution. If additional international intervention under UN sponsorship was envisaged, the British would like to have the resolution sponsored by the USSR, India, and the UK.
4. SEATO. The British confirmed the US opinion that, if other measures failed, SEATO action must be invoked. However, the British would have to obtain cabinet approval for SEATO action, and any movement of SEATO forces from Thailand to Laos would require an additional political decision.

(S) Msg, SecState Circular 1710, 30 Apr 61.

30 Apr

[REDACTED]
totalled 365 personnel.
(TS) Msg, CHJUSMAG Thailand to CINCPAC, 300615Z
Apr 61.

30 Apr

The Secretary of State in response to a strongly worded message from Ambassadors Brown and Harriman modified the authority granted on 29 April (see item) to release bombs to Phoumi. The new instructions stipulated that "bombs should not . . . be used in T-6s or released to Phoumi unless specifically authorized by Ambassador Brown."

Brown, upon learning of the authority granted on 29 April, had directed that no action be taken by CHMAAG under this authority. Brown and Harriman had then cabled the Secretary that the use of bombs would be seized upon by the Communists as an excuse for further military action and delay in agreeing to a cease-fire. Furthermore, doubts would again be raised in the minds of the neutrals and Allies as to the sincerity of the US in seeking a cease-fire.

The Ambassadors asserted that they would support "some really significant action such as stationing SEATO forces in Thailand," thus applying "real pressure" upon the Communists to desist from military action. In their judgement, Brown and Harriman continued, the use of bombs in T-6s would be "provocation without achieving results needed."

CHMAAG, reporting these ambassadorial actions to CINCPAC, depicted himself as "again . . . in the middle," since he had alerted the FAL to imminent strikes before Ambassador Brown had issued the holding order.

(TS) Msgs. CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 109099, 30 Apr 61; SecState to Vientiane, 1195, 30 Apr 61.

30 Apr,
1 May

According to a 30 April Pathet Lao radio broadcast monitored by FBIS, Kong Le proposed that cease-fire discussions take place at Ban Namone on 1 May.

On the same day Secretary Rusk suggested to Ambassador Brown that he advise Phoumi to accept. The Ambassador, according to his report to the Secretary, had acted on the suggestion on 1 May. Accompanied by the British Ambassador and CHMAAG, Brown had seen Phoumi and urged him to accept the "Kong Le/Souvanna Phouma" offer for cease-fire negotiations at Ban Namone but to ignore any reference to discussions concerning the government or the composition of the Laotian delegation to the Geneva Conference.

Phoumi had been "most reluctant" to accept the Kong Le offer and had refused to do more than "consider" the recommendations of the US and British Ambassadors that he do so. In addition to expressing his doubts concerning the sincerity of the rebel regime's offer, the Laotian leader had pointed out that Ban Namone was 15 kilometers inside enemy lines and, therefore, could not be considered a neutral spot, normal for truce meetings. Phoumi had said he was considering a counter offer to meet on Route 13 at some midpoint between the opposing lines.

(TS) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 1194, 30 Apr 61;
(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1983, 1 May 61.

1 May

The National Security Council discussed the situation in Laos and agreed that "no final decisions as to U.S. courses of action with respect to that situation should be taken at this meeting, pending further developments in the cease-fire negotiations." The Council noted that the President would be prepared "under certain conditions" to deploy US forces to Thailand. Finally, the Council agreed that the Joint Chiefs of Staff should prepare, for presentation to the Council the next day, an appreciation of the military implications of "various" measures that might be taken in Laos, Thailand, and other countries of Southeast Asia.

(TS) NSC Action No. 2417, 1 May 61 (approved by President 16 May 61).

1 May

The ICC Laos submitted its first report to the Geneva co-Chairmen. After expressing sentiments of concern and hope, the ICC stated its intention to proceed to Laos as soon as the date for an agreed cease-fire had been arranged, in order to be present at about the time the actual cessation of hostilities took place. Upon arrival in Laos, the Commission stated, its "primary and most important responsibility" would be "to establish close and cooperative relations with the parties, particularly with such joint committees as may be set up for effective implementation of the cease-fire." The ICC expressed its willingness to proceed immediately to any place where such committees might be functioning, and its readiness to consider, in cooperation with the parties to the cease-fire, such measures as the establishment of inspection teams. For this latter purpose, the ICC needed to be authorized to request and receive relevant military information.

The Commission envisioned as its task subsequent to the cease-fire agreement the supervision and control of that agreement.

The ICC requested instructions from the co-Chairmen authorizing the above actions (see item 6 May).

(C) Msg, New Delhi to SecState, 2543, 1 May 61.

1 May

CINCPAC provided to the JCS plans for the deployment of US forces to Thailand and South Viet Nam (see item 29 April). CINCPAC's plan set up two separate 5,000-man forces, to be deployed to their respective locations separately and by separate orders. The units involved and the timetables for their deployment were as follows:

A. Thailand

1. Forces

- USMC headquarters
- 2 USMC BLTs
- 1 USMC Air Group (-)
- 1 USA Battle Group
- 1 USAF F-100 squadron (plus 6 RF-101s)
- USA 9th Logistical Command Control and Support Elements

2. Deployment

- a. Commencing D-Day - airlift of USMC headquarters and one USMC BLT to Udorn, and USAF elements to Takhli.
- b. Commencing D+1 - airlift of 1 USMC BLT to Udorn and air and sealift of 9th Logistical Command Control and Support Elements to Khorat.
- c. Commencing D+2 - airlift of US Army Battle Group to Udorn.
- d. Commencing D+5 - airlift of USMC Air Group (-) to Udorn.

B. South Viet Nam

1. Forces

- Headquarters and Headquarters Element of Marine Expeditionary Brigade
- 3 USMC BLTs
- 1 USMC Air Group (-)
- USMC Support Elements as directed

2. Deployment

- a. Commencing D-Day - air and/or sea lift of headquarters and three BLTs to Tourane.
- b. Commencing D+5 - air and/or sea lift of Marine Air Group (-).
- c. USMC supporting elements as directed.

In addition to the foregoing, two attack carrier task groups would take station off South Viet Nam, prepared for supporting operations as directed by CINCPAC. Later a USA Brigade Task Force, less 1 battle group, would deploy from Hawaii to Udorn, at which time the USMC ground and air units at Udorn would be relieved for further deployment.

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, DA IN 109146, 1 May 61.

1-2 May Subsequent to the 1 May NSC meeting (see item), the JCS met, with the Secretary of Defense present. The CNO outlined a requirement imposed on the JCS for an appreciation of the military implications of possible military actions in Southeast Asia, and the Director, Joint Staff, was assigned the project of preparing such a paper. At the same meeting, the Secretary of Defense tabled a draft outline memorandum for the President on US actions regarding Laos.

On 2 May, the JCS met twice with the Secretary of Defense and the Service Secretaries in preparation for the afternoon's NSC meeting. At the morning session, there was extended discussion of the draft memorandum for the President prepared by the Secretary of Defense; the discussion ended with the Secretary of Defense requesting the Service Chiefs and Service Secretaries to submit any differing views after lunch.

At the afternoon meeting, the Secretary of Defense presented a "clean draft" of his proposed memorandum for the President, incorporating changes agreed to during the morning session. Next, the Service Chiefs and Service Secretaries tabled memoranda embodying their respective views. Finally, the Joint Staff presented its appreciation of the military situation in Southeast Asia (begun on the previous day; see above); and the conferees agreed to several amendments to it.

The Secretary of Defense then decided that he would gather all these papers into a "package" for presentation at the NSC meeting. The package, when constituted, contained the following:

1. The memorandum for the President prepared by the Secretary of Defense.
2. A message from the CJCS, at Saigon, on the subject of Laos and Southeast Asia.
3. Memoranda containing the individual views of:
 - a. The Secretary of the Army
 - b. The Chief of Staff, Army
 - c. The Chief of Naval Operations
 - d. The Secretary of the Air Force
 - e. The Chief of Staff, Air Force
4. Portions of the Joint Staff "Appreciation of the Military Situation in Southeast Asia."

(See following item.)

(C) Notes to Control, 1 May and 2 May 61; OCJCS Files, 091 Laos (3).

2 May The National Security Council took the following actions:

1. Noted and discussed a briefing by the Acting Chairman, JCS, on the military implications of "possible" courses of action in Laos.
2. Noted the President's directive that contingency military planning for Southeast Asia should be continued in the light of the rapidly developing situation, and should be discussed with the United Kingdom.
3. Noted that the Secretaries of State and Defense would send to the President "promptly" a joint recommendation on US action regarding Laos (see item 9 May).
(TS) NSC Action No. 2418, 2 May 61 (approved by President 16 May 61).

2 May In a message to Secretary Rusk, the US Ambassador to Laos summarized Ambassador Harriman's meeting with Prince Boun Oum and General Phoumi Nosavan at Luang Prabang on 30 April. Phoumi had requested a promise that 1) the US would not allow key strategic points to be taken, and 2) if these centers should fall to the opposition, the US would provide every assistance in order to retrieve the situation.

Ambassador Harriman, after complimenting the RLG for offering to meet opposition representatives to discuss the cease-fire, had recommended that 1) the cease-fire talks begin immediately, and; 2) that such talks be limited to military arrangements to stop the fighting, without any discussion on political questions. Harriman had concluded his presentation by: 1) stressing the US view of the "error" of trying to compromise with Souvanna Phouma on the future of Laos 2) expressing the hope that the morale of government forces would be maintained at a high level, and that the FAL would resist aggression to the maximum possible extent.

In a separate message to the Secretary of State, Ambassador Brown reported that, during a meeting with King Savang Vathana later in the day, Ambassador Harriman had urged that the King not "compromise" the status of the present RLG before the conference had convened. The King had agreed to retain the present RLG in order not to weaken the position of the West.

(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2009, 2 May 61;
(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1998, 2 May 61.

2 May The JCS informed CINCPAC that SEATO Plan 5 was under discussion in Washington, within the US Government and with the UK.

The JCS reported that the British considered implicit in Plan 5 the "automatic extension" of military operations to Luang Prabang, Xieng Khouang and the Plaine des Jarres. It was the view of the JCS that this attitude was endangering the British contribution of their force commitments to SEATO Plan 5.

Within the US Government, the JCS continued, concern had been expressed "at high levels" that SEATO Plan 5 envisaged the securing of too many places. The JCS had been advised that only Vientiane, Seno, and possibly Pakse should be secured by the SEATO forces. They requested CINCPAC's confirmation or comments on the JCS view that implementation of the plan would conform to this advice, as well as his comment whether or not SEATO Plan 5 required updating in view of the current situation (see item 3 May).

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 995267, 2 May 61.

2 May

Ambassador Brown informed the Secretary of State that, following a conference of FAL general officers and a meeting of Laotian Cabinet members, the RLG had issued a press statement on cease-fire negotiations. After reviewing RLG efforts to effect a cease-fire (see item 25, 28, 29 April), the release stated that the officer representing the royal army had been unable to meet the Pathet Lao representative, on 1 May, since Ban Namone was in enemy territory. However, contact with enemy forces had been made near Vang Khi on 1 May. According to the statement, a temporary cease-fire was now in effect in the Vang Khi-Vang Vieng area.

In a separate message to Secretary Rusk, Ambassador Brown reported that, according to the British Ambassador, RLG Foreign Minister Sopsaisana had said the FAL representative had specifically told the PL officer with whom he had made contact that he was to arrange for talks to work out a nation-wide cease-fire. Furthermore, Sopsaisana had said that the FAL officer had been authorized to make arrangements for a future meeting to discuss political problems.

(U) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2007, 2 May 61;

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2008, 2 May 61.

2 May

Counselor Mendenhall reported from Saigon to the Secretary of State the main points of conversations of the previous day between President Diem, General Lemnitzer, Ambassadors Harriman and Durbrow, and General McGarr (CHMAAG South Viet Nam).

Diem had stated that since the start of the Soviet airlift, the US had been following the UK lead, seeking a cease-fire while the Soviets were building up supplies in both Laos and North Viet Nam. Moreover, the supplies being built-up in the Plaine des Jarres were, according to Diem, not only for use in Laos but for operations against South Viet Nam.

An "all out effort" must be made immediately, Diem continued, to hold at least the Mekong Valley cities, and Saravane, Attopeu, and Tchepone (towns in southern and eastern Laos near the South Vietnamese border).

Diem reported that one of his diplomats had, in conversation with a UK diplomat, opined that the troops required to assure the independence of Laos, estimated by the UK diplomat to be 400,000, could be obtained from Taiwan. Diem indicated to the Americans his agreement with this view. General Lemnitzer commented in reply that the introduction of Chinese Nationalists into Laos would raise more problems than it solved; he suggested that actions should, rather, be taken by SEATO. "Diem laughed," reported Mendenhall. The Vietnamese President stated that the Thais were "'fed up'" with SEATO and were now consulting on international affairs with Viet Nam for the first time since Diem had taken office.

(Mendenhall reported, parenthetically, that on 1 May, when Durbrow had asked Diem if South Vietnamese and Thai troops might be sent into Laos, Diem had replied that there was no legal basis for the entrance of South Vietnamese troops, but that Thai and US troops should enter under the legal basis provided by SEATO.)

Finally, regarding the 14-Nation Conference, Diem had asked: What would the Conference decide? Would it only confirm Communist advances? If there was to be a cease-fire, the free world must insist, Diem had urged, that the Communists return to the positions held at the time of the Geneva co-Chairmen's call for a cease-fire (see item 24 April).

(S) Msg, Saigon to SecState, 1659, 3 May 61.

2-3
May

CINCPAC requested that the JCS remove, on a one-time basis, the restriction that carrier-based reconnaissance flights over Laos avoid the Laos-North Viet Nam border (see item 6-7 April). CINCPAC wished to obtain photographic coverage of the ground access routes from North Viet Nam into Laos; he considered these routes to be of strategic importance, both to the current situation in Laos and to the assessment of the continuing threat to the whole of Southeast Asia. The imminence of a cease-fire made this requirement more urgent, since the cease-fire agreement might restrict overflights of Laos, thus denying this information to the US for an indefinite time.

On the following day, the JCS granted CINCPAC permission for a carrier-based reconnaissance mission stipulating that the mission must be completed before the cease-fire was "effective and so declared" by the ICC. CINCPAC quickly ordered CINCPACFLT to initiate such a mission as soon as possible.

(TS) Msgs, CINCPAC to JCS, 020335Z May 61; JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 995287, 3 May 61; CINCPAC to CINCPACFLT, 032047Z May 61.

3 May

In response to a request from the Secretary of State, Ambassador Brown provided his estimate of the Laotian situation.

Militarily, Brown began, the FAL was "fast approaching ineffectiveness" and only SEATO or US troops could stop the Pathet Lao if it chose to attack the Laotian population centers. However, "hard evidence" of the imminence of such an attack was lacking, and there seemed a fair chance that a cease-fire would soon take place.

Given the bleak military outlook, Brown continued, the political situation was surprisingly stable. But dissatisfaction with the RLG was increasing in the armed forces and in the politically minded quarters of Vientiane. Although this sentiment was inchoate and unorganized, Brown concluded, there was some risk that the RLG might be deserted by the Laotians.

(S) Msgs, SecState to Vientiane, 1202, 1 May 61;
Vientiane to SecState, 2011, 3 May 61.

3 May

The US Charge d'Affaires in Vientiane informed the Secretary of State that the Pathet Lao radio had broadcast at 0630, 3 May, a statement by Kong Le in which he ordered his forces to cease firing as of 0800 on the same day. Kong Le had also requested that both the NLHX forces and the "Phoumi-Boun Oum party" cease firing and immediately end all military movements. These two factions were urged to send fully authorized representatives to Ban Namone, 11 kilometers south of Vang Vieng in order to discuss: a) formation of a coalition government, b) selection of Laotian representatives to attend the conference in Geneva on 12 May, and c) ways and means to solve the "Laotian question and return Laos to its former state."

The Secretary of State, in receipt through other channels of the Kong Le statement, recommended to Ambassador Brown that he advise the RLG to cooperate without raising complicating issues on "picayune details." Phoumi had already accepted, however, as Brown reported a few minutes later. In an official declaration Phoumi stated that the RLG had welcomed the proposal and had given orders to the FAL Commander in Chief to "stop all hostilities and all fighting on all fronts as of this date."

In a cable to Ambassador Brown several hours later, Secretary Rusk noted that the Pathet Lao radio had later broadcast a message from Souvanna Phouma suggesting that the meeting called for by Kong Le take place on 5 May. The purpose given by Souvanna for the meeting was, however, to "negotiate a coalition government to attend . . . [the] Geneva Conference. It appeared, the Secretary said, that Souvanna might be attempting to relate political questions to the cease-fire. RLG acceptance of Souvanna's invitation would seem to place the US at a "maximum disadvantage" at the Geneva Conference, Rusk declared. Therefore, Phoumi ought to be supported if he refused Souvanna's invitation to discuss far-reaching political questions under the present conditions. It would be more profitable, Rusk continued, that the cease-fire first be established and the ICC introduced into Laos before any political discussions took place.

On the following day, Ambassador Brown reported that Phoumi, speaking for the RLG in a radio broadcast statement, had declared that a commission headed by General Sing Rathanasamy would meet with representatives of the other forces on 5 May at a point located 2 kilometers north of Hin Heup. (Souvanna's proposal had, according to Phoumi, named Hin Heup as an alternative to Ban Namone.)

Ambassador Brown further reported that Phoumi had told him that the delegation had full powers to discuss the cease-fire, but had no authority to "talk politics."

(S) Msgs, SecState to Vientiane, 1207, 1208, 3 May 61
(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2021, 4 May 61; (U) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 2012, 2014, 3 May 61; (U) NYT, 4 May 61, p. 1; (U) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2020, 4 May 61.

3 May

CINCPAC, replying to the JCS queries concerning SEATO Plan 5 (see item 2 May), stated his view that, under current conditions, the forces entering Laos under the Plan should have as initial objectives the securing of the Vientiane and Seno/Savannakhet areas and adjacent Mekong River crossings. All SEATO military advisers had agreed in these objectives. However, CINCPAC continued, the central objectives of the plan should also include Thakhek, Paksane and other key locations on the Lao-Thai border, in order to maintain the lines of communication from Savannakhet to Vientiane and to assure the Thais that the US did not intend to permit Communist forces becoming a "direct threat" to Thailand. Beyond these border areas, action would not be initiated to seize and hold additional areas "unless so directed."

