

CHRONOLOGICAL SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT
EVENTS CONCERNING THE LAOTIAN CRISIS,
SECOND INSTALLMENT: 1 FEBRUARY TO 31 MARCH 1961

HISTORICAL DIVISION
JOINT SECRETARIAT
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- 1 Feb The Department of State, in a circular cable, stated that, according to an officer of the British Embassy in Washington Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Sobolev had "emphasized" the need for an international conference on Laos. Reportedly, Sobolev told the British Ambassador to the USSR that the Soviet Government did not believe the ICC could operate without new instructions from a conference consisting of either the participants in the Geneva Conference of 1954 or a "larger group." In either case, according to Sobolev, the Soviet Government believed the Chinese Communists should be present at the conference to speak for themselves.
(S) Msg, SecState Circular, 1140, 1 Feb 61.
- 1 Feb Hanoi Tass reported that Prince Souphanouvong had asked the Geneva Co-Chairmen to convene without delay an international conference "analogous to [the] Geneva Conference in order [to] bring [an] end to foreign aggression in Laos and insure peace, independence and neutrality [to] Laos."
(OUO) Msg, Moscow to SecState, 1812, 1 Feb 61.
- 1 Feb To forestall Souvanna from possibly throwing in his lot with Kong Le and the Pathet Lao, the Secretary of State directed the US Ambassador to Cambodia to suggest to the British Ambassador that he advise Souvanna not to commit himself at a time when the new US Administration seemed about to evolve an important new policy towards Laos.
(S) Msg, SecState to Phnom Penh, 662, 1 Feb 61.
- 1 Feb CINCPAC informed the JCS that he concurred in the recommendation of CHPEO to approve Phoumi's request for funds and equipment for four new infantry battalions (see item 23 January). In CINCPAC's opinion, these additional forces were urgently needed to enable Phoumi to continue the offensive, consolidate areas under his control, and relieve, for training, FAL units then in combat.
(S) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 312254Z, 31 Jan 61 (rec'd 1 Feb 61).
- 1 Feb A survey by CHPEO revealed that only 30 of a former 193 French military personnel were still engaged in training and logistical activities for the FAL. "It is obvious," reported the PEO Chief, "that this progressive decrease in French training and advisory personnel has left a void which has had an adverse effect on FAL efficiency."
(S) Msg, CHPEO Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 80693, 1 Feb 61.
- 1 Feb The Deputy Secretary of Defense informed the Chairman, JCS, that the JCS proposal to install a MAAG in Laos (see item 14 January) "would not be in consonance with the overall approach of the United States toward solution of the Laos problem. Accordingly, the proposal . . . will be held in abeyance for the present." Representatives of the Defense and State Departments had considered the installation of a MAAG in Laos but, while recognizing the advantages of such a step, had concluded that anticipated political repercussions would outweigh them.

The Deputy Secretary recognized the desirability of increasing US responsibility for military training in Laos and assured the Chairman, JCS, that efforts would be made to reach agreements to that end with the Lao and French Governments.
(S) Memo, Deputy SecDef to CJCS, 1 Feb 61, 1st N/H to JCS 1992/890.

- 1 Feb In negotiations on the status of Seno Air Base the French Ambassador, according to an official of the French Foreign Office, was able to persuade Phoumi to postpone the scheduled Lao takeover of the base (see item 29 January) from 1 to 5 February. According to Phoumi, this takeover would be "symbolic" and would involve only buildings already the property of the Laotian Government. The French Government instructed the Commander of Seno to receive FAL forces amicably if they demanded access to the base on 5 February but to take no official cognizance of their presence.
(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1452, 1 Feb 61; (C) Msg, Paris to SecState, 3052, 1 Feb 61.
- 1 Feb The Australian representative presented to the SEATO Council of Representatives his Government's proposed answer to a request of the Laotian Government for a SEATO investigation of Communist military intervention in Laos (see item 22-23 January). The Australian plan called for an investigation by the Ambassadors to Laos of the SEATO nations. This investigation would seek to determine 1) how much war material had been delivered to Laos by Soviet planes, 2) the extent to which foreign Communist elements were present in the ranks of the Pathet Lao, and 3) the extent of deliveries of war material and personnel by land from North Vietnam.

Alexis Johnson, the US Ambassador to Thailand, reported that Thailand and Pakistan supported the Australian proposal wholeheartedly, while New Zealand was willing to accede if all other SEATO powers accepted it. France and Britain were opposed, the former "on principle" and the latter for fear of jeopardizing the negotiations concerning the ICC (see item 21 January). Ambassador Johnson stated that for the time being the US was "not able to take definite action."
(S) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 1350 and 1351, both 1 Feb 61.
- 2 Feb Chinese Communist Foreign Minister Chen Yi, in a speech in Peking, called for an international conference on Laos preceding any resumption of operations by the ICC. According to the US Consul General in Hong Kong, this was a reversal of the Chinese Communist position stated on 28 December 1960 that the ICC should be reconvened first, and only if it failed should an international conference be called.

At the same time, continued the US diplomat, the Communists were making a determined effort to strengthen the claims of legality of the Souvanna Phouma Government. Several recent reports emanating from Hanoi and Xieng Khouang stated that while "Premier Phouma was staying abroad," certain members of the Souvanna group were to "be in charge all affairs of state," and that Souvanna would return to Laos soon and "continue to assume [responsibility for] affairs of [the] country."
(C) Msg, Hong Kong to SecState, 1338, 4 Feb 61.
- 2 Feb A draft proposal intended to neutralize Laos with respect to the conflicts of the Cold War through a "Neutral Nations Commission" (NNC) was proposed to the Governmental Task Force on Laos by its Chairman, Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs J. Graham Parsons (see item 10 February for announcement of this policy to US Embassies).

The proposal, which included a basic concept and the specific steps for carrying it out, was presented in five parts, as follows:

- A. Circular "Concept" Message.
- B. Circular on Neutral Nations Commission.
- C. Circular on SEATO.
- D. Instruction to Moscow.
- E. Recommended Lines of Action, Objectives, and Time Table.

