





3CSM-215-67 2 0 APR 1967

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

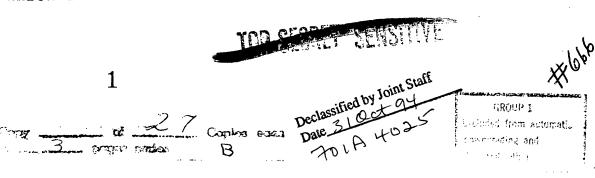
Subject: PRAIRIE FIRE - Phase III (U)

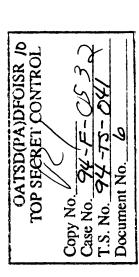
1. (U) Reference is made to:

a. COMUSMACV message to CINCPAC, 2508207 March 1967, JCS IN 89390.

b. CINCPAC message to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 0100112 April 1967, JCS IN 13559.

- 2. (45) The area of Laos between the Tchepone-Se Kong Piver line and the Lao/Vietnam border 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. Although all of these efforts have gradually increased in scope and effectiveness, they are by no means capable of stemming the infiltration or denying the use of the 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. Quring the conduct of PRAIRIE FIRE operations over the past few months, COMUSMACV's Studies and Observations Group (SOG) has identified and assessed a potential for the establishment of a friendly guerrilla force in the Annamite Mountain Region of southern Laos. This potential is the Kha tribal group which inhabits the area and is being exploited by the enemy.





Past experience with Montagnard groups in Southeast Asia has shown that these people will respond to Caucasian influence and can be developed into guerrilla forces. Such a program could provide an important supplement to the existing counterinfiltration effort at a low cost in men and material and with a low risk of embarrassing the neutralist Government of Laos.

- 4. (The CINCPAC has endorsed (reference 1b) a COMUSMACV proposal (reference 1a) that SOG develop and direct a guerrilla program in southeastern Laos. The proposed concept of operations is outlined in Appendix A hereto. Estimates at this time indicate a potential force of some 3,000 men and a requirement for 135 US Army personnel.
- 5. The Joint Chiefs of Staff have examined the proposed concept and consider that this course of action should be pursued. Time consuming and carefully executed preliminary activities such as contact, exfiltration, training, indoctrination, reinfiltration, and recruiting must be undertaken before it will be possible to determine the exact scope and area of the program. These initial steps can be taken without an expansion of the PRAIRIE FIRE zone or the commitment of additional US Army Special Forces into Laos. However, this initial activity should not be undertaken without conceptual approval of the over-all program.
 - 6. (Accordingly, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommend that:
 - a. The guerrilla warfare concept contained in Appendix A be approved in principle for further planning, training, and discussion with RVNAF.
 - b. Execution of the preparatory phase (Appendix A, subparagraph lb (1)) be approved.
 - c. Execution of the exploitation phase (Appendix A, subparagraph 1b (2)) be approved, subject to the successful accomplishment of the preparatory phase and further assessment.
 - d. The phased PCS deployment to RVN of 135 additional US Army personnel be approved.
 - e. Additional funds in the estimated amount of \$2,000,000 be provided to the Department of the Navy for the support of this program through the fourth quarter of FY 1968.





- f. A memorandum substantially as contained in Appendix B hereto, together with Appendix A, be forwarded to the Secretary of State.
- 7. (U) Upon receipt of your approval, the implementing message in Appendix C hereto will be dispatched.

For the Joint Chiefs of Staff:

SIGNED

EARLE G. WHILLER
Chairman
Joint Chiefs of Staff

Attachments



APPENDIX A

*PRAIRIE FIRE" PHASE III OPERATIONS (U)