CINCPAC considered that all forces specified in SEATO Plan 5, as modified (see item 5 April), were required to carry out the above objectives and that no updating of the Plan was required. By way of rebuttal of the British fears (see item 2 May), CINCPAC noted that Plan 5 contained, in his opinion, adequate provisions, through the chain of command from the SEATO Council, to preclude SEATO forces' undertaking any subsequent actions that were unacceptable either politically or militarily.

Finally, CINCPAC cautioned that SEATO Plan 5 had not been conceived of as an operation to seize and hold beachheads against an organized opposition, but rather had been predicated upon having an organized FAL that the SEATO forces could support in a counter-insurgency campaign. This assumption obtained at the present time; if, however, the FAL became incapable of conducting organized operations, SEATO Plan 5 would no longer be an appropriate plan for intervention in Laos.

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 031110Z May 61.

3 May

CINCPAC reported to the JCS that a review of the "newest weapons and equipment" had been conducted, as requested by the Chairman, JCS. The conclusion had been drawn that none of these new items were suitable for "profitable use" by the FAL because the Laotians did not have the capability to employ more sophisticated weapons than those already provided to them. Furthermore, CINCPAC continued, if the situation developed so that the FAL training program could be continued, the ingredients of the program should be "basic training of the soldier" and "motivation and leadership of the officer." Without these fundamentals, concluded CINCPAC, weapons and equipment would be useless.

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 032301Z May 61; (S) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 108466, 28 Apr 61.

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4 May

Philippine Foreign Minister Serrano informed the US Ambassador at Manila that the Philippine Government was "greatly concerned that there was no present indication of US decisive action in Laos situation." Serrano had the personal impression, Ambassador Hickerson reported to the Secretary of State, that the US was seeking a way to allow Laos to "slip" to the Communists without "too great damage."

Hickerson reported that Serrano had not been impressed by the Ambassador's disavowal of such a US intention. The Ambassador urged to the Secretary that Serrano be kept more fully informed of US policies, in order that his skepticism be abated.

(S) Msg, Manila to SecState, 1273, 4 May 61.

4 May

The Charge d'Affaires in Bangkok reported that, within the SEATO Council of Representatives, discussions and agreements on the political actions in support of SEATO Plan 5 (see items 13 and 28 April) had proceeded as follows:

1. Regarding Action 5, appointment of a political adviser (POLAD) to the SEATO force, the French believed it necessary that specific terms of reference be drafted for the POLAD. The other representatives argued that the general terms of reference contained in Plan 5 for the SEATO Force Commander would suffice. Discussion was suspended pending arrival of expected instructions for the Australian representative from his government.

2. The French representative agreed, subject to confirmation from Paris, to the proposal that situation assessments and warnings would be issued by the Council of Representatives upon receipt, in each case, of instructions from the respective member governments. Also agreed to by the Council was the proposition that if the Charter Green warning were issued, the respective nations would have the responsibility of calling up their force contributions (Action 6 - see items 13 and 28 April).

3. The French Government was "agreeable" to formal status of forces agreements (Action 8), but insisted that no contact should be made with the RLG regarding these agreements until Plan 5 had been activated. The Thais proposed that, in the event formal agreements were not authorized, there should at least be prepared a list of provisions for the guidance of the Force Commanders in negotiating with the RTG and RLG. All agreed to refer the Thai proposal to their governments for instructions (see item 22 May).

(TS) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1971, 4 May 61.

5 May

Counselor Unger reported to the Secretary of State that a US Embassy Officer had informed the SEATO Council Representatives of Thailand, Australia, the Philippines, New Zealand, and Pakistan that the US was prepared to accede to a UK proposal to postpone further discussion of Charter Yellow. The US spokesman had emphasized that the US was not abandoning the Charter Yellow proposal, and the various Representatives, with the exception of the Australian Representative, had appeared to accept the US position "with equanimity."

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The Australian delegate, while admitting that the UK proposal was "not too unreasonable" at the present juncture, stated frankly that the US should previously have exerted greater efforts to bring France and the UK into line with the US position that Charter Yellow was urgently required. The Australian blamed the US equally with the UK for the present status of SEATO: "'a dead horse.'" The Australians and the Asian members of SEATO had looked to the US for strong leadership, he continued. Australia, for one, had made it unmistakably clear that she would follow the US lead and that she expected the US to use a "strong hand" in impressing upon France and the UK the gravity of the situation in Laos and the necessity for action. But the US had failed to exercise its leadership. The British could have been persuaded to give in, the Australian declared. The French would then have been isolated and required either to prove themselves "worthy members of SEATO" or to admit to "self-centered obstructionism." Even if the latter alternative had resulted, the resulting situation would have been better, in the eyes of the Australian, than the present impasse, which had demonstrated to the Asian members that the SEATO Council resolution (see item 29 March) was "empty words."

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1984, 5 May 61.

5 May

Counselor Unger cabled from Bangkok the substance of a conversation between Prime Minister Sarit and Ambassador Harriman. The two statesmen had agreed that, because of the likelihood of a cease-fire, the time for SEATO action had passed. However, Ambassador Harriman had emphasized that both countries must continue quietly and unilaterally to take required alert measures, regardless of British and French opposition to a SEATO declaration of Charter Yellow. Deploring SEATO's inability to take firm action in recent weeks, Harriman also had agreed with the Prime Minister that had SEATO "acted promptly" a cease-fire would probably have since resulted, before many fallen Lao positions had been lost. Consequently, the two men considered, the Western position at the Geneva Conference would have been greatly enhanced.

To Ambassador Harriman's inquiry whether Thailand was prepared to attend the Geneva Conference if there were an effective cease-fire, Sarit replied "'if America goes we go too.'" Sarit made it clear that Thailand would press at the Conference for several points it regarded as "essential." First, the Thais were "absolutely opposed" to acknowledging Souvanna or the PL as representing Laos at the Conference. Second, the Pathet Lao must agree to withdraw from their present positions, either to the "arrangements" of the 1954 Geneva Conference (de facto control by the PL of Sam Neua and Phong Saly provinces) or to the positions occupied before the Kong Le August 1960 coup. (This second alternative was attributed by Counselor Unger to Harriman, who quickly pointed out that he considered it "unrealistic" and that Sarit had in fact proposed it.) If the Communists did not meet these Thai requirements, Sarit continued, Thailand "might well withdraw from the Conference." However, Harriman eventually

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obtained Sarit's agreement that the question of Lao representation might be postponed at the "early stages" of the Conference, and that Pathet Lao withdrawal "away from the Mekong" and north of the 17th parallel would be an acceptable minimum.

On the question of a broadened or coalition government in Laos, Sarit emphasized that this should not be hurried. He did not think the King strong enough to head such a government and implied, according to Unger, that there was no man strong enough in his estimation; though not fully satisfied with Phoumi et al., he would not change them.

Sarit did not think that Boun Oum and Phoumi could exist under a government headed by Souvanna Phouma and including Communists; either a divided Laos or self-exile by Boun Oum and Phoumi would result. Sarit did not, however, rule out Souvanna's participation in government in some position other than prime minister.

Asked by Harriman for a message to President Kennedy, Sarit responded with the thought that all parties should be prepared, in the event the Geneva Conference failed, to take whatever action necessary to avoid losing Laos. Sarit also desired that more credence and weight be attached to the views of the Southeast Asian allies.

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1979, 5 May 61;
(S) Msg, SecState to Bangkok, Circular 1753, [6 May 61].

5 May

CHMAAG informed CINCPAC that an FAL cease-fire committee had met with a PL cease-fire "sub-committee." The meeting had been inconclusive because the PL committee had lacked "power to talk terms."

A meeting the next day, Ambassador Brown informed the Secretary of State, ended in disagreement as to the site for future meetings. The PL insisted upon Ban Namone; the RLG on Hin Heup. But though the meeting itself was again inconclusive, the Ambassador saw significance in the fact that the Pathet Lao had been represented by qualified officers for the first time.

(S) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 110568, 5 May 61; (C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2029, 6 May 61.

6 May

CHMAAG, in a Situation Report to CINCPAC, reported that "Pathet Lao guerrilla units accompanied by Chinese Communist political advisers are moving into areas of northern Laos which have been abandoned by FAL forces."

(S) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 110914, 6 May 61.

6 May

The Department of State cabled to US Embassies the draft instructions to the ICC Laos agreed to by the Geneva co-Chairmen, the UK and the USSR (see item 1 May).

According to the draft, the co-Chairmen considered that, at present, the basic task of the ICC was the "fixing" of a cease-fire in Laos in accordance with an understanding to be reached by the belligerent parties, and in exercising supervision and control over that cease-fire. The ICC should arrive in Laos immediately

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after the belligerent parties had ceased firing and should proceed to carry out its task.

Regarding functions for the ICC to perform after the completion of this "first stage" of its work, the co-Chairmen stated that the determination of these functions fell within the competence of the Geneva Conference. The co-Chairmen requested that the ICC furnish them with regular reports on its activities, particularly with regard to the manner in which the cease-fire agreement was being observed by the belligerent parties.

(S) Msg, SecState Circular, 1750, 6 May 61.

6 May

The US Military Attache in South Viet Nam reported to the Army Chief of Staff that approximately 150 South Vietnamese troops had entered Laos east of Tchepone. The Attache reported that South Vietnamese Special Forces reconnaissance teams had been in the Tchepone area since 1 May and had observed more than three battalions of Communist troops beleaguering various FAL outposts. The Attache commented that if the Communist troops succeeded in gaining control of the highway from Laos through Tchepone to South Viet Nam before the military positions were frozen by a Laotian truce, the opportunities for guerrilla incursions would endanger two northern provinces of South Viet Nam.

(S) Msg, USARMA Saigon to CSA, 060357Z May 61.

5 May

The JCS, informing CINCPAC that the stationing of US forces in Thailand was under consideration in Washington (see item 1 May), urgently requested his opinions and recommendations on several questions regarding this course of action, as follows:

- a. What kind of U.S. force do we propose to station in Thailand?
- b. Should it be part of a SEATO force?
- c. Should it be conceived and fashioned as a deterrent to guerrilla infiltration from across Mekong rather than just a U.S. "presence?"
- d. Mission or objective of such force?
- e. Composition of such force - type and number of personnel?
- f. Source of personnel?
- g. Time required to form such force?
- h. Time required to position in Thailand?
- i. Should engineers be included in force - type, number, mission?
- j. Should Civic Action teams be included - size and number of teams?

(See following item for CINCPAC's item-by-item response.)
(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 995542, 6 May 61.

7 May

Within hours, CINCPAC responded to the JCS queries regarding the stationing of US forces in Thailand (see preceding item). CINCPAC's replies, keyed to the JCS questions, were as follows:

(a) The US force stationed in Thailand should be the same as the US elements for SEATO Plan 5 as modified (see item 5 April). Alternatively, the 5,000-man force suggested for Thailand by CINCPAC on 1 May (see item) could be deployed.

(b) The US force should be the US element of the SEATO force designated for SEATO Plan 5.

(c) The force should not be conceived of as a patrol force against infiltration; the Thais had both the responsibility and the capability for patrolling against infiltrations. The US forces designated for SEATO Plan 5 were capable of supporting the Thais in defensive action but were capable of limited offensive action.

(d) The mission of the US force should be to contribute to a visible SEATO effort to stabilize the defenses of Southeast Asia against Communist encroachment and to demonstrate the US intent to honor its commitments to the countries of that area.

(e) The composition of US forces should be that indicated in SEATO Field Forces Plan 5, as modified (see item 5 April).

(f) The sources of personnel would be the PACOM components, augmented from CONUS, as indicated by SEATO Field Forces Plan 5.

(g) The US elements of Plan 5 were already formed and prepositioned in forward areas.

(h) The timing of deployments to Thailand should be substantially that indicated for the positioning of the 5,000-man force suggested on 1 May (see item).

(i) The US elements of SEATO Field Forces Plan 5 contained sufficient engineer units for initial requirements.

(j) Civic Action teams would not be required; the US element of SEATO Field Forces Plan 5 included civil affairs personnel.

CINCPAC strongly recommended that any decision to station US forces in Thailand be "generally in consonance" with the concept of operations for the PACOM elements of SEATO Plan 5. He warned, finally, that if the US force were intended only to bolster Thai strength rather than to enter Laos, Sarit might not favor this course of action.

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 070008Z May 61.

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7 May

CHMAAG reported to CINCPAC that a "maximum effort has been made to obtain hard evidence of Viet Minh presence in Laos." A considerable amount of information had been accumulated, CHMAAG continued, but "very little that would stand up as firm evidence in any international conference." CHMAAG listed several specific Viet Minh units that had reportedly been identified by the RLG, but stated that this information had not been confirmed by other sources. The general consensus of reliable observers, reported CHMAAG, was similar to the recently expressed views of the Chief of the RLG External Documentation Service, who had said:

I cannot see entire Viet Minh units engaged in combat in Laos, up to now. Their tactics would be different from those we have seen employed by the enemy. Regular Viet Minh units could be expected to follow up and exploit their tactical successes rapidly instead of taking a week or longer for regrouping after a key town has been taken by them.

There are, to be sure, Viet Minh technicians, weapons crews, and advisors with Pathet Lao forward elements. I accept that entire Viet Minh units have been employed in enemy rear areas, such as Sam Neua and Xieng Khouang provinces, to bolster Pathet Lao morale and consolidate control in these areas. But from the analysis of all the information available to us, I cannot find proof that regular Viet Minh Army units are being employed to spearhead enemy attacks.

(S) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 111585,

9 May 61.

8 May

Secretary Rusk (in Oslo for the NATO Council of Foreign Ministers meeting) informed the Department of State that during a meeting between British and French Foreign Office representatives and the US Deputy Assistant Secretary for Far Eastern Affairs, the following points concerning the Geneva Conference on Laos had been discussed:

1. There was complete agreement among the three diplomats that, unless the ICC Chairman sent some form of assurance that the cease-fire was effective, the Conference should not be opened.

2. It was hoped that Sihanouk would arrive to open the Conference. If not, the British and Soviet Foreign Ministers would draw lots for the opening day chairmanship of the meeting. Thereafter they would alternate daily as chairman instead of the chairmanship's rotating through the 14 nations.

3. It was considered advisable to provide Laos a seat at the conference table. The RLG, as the legitimate government, would claim the right to this seat; if this right was challenged it might be necessary, as a concession, to seat the Laotian delegation as observers, speaking in the conference on invitation. Allowance would also have to be made for seating the delegation of a coalition government if one was formed.

4. The suggestion that King Savang, as sovereign of the country to be under discussion at the international meeting, be invited to express his desires and opinions at the Conference was considered to have some merit. However, all three representatives seriously doubted that the King would accept such an invitation.

5. According to the British delegate, the Soviets had agreed that conference deliberations would be restricted to the subject of Laos. Any effort to broaden the field of discussions would be vigorously resisted by the US, UK, and France.

6. It was agreed that the agenda should be kept as simple as possible. The first item should be consideration of the ICC Chairman's message on the effectiveness of the cease-fire. At that point, it was hoped that the agenda would consist of one item entitled "'International Recognition of Neutrality of Laos and Measures to Achieve it with the Assistance of International Supervisory and Control Machinery.'"

7. On the subject of the Geneva Accords, the British were firm in their opinion that the Accords were so out dated that large portions were inapplicable. The British believed that the best approach, therefore, would be to pay "lip service" to the spirit of the Geneva Accords, while at the same time attempting to perfect agreements to meet new needs under new conditions. The French were probably only partially agreed on this approach, as they were most reluctant to give up special privileges that had been given to them by the Accords.

8. It was agreed that, before any conference machinery could begin the task of assisting Laos to achieve the status of a neutral nation, agreement had to be reached on the essential aspects of neutrality. One predominant consideration would be the question of restrictions on the size and character of a future Laotian military force.

9. There was general agreement on the need to involve neutral countries, such as Cambodia and Burma, in the problem of Laos. The Asian neighbors of Laos would then have the opportunity to assume "heavy responsibility" in guarding their own interests and in bringing about the conditions in Laos that would be acceptable to them.

"Considerable sympathy" had been shown for the idea of establishing a Commission (either separate from or in conjunction with the ICC) that, under authority from the 14-Nation Conference, would carry out its mission in Laos for several months and then report to a reconvened Conference. This concept would have the advantage of: 1) keeping the work of the Conference within manageable bounds; 2) allowing the opportunity for the situation in Laos to evolve in the presence of Commission teams; and 3) providing mechanism for an Asian Commission to work out many of the details more properly in its province than in that of a conference session.

10. Finally, there was agreement that any major violation of the cease-fire by the Communists would create an entirely new situation which would require appropriate action by SEATO powers.

(S) Msg, Oslo to SecState, SECTO 16, 8 May 61.

8 May

The Acting Secretary of State informed diplomatic posts of the Harriman/Galbraith meeting with Prime Minister Nehru on 5 May. Ambassador Harriman had reported that Nehru had agreed with him and Ambassador Galbraith on the following points: 1) India and the US had a common objective in attempting to develop a genuinely neutral Laos; 2) rather than follow the 1954 Geneva Agreement on the ICC procedures for guaranteeing the neutrality of Laos, new and special machinery was needed; 3) the function of the ICC should be "only" to verify the cease-fire. The Commission should not become involved in any political negotiations; and 4) it would be desirable for the US and India to confer prior to the opening of the Geneva Conference.

Ambassador Harriman had also said that, in the Prime Minister's opinion, it would be preferable to have the various political factions in Laos form a coalition regime now, so that a Laotian Government could participate in the Conference, rather than to have delegations from two or three groups attending the Geneva meeting as observers. In addition, the Indian leader was opposed to the introduction of any other subjects for consideration at the Conference (e.g., the problem in South Viet Nam).

Nehru had also expressed the opinion that the Pathet Lao would undoubtedly try to use its military advances to enforce the movement's demands for a larger political participation in the government. Nevertheless, the Indian Premier believed that the US should not permit these PL territorial gains to "force" a division of Laos.

(S) Msg, SecState to New Delhi et al., 3172, 8 May 61.