A. Circular "Concept" Message.

The US should, according to the draft proposal, explore the "feasibility of a 'neutral nations commission' centering around Cambodia and Burma with suitable flexibility for additions." These countries were selected because, though "neutral and troublesome," they were "anti-Communist domestically," wished a "non-Communist Laos in their own self-interest," and had "themselves taken initiatives consistent with [the] approach we have in mind." In addition, the Communist Bloc was "actively wooing them and would find it difficult [to] rebuff their efforts on behalf of peace."

The "heart" of the draft proposal was an "understanding" between the US and the USSR. Because the Soviet Union might feel that time favored the Communist cause in Laos, the US might have to bring military and political pressure to bear before an "understanding" with the USSR could be achieved.

To assure close collaboration between the US and its closest allies and to reassure the Asian allies, the US planned to propose, at a special meeting called for the purpose, that SEATO "undertake certain limited actions all short of SEATO intervention in Laos, but designed [to] show [that] SEATO [was] prepared [to] act if necessary."

Upon the receipt of a signal to "execute," US Ambassadors to SEATO Nations were to make a presentation to their host governments along the following lines: 1) urge active support of the Laotian Government of Boun Oum as the legitimate Government of Laos even though, ideally, it should be broadened to be more representative of the Lao people; 2) explain that the US conceived of Laos as a "neutral state, unaligned in her international relations" and without foreign military bases, foreign troops, or military alliances; and 3) state that the US had suggested to the Laotian Government that it proclaim the neutrality of Laos by a "declaration which all interested governments would be invited to respect."

The Ambassadors should then, according to the draft proposal, explain the "Neutral Nations Commission," giving as its duties the following: 1) to stop in Laos "all foreign military intervention . . . in contravention of international agreements and inconsistent with [the] status of Laos as a neutral;" 2) to bring about a "cease-fire and regroupment" of Pathet Lao forces in Sam Neua and Phong Saly Provinces; and 3) to establish machinery for supervision of "military material and equipment required for defense and maintenance [of] law and order."

The Ambassadors should also point out that, if the peaceful proposals failed, SEATO had an obligation to defend the "integrity of Laos and security of Southeast Asia which [the] outcome of the struggle in Laos will vitally affect."

The Ambassadors were also to state that the US would continue economic aid to Laos but would be prepared to withdraw its military training mission and submit its military assistance to control by the Neutral Nations Commission.

B. Circular on Neutral Nations Commission.

Under the draft proposal, King Savang Vathana was to invite Burma, Cambodia and Malaya to make up the Neutral Nations Commission. This invitation, issued through diplomatic channels, would also invite all other nations to respect the independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and neutralized status of Laos and to desist from and condemn "foreign intervention in Lao internal affairs . . . not permitted by international agreements."

Upon issuance of the Lao invitation, the US would undertake the following actions:

1. Issue a unilateral declaration of respect for Lao neutralization and support for the Neutral Nations Commission.
2. Seek similar declarations by all interested powers, including US allies and the USSR.
3. Seek, "by all possible means," to persuade Cambodia, Burma, and Malaya to accept the Lao invitation.
4. Seek UN Security Council action that would take note of the Lao invitation and authorize the UN Secretary General to provide appropriate assistance to the Neutral Nations Commission.

C. Circular on SEATO.

The US "has watched with growing concern for [the] future of SEATO and effect on Thailand and South Viet Nam of SEATO failure to act in [the] deteriorating Laos situation." However, there was little hope, according to the draft message, of agreement by the UK and France, and probably Australia and New Zealand, with policies which the US, Laos, Thailand, and Viet Nam "would regard as optimum." The US, therefore, should seek agreement within the SEATO Council of Representatives to a limited course of action comprised of the following:

1. Send the Secretary General of SEATO and/or a military group to Laos to determine whether the Lao Government could control the principal population and communication centers.
2. If the report was negative, convene the SEATO Council of Representatives to examine the nature of intervention by the Communist Bloc in Laos.
3. Seek agreement of the Council to a minimum response consisting of encouragement of the Lao Government to resist and the stationing of a US force (battle group/air squadron size) in Thailand under the SEATO flag.

D. Instruction to Moscow.

Under the draft proposal, the US Ambassador to the USSR was to invite the Soviet Government to cooperate with the US Government in achieving a neutralized Laos under the conditions set forth in the draft proposal.

E. Recommended Lines of Action, Objectives, and Timetable.

This portion of the draft proposal called for the continuation of military measures already decided upon (see item 23 January) and a timetable integrating, chronologically, all US actions. This portion also summarized the broad objectives of US policy in Laos already developed in the other parts of the draft proposal.

The Director of the Joint Staff, in a memorandum for the JCS, concluded that the State Department draft proposal, with modifications, was "acceptable from a military standpoint." The modifications proposed were as follows:

6. a. Insure Laos is not stripped of U.S. training and operational support without explicit simultaneous phase-in of neutral substitute agencies with comparable demonstrated capabilities.

b. Insure the Neutral Nations Commission will have means in fact to observe, control or inhibit Pathet Lao preparations for eventual takeover of Laos.

c. Insure that no military ultimatum is issued to the USSR prior to making necessary political and military preparations.

d. Insure that indication is given of long-term measures that must be initiated to reduce present Communist influence in Laos.

The Director of the Joint Staff recommended that the JCS "approve the above conclusions as a basis for further coordination on this subject."

(TS) "Proposed State Department Message," JMF, Laos;
(TS) Memo, Director of the Joint Staff to the JCS, "State Department Draft Proposal Concerning Laos," DJSM-136-61, 3 Feb 61.

2 Feb

CHPEO advised CINCPAC that "the greatly increased tempo of operations within [the] FAL makes it necessary to add materially to [the] PEO advisory staff." At the higher levels, particularly in Air Force and Engineer matters, additional personnel were urgently needed for planning and advisory functions. At the lower levels an increase in staff was required because of the growing number of geographical locations where the FAL needed logistic advice, and the increased requirements for maintenance and repair of equipment.

The vacuum created by the reduction of the French military advisory activities (see item 1 February) was, in the opinion of CHPEO, an additional reason for an augmentation of his staff.

(S) Msg, CHPEO Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 81318, 2 Feb 61.