1. Concept of Operations:	.3
a. General: PRAIRIE FIRE elements establish contact	2
with tribal groups in southeastern Laos in order to	3
identify individuals and villages which are susceptible	1
to recruitment into an anti-VC/NVA/PL guerrilla movement.	
Selected individuals are removed to SVN, indoctrinated and	6
trained, and reinfiltrated to their home areas to continue	<i>1</i>
recruiting. Once a large enough force (approximately 100 men)	
has been recruited, US Special Forces conduct training and	
direct the force in the execution of guerrilla operations	: 10
against the enemy. Phase I and II PRAIRIE FIRE operations	1
continue and provide assistance and support to the guerrilla	1
forces during their formative stages. In later stages the	. 1
operations become mutually supporting. Tactical air continues	1
to support all PRAIRIE FIRE operations. US provides supplies	1.9
and support and directs program through COMUSMACV.	1
b. Phases:	17
(1) Preparatory Phase:	18
(a) RVNAF/FAR discussions to obtain FAR agreement	19
to the program and to obtain the services of selected	20
Lac personnel to make initial contacts. US support,	21
participation, and control kept in background but	22
understood.	23
(b) SOG trains initial contact personnel.	24
(c) PRAIRIE FIRE teams reconnoiter area to identify	25
potential locales.	26
(d) Contact personnel, protected and accompanied	27
by PRAIRIE FIRE teams, make initial contact with	28
selected village chiefs. Power of team to call in air	29
strikes and supply drops is demonstrated.	30
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Appendix A

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(e) Recruits lumished by Village Chiefs are	1
exfiltrated and given intensive indoctrination and	2
training.	3
(f) Above groups reinfiltrated to continue	4
recruiting in tribal areas and to conduct intelligence	5
and psychological activities.	6
(2) Exploitation Phase:	7
(a) Once a large enough force has been recruited	8
(approximately 100), a US Army Special Forces A	9
Detachment trains the force in a safe area (either in	10
Laos or in SVN) while recruiting of additional personnel	11
continues.	12
(b) Guerrilla units, advised, directed, and supported	13
by US Army Special Forces Detachments, initiate guerrilla	14
operations against the enemy.	15
(c) PRAIRIE FIRE Recon Teams, Exploitation Forces,	16
and US tactical air provide support as appropriate.	17
2. (a) Area of Operations:	18
a. During the preparatory phase, operations will be limited	19
to the currently authorized PRAIRIE FIRE zone.	20
b. During the exploitation phase, guerrilla warfare opera-	21
tional areas will be assigned to the guerrilla units developed,	22
based on such factors as the unit's home area, capability for	23
expansion, target availability, and other friendly activity.	24
3. (167) US Participation:	25
a. During the initial RVNAF/FAR (Lao Armed Forces)	26
discussions, US involvement will be kept in the background;	27
but it will be understood that the US will provide principal	28
support and direction to the program.	29
b. During the preparatory phase, US personnel, with the	30
exception of Recon Team and Expiditation Force advisors, will	31
not penetrate into Laos.	32

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Appendix A

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c. During the exploitation phase of Army Special Forces A	T
Detachments will operate in Laos with the guerrilla units.	2
Initial estimates place the guerrilla potential at approxi-	3
mately 3000. This would involve about 10 USASF A Detachments	4
in Laos and some additional supporting personnel for COMUSMACV.	5
d. US tactical air continues to provide support for all	6
PRAIRIE FIRE operations.	7
e. US provides equipment and supplies to guerrilla forces	8
developed.	9
f 119 everyation community and control through MACCO	10

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Appendix A

APPENDIX B

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF STATE

Subject: PRAIRIE FIRE - Phase III (U)

1. The area of Laos between the Tchepone-Se Kong River
line and the Lao/Vietnam border continues to be dominated by
North Vietnamese forces and to serve as the principal infil-
tration 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. Although all of these efforts
nave gradually increased in scope and effectiveness, they are by
no means capable of stemming the infiltration or denying the use
of the 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 the country's
political and military balance.

2. During the conduct of PRAIRIE FIRE operations over the past few months, COMUSMACV's Studies and Observations Group (SOG) 17 has identified and assessed a potential for the establishment of 18 a friendly guerrilla force in the Annamite Mountain Region of 19 southern Laos. This potential is the Kha tribal group which inhabits the area and is being exploited by the enemy. Past experience with Montagnard groups in Southeast Asia has shown 22 that these people will respond to Caucasian influence and can be developed into guerrilla forces. Such a program could provide 24 an important supplement to the existing counterinfiltration effort at a low cost in men and material and with a low risk 26 of embarrassing the neutralist Government of Laos.