8 May

Another cease-fire meeting was held at Hin Heup (see item 5 May) and again the results were inconclusive, because of disagreement concerning a formal meeting place for negotiations. The RLG representatives had agreed to come to Ban Namone for military discussions if the PL would come to Hin Heup for "political discussions." The PL had insisted that all discussions be held at Ban Namone; the FAL had refused this proposal because Ban Namone was located behind the PL lines.

(S) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 111561, 9 May 61; (U) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2042, 9 May 61.

8 May

The first elements of the ICC arrived in Vientiane, according to Ambassador Brown. The respective delegation chairmen were: India, Mr. Samarendranath Sen; Canada, Mr. Leon Meyrand; Poland, Mr. Albert Morski.

(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2039, 8 May 61; (U) NYT, 9 May 61, 1, 4.

8 May

Counselor Unger reported to the Secretary of State from Bangkok that, since the US acceptance of a political solution through the ICC and the 14-Nation Conference (see item 23 March), the US had suffered a loss of prestige and that the confidence of the Asian and Pacific allies in US leadership had waned.

Although many of these allies had doubted that a stable, united, non-Communist, neutral Laos could be achieved through a 14-Nation Conference, they had acquiesced in the new US position, which they understood to be premised upon an early cease-fire and the avoidance of the loss of additional territory to the PL. It was with this understanding, together with the US assurances that SEATO would act if a Communist take-over threatened Laos, that the allies had agreed to the mild SEATO resolution of 29 March (see item).

Since the SEATO Council meeting, the Communists had sought to immobilize the US by holding forth the prospect of a cease-fire while they advanced their military position in Laos. Twice some SEATO response appeared to be gaining the general acceptance of the SEATO members and twice the UK had dissuaded the US from SEATO action. In all this, Unger continued, the role of the British was not appreciated by the Asian allies, who feared that the US was betraying a "dangerous inability" to frustrate an "obvious Communist game."

Perhaps the most serious damage done by the events of the past six weeks, stated Unger, had been the raising of doubts in the minds of the allies concerning the reliability of US assurances of support "when their turn comes."

On 10 May, commenting upon Unger's analysis, Ambassador Brown cabled from Vientiane his view that the US could not afford for one instant to relax its vigilance during a cease-fire. Brown believed that the PL-Viet Minh forces could from their present positions overrun Laos in a matter of days if the FAL were the only opposition. While the US training and resupply of the FAL would continue at top speed, the FAL could not in the "time available" be given the capability to withstand the Communist attack. Therefore, Brown concluded, planning should begin now for the rapid intervention of outside forces at the "first firm sign" that the enemy intended to mount an attack. This planning should be within the SEATO framework if possible. If that should seem as unproductive as in the past, the alternative should be on as wide a multilateral basis as was obtainable.

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1994, 8 May 61; (S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2049, 10 May 61.

8 May

CHMAAG cabled to CINCPAC his comments, proposals and recommendations on US actions in Laos during the cease-fire period. The various points included in the cable, some "general in nature" according to CHMAAG, because of the absence of terms of reference for the operation of the ICC, were the following:

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1. A proposal to increase the training in Thailand for the FAL.

2. A proposal to refit and retrain those FAL units remaining in Laos, including: a) inspection and rehabilitation of equipment; (b) training on the site and at schools of officers, NCO's, and specialists; (c) acceleration of English language training in order to prepare more Laotians for training in the US; (d) encouraging of the FAL to intensify its troop information, troop indoctrination, and psychological warfare programs; and (e) organization of technical service contact teams to visit FAL units to assist with the rehabilitation of equipment.

3. The comment that, although the ICC might object to the movement of units or equipment and to the presence of MAAG personnel, the initial ICC concern would be to assure the fact of a cease-fire. The US should, therefore, CHMAAG continued, take every possible step "during this period" to improve the posture of the FAL.

4. A proposal to continue the "essential" US resupply of all FAL units, including air drops to otherwise inaccessible units. It might be necessary, CHMAAG said, that the FAL inform the ICC of this resupply "in certain cases."

5. Anticipating requests from the ICC for assistance in transportation and communications, the statement that CHMAAG could render "limited support," and the request of CINCPAC for guidance concerning US reaction to such requests.

6. CHMAAG's intention to retain and redeploy Thai volunteer personnel as previously planned (see item 29 April).

7. The expectation that the PL would attempt during the cease-fire period to infiltrate and subvert where possible, and the consequent necessity that the FAL be prepared and supported in countervailing these tactics.

8. The proposal that, in view of the overriding necessity to improve the FAL logistics capability, there be approved increases in: (a) technical service advisers assigned to the MAAG, (b) logistic training within the FAL; and (c) the quotas for Laotians to US technical service schools.

(On 9 May, Ambassador Brown commended CHMAAG's message to the Department of State's attention, stating his full support for CHMAAG's proposals.)

(For CINCPAC's comments, see item 10 May; for State's comments, see item 12 May.)

(S) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 111398, 9 May 61; (S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2041, 9 May 61.

8 May

CINCPAC stated to the JCS that he "sensed a lack of complete understanding at high places on [sic] Washington" of the concept of SEATO Plan 5, the interrelationship of that plan and the FAL, and the capabilities of the FAL to do their part in Plan 5. "Thus," CINCPAC continued, "the decision makers may have been led to feel that Laos is lost and that, therefore, their attention should be focused on other somewhat less critical problems." CINCPAC offered rebuttal to these misconceptions as follows:

1. Implementation of SEATO Plan 5 did not mean that US troops must retake Laos. If action were taken "while there is still time" SEATO forces would merely occupy key urban centers without having to "fight their way in," and FAL forces would be freed to fight in the remote areas of Laos.

2. The recent major reverses suffered by the FAL had, CINCPAC felt, led the "decision makers" to conclude that the FAL could not and would not fight. There were "many facets to the recent record of the green and half trained FAL," CINCPAC said, "but they will fight if the circumstances give them any hope of success." Although the FAL had been "taking a licking in the broad sense," because of superior enemy fire power and competent Viet Minh assistance, the FAL had not disintegrated. There still remained "an army and other means to revive the counter-guerrilla campaign" that had been progressing prior to the Kong Le coup and the subsequent Communist intervention.

The US now had its "last opportunity," CINCPAC argued, to save Vientiane, keep the King on his throne, and prevent Communist occupation of important positions on the Mekong River. "Explicitly, this means implement SEATO Plan 5, or any politically necessary variant," CINCPAC asserted. If the key cities of Laos were secured, CINCPAC concluded, the FAL would "stiffen" and the RLG would be in an immeasurably better position to "carry the day" for the minimum US objectives in Laos, which were, according to CINCPAC, "in serious jeopardy."

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 080113Z May 61.

8 May

CHMAAG informed CINCPAC that, in view of the arrival of the ICC team in Vientiane, he had directed that all reconnaissance missions be "stood down." CHMAAG recommended to CINCPAC, however, that US reconnaissance aircraft remain available awaiting future developments on the Laotian scene.

On the same day, CINCPAC ordered CINCPACFLT to discontinue carrier-based reconnaissance missions (see item 2-3 May).

(TS) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 111117, 8 May 61; CINCPAC to CINCPACFLT, 080722Z May 61.

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9 May

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The Acting Secretary of State informed Secretary Rusk (at Oslo for the NATO Foreign Ministers Meeting) that the President had approved the following instructions for the Geneva Conference on Laos.

1. The Secretary of State was to proceed to the Geneva Conference as the head of the US Delegation on the assumption that a cease-fire, verified by the ICC or "other conditions satisfactory" to the US, would prevail by 12 May. In the absence of such conditions, the Secretary was authorized at his discretion to stay away from the opening session, or to attend and request a suspension pending clarification of the situation in Laos.

2. The US would continue to support the present government of Laos and would press for its representation at the Conference. If this proved to be impossible, the US would accept an arrangement whereby representatives of the present government, the Souvanna group, and, if necessary, the PL would participate as observers at the international gathering. If a coalition government with a dangerously large or influential Pathet Lao component should seek admission as the RLG, the US delegation would request new instructions.

3. As an opening position, the US should propose a constructive package that would assure a neutral, independent, peaceful, sovereign, and socially and economically viable Laos. The program would include the following three points:

a. A neutral, politically independent Laos with a firm international guarantee against external aggression.

b. The establishment of Laos as a "peace sanctuary" with internal forces reduced to the level necessary to maintain its national security. This condition would be supervised and maintained by a Peace Preservation Commission of neutrals, preferably under UN auspices. The Commission's goals would be first, to insure the phased withdrawal of foreign military personnel and prevent the entry of new military personnel or equipment except the minimum required to train and equip an internal constabulary and, second, to prevent infiltration and subversion within Laos.

c. The US would invite the USSR and other interested missions to join it in underwriting the cost of an extensive technical and economic aid program for a neutral and independent Laos. The program would be administered by a commission of neutral nations from the area.

4. Since the Soviets would probably reject these proposals, the US Delegation should consider the following contingencies:

a. Continue to present US proposals at infrequent sessions for several months, providing an acceptable cease-fire was maintained;

- b. Seek to suspend the Conference on the basis of a de facto cease-fire while the principal political factions in Laos turned to the formation of a coalition government,
- c. Seek to negotiate a compromise based on a federated or partitioned Laos;
- d. Take the matter to the UN either before or after the Conference had adjourned; or
- e. Leave the Conference on a clear issue of principle, or seek to have it brought to an end.

These alternative courses of action were not mutually exclusive, but a combination of them would depend upon circumstances. The US position "on the ground in Laos is weak. We cannot enforce what we would like," the instructions stated. Furthermore, the Communists would insist on getting a Communist-dominated coalition government. Therefore, it was recommended that "we keep under constant advisement what military and political actions we should take in Laos, Thailand, and Free Viet-Nam to strengthen our hand or anticipate a break-up of the Conference."

5. The recommendation was also made that "we be prepared to have the Conference fail and be adjourned if we cannot reach some satisfactory agreement."

With that possibility in mind, considerations should be given to plans by which, if necessary, "the political and military position of the present government may be consolidated in southern Laos." (See item 12-13 May for contingency plans.) The Communists might possibly accept such a de facto division.

However, if the Communist forces, following the break-up of the Conference, should renew their offensive, the US would be faced with the ultimate decision: "whether or not to introduce US forces into this area through SEATO or with those SEATO members prepared to participate. Our military plans and preparations should be kept in a high state of readiness against this eventuality. To support this eventuality the MAAG in Laos should utilize the existing period of cease-fire to intensify its training and reorganization of the FAL."

6. Early in the Conference the US would be confronted with the "crucial question" of who would head up a new Lao government and what would be the composition of a coalition government.

The US should, in the first instance, have as its objective a government composed of all principal political elements within Laos, except those on the extreme right and the extreme left. Souvanna Phouma would participate as a member of the new government, but not as Prime Minister. If this plan did not prove feasible, the US might be confronted with the acceptance of a government headed by Souvanna and including at

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least two Pathet Lao ministers. After appropriate consultations had been held by the US Delegates in the early stages of the Conference, the Delegation would be in a better position to make recommendations on this crucial point and to ask for instructions.

(S) Msg, SecState to Oslo, TOSEC 34, 9 May 61.

9 May

The JCS commented by memorandum to the Secretary of Defense on the draft State-Defense joint plan for possible SEATO intervention in Laos.

This plan, completed on 4 May, was an outgrowth of the NSC meeting of 2 May (see item). The plan considered first the circumstances under which SEATO intervention would take place. Clear failure to reach a cease-fire, or the breaking of a cease-fire by the Communists, accompanied by a resumption of offensive action, would be the precipitating cause. UN action to control the situation would be sought, based on a Lao appeal. At this time the SEATO nations could 1) wait for effective UN action without doing anything unless such UN action were forestalled; 2) take visible preparatory SEATO steps while waiting, to speed UN action; or 3) proceed with necessary intervention measures simultaneously with initiation of the appeal for UN action. A plan of action "should" be presented to the US Congress before, or at least simultaneously with, the initial UN steps.

The political objective prompting intervention would be made clear: to hold intact the existing military situation in Laos pending an effective cease-fire and the establishment of satisfactory controls. Assurance would be given that no action to "reconquer Laos" would be taken and that any military action that occurred would be defensive; though defensive, however, it would be adequate to fulfill the political objective.

Combat forces in Laos would number approximately 13,200 on a SEATO-wide basis; without the Commonwealth Brigade, they would number about 12,000. Pakistani forces of about 2,000 men would arrive as soon as airlift could be provided.

Initially, the SEATO forces would occupy key points along the Mekong River still in RLG hands, including Vientiane, Paksane, Thakhek, Seno, and Savannakhet. The defense of Luang Prabang would initially be left to FAL forces. The general guideline for reaction by intervening forces to increased hostile action by the enemy would be a response "adequate to fulfill the mission and to inflict punishment on the attacker." If the Pathet Lao forces (without major additional Viet Minh reinforcements) continued a broad offensive not limited to the areas occupied by SEATO forces, they and their supply lines should be subjected to air attacks, but no such attacks should be made closer than 10 miles from the North Vietnamese or Communist Chinese borders except for Nong Ket, a well-marked supply center five miles from the border.

State and Defense were divided on what should be done if major additional Viet Minh forces moved into Laos. State's alternative would require the SEATO

forces to take no counteraction initially, whereas the Defense alternative would immediately authorize air attacks confined to Laos. If the Viet Minh attacked, under the State alternative the SEATO forces were to seek political authorization for immediate action against North Viet Nam. Under the Defense alternative such political authorization was to be sought if Viet Minh attack seemed imminent.

If the Chinese Communists intervened, political authorization would be sought for prompt counteraction.

The draft plan estimated Pathet Lao capabilities would not extend beyond harassing, guerrilla-type operations, probably directed by DRV (North Vietnamese) cadres and with DRV technical and logistical support and Communist-bloc airlift.

North Viet Nam could introduce up to 14 infantry divisions and one artillery division to counter SEATO forces. These DRV forces could be provided tactical air support by the Chinese Communists. About 270 jet fighters were normally located at South China bases, and these and other aircraft, including light jet bombers, could be readily redeployed for operations in Laos.

The Chinese Communists could have about eight divisions in Laos within 30 days from the date of deciding to intervene. These divisions could be supported by jet fighters and light bombers as indicated above.

The draft plan assessed enemy intentions as follows: Open counterintervention by Communist-bloc forces would be in large part dependent upon the manner and circumstances attending the introduction of SEATO forces into Laos. Thus if the declared objective of the SEATO forces were the taking of all Laos up to the borders of Communist China and North Viet Nam, there probably would be a massive Communist-bloc response. But declaration of the limited objective set forth earlier in the State-Defense plan probably would provoke no more than a Communist political and diplomatic campaign to force withdrawal of the SEATO forces. The Communists probably would make such withdrawal a prior condition to the convening of the Geneva Conference.

The draft plan recommended 1) that the President approve the foregoing plan for SEATO military intervention if the existing cease-fire negotiations should break down and the Communist offensive should be renewed, and 2) that the necessary measures for intervention should proceed simultaneously with the initiation of steps in the UN.

In reviewing the foregoing plan, the JCS stated, they had given special attention to the part concerned with the contingency of major additional Viet Minh forces moving into Laos. Any intervention with US forces into Laos either unilaterally or under SEATO auspices should, the JCS considered, be undertaken

"only after firm US governmental decision to the effect that the United States is thereby prepared and committed to succeed in its military intervention regardless of the extent of possible communist escalation." The requirement for such a US governmental decision, the JCS recommended, should be written into the draft as "an unequivocal fundamental to US military action."

(TS) JCSM-313-61 to SecDef, "Proposed Draft on Plan for Possible Intervention in Laos (U)," 9 May 61, derived from (TS) JCS 1992/985, 9 May 61.

9 May

The Acting Secretary of State, in a message to Ambassador Brown, discussed the "special relationship" of the US and the Meo tribesmen. Since the beginning of the year, the US had provided the Meo with arms and guidance, urging them to fight the Pathet Lao. The Meo leaders had responded by providing 6,700 tribesmen who had formed auto-defense units and who had fought effectively. As a result, the Meos had deprived themselves of the manpower to plant their food crops and had incurred the enmity of the Communists who would undoubtedly seek to destroy the Meo threat.

The US had, therefore, both a moral obligation and a practical need to preserve the Meos by aiding them materially and politically; however, it was anticipated that supplying those Meos located north of Xieng Khouang would prove increasingly difficult.

In view of the above, the Acting Secretary continued, the following had been decided:

1. The Department of State did not agree to the arming of 900 additional Meo scattered throughout northern Xieng Khouang province. These units would add little to the Meo defensive capability and would, moreover, be particularly vulnerable to Communist countermeasures.

2. Ambassador Brown should attempt to insure that the RLG would defend the proposition that the Meo were part of the FAL, and thus the position that the areas held by the Meo were under RLG authority. Also, the RLG should continue to supply the Meos. [redacted] authorized to make a "special effort" prior to effective ICC inspections to supply food and ammunition, but not arms, to the Meos. This authorization envisaged, according to the Acting Secretary, the caching of ammunition and communications supplies to permit the Meo to defend themselves; offensive action should be carefully avoided while the cease-fire was in effect.

3. Ambassador Brown should urge the RLG to inform the ICC that the Xieng Khouang area was a combat front, to which cease-fire verifications must extend.

4. In the event of signs of "doubt or restiveness" on the part of the Meo leaders, the above resupply should serve as an earnest of US intentions.

5. The US would seek to have the Geneva Conference provide for the protection of Laotian minorities, including the Meo.

6. LTAG teams should remain with the Meos as long as feasible. Since these teams would be training regular auto-defense units, they need not be hidden from the ICC.

7. [REDACTED]

8. [REDACTED]

9. Care should be taken to give the "outward appearance" that the Meos were not receiving preferential treatment over other auto-defense units.

(See item 17 May for Ambassador Brown's point-by-point reply.)

[REDACTED]

0 May

The JCS informed CINCPAC that they had transmitted to the Secretary of Defense, their answer to the Secretary of State's question: "'Does US have present capability, logistic and otherwise, to engage in full-scale non-nuclear campaign in Laos, and possibly North Vietnam and Red China, to include capture Hainan Island?'"

The views of the JCS, which they had requested that the Secretary of Defense furnish as such to the Secretary of State, were as follows:

1. The US had the capability to conduct a full-scale, non-nuclear campaign in Laos and North Viet Nam provided Communist China did not intervene.