3 Feb

The Soviet airlift from Hanoi to the Pathet Lao forces was reported to be continuing at the rate of two sorties a day. According to a Canadian military attache who had just returned from North Viet Nam, the quantity of material being airlifted appeared to be far in excess of the requirements for the defensive actions in which the Pathet Lao was engaged.

(C) Msg, Saigon to SecState, 1337, 3 Feb 61.

- 3 Feb The JCS approved CHPEO's request for an augmentation of PEO by nine US Army Special Forces teams (Monkhood) on a 180-day basis. It was estimated that these teams would arrive in Vientiane in increments of three teams each on 1 March, 1 April, and 1 May.
(S) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 990154, 3 Feb 61.
- 3 Feb The US military attache in Laos reported that according to the commander of the Laotian First Military Region (bordering on Burma) approximately 6,000-7,000 Chinese Nationalist troops had entered Laos from Burma between 28 and 30 January.
(S) Msg, USARMA Laos to DA, DA IN 81402, 3 Feb 61.
- 4 Feb The CHPEO advised CINCPAC that Phoumi was enthusiastic about a program for providing Thai technical specialist volunteers for the FAL (see item 23 January).

The CHPEO listed 385 military specialist billets which, in his opinion, were needed to provide necessary specialist and technical support to the FAL.
(S) Msg, CHPEO Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 81837, 4 Feb 61.
- 4 Feb The Secretary of Defense approved CINCPAC's request for 115 additional Filipino military technicians (see item 20 January) provided they were used not to replace personnel of the French Military Mission but "to supplement and improve the current effort in the logistic field."
(S) Msg, OSD (CM & TD) to CINCPAC, DEF 989769, 4 Feb 61.
- 4 Feb The Chinese Communist radio reported a statement by the Chinese Communist Vice Premier that "support by the Soviet Government to Laos in response to [the] request [of the] lawful government [of] Laos headed by Prince [Souvanna] Phouma is in accordance with international practice and is righteous action. . . . If [the] lawful Government of Laos . . . asks support from China, [the] Chinese Government too will certainly give it."
(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1471, 4 Feb 61.
- 4 Feb The strategic road junction of Routes 7 and 13 was taken by the FAL, according to the JCS Laos Situation Report. Recapture of this road junction placed in friendly hands the primary ground communication route between Vientiane and Luang Prabang for the first time since January and opened the way for a drive on the Communist-held Plaine des Jarres.
(TS) JCS Laos Sit Rep 32-61, 5 Feb 61.
- 4 Feb The British Ambassador to Cambodia, having agreed to use his influence with Souvanna (see item 1 February), obtained an interview with the former Lao Premier. In this interview Souvanna stated that he planned a brief visit "of one or two days in the 'near future' to the Pathet Lao-held areas of Phong Saly and the Plaine des Jarres to see 'troops and ministers loyal to me.'" Following this trip, Souvanna said, he planned to visit various world capitals, including Saigon, New Delhi, Cairo, Paris, London, and Moscow.

The British Ambassador reported that his arguments to postpone this visit to Pathet Lao territory because a new US policy on Laos appeared imminent had no effect. Souvanna, in the Ambassador's opinion, was still determined to go.
(S) Msgs, Phnom Penh to SecState, 981, 3 Feb 61, and 991, 6 Feb 61.

4 Feb Ambassador Brown reported to the Secretary of State that a Laotian takeover of Seno (see item 1 February) would involve the US in the French-Lao differences over the base. PEO logistics personnel had been assisting FAL operations at Seno for months. Also PEO training personnel might be required to visit FAL units moved to Seno.

In view of these anticipated difficulties the Ambassador requested guidance from the Department of State (see item 8 February).

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1472, 4 Feb 61.

5 Feb The Laotian Government installed several "Headquarters elements" in the airport passenger office and other minor facilities at Seno. According to a French Embassy officer in Vientiane, the French Ambassador had protested this "unilateral procedure" to the Laotian Government, but the French Government still hoped to "arrange matters quietly." (S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1480, 6 Feb 61; (U) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1480, 6 Feb 61; (U) Msg, Paris to SecState, 3121, 7 Feb 61.

6 Feb The Government of the Republic of China declared its opposition to either the reactivation of the ICC or a 14-Nation Conference as proposed by Prince Sihanouk. In an informal note handed to the US Ambassador, the Chinese Nationalist Government stated that either of these proposals would contain a "built-in mechanism of Communist domination" and would mean "abdication of free world leadership in Laos and pave the way for a final Communist takeover."

(C) Msg, Taipei to SecState, 453, 6 Feb 61.

6 Feb In response to a request from the President for a statement of the capability of the US to commit military forces to Laos, the Chairman, JCS submitted a study of "US Air and Sea Lift, Readiness and Posture of Laos," (derived from JCS 1992/912).

1992/912 (1) According to this paper, the US could introduce sufficient forces into Laos within 30 days to protect key cities, communication centers, and lines of communication and to establish a secure base for subsequent operations to defeat the Pathet Lao, provided there were no overt intervention by Communist China or North Viet Nam. If North Viet Nam intervened overtly, US forces would be able to fight delaying actions and probably would be able to hold Vientiane and southern Laos. If both North Viet Nam and Communist China intervened overtly, US forces in Laos would still be able to hold Vientiane and southern Laos, provided other US and allied forces took certain counteractions outside Laos that would directly affect operations in Laos.

Intervention by US forces to prevent a Communist conquest of Laos would, according to the JCS paper, initially reduce the over-all capabilities of the US to wage general and limited war. Assuming that military production were increased and partial mobilization carried out as a result of US intervention in Laos, this over-all capability would eventually increase.

(TS) Memo, CJCS to the President, "Air and Sea Lift, Readiness and Posture of Laos," 6 Feb 61, CJCS 091 Laos (1). (TS) JCS 1992/912, "Air and Sea Lift, Readiness and Posture of Laos," 3 Feb 61, JCS 9153.2/7000 (30 Jan 61)

6 Feb CHPEO cabled CINCPAC that Phoumi was organizing six special battalions in addition to the four for which US support had already been requested (see item 1 February). CHPEO also reported that he had informed Phoumi that the US Government had made no provision to pay or equip these six units; in addition, competent officers and noncommissioned officers would be difficult for Phoumi to obtain.

