



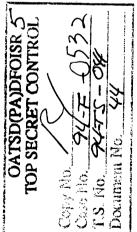
# THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301

JCSM-171-68 **2 1** MAR 1968

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

Subject: PRAIRIE FIRE - Intelligence Net

- 1. (U) Reference is made to:
- a. COMUSMACV message to CINCPAC, 150407Z January 1968 (JCS IN 36859).
- b. CINCPAC message to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 060115Z March 1968 (JCS IN 53073).
- 2. The southeastern panhandle of Laos continues to be dominated by North Vietnamese forces and to serve as the principal infiltration route and support area for enemy operations in South Vietnam. The avowed neutrality of Laos and the US desire to conform as closely as possible to the provisions of the Geneva Accords have limited friendly activity in the area to PRAIRIE FIRE reconnaissance and exploitation missions, air operations, and some CAS road watch teams. Our operations have been hampered by the lack of an adequate intelligence gathering capability in the PRAIRIE FIRE area. Therefore, the search has continued for new or improved concepts to deal with the problem without a drastic shift in policy toward Laos and without upsetting that country's political and military balance.
- 3. (During the conduct of PRAIRIE FIRE operations over the past months, COMUSMACV's Studies and Observations Group has identified and assessed a potential for the development of a native intelligence net in the PRAIRIE FIRE operational area. This potential exists within tribal groups which inhabit the area and are being exploited by the enemy. Past experience with Montagnard groups in Southeast Asia has shown that these people will respond to US influence and can be developed into intelligence assets. Such a program could provide an important supplement to ongoing PRAIRIE FIRE activities at a low cost in men and materiel and with a low risk of embarrassing the neutralist Government of Laos.





Copy of Copy of A"

Declassified by Joint Staff

Date 21 (1) A 402

GROUP - 1 Excluded from patometro downgrading and declassification

941103-70/



- 4. (TO CINCPAC has endorsed (reference lb) a COMUSMACV request (reference la) that authority be granted to contact, train, and employ tribal groups in the PRAIRIE FIRE area as intelligence assets. This plan would permit the creation of intelligence nets which would be permanently in place in the operational area and could substantially improve our knowledge of enemy activity and our interdiction effort. Initial efforts to develop this capability can be undertaken with existing personnel and funds available in the PRAIRIE FIRE program.
- 5. (The Joint Chiefs of Staff have examined the proposed concept and consider that this course of action should be pursued.
- 6. ( Accordingly, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommend that:
  - a. Authority be granted to recruit cooperative natives in the PRAIRIE FIRE area for intelligence collection, to extract willing individuals to SVN for training, and to return the trained personnel to their home areas to establish and expand intelligence nets.
  - b. A memorandum, substantially as contained in Appendix A, be forwarded to the Secretary of State.
- 7. (U) Upon receipt of your approval, the message in Appendix B will be dispatched.

For the Joint Chiefs of Staff:

EARLE G. WHEELER

Chairman

Joint Chiefs of Staff

Attachments





#### APPENDIX A

# DRAFT

## MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF STATE

1. The southeastern panhandle of Laos continues to be

Subject: PRAIRIE FIRE - Intelligence Nets (C)

dominated by North Vietnamese forces and to serve as the	2
principal infiltration route and support area for enemy opera-	3
tions in South Vietnam. The avowed neutrality of Laos and the	4
US desire to conform as closely as possible to the provisions	5
of the Geneva Accords have limited friendly activity in the	6
area to PRAIRIE FIRE reconnaissance and exploitation missions,	7
air operations, and some CAS road watch teams. Our operations	8
have been hampered by the lack of an adequate intelligence	9
gathering capability in the PRAIRIE FIRE area. Therefore, the	10
search has continued for new or improved concepts to deal with	11
the problem without a drastic shift in US policy toward Laos	12
and without upsetting the country's political and military	13
balance.	14
2. During the conduct of PRAIRIE FIRE operations over	15
the past months, COMUSMACV's Studies and Observations Group	16
has identified and assessed a potential for the development of	17
a native intelligence net in the PRAIRIE FIRE operational area.	18
This potential exists within tribal groups which inhabit the	19
area and are being exploited by the enemy. Past experience	20
with Montagnard groups in Southeast Asia has shown that these	21
people will respond to US influence and can be developed	22

GROUP-1 EXCLUDED FROM AUTOMATIC DOWNGRADING AND DECLASSIFICATION



1.

Appendix A

1

into intelligence assets. Such a program could provide	1					
an important supplement to the ongoing PRAIRIE FIRE	2					
activities at a low cost in men and material and with	3					
a low risk of embarrassing the neutralist Government of	4					
Laos.						
3. ( The Joint Chiefs of Staff have therefore	6					
proposed that COMUSMACV be authorized to recruit	7					
cooperative natives in the PRAIRIE FIRE area for	8					
intelligence collection; to extract willing individuals	9					
to SVN for training; and to return the trained personnel	. 10					
to their home areas to establish and expand intelligence	11					
nets.	12					
4. ( I have examined the proposed concept and	13					
consider that this course of action should be pursued.	14					
5. (U) Prior to taking any action on this matter, I	15					
would appreciate your views.	16					

Appendix A



## APPENDIX B

DRAFT

	FROM:	JCS	Ref a is JCS IN 36859	DISTRIBUTION			
	TO:	CINCPAC		SECDEF J-3 ASD/ISA SACS	SA.		
	INFO:	COMUSMACV AMEMB SAIGON AMEMB VIENTIANE	Ref b 1s JCS IN 53073	STATE DIA CJCS CNO DJS CSAF SJCS CMC			
	TOP SE	CRET LIMDIS JCS	JCS send.	CSA			
	Subj:	PRAIRIE FIRE (U)					
	Refs:	a. COMUSMACV msg 1	50407Z Jan 68				
		b. CINCPAC msg 060	115Z Mar 68				
	1. (	Authority is gr	ranted to establish	intelligence	1		
	nets in the PRAIRIE FIRE area. This includes authorization						
to recruit cooperative natives, to extract willing							
	individuals to SVN for training, and to return the						
	trained personnel to their home areas to establish						
	and expand intelligence nets.						
	2. (	U) Request that inf	ormation regarding	progress	7		
	of this	activity be includ	ed in normal PRAIR	Œ FIRE	8		
	progres	s and weekly report	s.		9		
	3. (	State concurs.	GP-1		10		

Writer: Colonel R. B. Rheault, USA Special Operations Division, SACSA Extension 55078

TOP CRET - SENSITIVE

Appendix B