2. The US did not have the present capability to conduct full-scale, non-nuclear war with Communist China. Therefore, the JCS were of the firm opinion that military intervention in Laos should be undertaken only after a "firm US governmental decision" had been made that the US was "thereby prepared and committed to succeed in military intervention regardless of [the] extent of possible subsequent communist intervention."

3. The Chinese Communist threat could, however, be destroyed or neutralized by nuclear sorties in numbers well within the present capabilities of PACOM.

4. Full-scale, non-nuclear operations in Southeast Asia would seriously restrict the capabilities of the US simultaneously to conduct similar operations elsewhere, until appropriate mobilization or other emergency measures had been undertaken.

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 995753, 10 May 61.

0 May

CINCPAC supplied to CHMAAG his comments on CHMAAG's recommendations for US actions in Laos during the cease-fire period (see item 8 May).

CINCPAC generally concurred in CHMAAG's comments, with the following qualifications and exceptions:

1. The proposed acceleration of English language training and subsequent increase in Laotian training in the US (comments 2(c), see item 8 May) should not dilute "irreparably" FAL leadership.

2. CINCPAC was awaiting guidance from the JCS concerning the disposition of Thai volunteers during the cease-fire period (comment 6, see item 8 May; see item 29 April).

3. Guidance for CHMAAG on US reaction to ICC requests for assistance (comment 5, see item 8 May) would be furnished by separate message.

(S) Msg, CINCPAC to CHMAAG Laos, DA IN 112033, 11 May 61.

10 May CHMAAG evaluated for 13th Air Force Headquarters the RT-33 reconnaissance missions over Laos. CHMAAG recounted the "outstanding results" of the first mission flown, the photographs from which had been immediately utilized to save RLG forces south of Vang Vieng from a "serious defeat." Unfortunately, CHMAAG continued, subsequent RT-33 missions had been restricted to altitudes of 20,000 feet or above. The Laotian jungle, according to CHMAAG, made high altitude reconnaissance "of little or no value."

(S) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to 13th AF, DA IN 111739, 10 May 61.

10 May Ambassador Brown reported to the Department of State that Indian Prime Minister Nehru had, at the behest of Secretary Rusk and Lord Home, who were striving to get the Geneva Conference underway on 12 May, requested ICC Chairman Sen to certify the existence of a cease-fire as quickly as possible. According to the British Ambassador to Laos, from whom Brown received this information, Nehru's message had urged Sen to make this certification if it was "at all consistent with [the] facts and his conscience."

(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2050, 10 May 61.

11 May In response to the message containing instructions for the Geneva Conference (see item 9 May), Secretary Rusk informed the President and the Acting Secretary of State that he wanted to comment on the "all important paragraph five." The effectiveness and strength of the US position in Geneva, Rusk said, would be "critically determined by whether we are prepared, should negotiations break down, to act in Laos by military means, at least in the south, or whether we are in a position of trying to save what can be saved without SEATO action in Laos itself. . . . We hope . . . to reach a satisfactory result by negotiation which would avoid military action, but we must be clear in our own minds at some stage as to whether we must accept an unsatisfactory result because we have no other acceptable choice."

The Secretary reported that he and Lord Home would be having discussions with Gromyko about a Laotian settlement that would reflect Khrushchev's agreement to an "Austrian Laos." The US could make real headway, Rusk said,

if Gromyko believes that we still are as determined as President and I said we were when we saw him in Washington. If he concludes that we have "abandoned Laos" he will chase us around the barn in negotiations. If we are serious, beyond a gesture such as leaving the Conference, I believe there is a real chance that we can find a US-UK-USSR agreement which could reassure our SEATO allies and avoid the atmosphere of defeat in Laos. But we are approaching the final stages where we cannot bluff because the bluff might be called.

At SEATO, CENTO and NATO Rusk continued, "I have been deeply impressed by the extent of the reliance of the Free World upon the attitude of the United States. These nations have great respect for the combination of firmness and peaceful purpose the President has shown. . . ."

On Laos, Rusk believed, the US had a "fair chance" of getting strong neutral support, partly because of the extraordinary patience the US had shown in trying to find a peaceful settlement and partly because of the neutrals' own anxiety about a Communist Laos. But even neutrals, Rusk warned, might abandon their own neutrality if they believed that the US would shrink from confronting Sino-Soviet power when the "chips are down."

The delegation would not negotiate seriously about Laos until a cease-fire had been reasonably frozen. But if such a cease-fire was "blatantly violated" by the other side, Rusk hoped, he said, that the US would be "prepared to support UN and SEATO action by an appropriate military demonstration in Laos." The Secretary believed that such a demonstration could be made without escalation into a general war because the Sino-Soviet bloc would be very reluctant to let Laos get out of control under conditions that would impose upon it the maximum responsibility for pressing a military rather than a peaceful solution. In his opinion, the Soviets were playing "for larger stakes throughout the world," and they would accept continued negotiations on Laos or some sort of UN action before resorting to major escalation.

The President, replying to Secretary Rusk's message, stated that he fully understood the force of Rusk's arguments, and specifically agreed that, if a cease-fire was blatantly violated by the other side, the US must face the prospect of UN and SEATO action and an appropriate military demonstration in Laos. In view of this possibility, said the President, continued close understanding with the British was essential, and he instructed Rusk to hold Lord Home to the standards agreed upon at Key West and Bangkok. The US had been going "the last mile" with the British on the road of negotiation and cease-fire and would continue to do so as long as there was agreement that this road offered hope for a genuinely neutral Laos. But if there should be a serious change on the ground by military action of the other side, the US should have clear British support for appropriate action.

The US should also aim at the "closest possible understanding with the French," the President continued, because a three-power solidarity against Soviet pressure might "be vital in even more important phases this year."

The US must maintain, with British support and French understanding, a "readiness to act." This was "the necessary condition for a productive conference," the President declared, but any action must be taken under conditions which would, in fact, impose the maximum responsibility on the other side.

(TS) Msg, Geneva to SecState, SECTO 59, 11 May 61;
(TS) Msg, SecState to Geneva, TOSEC 54, 11 May 61.

11 May Secretary of State Rusk informed the Department of State of the results of a meeting between Lord Home and Gromyko as reported to him by Home.

Gromyko had been adamant on two points: 1) that three "'forces'" from Laos be represented at the conference table, the Pathet Lao to have equal status with the others, and 2) whatever Laotian delegations were present when the conference officially opened would represent Laos. Because the RLG representatives had not arrived, the Souvanna and Pathet Lao delegations would therefore be the only Laotian representatives.

Secretary Rusk stated the opposition of the US to the Soviet "three forces" approach, pointing out that the US had only accepted an invitation to the conference to meet with 13 nations of which Laos was one. The Pathet Lao did not claim to be a government nor was it recognized as such by any power. To seat the Pathet Lao at the conference table would, in Rusk's opinion, grant it status which could influence the negotiations for a new government in Laos in the direction of Communist domination. In view of the fact that some powers at the conference recognized Souvanna as premier, the US was willing to seat his representatives along with those of the RLG as special observers but not as official delegates. Either of these groups should be allowed to request that any other Laotian present in Geneva be granted permission to sit in the galleries of the conference hall and possibly be given permission to speak.

The British and French agreed with this position as logical and defensible. The British were willing to attempt to gain Gromyko's acceptance of it but were fearful that he would refuse, in which case the three Western allies would have to decide whether or not to break up the conference on the seating issue.

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, SECTO 83, 12 May 61.

11 May The ICC submitted its initial report from Laos to the Geneva co-Chairmen. A copy furnished the Department of State by the British Embassy was sent to Secretary Rusk at Geneva.

The ICC reported that it had established friendly contact with all the principal parties in Laos and had ascertained that, since the declaration of cease-fire (see item 3 May), there had been a "general and

demonstrable cessation of hostilities." Although there had been complaints of local violations of the cease-fire, the ICC had not received any formal written complaints. On the contrary, it had been given unequivocal assurances by each side of a determination to maintain the cease-fire except when provoked or in self-defense. The belligerent parties had not yet signed a formal agreement of cease-fire, the ICC reported, but military teams from both sides were in regular contact with each other and an agreement "on questions relating to the cease-fire" would, it was hoped, be reached soon. Any breaches of the cease-fire which had occurred were, according to the ICC, the result either of misunderstanding or of peculiar terrain and troop deployment factors.

(C) Msg, SecState to Geneva, TOSEC 59, 11 May 61.

12 May

The Under Secretary of State advised Ambassador Brown that the Department concurred in CHMAAG's recommendation for US actions during the cease-fire period (see item 8 May). The State Department excepted from this concurrence only CHMAAG's comment that the ICC might have to be notified of US resupply of FAL units, noting that the US had consistently sought to limit the ICC terms of reference to verification of a cease-fire. CHMAAG's request for guidance in aiding the ICC was "being considered" with the Department of Defense.

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 1247, 12 May 61.

12 May



(S) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 112578, 12 May 61.

12-13
May

In a memorandum to the JCS on 12 May, the Chief of Naval Operations recommended that the JCS urgently prepare and co-ordinate with CINCPAC a plan for holding southern Laos, with the RLG unilaterally or with the RLG supported by some or all of the SEATO allies. The plan should stem, the CNO recommended, from existing contingency plans and should cover the incident problems and operations throughout Southeast Asia, especially Thailand and South Viet Nam. The plan should, the CNO concluded, indicate the recommended demarcation line across Laos.

The Chief of Naval Operations based his recommendations upon the instructions for the Geneva Conference that had been cabled to Secretary of State Rusk on 9 May (see item), and upon additional information from Walt Whitman Rostow, Deputy Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs. Mr. Rostow had told the CNO that the President had reaffirmed to the Secretary of State the firmness of US intent to be prepared for the contingencies to which the foregoing plan was to be addressed. Mr. Rostow had also reported the President's

intent to have this fall-back position of a divided Laos discussed with the UK, and perhaps with other SEATO allies, in order to carry as many as possible of the allies along with the US if the contingency should develop (see item 11 May). The President was also concerned, Mr. Rostow had said, that US military contingency planning should proceed accordingly.

On the following day, the JCS, presumably as a consequence of the foregoing memorandum, requested the comments and recommendations of CINCPAC to assist them in preparing a plan such as the Chief of Naval Operations had recommended. The JCS stated to CINCPAC that they considered the following factors pertinent in drawing up the plan: 1) the maximum geographical area and population of Laos consistent with political and military realities should be held; 2) offensive operations to seize a demarcation line in enemy-held territory would probably not be authorized; 3) the FAL alone would be unable to continue to hold its existing positions if fighting was resumed, and if regrouped in some chosen area of southern Laos, the FAL would have to be reorganized and trained before it could stand alone; 4) SEATO forces should initially occupy and secure key areas in southern Laos; 5) SEATO force strength could be reduced (if the plan were put into effect) as reorganization and training increased the capability of the FAL to assume responsibility; and 6) the choice of a line would be essentially a political decision, tempered by military considerations; hence several possible lines should be examined. The JCS described six possible demarcation lines for CINCPAC's consideration and comment.

Finally, the JCS stated their opinion that the concept of SEATO Plan 5 or CINCPAC's OPlan 32-59 (Phase II, Laos) remained valid as a point of departure for the proposed plan. (For CINCPAC's reply see item 16 May.)

(TS) Msg, JCS 995920 to CINCPAC, 13 May 61; (TS) Memo, CNO to JCS, "Contingency Planning, Laos (C)," 12 May 61, serial 00096P61, reproduced in JCS 1992/987, 12 May 61.

13 May

Secretary Rusk reported that, in discussions with the French and British foreign ministers, the following "tentative program" for getting the Conference under way had been agreed to:

1. On 14 May the co-Chairmen would announce that they had decided to seat, as observers, any Laotian group which any Conference member requested to be seated. In an accompanying announcement, the co-Chairmen would declare that these seating arrangements were without prejudice to efforts being made in Laos to form a government, which was an internal Laotian affair.

2. The opening meeting would be on 15 May and would be confined to brief formal statements by the co-Chairmen. Business meetings would begin on the 16th with general statements by all delegations of

their over-all views on Laotian policy. Following these statements, discussion would probably then turn to "detailed consideration of military aspects of the situation and peace-keeping machinery."

3. The US, British, and French Governments agreed to advise Phoumi urgently that this agreement was without prejudice to his negotiations for a new government, and he should continue to stand firm for a satisfactory coalition arrangement.

4. The US delegation agreed to urge the Thai and Vietnamese delegations to be present for the first business meeting.

The Secretary concluded by requesting Department of State comments on the "observer" plan (see item 14 May).

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, SECTO 102, 13 May 61.

13 May

The advance party of the RLG delegation to the Geneva Conference arrived at the Conference site, Secretary Rusk informed the Department of State. In a meeting of this advance group with Rusk, Ngon Sananikone, senior member and spokesman of the party, stated two prerequisites for RLG attendance at the Conference: 1) a valid cease-fire; and 2) recognition of the RLG as the sole legal government of Laos. The Secretary then informed the Laotian group of the strong US insistence that the RLG was the only legitimate Lao government, of the unacceptable Soviet demand for triple representation on the basis of equality, and of the sentiments of "other friendly nations" that debate over the legality of Laotian representatives should not be permitted to frustrate the objectives of the Conference. The Secretary suggested that the group cable its government for the latest RLG position, particularly with regard to possible acceptable formulae for Lao representation.

Ngon cabled Vientiane as requested, mentioning the Soviet demand and stating that, unless there was a "last-minute" change in the attitude of the RLG, the delegation was determined to maintain its present position: that it was the only delegation authorized to represent the Kingdom of Laos at the Conference table (see item 14 May).

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, SECTO 101, 13 May 61;
(C) Msg, Geneva to SecState, 1372 (to Vientiane, 7), 13 May 61.

13 May

Secretary Rusk met with Gromyko in an effort to resolve the differences between the US and the USSR regarding the seating of Laotian delegations at the Geneva Conference. As reported by Rusk, Gromyko stated that he saw two possible solutions: 1) the seating of a coalition government if one satisfactory to all sides could be formed prior to the conference; or 2) the seating of representatives of the "three existing forces" in Laos. These were, according to Gromyko, the Souvanna Government, the Pathet Lao, and the "rebels" [the RLG].

Rusk refused to accept the seating of the Pathet Lao on the grounds that it was "merely the military arm of a political party" and not entitled to sit at what the US understood was to be a "conference of governments." As a compromise, Rusk then proposed that Laos not be officially represented at the conference but that individual Laotians be invited to express their views as individuals in some manner acceptable to the co-Chairmen.

Gromyko flatly rejected Rusk's proposal and said that the Conference could not begin without Laotian representation, which he reiterated would have to be tripartite. Rusk, in turn, refused to participate in the Conference on Gromyko's terms.

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, SECTO 94, 13 May 61.

13 May

The US Charge d'Affaires in Bangkok, responding to the Secretary of State's inquiry concerning the intentions of the Thai Government with regard to participation in the Geneva Conference, reported that the Thai Government, as represented by its Foreign Minister, had serious doubts concerning Thai participation.

The Charge had conversed at length with Foreign Minister Thanat, who, although aware of the desirability of Thai representation, considered nevertheless that Thai attendance might do a "real disservice" to Thailand and its friends. Thanat had not reached his final decision, the crucial factor in which, the Charge reported, would be the US position and intentions at Geneva. Thanat was convinced that the UK and France were prepared to surrender Laos to the Communists, albeit through the "face saving" interim step of a Souvanna Prime Ministry. Moreover, the UK prestige was bound up in the Conference's achieving some sort of solution, and, as evidenced by the US's acceding to UK desires in SEATO (see item 5 May), the US position, Thanat feared, would ultimately hinge upon the "desire or need" to assuage the British. Implicitly, therefore, the US was also prepared to lose Laos.

Thanat had been most recently disturbed by reports that Lord Home, Mr. Gromyko, and Secretary Rusk had agreed to permit the attendance as observers at the Conference of all three Lao factions. The US Charge, although he had no knowledge of such an agreement, argued that it had been envisaged from the outset that it might be necessary, in order to get the Conference underway, to have the various factions attend as observers; indeed, the Communists would also be yielding a point in such an arrangement. Thanat felt, however, that the position of the RLG was one of the few US assets at the Conference, not to be bargained away before the Conference itself convened.

The Thai could see little advantage in attending the conference inasmuch as the present Communist solidarity and Allied disunity seemed to assure Communist gain. The US diplomat replied that a strong Thai representation would itself be an important factor at the Conference, and that neither the US nor Thailand should feel in any way committed

to any unacceptable conclusions of the Conference. To this, Thanat replied that attendance at the Conference would itself be a commitment. Moreover, Thanat felt that the UK would maneuver the US into accepting a damaging agreement. If Thailand left the Conference under these circumstances, the blame for failure would fall upon it.

The Charge concluded his message by urging that "some high level US expression, or unequivocal statement of [the US] position at Geneva" was necessary to dispel these Thai misgivings. Otherwise, the chance was "at least fifty-fifty" that the Thais would not attend the Conference (see items 14, 15, and 16 May).

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 2047, (to Geneva, 16), 13 May 61; (C) Msg, Geneva to SecState, SECTO 84, (to Bangkok, 4), 12 May 61.

13 May Representatives of the RLG, PL, and Souvanna met at Ban Namone, according to Ambassador Brown, and agreed to inaugurate political and military discussions at that site. The representatives also issued a statement acknowledging that there was an effective cease-fire on all fronts. Additionally, in recognition of the fact that there were still some "trouble spots," each delegation agreed to reissue orders for all units to maintain the cease-fire that had been proclaimed on 3 May (see item).

On the following day, the Ambassador reported, Radio Vientiane broadcast the RLG's reissue of its cease-fire order.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2070, 14 May 61;
(U) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 2073, 2077, 14 May 61.

13 May In a message to both the Department of State and to Ambassador Brown in Vientiane, Secretary Rusk stated that the US, French, and British delegates at Geneva had unanimously agreed that each would advise Phoumi and King Savang to use the "greatest care" in political negotiations with Souvanna and his half-brother Souphanouvong. Now that the cease-fire had been agreed upon (see preceding item) it would be a mistake, said Rusk, to enter into improvident political agreement under a feeling of pressure because of the Geneva Conference. The Secretary requested that the details and extent of any political commitments either made or being contemplated by the RLG be ascertained as soon as possible.