(On 7 February, CINCPAC concurred in the action taken by CHPEO.)

(S) Msg, CHPEO, Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 82068, 6 Feb 61.

6 Feb The FAL jumped off to seize the Plaine des Jarres by an attack on two fronts. Force Sam Sen Thai (SST) moved east from RJ 7 and 13, while Force Phou Phleng (PP) advanced north from Vang Vieng.

(TS) Msg, CHPEO to CINCPAC, DA IN 81972, 4 Feb 61.
JCS (TS) Laos Sitrep 37-61, 10 Feb 61.

7 Feb Force PP, attacking the Plaine des Jarres from the South, was stopped by an enemy blocking position at Ban Ta Vieng on the southern edge of the Plaine.

(TS) JCS Laos Sitrep 34-61, 7 Feb 61.

7 Feb CINCPAC recommended to the JCS that approval of "cognizant Washington, D.C. authorities" be obtained to allow the use of US aircraft to fly supplies for the FAL directly to Vientiane (see item 9 February). Under existing procedures, all military supplies for Laos had to be transhipped via CAT at Bangkok. Employment of CAT aircraft for this purpose resulted in inadequate airlift for necessary logistic support of FAL combat units.

(TS) Msgs, CINCPAC to JCS, DA IN 81190, 2 Feb 61, and 071820Z, 7 Feb 61.

7 Feb The military situation in Laos, as presented by the Chairman, JCS, to the Secretary of Defense, was as follows:

1. The Laotian Government controlled the main towns and cities of northern, southern, and western Laos except for the Phong Saly area in the north. Much of the countryside in these areas was heavily infiltrated by the Pathet Lao.

2. The Pathet Lao forces, combined with those of Kong Le, controlled the northeastern portion of the country including the Plaine des Jarres/Xieng Khouang areas. The Pathet Lao were also active in the northeast, attacking Muong Sai, the last RLG garrison in Phong Saly Province, and in the south in the Thakhek and Attapeu areas. In general, the Pathet Lao were not conducting unusually aggressive operations, but they were being supplied by Soviet airlift with material in excess of their needs for "normal operations" in the Plaine des Jarres.

3. The FAL was planning an offensive to retake the Plaine des Jarres. In addition, guerrilla forces of Meo mountain tribesmen were active south of Xieng Khouang.

(TS) Memo, CJCS to SecDef, "Status Report on Laos for the Secretary of Defense," 7 Feb 61, CJCS-091 Laos (1).

7 Feb The French Ambassador in Phnom Penh, acting under instructions from Paris, pointed out to Souvanna that his visit to Xieng Khouang at this juncture could be advantageously utilized by the Soviets as evidence that Souvanna supported their intervention. Souvanna replied, the US Ambassador

informed the Secretary of State, that he was aware of this possibility, but nevertheless he felt it was essential that he visit his supporters to counter the greater danger that they would become discouraged and join forces with the Pathet Lao.

(S) Msg, Phnom Penh to SecState, 1003, 8 Feb 61.

7 Feb

The UN Secretary General advised the US delegate to the UN that he had strongly advised the Lao delegates to the UN against an appeal to the Security Council unless they had convincing factual evidence of intervention to back up their charges.

The Secretary General had also informed the Lao delegates that he hoped their government would seek to become more truly representative. If Souvanna could not be brought into the government, advised the Secretary General, at least some of his followers should be included so that "the other side" could not convert Souvanna into "another Lumumba."

(S) Msg, New York to SecState, 2136, 8 Feb 61.

8 Feb

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 080340Z, 8 Feb 61.

8 Feb

In response to Ambassador Brown's request for guidance on the Seno problem (see item 4 February) the Secretary of State suggested that the Ambassador point out to Phoumi "that in taking action on Seno, [the] RLG would be well advised to keep three points in mind":

1. SEATO action to oppose any Communist aggression against Laos short of overt armed attack would require unanimous consent. Alienation of France by Laos would not facilitate such agreement.

2. The presence of French troops at Seno was recognized by international agreement. Forcing them off Seno might cause the French Government to withdraw all its troops from Laos, thus placing the US in an extremely difficult position because the presence of the PEO was still tied to the existence of the French Military Mission.

3. At a time when the Laotian Government needed all the support it could get, it was unwise to alienate a power which had always been friendly to Laos. Such action might also alienate other powers.

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 829, 8 Feb 61.

8 Feb

Ambassador Brown and his Country Team concurred in the recommendation of CHPEO that his staff be increased by 73. This increase was necessary, in the opinion of the Country Team, because of the increased responsibilities assigned the PEO (see item 26 January) and because of the gradual freeze-out of the French Military Training Mission.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1489, 8 Feb 61.

8 Feb

The Canadian Government, according to the text of its note as published by the Cambodian press, replied to Prince Sihanouk's proposal for a 14-Nation Conference by stating its preference for reactivation of the ICC. In the opinion of the Canadians, the most "rapid and most generally

acceptable means of reducing tensions" in Laos would be through the "existing organism, that is ICC Laos." The Canadian Government, therefore, was prepared to resume its duties in the ICC if requested to do so by the Geneva Co-Chairmen and if the King of Laos agreed to it.

(U) Msg, Phnom Penh to SecState, 1008, 9 Feb 61.

9 Feb According to the text published in the Cambodian press, Prime Minister Nehru of India replied favorably to Sihanouk's 14-nation proposal. But, in Nehru's opinion, the ICC should meet, not as an alternative to the conference, but as an action to prevent "progressive deterioration" of the situation in Laos while the conference was being organized. The Indian Government also wanted any new conference to be a "continuation of [the] old Geneva Conference with new terms of reference" because to break away from it would leave "no sound basis" for approaching the question.

(U) Msg, Phnom Penh to SecState, 1019, 10 Feb 61.

9 Feb Souvanna, in a letter to the US Ambassador to Cambodia, expressed his approval for a 14-Nation Conference as proposed by Sihanouk. According to Souvanna, only such a conference could end the civil war in Laos in view of the aggravated situation there. The ICC, in Souvanna's opinion, could be useful but only as an agent to carry out the decisions of the conference. As its members had already worked in Laos, the ICC could, unlike a new organization, begin its work immediately without losing precious time in familiarizing itself with Lao affairs.