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Appendix B

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3. (15) The Joint Chiefs of Staff have therefore proposed
that COMUSMACV develop and direct a guerrilla program in
southeastern Laos. The proposed concept of operations is
ourlined in the Appendix.*
4. (I have examined the proposed concept and consider
that this course of action should be pursued. Time consuming

and carefully executed preliminary activities such as contact, exfiltration, training, indoctrination, reinfiltration, and 8 recruiting must be undertaken before it will be possible to 9 determine the exact scope and area of the program. 10 initial steps can be taken without an expansion of the PRAIRIE 11 FIRE zone or the commitment of additional US Army Special Forces 12 into Laos over and above the present PRAIRIE FIRE program. 13 However, conceptual approval of the over-all program should 14 precede such preliminary activity. 15

5. (U) Prior to taking any action on this matter, I would appreciate your views.

* Appendix A hereto

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Appendix B

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APPENDIX C

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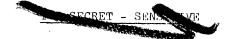
FROM:	JCS	•		
TO:	CINCPAC CSA	Ref a is JCS IN 89390		
10.			DISTRIBU SECDEF	Л-3 ИОТ'ГГ
INFO:	COMUSMACV	Ref b is JCS IN 13559	ASD/ISA	SACSA
	AMEMB SAIGON AMEMB BANGKOK	Ref c is JCS	STATE CJCS	DIA CNO
	AMEMB VIENTIANE	IN 47122	DJS SJCS	CSAF CMC
TOP SE	CRET LIMDIS JCS	JCS send,		
Subj:	PRAIRIE FIRE - Phase	e III (U)	•	
Refs:	a. COMUSMACV msg MAC b. CINCPAC msg 01001 c. COMUSMACV msg 151			
	This message in two p	parts.		1
	Part One for CINCPAC.			2
1.	Program for the	conduct of guerrilla		. 3
operat	ions in the Annamite	Mountain region of		4
southe	rn Laos contained in	reference a is approved		5
for co	ntinued planning, tra	ining, and discussion		6
with r	epresentatives of the	RVNAF and for execution		7
on ord	er of the JCS upon su	ecessful accomplishment		8
of pre	liminary steps.	•		9
2.	(TS) Authority is gra	nted to initiate		10
prelim	inary activity subjec	t to the following		11
guidan	ce:			12
	a. Operations will be	limited to the current		13
PRA	IRIE FIRE area of ope	rations.		1 ii
1	b. Reconnaissance and	contact with indigenous		15
per	sonnel may be carried	out.		16
(c. Recruitment, exfil	tration, and training of		17
ini	tial contact teams an	d cadre may commence.		18
(d. Trained personnel	may be reinfiltrated		19
tu 1	their native area to	conduct intelligence,	:	20
psyd	chological, and recru	iting activities.		21



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e. Phase I and II PRAIRIE FIRE operations may	1
support these initial steps as appropriate.	2
f. US Army Special Forces personnel, other than	3
those engaged in Phases I and II operations, will	4
not repeat not penetrate into Laos during this stage.	5
g. The JCS will be kept informed as to the progress	6
of the above activity.	7
3. Based upon the results of this preliminary	8
activity and upon your specific recommendation, the	9
Joint Chiefs of Staff will authorize the initiation of	10
guerrilla warfare in specific areas and for the infil-	11
tration of US Army Special Forces teams	12
4. (Requests for funds to support the above program	13
will be submitted through appropriate channels.	14
5. The additional US Army personnel required will	15
not be available for assignment on a PCS basis until	16
1 January 1968.	17
6. State concurs.	18
Part Two for CSA	1.9
7. Request that you prepare for deployment on PCS to	50
RVN the US Army personnel outlined in reference c, para 4 c,	21
commencing NLT 1 January 1968. Spaces for these personnel	22
are approved as an exception to the Program 4 manpower	23
ceiling. Gp-l	24

Writer: Lt Colonel R. B. Rheault, USA Eastern Division, SACSA Extension 76529



Appendix C