On the following day, in a message to Secretary Rusk, the US Ambassador in Vientiane reported that Phoumi had stated that political discussions, scheduled to start that day at Ban Namone, were necessary in order to obtain effective cease-fire terms. Phoumi did not anticipate, however, that there would be any concrete results from these talks.

In Phoumi's opinion, the delegations would be discussing "abstractions," while the "real issues"--the neutrality of Laos, elimination of outside interference, and Laotian foreign relations--would be

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discussed at Geneva. The opposition at Ban Namone would bring up the questions of a unified delegation to Geneva and the establishment of a coalition government, while at the same time, the first question and possibly the second would be under consideration at Geneva. The Laotian General, therefore, had instructed the RLG cease-fire delegation to maintain King Savang's basic thesis that an internal political solution could not be reached until the necessary international framework had been agreed upon at the Geneva Conference. It would be necessary, Phoumi had declared, for political discussions at Ban Namone to continue as long as the Geneva Conference was in session.

Ambassador Brown reported that he had fully agreed with Phoumi on the general strategy of the political talks.

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, SECTO 104, 13 May 61;
(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2071, 14 May 61.

14 May The Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs informed Secretary Rusk that the Laotian observer seating plan (see item 13 May) was "clearly within terms of instructions approved by [the] President. This point was specifically discussed with [the] President by Harriman and myself."

(S) Msg, SecState to Geneva, TOSEC 95, 14 May 61.

14 May Secretary Rusk reported that, according to Lord Home, Gromyko had refused to accept the observer formula for seating Laotians at the Geneva Conference (see item 13 May). The Soviet foreign minister, said Home, continued to insist that the three Laotian groups be seated on the basis of "full participation and equality." Gromyko then agreed to a formula by which the co-Chairmen would seat representatives from Laos proposed by individual governments participating in the conference.

Mr. Rusk also stated that the US delegation was seeking instructions on whether the US delegation should attend the conference if all three Laotian parties were seated. (See item 15 May for these instructions.)

(S) Msgs, Geneva to SecState, SECTO 116, 14 May 61, and SECTO 122, 14 May 61. NYT, 16 May 61, 1.

14 May Phoumi replied to his delegation's request for confirmation of instructions (see item 13 May) by reaffirming that the RLG was the only group entitled to sit at the Geneva Conference and to speak on behalf of the people of Laos. The Pathet Lao and the Souvanna group might be admitted to the conference as observers, Phoumi said; if they insisted on being so represented, however, the RLG would send representatives from all Laotian political parties to be similarly seated.

On the same day, Secretary Rusk was informing Ambassador Brown that the US would likely have to accept full participation of all three Laotian delegations in order to permit the conference to proceed. It would be extremely difficult for the US, the Secretary said, if the RLG should decide not to participate on the basis of equal representation. The Secretary therefore requested Ambassador Brown to emphasize to the RLG the importance which the US attached to the RLG's not objecting to the above formula. Brown should at the same time assure the

RLG that the US would seize every opportunity at the Conference to reiterate its position that the RLG was the only legal government in Laos, and urge the RLG to send instructions to its delegation. "sufficiently broad" to enable it to act in concert with the US on the matter of Lao representation. Rusk pointed out that the other representatives of Laos would not acquire legal status from being allowed to participate in the conference.

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, SECTO 119 (to Vientiane, 17), 14 May 61; (C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2072 (to Geneva, 23), 14 May 61.

14 May The Secretary of State again requested that the US Embassy in Thailand urge the Thai Government to send its delegation to Geneva as soon as possible, in order to lend its support to the US during the "crucial deliberations" of the opening business session of 17 May (see item).

Counselor Unger replied from Bangkok that Thai Foreign Minister Thanat, undoubtedly influenced by reports of US resistance to Pathet Lao representation at Geneva, had stated that the Thai delegation would arrive at Geneva on 16 or 17 May. Thanat himself would necessarily stay in Thailand awaiting Vice President Johnson's visit, and would not decide upon his own attendance at Geneva until this visit had taken place and, presumably, the RTG was satisfied about US intentions (see items 15 and 16 May).

(C) Msgs, Geneva to SecState, SECTO 109 (to Bangkok, 10); Bangkok to SecState, 2053 (to Geneva, 19); both 14 May 61.

15 May Secretary Rusk, in a letter to Thai Foreign Minister Thanat, urged that the Thai Government send a strong delegation to Geneva. The US was handicapped at Geneva, wrote the Secretary, by the absence from Geneva of "vigorous delegations from states directly affected by events in Laos such as Thailand, Viet Nam and Laos itself."

Rusk described the efforts of the US to exclude the Souvanna and Pathet Lao delegations and attributed the failure of those efforts to the agreement of the RLG to discuss political questions as well as cease-fire matters with Souvanna and the Pathet Lao. These discussions had, according to the Secretary, "effectively undermined" the US position. (See item 16 May for Thanat's reactions)

(C) Msg, Geneva to SecState, SECTO 126 (to Bangkok 15), 15 May 61.

15 May Secretary Rusk reported that, following receipt of instructions from the Department of State, he had informed Lord Home that the US could accept the formula to seat representatives of Laos proposed by individual governments participating in the Conference (see item 14 May).

According to the New York Times, this decision had been taken, following consultations between Rusk and President Kennedy, in order to "get as quickly as possible to the central purpose of the Conference," which was "an international agreement on the neutrality and independence of Laos and on international machinery to insure that neutrality and independence."

Later in the day the US formally proposed to the co-Chairmen that the delegate of the RLG be seated at the Conference.

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, SECTO 146, and (U) Msg, Geneva to SecState, SECTO 143, both 15 May 1961, NYT, 16 May 61, 1.

15 May Ambassador Brown reported to Secretary Rusk that in compliance with the Secretary's instructions (see item 14 May), he had "urged Phoumi most strongly" to instruct the RLG delegation to participate in the Geneva Conference. Phoumi had replied that such action would be an admission of the equality of the other side, which would totally undermine the RLG in its political negotiations at Ban Namone. The Ambassador then had pointed out that refusal of the RLG delegation to participate at the Geneva Conference would leave the field clear for the other side. Phoumi, reported Brown, had been unimpressed but had agreed to present the Ambassador's arguments to the King.

After the meeting with the King, reported Brown, Phoumi had stated to the British Ambassador that the RLG had confirmed its earlier decision to withdraw from the Conference if delegates of the other side were seated. The RLG would agree, however, to have no Laotian representation at the opening session but to have "all three groups take part in subsequent working meetings and committee sessions." (The Soviets had already rejected any formula calling for exclusion of all Laotian representation. See item 13 May.)

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2082 (to Geneva 32), 15 May 61.

16 May British Foreign Secretary Home, in a speech before the Geneva Conference, made the following conclusions:

1. Laos should remain a single united country with one government picked by the Laotians themselves. No independent power or parties should set themselves up as alternatives to the government.

2. Laos, to survive, must be genuinely neutral.

3. The struggle in Laos could never have reached its present intensity without importation of illegal arms. As a neutral, Laos would have no requirements for large quantities of weapons and should only want enough for internal security.

4. The Laotian economy had hardly developed. Assistance from outside, therefore, had a disproportionate influence on political events. This problem should be studied in an effort to find a method for cooperation rather than rivalry.

5. Experience with the ICC had taught some lessons regarding control and supervision, but the machinery should be re-examined in the light of present conditions.

Chen Yi, the delegate of Communist China, followed Home to the rostrum and proceeded to blame the US for all troubles in Laos. According to Chen Yi, the US had created SEATO as a tool for interference in internal Laotian affairs, had sabotaged efforts to create a coalition government in Laos, had supported a "rebel clique" in starting a civil war while still recognizing the Souvanna Government and continuing to provide it military aid, had instigated Chinese Nationalist remnants and certain SEATO members to participate in the civil war, and had established a MAAG to take direct command of "rebel" [RLG] operations.

A peaceful settlement of the Laos question, according to Chen Yi, would have internal and international aspects. Internal matters could only be settled by the Laotians themselves; the international aspect required all conference participants jointly to insure the independence and neutrality of Laos. Neutrality for Laos would mean that Laos could not join any military alliances, no foreign military bases could be established in Laos, no foreign power should be permitted to use force or the threat of force against Laos, no country should be permitted to use aid as a means to violate Laotian neutrality, all US military personnel must be withdrawn, and all Chinese Nationalist remnants should be disarmed and withdrawn.

(C) Msg, Geneva to SecState, SECTO 159, 17 May 61.

16 May

CINCPAC replied to the JCS message of 13 May (see item 12 May) concerning a plan for holding southern Laos in case the conference at Geneva should fail. Observing that the choice of a demarcation line was the key to defining the military objective of such a plan, CINCPAC devoted his dispatch to that subject. In one of his general comments, referring to the JCS statement that the choice of a demarcation line was essentially a political decision tempered by military considerations, CINCPAC questioned

whether in the ultimate event military could be subordinated to political considerations in making this decision. For various political or military reasons, cited individually for each of the possibilities, he viewed all six of the possible demarcation lines suggested by the JCS as unacceptable. He then described a demarcation line--a modification of one of those suggested by the JCS--that would, he said, "neither liquidate current holdings in Laos nor preclude prospects for survival of a free Laos." He identified the line as follows:

From the triple intersection of the Phong Saly, Nam Tha, Luang Prabang provincial borders roughly south southwest along the Nam Tha-Luang Prabang provincial border to the Muong border between Muong Nam and Muong Muongsay in Luang Prabang Province; thence roughly south-southeast through Luang Prabang Province passing along the eastern Muong borders of Muong Nam Nga, Muong Luang Prabang and Muong Kieng Ngeum to the provincial border of Kieng Khouang; thence southwards, eastwards and northwards following the border of Kieng Khouang Province to the triple intersection of the Kieng Khouang and Khammouane provincial borders with the frontier of North Viet Nam; thence southwards along the frontier of Laos and North Viet Nam to the DML dividing Viet Nam.

The advantages of this line, CINCPAC said, included its utilization of existing administrative boundaries, thus dispensing with the need for surveying and fixing new lines; the affording of protection to Thailand's frontier from direct contact with Communist areas; the retention of both the traditional capital of Luang Prabang and the administrative capital of Vientiane; and the retention of the minimum military objectives of both SEATO and US unilateral contingency plans. The proposed plan had the disadvantage, he acknowledged, that the Communists were certain to insist on more territory in any partition.

Some additional factors that should be considered in designing a demarcation line were the following, CINCPAC added: 1) Communist influence had been predominant in Phong Saly and Sam Neua provinces for years; 2) Souvanna Phouma and his family had been predominant in the Luang Prabang area; 3) Meo tribesmen had been fighting the Pathet Lao, were organized under their own leaders, and would continue to be a subversive problem to the Pathet Lao if provided with the means to fight; 4) Sananikone influence could be counted on to help the RLG hold north of Vientiane; 5) Boun Oum's south and Phoui's Mekong center could work together; 6) the King in Luang Prabang could continue to be a respected symbol provided Luang Prabang remained free of Pathet Lao control; and 7) the demarcation line should follow definable terrain features or province lines.

CINCPAC recommended that the demarcation line described earlier in his dispatch be considered the line beyond which the US and its SEATO allies would not be pushed.

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 160438Z May 61.

16 May Counselor Unger reported from Bangkok to the Secretary of State at Geneva that Thai Foreign Minister Thanat had been deeply appreciative of the Secretary's letter of 15 May (see item).

Thanat continued to think, however, that in view of the continued uncertainties of the negotiations at Geneva, it would be of assistance to the US if the Thai Government continued to withhold its presence from the Conference. He had therefore instructed the Thai delegation arriving at Geneva today not to participate. Thanat himself planned to arrive in Geneva on 19 May and asked that, in the meantime, the US tell him what it considered would be the most helpful posture for the Thai Government and its representatives to assume.

In a reply of the same day, Secretary Rusk stated that the common interests of Thailand and the US would be "greatly assisted" by a strong Thai delegation contributing directly and forcefully to the Geneva negotiations (see item 19 May).

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 2061 (to Geneva, 23), 16 May 61; (S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, SECTO 158 (to Bangkok, 21), 16 May 61.

16 May Ambassador Brown reported to the Secretary of State that ICC Chairman Sen had, in conversation with Brown on 14 May, conceded the need for a more detailed cease-fire agreement, in view of the hostilities aroused by the resupply of the scattered troops behind enemy lines. Sen had termed the ICC "powerless," under its present terms of reference, to investigate complaints in the absence of a detailed agreement on troop positions and cease-fire conditions. In any event, Sen believed, ICC teams sent to "trouble spots" had not, in his experience, ascertained the truth of charges and counter-charges. The teams could, however, dampen the hostilities. (Brown on the following day, reported that he had later told the ICC Chairman and the Canadian ICC delegate that the existing cease-fire agreement, though it lacked detailed provisions, did require the services of the ICC. Brown felt that, although the ICC would have to ignore troop movements and questions of "who attacked whom," it could at least ascertain the fact of actual shooting and would, by its presence, probably cause the shooting to cease.)

Sen had hinted, Brown reported, that the Ambassador should dissuade the RLG from filing complaints with the ICC, inasmuch as this would only inspire counter-charges and deepen existing suspicions.

After some argument, Sen acknowledged the presence of substantial numbers of Viet Minh technicians among the Pathet Lao forces, but at the same time called attention to the presence of US and Thai advisers among the FAL troops.

Sen made a major effort, Brown continued, to persuade Brown that Phoumi should be urged to agree to a coalition government. Sen had pointed to the lack of popular support for the Boun Oum regime, and had opined that, whatever the relative strengths of the factions, the Souvanna and Pathet Lao groups were at least

"significant" and therefore had to be included in a "truly neutral" government. Brown, dismissing as foolish any effort to distinguish between Souvanna supporters and Pathet Lao, emphasized the pointlessness of a "neutral" government that was in fact Communist dominated. He stated that apart from the Phoumi group there were important conservative elements in Laos that must be represented in a properly balanced coalition. No harm was done, Brown said, by delaying the formation of a coalition government, inasmuch as the intentions of the Communists were not yet known and the "international framework" for such a government had not yet been erected.

(C) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 2088 and 2095, 16 and 17 May 61.

17 May

As reported by Secretary Rusk, the delegate of the Souvanna group made the following requests of the nations attending the Geneva Conference: 1) make a declaration recognizing the neutrality of Laos based on the Geneva agreements, the Vientiane Accords of 1957, and the Souphanouvang-Souvanna declaration of November 1960; 2) cease military aid to "rebels" and not introduce military forces or establish military bases in Laos; 3) cancel SEATO protection for Laos; 4) abstain from interference in Laotian internal affairs; and 5) respect the unity, territorial integrity, and independence of Laos.

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, SECTO 170, 17 May 61.

17 May

Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko at the Geneva Conference tabled two drafts embodying the Soviet position on Laos. These drafts were 1) a declaration of neutrality of Laos, and 2) an agreement for withdrawal of foreign troops and terms of reference for the ICC.

1. The Declaration of Neutrality. The Conferees, according to the Soviet draft, would reaffirm the principles of Laotian sovereignty, independence, unity, and territorial integrity. Taking into account that Laos solemnly pledged not to participate in military alliances, or to permit foreign military bases or troops on Laotian soil, the Conferees would pledge not to interfere in internal Laotian affairs or to involve Laos in military alliances. They would pledge not to station troops or to establish bases on Laotian territory, and to refrain from the use or threat of force. The Conferees would agree that clauses in all existing treaties, including SEATO, at variance with this declaration would lose force. All foreign military personnel would be withdrawn within a specified period. In the event of a threat to or violation of the independence of Laos, the parties to this declaration would agree to consult on measures to be taken to remove such a threat.

2. Agreement on Troop Withdrawal and Terms of Reference for the ICC.

Chapter 1. Withdrawal of foreign troops and military personnel.

Article 1. All foreign military units and military personnel shall be withdrawn from Laos.

within 30 days from the entry into force of the present agreement. The term "foreign military personnel" shall include all foreign military missions, military advisers, instructors, consultants, observers and any other foreign military persons, including those serving in the Armed Forces in Laos, as well as all foreign civilians connected with the supply, maintenance, storing and utilization of war material.

Article 2. The withdrawal of foreign military units and military personnel from Laos shall be executed along routes and through points that shall be determined jointly by the representatives of the three political forces in Laos (or by the government of Laos).

Article 3. It shall be prohibited to introduce into Laos any foreign military units and military personnel mentioned in article 1 of the present agreement.

Article 4. Upon entry into force of the present agreement the introduction into Laos of any kind of armaments, munitions and war materials, except for the defense of Laos, shall be terminated.

Article 5. In accordance with the request of the Laotian authorities the international commission for supervision and control in Laos . . . shall exercise supervision and control over the cease-fire in Laos. It shall conduct its work strictly within the limits of the cease-fire agreement, entered into by the three political forces in Laos, and in close co-operation with the Laotian authorities.

Article 6. The international commission shall be entrusted with supervision and control over the withdrawal of foreign troops and military personnel, as is provided for by the article 1 of this agreement.

Article 7. On the instructions of the two Co-Chairmen of the Geneva Conference the International Commission shall investigate cases of violation of the clauses of article 3 of the present agreement concerning the prohibition of the introduction into Laos of any foreign military units and military personnel.

Article 8. The International Commission shall conduct its entire work on supervision and control in cooperation with the government of Laos which shall render it all possible assistance in its activities. To perform its functions under article 6 the commission in accord with the government of Laos, shall set up the appropriate groups.

Article 9. The decisions of the International Commission on all questions shall be

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adopted unanimously, except for decisions on purely procedural questions which shall be adopted by a majority vote.

Article 10. The International Commission shall conduct its work under the general guidance and supervision of the two Co-Chairmen of the Geneva Conference of 1954.

Article 11. The costs involved in the operation of the International Commission shall be divided among all the states participants in the International Conference

Article 12. The question of the length of time during which the International Commission is to function shall be decided by the Co-Chairmen of the Geneva Conference of 1954 and the government of Laos, who in three years time shall hold appropriate consultations on this matter and shall inform all the parties to the present agreement of their decision. If necessary the government of Laos may raise before the two Co-Chairmen of the Geneva Conference the question of the termination of the operation of the International Commission before the end of the above-mentioned period.