(C) Msg, Phnom Penh to SecState, 1013, 9 Feb 61.

9 Feb The JCS informed CINCPAC that the use of US aircraft to lift supplies for the FAL to Vientiane was not approved (see item 7 February). Use of Udorn in Thailand by US aircraft carrying military equipment to Laos was approved, and CINCPAC was directed to determine: 1) the capability of Udorn to support FAL operations; 2) facilities required to make Udorn capable of supporting planned operations; and 3) negotiations with Thailand required for use of Udorn.

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 990025, 9 Feb 61.

9 Feb The JCS recommended to the Secretary of Defense that US Laotian Training Advisory and Assistance Groups (LTAGs) continue to train FAL units without a formal agreement with the French. If the French objected, the US Government should negotiate with the French Government for an agreement while the LTAGs continued their activities in Laos.

LTAGs had been established to train the FAL under a US/French agreement signed on 28 May 1959. For purposes of cover, these US training teams were placed under nominal French supervision, but there was no actual control or military command involved. Because of the coup by Kong Le on 9 August 1960, negotiations to extend the agreement beyond the expiration date of 1 September 1960 to 1 June 1961 were stopped. The LTAGs, however, continued to train FAL forces. More important, in the opinion of the JCS, the teams had provided advice and leadership without which the FAL would have been ineffective.

(TS) JCS 1992/923, Laotian Training, Advisory and Assistance Groups, 9 Feb 61.

10 Feb

The Secretary of State, in three circular messages to US Embassies, supplies "background and rationale for use as appropriate with government to which accredited" in order to explain the US concept of a neutralized Laos whose neutrality would be safeguarded by a Neutral Nations Commission. Two of these circulars had been under consideration in preliminary draft form as "Circular Concept Message" and "Circular on Neutral Nations Commission" (see item 2 February). Now issued as Circulars 1190 and 1191, they differed only slightly from the preliminary draft version.

A significant modification of the early draft proposal was the following qualification to be met before the US agreed to submit its military aid or that of its allies to the supervision of a neutral commission:

We would expect RLG to insist that there be real evidence of effectiveness of control and supervision which would deny clandestine support before assistance from ourselves, French, and other anti-Communist sources would be subject to restriction.

The third circular was a declaration of neutrality to be offered to King Savang in the hope that he would issue it. This text stated the determination of Laos to remain sovereign and independent, reaffirmed the traditional Lao policy of neutrality, and invited Cambodia, Burma and Malaya to form a commission under the leadership of Prince Norodom Sihanouk of Cambodia "to direct its efforts toward ensuring Laos against foreign intervention both overt and covert."

(S) SecState Circulars 1190, 1191, 1192, 11 Feb 61.

10 Feb

The British Government was impressed by the NNC concept and willing to support it at home and abroad, the Foreign Secretary informed Secretary of State Rusk. But the British doubted it would work out exactly as described, and pointed out that the Communists were committed to a conference and were therefore likely to argue that it would be necessary to hold one in order to give international approval to the NNC. In addition, neutral countries might also feel that a conference agreement between the great powers would be necessary. (The British shared the US desire to avoid a conference.)

The British were also convinced that the Boun Oum regime was unacceptable to both the Communists and the neutrals. A solution to the Laotian problem could only be reached, according to the British, "on the basis of a government of national unity which at least includes Souvanna Phouma and is committed to return to [the] sort of arrangement we had under Vientiane Agreements."

(S) Msg, SecState, Circular, 1196, 13 Feb 61.

11 Feb

Premier Chou En-Lai stated in a letter to Prince Sihanouk that the Chinese Communist Government agreed to the necessity for a 14-nation conference to end foreign interference and restore peace in Laos. As reported by the US Consul General in Hong Kong, the Chinese Premier stated that the conference was needed to "make new provisions on tasks and function" of a reactivated ICC.

(OUO) Msg, Hong Kong to SecState, 1388, 17 Feb 61.

11 Feb

The Secretary of State informed Ambassador Johnson in Thailand that the US supported an informal British suggestion for an investigation of Communist intervention in Laos by the SEATO Committee of Security Experts rather than the Australian plan for an investigation by the Ambassadors of the SEATO nations in Vientiane (see item 1 February).
(S) Msg, SecState to Bangkok, 1197, 11 Feb 61.

11 Feb

FAL Force SST, attacking east along Route 7, was held up by an enemy defensive position on the Phou Soung Summit, about four miles east of RJ 7 and 13.
(TS) JCS Laos Sitrep 38-61, 11 Feb 61; (TS) CHPEO Laos PIR No. 2, 6 Mar 61, DA IN 90418.

12 Feb

[REDACTED]
(S) Msg, CHJUSMAG Thailand to CINCPAC, DA IN 84137, 12 Feb 61; (S) Msg, CHJUSMAG Thailand to CHPEO Laos, 171230Z Feb 61.

12 Feb

The US Ambassador to Laos, Winthrop Brown, delivered a memorandum to the Laotian Government setting forth the US proposal for a neutralized Laos to be achieved through a Neutral Nations Commission (see item 10 February).
(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1530, 15 Feb 61.

13 Feb

The US Ambassador to Thailand reported that the Foreign Minister of Thailand had reacted favorably to the US proposal for a Neutral Nations Commission (see item 10 February). The Thai diplomat doubted, however, that Sihanouk would accept membership on the NNC, even though he did not want a Communist Laos on the borders of Cambodia. In his opinion, Sihanouk would certainly check first with Peking and Moscow, and the Communists then would ask the Cambodian leader to query the RLG on its attitude toward incorporating the PL into the government. If there was to be any hope whatever of obtaining Communist acquiescence in the NNC concept, the RLG must be assisted and advised in making a carefully considered reply to the Communists on this point. The reply should not constitute a flat rejection but, without making any commitments, should "hold out some bait" to the Communist.
(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1441, 14 Feb 61.