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, SECTO 170, 17 May 61; (U) Msgs, Geneva to SecState, SECTO's 167, 168, 17 May 61.

17 May

The RLG, in letters to its delegation at Geneva and to the US Ambassador at Vientiane, reaffirmed its position at the Geneva Conference. This position, as stated to the US Ambassador, was as follows:

The legal Royal Government, constitutionally established, solemnly installed by the sovereign and sanctioned by the Royal Ordinance, sends its delegation, which is the only one competent to represent Laos and to speak in the name of the Kingdom of Laos, to Geneva.

Laos will participate at the Conference if this delegation is the only one allowed to sit in the meeting room. The other parties representing the different political tendencies (including the representatives of the neutralists of the Souvanna Phouma group or the representative of the NLHX group) should be admitted only in observer status.

If the two representatives of the two other Lao political tendencies continue to be permitted to be present at the working sessions, the RLG will not be able to authorize the governmental delegation to participate in them. This delegation will withdraw definitively from the Conference. At the same time, the RLG will be able to authorize the representatives of the five

political parties of Laos to sit facing the representatives of the two other neutralist and pro-Communist political factions

As for wanting to seat the five representatives of the parties behind the government delegation, while the representation of the pro-Communist ex-NLHX group is given its place there as a delegate on equal legal status with the governmental delegate, the RLG would not be able to consent.

If all of these proposals of the RLG cannot be retained, the RLG considers that the Geneva Conference could meet without the participation of Laos and decide on the solution of the recognized and guaranteed neutrality of Laos.

The RLG had remained steadfast in this position despite the entreaties of US and allied officials at Geneva and Vientiane (see items 13, 14, 15 May).

(S) Msg, SecState to Bangkok, 1791, 16 May 61; (C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2122, (to Geneva, 65), 20 May 61; (C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2093 (to Geneva, 40), 17 May 61.

17 May

Ambassador Brown commented to the Secretary of State upon "certain new facts and trends" in the situation of the Meos which required, in Brown's opinion, some modification of the "purposes and limitations" of the State Department's policy message of 9 May (see item). Among the factors and comments included in Brown's message were the following:

1. Large numbers of enemy troops had been freed by the partial cease-fire, and the enemy had embarked upon a "fairly widespread and determined effort to locate and disperse or destroy" the Meo auto-defense units. This enemy activity was compelling the redeployment of the Meo units from exposed positions north and east of the Plaine des Jarres to areas northwest and southeast of the plain. This redeployment removed the Meo threat to the enemy supply routes. On the other hand, however, the Meo were now located on an arc of rugged terrain that commanded all approaches from the Plaine des Jarres westward to Luang Prabang and southward to Vientiane, and that afforded concealed lateral movement and reinforcement and sufficient depth for maneuver.

2. The ICC was precluded by its present terms of reference from any effective investigation of the cease-fire, especially in areas such as the Meos held. Until and unless the Geneva Conference altered the ICC terms of reference, therefore, the ICC would be of little "defensive value" to the Meo forces.

3. As the Communists pressed their efforts to disperse the Meos, considerable numbers of them could be expected to resettle in areas where RLG or US help could be had.

In view of the above facts, Brown offered the following point-by-point comments upon the State Department's 9 May directives (see item).

1. While agreeing that the arming of additional Meo was probably neither necessary nor wise, Brown felt that the arming of Meos who wished to join auto-defense units and defend their home might be desired by the US and RLG and would in any event be politically very difficult to refuse.

2. It appeared to Brown that the Meo could be expected not only to resist enemy attacks but to counterattack and create diversionary pressures. It would be very difficult under these circumstances to confine US aid to food and ammunition, as the State Department had stipulated. In fact, it had already been necessary to provide additional weapons to reinforce Ban Padong. Only if the ICC could effectively inspect the Meo areas, Brown said, should supplies be limited to food and ammunition and even then resupply of weapons might occasionally be necessary.

3. Phoumi had on 16 May (see item) submitted a formal complaint to the ICC chairman concerning the continued fighting at Ban Padong and had in the same document requested a formal ICC investigation. The ICC Chairman had told Brown on 17 May (see item 16 May for a similar statement) that he was reluctant even to receive complaints since he felt that the ICC was powerless to act.

4. Brown doubted that resupply limited to food and ammunition would under the present circumstances suffice to appease Meo's feelings of "doubt and restiveness." Hence, Brown had recommended the "more realistic measures" in 2. above.

5. Brown agreed that the US should seek at the Geneva Conferences to obtain protection for Laotian minorities, but felt that the US must explain carefully to the RLG that this proposal did not provide political separation of the Meos from the RLG.

6., 7., and 8. Brown concurred.

9. Brown described the weapons delivered to Meo auto-defense units as resembling closely the weapons normally provided by the FAL to such units. The only preferential treatment, according to Brown, was the promptness of resupply, which could be attributed to the Meos' being under attack.

17 May

Secretary of State Rusk enunciated to the Geneva Conference the US position on the Laotian question.

Secretary Rusk stated that the most immediate problem was "to insure an effective cease-fire, to give the ICC the necessary and relevant instructions and to give it the resources required to carry out its vital task"; the completion of these tasks was

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prerequisite to the Geneva Conference having any constructive results. Next, the Secretary continued, the Conference should turn to the problem of establishing and insuring a genuinely neutral Laos. The Secretary considered it too early in the Conference to present detailed proposals for achieving this neutrality, but not too early to begin considering the broad outline of a program directed to this goal. The consideration of this outline would involve the following three points:

1. A definition of the concept of neutrality, as it applied to Laos, that all the Geneva conferees could pledge themselves to respect. This definition should "go beyond the classical concept of nonalignment and include positive assurance of the integrity of the elements of national life."

2. The development of effective international machinery for maintaining the neutrality of Laos against both internal and external threats.

3. The establishment of a substantial economic and technical aid program for Laos.

The Secretary, expanding upon these points, stated that, for Laotian neutrality to be realized, foreign military personnel, except those specified by the 1954 Geneva Accords, should be withdrawn from Laos. The US would gladly withdraw, said Rusk, "if the 'Viet-Minh brethren' and other elements who have entered Laos from the northeast return to their homes." Furthermore, the US had no desire to send military equipment into Laos, had no military bases in Laos and wanted none, and had no interest in Laos as a staging area or thoroughfare for agents, saboteurs, or guerrillas.

Secretary Rusk then listed five attributes that the US proposed for a peace-keeping machinery for Laos:

1. The control machinery must have full access to all parts of Laos without the need for the consent of any civil or military officials.

2. It must have its own transportation and communication equipment sufficient to the task.

3. It must be able to act on any complaint from responsible sources, including personnel of the control body itself, Laotian officials, governments of neighboring states, and the respective governments of the members of the Geneva Conference.

4. The control body should act by a majority rule, not be paralyzed by a veto; and there should be provision for both majority and minority reports.

5. The control body should have some effective means of informing governments, and the world at large, of any finding that the conditions of peace and neutrality had been violated.

Finally, declaring the necessity for economic aid to Laos, the Secretary suggested that a neutral nations commission composed of Southeast Asian neutrals administer such aid, and invited the USSR to join with the US in underwriting the cost of such an aid program.

(U) NYT, 18 May 61, 1, 4 (text on p. 4).

18 May

Secretary Rusk reported from the Geneva Conference that the Indian delegate, Krishna Menon, had delivered a lengthy "disjointed recitation" of the Indian view of the purposes of the Geneva Conference. In the course of his rambling, the Indian delegate, distinguishing between the internal and external aspects of the Laotian problems, spoke against interference by the conference in the internal affairs of Laos. He also emphasized the importance of the 1954 Geneva Accords and the creditable job that the ICC had performed under these Accords.

Speaking next, the Pathet Lao delegate repeated in general the points made by the Souvanna delegate, endorsed the draft proposals tabled by the Soviets, and rejected Secretary Rusk's proposal that the ICC have access to all of Laos as equivalent to intervention in internal Laotian affairs. He also condemned the idea of an international body to control economic aid.

French Foreign Minister Couve de Murville followed the Pathet Lao delegate to the rostrum. As reported by Secretary Rusk, Couve, after calling on the ICC to enforce the cease-fire, recommended a return to the principles of the Geneva Accords. Since some adjustments were necessary, however, the French delegate considered the following measures desirable: 1) a declaration by the Laotian Government of its sovereign independence and neutrality, entailing political and military non-alignment and exclusion of foreign bases and military instructors from Laos except as provided by the Geneva Accords; 2) a parallel declaration by the conference powers to respect the Laotian Government declaration; and 3) a protocol annex formulating conditions for the ICC to supervise implementation of the military aspects of these declarations.

(Draft proposals of 1) and 2) were tabled by the French delegation on 23 May 61.)

(C) Msgs, Geneva to SecState, SECTO 179, 19 May 61, and CONFE 39, 24 May 61.

18 May

Secretary Rusk informed the Department of State that Gromyko had raised as a matter of concern the charge that a considerable number of KMT irregulars still remained in Laos, notwithstanding the approximately 4,300 who had been evacuated from the Burma-Thai-Laos area during March and April. The Secretary of State urgently requested any information, additional to the data received in early May, that would cover the following points: 1) how many KMT's still remained in the area; 2) where were they located; 3) how many had arms; and 4) how many were engaged in non-military activities.

In response to the Secretary's request, Acting Secretary Bowles informed Rusk later the same day that information available in the Department at that time indicated the following: approximately 1200-1600 KMT's on the Thai-Laos border; 800 in the Thai-Burma frontier; and possibly 500 in Laos.

(Reports to the Department of State by US diplomatic missions in the countries concerned contained only the following additional information: 1) from the Ambassador to Burma a report that, according to Burmese officials, approximately 500-600 KMT irregulars remained in Burma and 800 in Laos; 2) from the Ambassador to Nationalist China a report that, according to Chinese Nationalist authorities, about 600 irregulars remained in Burma, 500-700 along the Thailand-Burma border, and about 260 in Laos, of whom 160 had joined Phoumi's forces. The Ambassador to Burma confirmed the State Department figure of 800 irregulars along the Thailand-Burma border.)

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, SECTO 175, 18 May 61;
(S) Msg, SecState to Geneva, TOSEC 198, 18 May 61; (S) Msg, Taipei to SecState, 735, 22 May 61; (C) Msg, Rangoon to SecState, 883, 23 May 61.

18 May Ambassador Brown reported to the Secretary of State that the RLG had, at the Ban Namone meeting of the previous day, agreed to place discussions of a coalition government first on the agenda of future meetings. The RLG had made this concession, said the Ambassador, in order to obtain Pathet Lao agreement to the principle of a tri-partite Lao military commission to aid the ICC in the regulation of the cease-fire; however, Phoumi had later told Brown, the RLG had agreed to discussions of a coalition only "in principle" and would in fact insist that the activities of the tri-partite teams be discussed at the next meeting. (On 19 May, when the Ban Namone meetings resumed, the RLG did indeed insist that this military matter be considered. The other side demanded strict compliance with the agenda order, and the meeting ended without settlement of this issue. (See items 22 May and 26 May.)

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2105, 18 May 61;
(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2100, 18 May 61; (C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2116, 19 May 61.

19 May Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko announced that the Geneva co-Chairmen had agreed to ask the ICC to formulate its technical requirements for enforcing the Laotian cease-fire, reported the US Consul General in Geneva. Gromyko stated that the co-Chairmen would consider this matter again when the ICC reply was in hand.

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, SECTO 187, 19 May 61.

19 May Ambassador Young recounted to the Secretary of State the substance of a meeting at Bangkok between Vice President Johnson and Thai Prime Minister Sarit.

The Vice President had begun by stating that Thai participation in the Geneva Conference was so essential that he would even urge that Sarit himself attend. When Sarit expressed doubt at the prospects of useful results from the Conference, the Vice President replied that

the Conference probably would not produce any useful results if no influential leaders attended. It was President Kennedy's idea, said Johnson, that "strong men" be at Geneva "talking turkey" so that people throughout the world would be convinced that the Free World was making every effort to achieve a peaceful solution.

In a discussion of Thai military capabilities, Sarit assured Vice President Johnson that the Thais had over 5,000 men ready to move into Laos immediately, and "any number required" if the situation demanded; both of these commitments hinged, however, upon the proviso: "if the US is also ready to move."

The Vice President then asked Sarit if he believed it wise to have "Americans, white men," fighting in Asia, or would it be better for the US to provide "every manner of aid and equipment" to natives of Southeast Asia. Also, the Vice President noted that US intervention might trigger a Chinese Communist response, which would tie the US down in Laos, leaving open to Communist pressures the several other critical areas on the Bloc perimeter. To all these arguments, Sarit maintained his point that no Asian nation would intervene in Laos unless the US participated with troops.

Looking to the contingency of failure at Geneva, the Vice President suggested that the countries of Southeast Asia confer with one another now, to determine what should be done if the Conference should fail and to submit a "concrete proposition" to the U.S. Pressed by Sarit for a more specific statement of US intentions, the Vice President stated that it was "not possible to speak with finality at this time," because of the present state of US public opinion. The US Congress, the Vice President continued, believed that the US public was not prepared to send US troops into Laos, especially when there presumably were ample pro-Western troops in the immediate area.

(TS) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 2096, 19 May 61.

19 May

CINCPAC, in a message to the JCS, endorsed "heartily" the State Department's proposals and Ambassador Brown's suggested modifications of the programs for supporting the Meo tribesmen (see items 9 and 17 May). CINCPAC added the notion that the Meos represented an organized nucleus upon which could be built a "counter-Communist" covert effort which would be available to the RLG and the West regardless of the outcome of current political negotiations.

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS 190359Z May 61.

20 May

The JCS commented by memorandum on the concept for a divided Laos, tentatively titled Operation PORK CHOP, referred for their consideration by the Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA) on 12 May.

Operation PORK CHOP was a proposal designed to meet the need for military contingency planning contemplated by the President's instructions of 9 May (see item) in case the Geneva Conference on Laos should fail. PORK CHOP was based on the conclusion that 1) it was in the US interest to prevent the emergence of a "weak, leftist-

oriented but unified Laos," and 2) the alternative was "a divided Laos, with the free part firmly aligned against Communist control." The free part, according to this concept, should include the Mekong River Valley and southern Laos. The most desirable division of Laos was recognized as probably unobtainable--that is, one restricting the Pathet Lao to Phong Saly and Sam Neua provinces. Similarly, the prospect for obtaining the second most desirable dividing line was regarded as dubious--that is, the line separating the RLG and Pathet Lao forces in northern Laos, with the Pathet Lao forces in southern Laos being evacuated. The final position on partition, according to Operation PORK CHOP, would require a dividing line created by giving the Pathet Lao additional territory in the north as compensation for surrender of territory held in the south; such a line was seen as allowing anti-Communist control of the Mekong Valley and southern Laos, with room for future operations to stop Viet Cong "incursion through Laos to Thailand and South Viet Nam."

Operation PORK CHOP recommended that the US participate in the Geneva Conference with the concealed intention of producing an impasse by insisting on a genuinely neutral and independent Laos. The impasse would result, according to the plan, because the Communists would be forced to reveal their true intentions, namely, the virtual surrender of Laos. When the impasse was reached and the resumption of hostilities appeared possible, the operation below should be undertaken (alternatively, the operation could be triggered by Pathet Lao breach of the cease-fire with offensive action):

The US and/or SEATO, announcing absence of aggressive intent, would move forces into Laos to protect the Royal Lao Government against further aggression. The forces would be rapidly deployed to Vientiane, Seno, Thakhek, and Paksane. US/SEATO/Lao forces would then move to eliminate Pathet Lao pockets and establish control of essential areas (indicated on a map appended to Operation PORK CHOP); linking these areas with patrols and striking at incursions with helicopter-borne guerrilla forces would permit the combined forces to secure free Laos against Pathet Lao offensives. Intensive efforts to train and reorganize the FAL would be continued throughout the operation with a view to rendering the FAL self-sustaining, thereby permitting eventual withdrawal of US/SEATO forces. (An alternative plan for US forces intervening alone was included in the exposition of Operation PORK CHOP.)

Operation PORK CHOP claimed the following political advantages: 1) the deployment of US forces to Laos would a) prove to free Asian nations that the US was willing and able to act for their protection, b) demonstrate US willingness to honor treaty commitments, c) validate the SEATO concept, and d) demonstrate to neutrals and Communists US and SEATO determination to match force with force; 2) US/SEATO forces established in Laos would give the US a position of greater strength at the 14-Nation Conference.

The following political disadvantages were acknowledged: 1) British and French co-operation would be difficult to

obtain; 2) some neutrals might consider "Western intervention" unjustified; 3) the Communist bloc might use the opportunity to create serious problems elsewhere, e.g., in Berlin or Iran; and 4) the deployment of forces at this time might seriously disrupt the 14-Nation Conference concept.

The following military advantages were claimed for Operation PORK CHOP: 1) occupation of key centers by a noncombat operation; 2) protection of a substantial portion of Laos and key movement routes from Communist control and use; 3) prevention of the emergence of a Communist state on the borders of Thailand, Viet Nam, and Cambodia; and 4) the rendering of US support of Thailand and Viet Nam easier and less expensive.

The following military disadvantages were recognized: 1) involvement of US forces under burdensome conditions with respect to terrain, climate, and logistics; 2) the resulting production of an imbalance of US forces in the Pacific and a possible need for increased readiness preparations in the US; 3) the possibility of consequent involvement with North Viet Nam and Communist China; and 4) the creation of a situation making withdrawal of US forces in the near future most difficult.

The JCS commented that they considered the basic objective of Operation PORK CHOP feasible from a military point of view. They pointed out, however, that the partition line shown on the map accompanying that plan represented the least desirable of the lines mentioned in the plan and that the Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA) had acknowledged the preferability of the line proposed by CINCPAC (see item 16 May). This latter line, recommended by the JCS, was set forth in the appendix to the JCS memorandum, with a discussion of the advantages and disadvantages closely following CINCPAC's discussion (see item 16 May).

In further comment the JCS reiterated their view that the question of Laos could not be considered apart from Thailand and South Viet Nam and the relationship of these countries to Southeast Asia as a whole. The JCS again recommended the deployment of "suitable" forces to South Viet Nam and Thailand. In the opinion of the JCS such forces would, by their physical presence, be a stabilizing factor in the security of Southeast Asia, and at the same time they would provide an effective nucleus for possible future US and/or SEATO intervention in Laos.

The JCS reaffirmed their opinion that any intervention with US forces in Laos, unilaterally or under SEATO auspices, should be preceded by a firm US governmental decision committing the US by such intervention to make the necessary effort to achieve a successful outcome regardless of the possible Communist escalation. The decision to make such an effort, the JCS said, was fundamental to US military action. (See item 9 May.)

In view of the foregoing considerations, the JCS continued, it was their belief that existing CINCPAC and SEATO plans must be utilized for at least the initial operations of a military intervention in Laos. Military

plans for overseas operations of the magnitude envisioned in Operation PORK CHOP must be prepared in a deliberate manner, they warned, if unacceptable risks were to be avoided. Moreover, it should be fully realized that US intervention in Laos might provoke North Vietnamese and Communist Chinese intervention. It was therefore recommended that the military advice of the JCS be utilized from the outset in the preparation of plans for military operations such as those that might stem from the directive of 9 May 1961.

(TS) JCSM-340-61 to SecDef, "A Concept for a Divided Laos (S)," 20 May 61, derived from (TS) JCS 1992/995, 17 May 61, as revised by (TS) Dec On JCS 1992/995, 20 May 1961; (TS) JCS 1992/989, 15 May 61.

20 May

The ICC report to the Geneva co-Chairmen, later relayed from Geneva to the Department of State, reviewed the ICC's activities from 15 to 20 May. The Commission reported that at Ban Namone on 17 May, the warring factions had "agreed in principle" to consider the formation of a coalition government first, followed immediately by an examination of questions relating to the cease-fire. However, alleged violations of the cease-fire had caused the Boun Oum representative to annul this understanding on 19 May. Recriminations were hurled by both sides at this juncture; but the parties had nonetheless agreed to meet again on 22 May.

Regarding alleged cease-fire violations, the ICC reported that it had received the first written complaint from the Vientiane authorities on 16 May, followed quickly by a host of other complaints from the same source. In view of its "basic task" (see item 6 May), the ICC had decided to discuss these complaints with Souvanna and Souphanouvong. In these discussions, held at Xieng Khouang on 18 May, both Souvanna and Souphanouvong had assured the ICC representatives that their troops had not violated the cease-fire and that whatever actions their troops might have taken had been either under provocation or in self-defense.

The absence of a detailed cease-fire agreement made difficult the ICC's decisions of what to enforce, the Commission reported. Moreover, it was almost impossible to define provocation in the Laotian military situation. For example, the aerial resupply of Ban Padong was considered provocative by the Pathet Lao, whose consequent attacks were likewise termed provocative by the Boun Oum Government. Also, the confusion engendered by the terrain and foliage and the proximity of opposing forces made it almost impossible to fix upon the first provocative act.

To avoid such confusion in the future, the ICC proposed the following actions:

1. Renewed orders should be issued to all troops not only to maintain the cease-fire, but to desist from provocations; all parties should formally assure the ICC that this had been done.
2. The ICC should assume, with the co-operation of both sides, control and supervision of the resupply of isolated garrisons.

3. Such aerial flights over hostile territory as were not thus controlled by the ICC should be discontinued.

4. The parties at Ban Namone should discuss incidents among themselves and dispel thereby many misunderstandings.

The ICC then presented various other aspects of the Laotian situation that were engendering tensions: competition for civilian support; the treating of civilian disturbances as military actions; the arming of hostile tribes not having loyalty to any government; the seeming desire of both sides to consolidate gains; and the frequency of defections which were viewed by the losing side as hostile acts by the gaining side.

Because of these many problems, the ICC concluded, the situation could not be put right unless the Laotian factions agreed, in parallel with their political negotiations, to establish a machinery by which the ICC could supervise and control the cease-fire.

Finally, the ICC expressed the hopes to the co-Chairmen that external military supply of the Laotian groups would "cease forthwith," that all foreign advisers introduced into Laos since 1954 would be withdrawn, that the problems mentioned in this report would be discussed at Geneva, and that the co-Chairmen would further instruct the ICC on its next tasks (see following item).

(C) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 26, 23 May 61.

21 May

The Chairman of the ICC, in similar letters to Boun Oum, Souvanna, and Souphanouvong, set forth the Commission's proposals and hopes for the reduction of military tensions in Laos, as embodied in his report to the Geneva co-Chairmen (see preceding item). Also, the Chairmen expressed the intention of the ICC to visit the Ban Padong region and other areas to satisfy itself that an effective cease-fire existed throughout Laos.

(See item 25 May for Boun Oum's reply.)

(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2141, 24 May 61.

22 May

The US Ambassador to Thailand, Kenneth T. Young, reported to the Secretary of State the progress of the SEATO Council of Representatives upon the required political actions in support of Plan 5 (see items 13 and 28 April, 4 May), as follows:

1. The following actions had been agreed upon:
 - a. Definition of Communist insurgency (Action 1).
 - b. Designation of Thailand as "appointed nation" (Action 2).
 - c. Assignment of force commander and deputy commander responsibilities among the SEATO nations (Action 3).
 - d. Directive to SEATO Force Commander (Action 4).
 - e. Appointment of political adviser to the SEATO Force (Action 5).
 - f. Issuance of situation assessments and warnings by the Council Representatives (Action 6).

2. Further progress on the question of sharing costs (Action 7) could not be made until the Department of State supplied instructions to the US representative.

3. All representatives had agreed, with the French and British agreements subject to governmental confirmation, that formal status of forces agreements (Action 8) should be dispensed with. Also, a "consensus" had been reached that the SEATO military advisers would prepare, in lieu of status of forces agreements, a list of provisions for the guidance of the Force Commanders and would not refer back to the Council unless there was disagreement on "major points." All representatives except France had agreed that the responsibility for status of forces arrangements in Thailand should rest with the SEATO Force Commander; all representatives except France and Thailand had agreed that the responsibility for similar arrangements in Laos should rest with the Field Forces Commander.

4. No further progress had been made toward agreement upon the following:

- a. Manner of contacts between SEATO Commanders and the RTG and RLG (Action 9).
- b. "Mission and concept" of the SEATO force (Action 10).

(TS) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 2112, 22 May 61.

22 May

Ambassador Brown reported to the Secretary of State that the RLG representatives felt that the atmosphere at Ban Namone was "most oppressive psychologically." Ambassador Brown recounted the many concessions the RLG had made to PL intransigence: 1) abandoning the proposal that the talks be held at Luang Prabang; 2) accepting rebuff on its offer to hold military discussions at Hin Heup; 3) accepting similar rebuff on its offer to attend military talks at Ban Namone if political talks proceeded simultaneously at Phon Hong; 4) acceding to the holding of all talks at Ban Namone; and finally, 5) agreeing to give first priority to discussion of political affairs. The feeling within the RLG was, Brown continued, that the lack of "strong united Western support" had helped to bring the RLG thus far along the road of concession. "The RLG feels abandoned by its friends," one Ban Namone delegate had commented, and only the US could restore a spirit of confidence by giving assurance to the RLG that it would not be deserted if the civil war should be resumed.

(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2129, 22 May 61.

22 May

The Secretary of State informed Ambassador Brown that the Australian Minister at Washington had expressed his government's growing concern over the Pathet Lao attacks upon Ban Padong and the ICC's failure to act to halt these operations. The Australians were also concerned about reports that ICC Chairman Sen was playing a role in the domestic political aspects of the cease-fire talks in Laos. The Minister stated that the ICC had no mandate to participate either in the formation of a coalition government or in the selection of a delegation to attend the Geneva Conference.

The Secretary related that the Australian Minister had been told that the US shared these Australian concerns;

Ambassador Brown was requested to provide his estimate of the ICC's role in Laotian domestic politics (see item 26 May).

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 1273, 22 May 61.

22 May

Consul General Martin reported from Geneva that the representatives of Burma and Cambodia, the two neutral nations contiguous to Laos, had presented their views to the Geneva Conference.

Burmese Foreign Minister Sao Hkun Khio, in a brief presentation, declared that the solution to the Laotian situation lay in a return to the 1954 Geneva Accords, reinforced by a new Laotian neutrality declaration, recognized by this Geneva Conference.

Cambodian Foreign Minister Tioulong noted hopefully the "striking concordance" among the conferees in the matter of general principles. However, Cambodia recognized that, on the substantive question of control, there remained serious differences. Cambodia, for its part, agreed with the USSR that international control as conceived by the US could become an instrument for foreign interference. On the other hand, the Soviet counterproposal, requiring unanimity both in the ICC and between the co-Chairmen, went too far in the other direction, creating an ICC "half-paralyzed by 'triple veto.'" The Cambodian declared that a "middle solution acceptable to all" must be found. He submitted no proposals to accomplish this end, but expressed support of certain proposals put forward by Canada designed to render the ICC more effective.

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 24, 22 May 61.

23 May

The Departments of State and Defense and the CIA expressed, in a joint message to "Geneva," their objections to the recommendations of the ICC (see item 20 May). Selected for specific comment were the ICC recommendations that it control the resupply of isolated garrisons and that all other aerial flights over "hostile" territory be discontinued; the "basic objections" of the US to these proposals were as follows:

1. Without an effective cease-fire, the support of FAL units, including Meo units under attack, was a matter that could not be negotiated.
2. Even if a cease-fire were established, certain isolated FAL units could only be supplied the "necessities of life" by air; the discontinuance of flights over hostile territory would hamper this resupply.
3. Since the ICC had not taken cognizance of the Soviet airlift, the ICC proposition was "one-sided," in that it inhibited only the supply of the FAL and did not provide for the cessation of the Soviet airlift.
4. Since there was not yet any agreement on the rules of ICC procedure, consideration of ICC supervision of resupply flights was at this time premature.

5. The Polish members of the ICC might use the Commission's resupply flights as a means of gathering intelligence for the Pathet Lao.

US officials in Laos were likewise critical of the ICC report and submitted their comments to Washington. [redacted] the report did not make clear how the determination of "isolated garrisons" in "hostile territory" could be made. Militarily [redacted] the acceptance of the halting of aerial resupply would solve the enemy's most perplexing problem, while leaving unsolved the greatest US problem: how to check the enemy's steady encroachments on the ground. Moreover, the halting of flights over "hostile" territory would halt all US aerial support in Laos, inasmuch as every air route passed over some enemy guerrillas or patrols.

[redacted] the major US advantages--more suitable aircraft and more internal airfields--would be nullified by the ICC proposals, and the Meos, if termed by the ICC as "'cut off in areas generally controlled by [a] militarily hostile party,'" would be confronted by the bitter alternatives of surrender, extermination, or migration.

The US Ambassador to Laos, the Military Attache, and CHMAAG concurred [redacted] the Ambassador added, however, his belief that the ICC overestimated the dangerous character of overflights, and his warning that the US should not accept piecemeal arms control measures that hampered exactly those US actions that the enemy wished to prevent.

(These comments [redacted] were originally transmitted [redacted] to the JCS on 23 May. The retransmittals do not, however, specify the date of original transmission.) [redacted]

23 May

Foreign Minister Thanat Khoman delivered the Thai delegation's first presentation to the Geneva Conference. Noting at the start the uncertainty and fragility of the peace in Laos, Thanat urged that the ICC redouble its efforts to achieve a complete cessation of hostilities in Laos, in order that the Geneva Conference could begin to perform a positive and useful task.

Thanat criticized the seating of rebel Lao elements at the Conference, averring that this action had in effect confirmed a de facto division of the country and had therefore caused the RLG to absent itself from the Conference. Thanat considered it appropriate, the RLG being absent and some political parties being present, that representatives of all legal Laotian political parties be seated by the Conference.

Thanat also defended the status of Laos as a SEATO protocol state, urged the strengthening and broadening of the ICC, and declared for a Conference-guaranteed, rather than a Lao-declared, neutrality, since the threat to that neutrality came from without rather than within.

Finally, Thanat expressed his belief that all the nations of Southeast Asia whose interests and security were affected by Laotian developments should be invited to the Conference, and restated his proposal that Indonesia and Malaya, as well as other Southeast Asian nations, be invited.

Consul General Martin reported from Geneva on the same day that Thanat, following his speech, had presented to the co-Chairmen a formal request for two Conference seats for Laotian political parties supporting the RLG, these seats to be occupied in rotation by the parties' representatives. By the Thai plan, the RLG seat would remain vacant until the RLG chose to be seated. Thanat intended to make a "very forceful pitch," Martin continued, and to give the impression that the Thai delegation might leave the Conference, if the seating issue were not satisfactorily resolved. Indeed, Martin thought, it was not impossible that Thanat would carry out this threat.

Ambassador Harriman had told Thanat, Martin said, that the US would support the Thais on this issue, and on the issue of inviting additional Southeast Asian nations. However, Harriman had declared, the Conference should not be allowed to founder on the seating dispute. Rather, if the Conference were to fail, it should do so over some important substantive issue, such as a Soviet demand for a veto over control machinery.

(Consul General Martin believed that Thanat had been impressed by this counsel of moderation, and Thanat's actions of the following day bore out this judgment. The Soviet presiding officer, Pushkin, termed the seating controversy "not a 'continuing question,' but rather one that had been settled before the Conference began; and Thanat in reply merely reserved the right to raise the seating question again during the Conference.)

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 30, 23 May 61; (C) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 34, 23 May 61; (C) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 41, 24 May 61.

24 May

The Geneva co-Chairmen, the UK and USSR, had failed to agree upon new instructions to the ICC (see item 20 May), Ambassador Harriman reported to the Secretary of State.

The UK had submitted to the USSR a draft of instructions stating the co-Chairmen's belief that "wherever the Commission have grounds for believing that there might have been a substantial infringement of the cease-fire they should investigate the incident on the spot immediately." By the British draft, moreover, the co-Chairmen would have urged that a detailed cease-fire agreement be undertaken immediately, with the ICC doing "everything in its power" to bring this about. The UK instruction would have requested that all parties issue instructions to their troops to observe a "military stand-still," as well as a "cease-fire"; finally, all parties would have been asked to report to the ICC the exact locations of all their troops.

The UK draft was fully supported by the US and France. The USSR, however, rejected it as "unnecessary." The Soviet representative produced, after some prodding, an innocuous alternative draft that added no new instructions, expressing only "hope" that there would be no repetition of the

misunderstandings that had arisen during the cease-fire. Under questioning, he admitted it was the Soviet view that the ICC was powerless to investigate complaints without the express consent of both parties.

The British and the French considered this Soviet uncooperativeness to be "basic and serious," for both considered a verifiable cease-fire to be an absolute prerequisite to the Conference and both held that the ICC must be subject to instructions from the co-Chairmen (and later, the Conference) in order to control such a cease-fire. Here, then, was an "issue of substantive importance on which [a] firm stand must be taken."

The three Western allies therefore agreed to the following procedures:

1. The UK representative would remind the Soviet representative that the ICC had asked for instructions, and would insist that instructions must be sent.

2. If the USSR remained adamant, the UK representative would point to the UK-USSR pre-conference agreement (see item 19 April) and state that the matter would be referred to the British Government for instructions. He would also speculate that, the ICC's request for instructions having been received, the other delegations would require an explanation of the co-Chairmen's failure to act, and would serve notice that he would have to bring the matter to Conference debate by 29 May.

3. If the debate failed to induce Soviet co-operation, the UK would suggest suspension of the Conference until an agreement had been reached on instructions to the ICC.

On the following day, this course of action was inaugurated. The UK representative presented to the Soviet representative the arguments of 1. above, but the Soviet remained unmoved. The UK, therefore, released to the press a statement that no agreement had been reached on instructions to the ICC and that the matter had been referred to the British Government.

(TS) Msgs, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 42 and 43, 24 May 61; CONFE 50, 25 May 61.

24 May

CINCPAC stated to CHMAAG Laos the necessity for regrouping and retraining the FAL if, as he assumed, the US planned to provide the support that would enable the FAL to continue to fight the Pathet Lao.

CINCPAC noted the differences in the training systems of the PL and the FAL: the PL concentrated on leadership and troop indoctrination while the US training of the FAL stressed unit training and "hoped for better leadership." Consequently, "when the PL/KL [Pathet Lao-Kong Le] cause was at its lowest

ebb in Dec 61 and Jan 61, the communists did not talk defeat or cease-fire or ICC intercession. They talked ultimate victory." "We must," CINCPAC urged, "learn a lesson from this." CINCPAC presented the following observations on future US actions in Laos:

1. "Phoumi needs to get the habit of being a field commander."
2. Although guerrilla tactics remained an element in the struggle in Laos, standard infantry tactics had also been developed. A lack of coordinated firepower, not necessarily detrimental to guerrilla warfare, handicapped standard infantry units. It was necessary, therefore, that US advisers plan and direct FAL artillery, artillery observation and air strike interdiction at the tactical unit level.
3. Troop indoctrination would be essential to the creation of motivation and fighting spirit.
4. Civic action, as well as the support functions (communications, supply, logistics, and maintenance), would continue to be an important element.
5. "Confidence in the outcome must be displayed at all levels."

Regarding the "regrouping and retraining problem," CINCPAC observed that the plan for training FAL battalions in Thailand was "part of the solution." However, CINCPAC also suggested "special consideration" for the following additional proposals:

1. The establishment of a "special processing system" to reorganize and retrain units that had spent prolonged periods in combat.
2. Initiation of instruction in leadership for FAL NCOs and officers.
3. Conduct of a logistics survey to determine, during the cease-fire period, the exact status of supplies and equipment in Laos.
4. Emphasis upon marksmanship in the training of FAL troops.

(S) Msg, CINCPAC to CHMAAG Laos, DA IN 116119, 25 May 61.

24 May

The Consul General in Geneva reported to the Secretary of State 27 violations of the cease-fire in Laos during the period 13-23 May, as reported by "reliable sources." These violations consisted of sporadic shelling of FAL positions, ambushes of isolated FAL detachments, and a few probing attacks against FAL forces.

A primary target of the PL appeared to be the stronghold of the Meo guerrilla forces at Ban Padong which was reportedly shelled on all but three days of the period. PL forces were reported to have made probing attacks on Ban Padong on the 18th, 21st, and 22d.