14 Feb

In remarks to the US Delegates to the United Nations, the Secretary General of the UN expressed his belief that the US proposal for neutralizing Laos was "helpful" and "constructive." He commented, however, that Laos lacked either a well-established tradition of neutrality or physical strength to enforce neutrality. A way would therefore have to be found, perhaps along the lines of Austria, to obtain international acceptance of Laotian neutrality. The Secretary General also stated that a broadening of the present RLG was important and that every effort should be made to persuade Souvanna to take part.
(S) Msg, NY to SecState, 2200, 14 Feb 61.

14 Feb

During a presentation by Assistant Secretary of State Parsons on the US Neutral Nations Commission plan (see item 10 February), the Indian Minister to the US said that

the three proposed members of the NNC were weak, and they could not guarantee the neutrality of Laos without support by a larger ring of powers. Furthermore, said the Indian diplomat, he had gathered the impression from his Soviet colleagues in Washington that if Laos developed into another Korea, the Chinese Communists would "necessarily control" the situation. However, the Soviets had hinted that so far they were still in command.

(S) Msg, SecState to New Delhi, 2199, 15 Feb 61.

14 Feb

The Secretary of State explained the US concept of a neutral Laos (see item 10 February) to the Australian, British, Canadian, French, New Zealand, Pakistani, Philippine, Japanese, Vietnamese, and Thai representatives in Washington. In an informal note, the Secretary explained the US concept of a neutral Laos, "unaligned in international relations but free to exercise [the] sovereign right to manage [its] own affairs and to provide for its national integrity." Such a neutralized status would, according to the note, prohibit foreign bases or foreign troops on Lao soil except as permitted by previous agreements.

This neutralized status would be supervised by a temporary international commission centered around Cambodia and Burma. It would be established at the invitation of the King of Laos and would be reported to the UN in "some appropriate way." The responsibilities of the Commission would be to "arrange for cessation of all foreign military intervention" in Laos through effective supervision over military arms and equipment brought into the country. In the event that international neutralization did not bring about the hoped-for peace within the country, the Lao Government could request the aid of the Commission in stopping hostilities.

The US was prepared, according to the note, to have its military assistance screened by the Commission and to withdraw its military training teams when a competent neutral training mission was in place and able to perform its functions.

(S) SecState Circular, 1208, 14 Feb 61.

14 Feb

The US Government, in a joint State/Defense message, informed Ambassador Brown that the recommendation of the CHPEO for an increase in the FAL to 32,522 men was approved. This increase was to provide four additional infantry battalions, supporting artillery, and special forces operational detachments with necessary command elements (see items 23 January and 1 February).

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 868, 14 Feb 61.

14 Feb

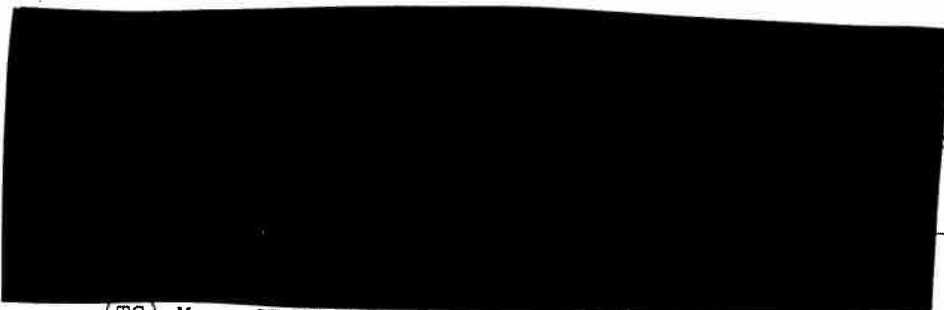
Ambassador Johnson reported that, at a meeting of the SEATO Council of Representatives, the British representative had proposed that SEATO limit its response to the Lao request for an investigation of Communist intervention (see item 22 January) to calling a meeting of the Council of Security Experts in Bangkok to "'analyze various national contributions' and prepare an assessment." Ambassador Johnson then suggested an amendment calling for the SEATO Council of Representatives to offer the services of the Security Experts to the Laotian Government for the purpose of making an investigation in Laos.

All representatives except the British and French had favored the US amendment. The British then suggested a

return to the Australian proposal (see item 1 February), and Johnson, hoping to get some action without further delay, had agreed to accept if all other representatives would do the same. The French refused, however, so no reply to the RLG request for an investigation could be agreed to.

(S) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 1439 and 1440, 14 Feb 61.

15 Feb



(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, DA IN 84828, 15 Feb 61.

15 Feb

The Canadian Government expressed a "good deal of sympathy" for the US general approach to the Laotian problem displayed in the MNC proposal. Particularly encouraging, said the Canadian Minister in reporting the reactions of his government to the Department of State, was the recognition in the US proposal that the concept of neutrality for Laos required more than a unilateral declaration to bring stability to the area while maintaining the independence and integrity of the country.

The Canadian Minister also emphasized his government's recognition of the need to broaden the Laotian Government. In addition, the Canadian Government wished to know what relation the new measures, if put into force, would have to the Geneva settlement and what effect they would have on the ICC.

(S) Msg, SecState to Ottawa, G-53, 16 Feb 61.

15 Feb



(S) Msgs, CHJUSMAG Thailand to JCS, 131035Z and 151125Z Feb 61.

15 Feb

CINCPAC dropped all forces earmarked for and in support of JTF 116 to Defense Condition 4.

(TS) JCS Laos Sitrep 42-61, 15 Feb 61.

15 Feb

King Savang Vathana stated to Ambassador Brown his approval in principle of the US proposal for a Neutral Nations Commission (see items 10, 12 February) but refused to make a public declaration on his own initiative as requested by the US. The King expressed his views during an interview at which the Ambassador presented the US plan. Reporting the results of this meeting to the Secretary of State, Ambassador Brown explained that the King did not wish to undermine the parliamentary procedures of his country by making a declaration or issuing an invitation on his own authority. The Ambassador had explained that the US had in mind a procedure comparable to the British speech from the throne in which the monarch stated the

policy of his government and, by announcing it himself, gave it the support and backing of the throne.

The King had proposed India, Burma, and Indonesia as members of the Neutral Nations Commission. The Ambassador, however, had urged that Cambodia, as the nation with the most to fear from a Communist Laos, be invited to accept membership. He had also expressed US concern that India, while professedly neutral, usually sided with the Communists, and that Indonesia might be tempted to favor the Communists to gain Soviet support against the Dutch on the West Irian question.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1530, 15 Feb 61.