(OUO) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 36, 24 May 61.

25 May

The British Ambassador to the US, during a call upon the Secretary of State, delivered on behalf of his government an aide memoire dealing with contingency planning in Southeast Asia. The aide memoire stated that, as a result of the Laotian cease-fire and the convening of the Geneva Conference, the "possible requirement for a military intervention or military preparation" had become "entirely different." The British Government, however, "had in mind" the following two contingencies: 1) that there might come a time during the negotiations when there would be an advantage in SEATO's "making some preliminary moves and letting these be known"; and 2) that the Conference might collapse with the resultant "serious resumption of hostilities" in Laos.

At present, the aide memoire continued, the UK was making no military preparations of any kind, "apart from some discussions between General Hull and Admiral Felt about fueling arrangements in Thailand." Since it appeared that no existing plans covered the two contingencies outlined by the British Government, it was considered "useful to know the views of the United States Administration on this subject."

The aide memoire also expressed the British Government's preference for bilateral rather than SEATO talks and suggested that these conversations be conducted, "without commitment to action by governments," by General Hull and Admiral Felt. It would, however, first be "essential for our two governments to agree upon terms of reference to be given the military planners."

(TS) UK Aide Memoire, "Contingency Planning in Southeast Asia," 25 May 61; OCJCS Files, 091 Laos (3).

25 May Ambassador Brown cabled to the Secretary of State the proposed RLG reply to ICC Chairman Sen's letter of 21 May (see item). The RLG draft reaffirmed the reissue of orders to RLG forces to cease fire and recapitulated the Pathet Lao cease-fire violations. However, the letter stated that ICC control of supply flights "could not be considered" in the absence of effective control of supply to the Pathet Lao; the letter also stated, with regard to halting flights not controlled by the ICC over hostile territory, that the RLG objected to the presupposition that there were areas exclusively controlled by the enemy. The draft reply concluded by agreeing to the proposal that the Ban Namone conferees discuss cease-fire violations, and the "fundamental necessity" of an early agreement on the details of the cease-fire.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2144, 25 May 61.

25 May CINCPAC, expressing the expectation that Communist attacks against Ban Padong would be intensified, emphasized to CHMAAG that continued FAL presence in that area was essential in order to validate the FAL claims to control within Xieng Khouang province. CINCPAC noted that "the right of self defense has never been precluded by cease fire arrangements to which [the] FAL is party," and inquired whether and to what extent CHMAAG and Phoumi had planned for the defense of Ban Padong. CINCPAC asked, particularly:

1. Had arrangements been made to airlift artillery and mortars to Ban Padong?
2. Had T-6 strikes been planned against the enemy personnel and materiel concentrations?
3. Were the ammunition and food stocks at Ban Padong sufficient to allow temporary loss of the helicopter strips? (See item 27 May.)

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to CHMAAG Laos, 252310Z May 61.

26 May Ambassador Brown informed the Secretary of State that ICC Chairman Sen had on the previous day delivered letters from Souvanna to Boun Oum and King Savang. Souvanna had invited Boun Oum to meet him at Ban Namone and had urged King Savang to head a coalition government. Boun Oum had already refused the invitation; the King had received the letter and had commented to Phoumi that he alone designated the head of government, that Souvanna should come to Luang Prabang "like any loyal Lao" if he had any suggestions or requests, and that the ICC Chairman should not act as a "mailman." The King concluded, characteristically, by refusing to "lower himself into [the] political arena."

Brown also reported that, on 23 May, Sihanouk had requested Boun Oum's aid "to save Geneva Conference," and Boun Oum had decided to leave shortly for Geneva. Brown considered that the principal purpose for Boun Oum's journey was to maintain the friendship and support of Sihanouk.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2148, 26 May 61.

26 May Ambassador Brown confirmed for the Secretary of State the Australian allegation that ICC Chairman Sen was, by his

activities in internal Laotian politics (see item 22 May), exceeding his mandate to verify a cease-fire. Brown cited several instances of Sen's intruding into Laotian politics, noting that Sen had from the outset stressed the importance of the formation of a coalition government.

To Brown it appeared that Sen was attempting to lessen US opposition to a coalition and to persuade the US to "accept Souvanna." In addition, Brown continued, it was almost certain that Sen was imparting to all factions the impression that he considered them co-equals with one another. In this respect, Sen's activities were probably giving to the Souvanna group and the Pathet Lao some encouragement that a political solution favorable to them would be found.

Chairman Sen had, however, emphasized the importance of an effective cease-fire and it was the ICC that had prodded the Pathet Lao into agreeing to discuss the cease-fire at Ban Namone. Moreover, Sen had been surprisingly willing to have the ICC go to Ban Padong, despite the lack of agreement among the parties regarding the status of actions at that site.

Brown considered that even if the ICC were enjoined from engaging in internal Laotian political maneuvers, the Indian members would find pretexts for pursuing their objectives. The Ambassador concluded that Sen had on balance been more helpful than harmful and that it would not in any event be propitious to call the ICC to task at this juncture.

In a message the following day, Brown reported that Sen had, in a conversation with the Ambassador, stated the conviction that no amount of international control machinery would ever wholly solve the Laotian problem or dispel outside influences. Although recognizing that international accord and control could lessen the outside influences, Sen believed that twenty armed divisions and the complete negation of Laotian national sovereignty would be required to achieve "really effective supervision and control."

Modifying his view that Sen was equating the three factions in Laos (see above), Brown also reported that Sen actually discounted the RLG equality considerably, because of the RLG's lack of popular support. The RLG's constitutionality did not impress Sen (nor did it impress UK Ambassador Addis, Brown noted) because the RLG had come to power essentially by force, with only pro forma compliance with constitutional procedures.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2155, 26 May 61;
(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2163, 27 May 61.

26 May

Ambassador Brown reported to the Secretary of State that, according to the press and members of the RLG negotiating team, agreement had been reached at Ban Namone on the principle of immediate formation of a subcommittee to deal with military matters. Among its other duties, the subcommittee would work with the ICC.

According to the Ambassador, the RLG was pleased by this development because it established the "principle of concurrent military and political committees."

(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2156, 26 May 61.

~~TOP SECRET~~

27 May

In a joint message, [REDACTED] authorized, subject to Country Team approval, the arming of ten additional Meo auto-defense teams. This US governmental action reversed an earlier decision, transmitted to Ambassador Brown on 9 May (see item), not to arm additional Meo.

In a return message the Country Team stated its approval of the arming of the Meo. Also, the Team suggested that if the Meo were ever confronted with the alternatives of extermination or evacuation, they could be resettled in the Annamite mountain chain of eastern Laos. In this area, the Meo would act as an "effective screen against Viet Minh probes, infiltration and subversion against both Laos and [South Viet Nam]."

[REDACTED]

27 May

The Chairman of ICC Laos reported to the Geneva co-Chairmen on the ICC's activities from 21 May to date (see item 20 May for the previous ICC report).

The situation in Laos had remained generally unchanged, the Chairman reported. On 26 May (see item), however, the parties at Ban Namone had agreed to the simultaneous discussion of political and military problems and to the establishment of a machinery for examining in detail the military solution and for determining the specific tasks which the parties might wish the ICC to perform with respect to the cease-fire.

The Chairman also reported that he had addressed identical letters to Boun Oum, Souvanna and Souphanouvong (see items 20 and 21 May) and had continued "to establish contacts" at the highest level. Both sides had continued to complain of opposition build-ups, provocations, and cease-fire violations. Meanwhile, the ICC had continued, in cooperation with the Laotian factions, to plan visits to sensitive areas along the cease-fire line (see item 21 May).

(C) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 83, 30 May 61.

27 May

CHMAAG, responding to CINCPAC's queries concerning the defense of Ban Padong (see item 25 May), termed that area a "guerrilla redoubt," supported operationally and logistically [REDACTED]. The MAAG had supplied assistance [REDACTED] but had not, [REDACTED] planned with Phoumi the defense of Ban Padong. Two hundred and fifty-five troops had been the extent of FAL reinforcements for Ban Padong, and the FAL had stated that no further troops were available.

Included in the assistance that MAAG had rendered was the air movement of two 75 mm. pack howitzers to Ban Padong. Also, the movement of two additional guns with crews and of additional mortars and crews was underway.

T-6 strikes had been planned and flown against the Communist attackers, CHMAAG continued, and the MAAG had cooperated "by expediting requests" passed to it.

CHMAAG stated that there had been no reported shortages of food or ammunition at Ban Padong. The Meo

commander had been advised to prepare alternate helicopter landing zones in the event that the currently employed strips were interdicted by enemy fire. Interruption of helicopter support would force complete reliance upon air drops for resupply, CHMAAG reported; further, enemy encirclement of Ban Padong and the introduction of anti-aircraft artillery would halt aerial resupply altogether.

CHMAAG believed that a determined conventional defense of Ban Padong was beyond the capability of the basically irregular forces there. Unless offensive guerrilla operations were resumed in Xieng Khouang province the PL could concentrate upon and achieve, after a "respectable fight" by the defenders, the reduction of the stronghold.

Future courses of action had been discussed with [redacted] CHMAAG went on to say, and it had been agreed that if Ban Padong were lost, guerrilla operations in the area would still be feasible. Small Meo bands operating from mobile bases could re-establish a guerrilla complex while being resupplied by air. The approximately 800 Meo effectives at Ban Padong were but a small part of the total Meo guerrilla strength of some 6,000 around the Plaine des Jarres, CHMAAG pointed out.

On the same day, CINCPAC acknowledged CHMAAG's report, expressing pleasure [redacted] at MAAG's close coordination with and support [redacted] CINCPAC suggested that CHMAAG continue to apply pressure upon Phoumi to provide additional reinforcements for Ban Padong.

(TS) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 116915, 27 May 61; CINCPAC to CHMAAG Laos, 272231Z May 61.

28 May

CINCPAC, noting the continued use of T-6's against the PL forces attacking Ban Padong, raised with CHMAAG the sensitive question whether T-6 operations of this kind were legitimate defensive actions as provided by the terms of the cease-fire. CINCPAC stated his opinion that the responsible commander was best able to judge what actions were necessary for the security of his forces. Nonetheless CINCPAC enjoined CHMAAG to discuss T-6 operations with Phoumi, reemphasizing that the blame for violating the cease-fire must fall on the Communists (see item 30 May).

(S) Msg, CINCPAC to CHMAAG Laos, 280546Z, May 61.

29 May

Consul General Martin reported from Geneva to the Secretary of State that the ICC report of its technical requirements (see item 19 May) had been received.

Military representatives of the Allied delegations had agreed that the report's requirements were valid and had decided during preliminary discussions of the report that first priority should be given to supplying the following:

- 5 light aircraft
- 6 helicopters
- 1 C-47
- 19 radios, long- and medium-range
- 30 jeeps
- 6 trucks

Soviet co-Chairman Pushkin, reported the Consul General, had refused to discuss these ICC requirements in plenary session. In a meeting with the British co-Chairman, Pushkin had insisted that the co-Chairmen handle the immediate requirements of the ICC. Further, Pushkin had insisted that, when the Conference reconvened, consideration must turn to such substantive matters as control machinery. He had continued to be firmly opposed to discussing the cease-fire, instructions to the ICC, and Laotian representation.

(C) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 75, 29 May 61;
(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 76, 29 May 61.

29 May

The JCS supplied to CINCPAC "draft terms of reference" for his imminent conversations with UK military officials regarding the contemplated intervention in Laos (see item 6-7 June). These terms of reference were substantially identical in both concept and language to those contained in the joint State-Defense draft plan for possible intervention in Laos, commented on by the JCS on 9 May (see item).

These terms had been handed to the British Ambassador in Washington by the Department of State, with the preambulatory statement that the "initial judgment" of the US was that the existing SEATO plan 5 was the proper vehicle "for the contemplated action," although the force strengths and operating aspects of the Plan should be reviewed in the light of the existing situation. Therefore, the terms of reference specifically requested of the conferees an updating of the estimates of enemy capabilities (see item 2 June for the amendment of these terms of reference).

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 996704, 29 May 61.

29 May

Ambassador Brown informed the Secretary of State that, according to newsmen and RLG delegates to the Ban Namone parley, agreement had finally been reached on the agenda for separate political and military committee discussions.

It was agreed that political discussions would cover the following points--all related to the formation of a coalition government: 1) provisional nature of the new government; 2) procedure for its formation; 3) its composition; 4) its duties; and 5) its policies.

The military agenda comprised the following items: 1) cease-fire, 2) composition of mixed cease-fire teams; 3) role of the ICC; and 4) questions relating to liaison between the ICC and the joint military subcommittee.

(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2166, 29 May 61.

30 May

The US Ambassadors to Laos and Thailand presented, in accordance with a request by Ambassador Harriman, their recommendations for US policy at the Geneva Conference.

The Ambassadors strongly supported the US delegation at Geneva in its "pressing hard now" for an effective cease-fire and strong instructions to the ICC. These steps were necessary, the Ambassadors said, to deter a many-pronged PL/Viet Minh advance. In addition, at least a dozen ICC field teams were necessary in Laos because they would probably cause the Communist advisers

and cadres to hide or withdraw. The US must, moreover, insist that the cease-fire and control machinery disputes be solved at Geneva before the Conference considered any political problems.

Ambassadors Young and Brown did not consider that the Communist charges that strong control machinery would infringe Laotian sovereignty should deter the US from insisting upon these strong controls as a means to get the Viet Minh out of Laos. Phoumi favored strong controls, the Ambassadors continued, and had given no indication of any substantial "local objection."

With regard to the Communist argument that channeling economic aid through an international control body would be incompatible with Laotian sovereignty, the Ambassadors pointed out that, in the present circumstances, Laos had only two choices: true neutrality and some loss of sovereignty; or Communist alignment and total loss of sovereignty. Unless there was some sort of international cost-sharing mechanism, the US, under the alternative government-to-government aid scheme, would be the unlucky and sole source, as at present, of the cash grants essential for direct maintenance.

(S) Msgs, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 67 (to Vientiane, 85), 28 May 61; Vientiane to SecState, 2169 (to Geneva, 106), 30 May 61.

30 May Consul General Martin reported that he had made clear to British co-Chairman MacDonald the US position that a plenary conference session to discuss the cease-fire and instructions to the ICC "must not be delayed beyond tomorrow [31 May]."

The French delegate supported this US position and said that, if the "meeting would not take place," at least the French, British and US positions should be made clear to the press.

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 81, 30 May 61.

30-31 May CHMAAG Laos replied to CINCPAC's query concerning the use of T-6s (see item 28 May). CHMAAG reported that the only T-6 missions flown since the cease-fire had been those specifically requested by the Meo Commander, Vang Pao, and that these missions had been considered defensive in nature. CHMAAG also considered that the missions had bolstered greatly the morale of Vang Pao and his Meo forces.

CHMAAG reported that, although every effort was made to have Phoumi or Laotian Air Force personnel consult with the MAAG prior to launching such strikes, this consultation did not normally occur. In reality, however, CHMAAG continued, US personnel knew of such missions inasmuch as the US assisted the FAL in the arming of the planes and in target selection.

CHMAAG also quoted for CINCPAC's information the views of Ambassador Brown on the current uses of the T-6s:

In view continued and increasing artillery barrage in violation cease-fire and importance maintenance Meo morale, I have not . . . objected despite obvious adverse propaganda

effect. No . . . bombs will be used.

On the same day, the JCS, in a message to CINCPAC, authorized the use of T-6s against enemy forces in the Ban Padong area as long as cease-fire violations by the enemy continued in that area. The JCS stipulated, however, that "Washington clearance" would be required for either the use of T-6s elsewhere in Laos or the use of bombs. CINCPAC on the following day requested in regard to these required "Washington clearances" that CHMAAG report the extent to which CHMAAG could control the Laotian Air Force.

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 996759, 30 May 61; (S) Msg Vientiane to SecState, 2158, 27 May 61; CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 117510, 31 May 61; CINCPAC to CHMAAG Laos, 312151Z May 61.

31 May

Ambassador Brown informed the Secretary of State of the proceedings at Ban Namone as reported by newsmen and members of the RLG delegation.

In the political committee, the Souvanna and PL delegates had presented their views of the policies a coalition government should follow. Souvanna's delegate called for: 1) enactment of laws that would not keep any political faction at a disadvantage; 2) the holding of general elections for the purpose of forming a new government conforming to the popular will; 3) the acceptance of aid from all countries without strings; and 4) no foreign military bases or alliances.

The PL delegate called for: 1) general elections governed by the 1957 electoral law; 2) unification of the armed forces of all political factions; 3) no foreign military bases except Seno; 4) refusal of SEATO protection; 5) withdrawal of all foreign troops; and 6) repeal of international agreements contravening the concept of neutrality.

In the military subcommittee, the PL delegation proposed the following ground rules for the cease-fire, all directed at the "Savannakhet group": 1) RLG aircraft should not violate territory held by the PL or Souvanna forces; 2) the FAL should withdraw seven kilometers from important points; and 3) the FAL should not make any arrests or conduct any sweep operations. The RLG group agreed to "consider" the PL proposals.

(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2176, 31 May 61.

31 May

Consul General Martin reported to the Secretary of State on the 31 May meeting of the Geneva Conference which took up the questions of technical requirements of the ICC (see item 29 May) and a reply to the ICC request for instructions (see items 20, 29 May).

MacDonald stated the British position to be that, in view of many complaints that cease-fire violations were continuing, further instructions to the ICC were needed, as well as a request to the opposing parties to cooperate with the ICC. MacDonald made clear that the instructions to the ICC would cover only the immediate military situation, without prejudice to "delegation" discussions or decisions on international control machinery.

Ambassador Harriman, speaking for the US, urged the delegates to support the British position and restated the US position on the cease-fire (see item 17 May) and the need for instructions to the ICC (see item 24 May). The French and Thai delegates supported the position taken by the US and Britain.

The Soviet delegate dismissed the cease-fire issue as academic, having been settled when the conference opened on the basis of the ICC report verifying the existence of the cease-fire (see item 11 May). Citing the ICC report of 27 May (see item), the Soviet delegate argued that isolated incidents had been exaggerated in order to evade the main issue before the conference. The Pathet Lao and Souvanna delegates supported the Soviet position.

(OUO) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONF 99, 1 June 61.