15 Feb

General Phoumi informed Ambassador Brown that the Laotian Cabinet had "almost completely accepted" the US proposal for a Neutral Nations Commission. In a message to the Secretary of State, the Ambassador reported that, according to Phoumi, the Laotian Government planned to seek final approval of the plan on 16 February at a meeting of the Council of Ministers presided over by the King. Phoumi then planned to fly to Phnom Penh and offer Souvanna a cabinet post. If he accepted, the National Assembly would be convened in special session at which a politically broader government would be presented. At this same session Phoumi planned for the King to make a speech from the throne presenting the neutral commission proposal and issuing invitations for participation in the Commission.

The Ambassador had replied by repeating the arguments made to the King in favor of inclusion of Cambodia on the commission and against India and Indonesia (see item 15 February). Phoumi appeared to understand, according to the Ambassador, but did not indicate whether or not he agreed.

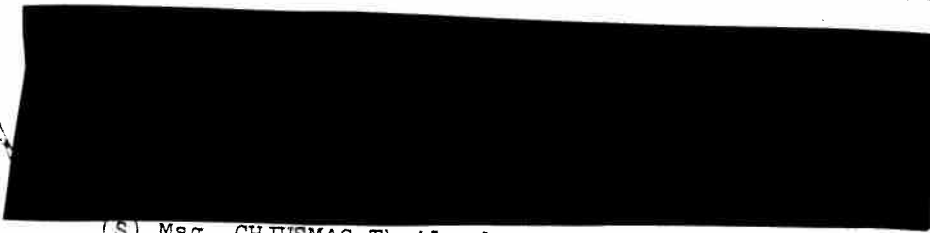
(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1528, 15 Feb 61.

15 Feb

The Secretary of State explained that, by "broadening" the Lao Government, the US meant "inclusion of all non-Communist elements." In a circular message to US diplomatic posts, the Secretary pointed out that inclusion of Pathet Lao representatives in the government would be "unwise," as they would, in accordance with standard Communist practice, spread their influence within the government far out of proportion to their numbers.

(S) Msg, SecState Circular 1214, 15 Feb 61.

15 Feb



(S) Msg, CHJUSMAG Thailand to CINCPAC, 151355Z Feb 61.

16 Feb

The French Government concurred in the general concept of the NNC plan (see item 10 February), the French Minister in Washington informed the Department of State. But the

French expressed grave concern that the schedule in the plan would not permit sufficient time for a US-British-French approach to the USSR in order to gain Soviet acceptance of it. A "broadening" of the Laotian Government should also be carried out, in the opinion of the French, as a prerequisite to putting into effect the NNC proposal. In addition, the French believed that the Laotian Government should relate any new neutrality proposal to the Geneva Agreement, as it was the only existing paper on Laos agreed to by the Soviets and the Chinese Communists. The French also questioned whether sufficient consideration had been given to the practical aspects of the Neutral Nations Commission, such as logistical support and finance.

In response to these points, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs advised the French Minister that the US had grave doubts regarding the wisdom of a tri-partite approach to the USSR. Such a step could have the following adverse results:

- 1) It could convince the Soviets that the entire concept was being stage-managed by a "white club" and that the Laotians were only puppets.
- 2) It could cause the Soviet Government to respond by offering its own alternative which would then lead to endless negotiations.

With regard to "broadening" the Laotian Government, the Deputy Assistant Secretary pointed out that Phoumi was arranging to make the supreme gesture of going to Phnom Penh to seek reconciliation with Souvanna. Therefore, "broadening" attempts were taking place simultaneously with plans for launching the NNC. It was pointed out to the French Minister that his Government could help by using its influence and connections to persuade Souvanna to accept Phoumi's gesture as genuine. The French Government could also assist by urging Sihanouk to accept the vital role of Chairman of the NNC.

(S) Msg, SecState to Paris, 3368, 17 Feb 61.

16 Feb

The most important obstacle to Sihanouk's willingness to serve on the NNC appeared to be the emphasis the plan placed on recognizing the presently constituted RLG, the US Ambassador in Phnom Penh reported to Secretary Rusk. The Cambodian Chief of State regarded the RLG as lacking popular support. In his opinion the RLG although technically invested constitutionally, had actually been

"imposed" on Laos by the US and was entirely dependent on the latter's support. Sihanouk's current position was that a fresh start, "from zero," should be made to form a government of national unity that would be truly representative of the Lao people. Therefore Ambassador Trimble believed that unless the base of the present RLG was greatly broadened, and included Souvanna, the Cambodian Chief of State would be unwilling to participate in the Neutral Nations Commission. Further, declared Trimble, Sihanouk would probably insist that the establishment of a more broadly-based government should precede rather than follow the creation of the NNC.

(S) Msg, Phnom Penh to SecState, 1051, 16 Feb 61.

16 Feb Phoumi informed Ambassador Brown that the Laotian Council of Ministers had decided that the King would broadcast a statement of Lao neutrality on 19 February. The statement would, according to Phoumi, request support of neutral nations but would not issue specific invitations to join the Neutral Nations Commission. Invitations to Cambodia and Burma would be announced by the Laotian Government at a press conference following the King's speech on the 19th.

According to Phoumi, the Council had not decided what position to offer Souvanna nor had it discussed reorganization to broaden the government. Brown cautioned Phoumi that the offer to Souvanna should be "sincere and respectable," to prevent the burden of refusal from falling on the Lao Government rather than Souvanna.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1541, 16 Feb 61.

16 Feb The Secretary of State informed US diplomatic posts concerned with the Laos crisis that the US believed that "specific mention of Malaya as well as Cambodia and Burma" should be included in both the royal address and the Lao Government invitation to participate in the Neutral Nations Commission (see item 10 February).

(S) Msg, SecState Circular 1219, 16 Feb 61.

16 Feb The British Foreign Office informed the US Embassy in London that it had instructed its Ambassador in Phnom Penh to do his utmost to persuade Souvanna to respond favorably to Phoumi's offer to join the Boun Oum government and help to bring about a cease-fire and the neutrality of Laos. However, the Foreign Office was apprehensive, the US Minister to Great Britain reported, that Souvanna would not bring himself to join a government which had revolted against him. Further, the British Ambassador would be "up against tough competition" in the Soviet Ambassador who had been seeing Souvanna regularly. If Souvanna rejected the British Ambassador's plea, he was then to urge Souvanna at least not to close the door on Phoumi in a way that would make further attempts to protect Laos "from civil war, or worse, impossible."

In British Foreign Office opinion, reported the US minister, the best way to get Souvanna to join the new

effort in Laos would be to form an entirely new government that would include persons from whom he was not so completely estranged as he was from the present RLG. The Minister stated that when an Embassy Officer had voiced the opinion that to dismantle the Boun Oum government at this time might invite catastrophic demoralization of the FAL, the British Southeast Asia Chief replied that he did not think the FAL cared very much what happened so long as it did not have to fight.

(C) Msg, London to SecState, 3301, 16 Feb 61.

16 Feb

In response to a request from the President, the Chairman, JCS, submitted the following estimate of the maximum number of Communist Bloc military forces that could be introduced into Laos within 30 days:

1. Ground forces.

15 Viet Minh divisions	105,000 men
8 Chinese Communist divisions	48,000 men
3 Chinese Communist parachute battalions	<u>3,000 men</u>
Total ground	156,000 men

2. Air forces.

Chinese Communist jet fighters	340
Chinese Communist jet light bombers	<u>125</u>
Total aircraft	465

This estimate was of the total military force that the Communist bloc could commit to Laos within 30 days and did not take into account such factors as military objectives, geographical limitations, or competing requirements for the forces listed. For instance, it would be unrealistic for the Viet Minh to commit their whole force to Laos in view of their internal security problems and the danger of possible attack by Viet Nam.

(S) Memo, CJCS to President, "Maximum Bloc Forces in Laos," 16 Feb 61, CJCS-091 Laos (1).

16 Feb

The SEATO Council of Representatives approved the Australian plan, as amended by the US, for an investigation of Communist intervention in Laos by the SEATO-nation Ambassadors to Laos (see item 1 February). The US amendment provided that the investigation take place only at the invitation of the Laotian Government and was adopted to meet the objections of Ambassador Brown, who feared that a SEATO investigation might side-track the RLG from proceeding with the NNC proposal. A requirement that the Laotian Government initiate action would, according to Brown, make the investigation less likely.

(S) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 1460 and 1461, and (S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1535, 16 Feb 61.

16 Feb

The Secretary of State informed Ambassador Brown that the US policy with regard to Chinese Nationalist irregulars in Laos (see item 3 February) was to obtain the withdrawal to Taiwan of those still under the control of the Nationalist Government and to resettle the remainder in small groups in Laos and Thailand. To further this policy,

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the Secretary directed the Ambassador to urge the RLG to make clear to the Nationalist Government its displeasure over the presence of the irregulars in Laos.

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 878, 16 Feb 61.

17 Feb

Australian Prime Minister Menzies informed the US Ambassador that the NNC concept was "imaginative and constructive" and that his government would give it full support. However, he posed the same three questions that his Secretary of External Affairs had raised in a discussion with the Ambassador two days earlier.

According to the US Ambassador these points were as follows: 1) the Australians were doubtful whether the neutrals involved, particularly Sihanouk, would accept the invitation since it presupposed acceptance of the Boun Oum government. Further, they believed that the neutrals, before undertaking the proposed task would insist on some broadening of the RLG, or at least some assurance that the Boun Oum government was not to be regarded as immutable; 2) the Australians had pointed out that the three neutrals involved were all small and relatively insignificant countries, and had questioned the caliber of the commissioners the neutrals could provide in relation to the magnitude of the tasks confronting them; 3) and finally, the Australian Government had stated that much of the success of the plan depended upon the attitude of the Communist Bloc.

The US Ambassador also reported that the Secretary of External Affairs, expressing surprise at the choice of Sihanouk as the central figure in the plan, had questioned whether he was sufficiently responsible and reliable for the task.

(S) Msg, SecState to Canberra, 455, 18 Feb 61; (S) Msg, Canberra to SecState, 482, 15 Feb 61.

17 Feb

The New Zealand Government stated that it agreed with the NNC concept and would give it full support. However, the New Zealand Minister in stating the position of his Government to the Department of State made the following comments:

1) Burma and Cambodia might not accept membership on the commission unless a prior big power agreement was secured, and Cambodia especially might insist on a 14-nation meeting. It might be necessary, therefore, to accept a conference, if to do so would remove the only "stumbling block" in the way of the success of the plan.

2) The New Zealand Government had reservations about the Commission membership and considered it might be advantageous to include India.

3) The RLG should be broadened.

The Deputy Assistant Secretary for Far Eastern Affairs informed the Minister that the US would be reluctant to agree to an international conference even if refusal to agree were the only obstacle to the success of the NNC plan. Turning to the question of the Commission's membership, the Deputy Assistant Secretary said that India's association with the ICC and its attitude toward the RLG almost precluded its being a member of the NNC. In conclusion, Mr. Steeves pointed out that everyone agreed

on broadening the RLG, and he told the New Zealand Minister that Phoumi was planning to offer Souvanna a post as Laotian Foreign Minister.

(S) Msg, SecState to Wellington, 332, 17 Feb 61.

17 Feb The US proposed to the British that the UK make the first presentation of the NNC plan (see item 10 February) to the Soviet Government. In making this proposal to the British Ambassador to the US, Assistant Secretary Parsons stated that the US Government had decided against a joint demarche with Britain and France because it would look too much like a "white man's club."

(S) Msg, SecState Circular 1229, 17 Feb 61.

18 Feb The British Ambassador to the US informed Assistant Secretary Parsons that, unless the Soviets gave their reply on the ICC before 20 February, the British Government preferred that the US rather than the UK contact the Soviets first in support of the Neutral Nations Commission proposal. The US agreed and informed the British Ambassador that the NNC proposal would be presented to the Soviet Ambassador in Washington on 20 February.

(S) Msg, SecState Circular Unnumbered, 18 Feb 61.

18 Feb

[REDACTED]
(S) Msg, CHJUSMAG Thailand to CHPEO Laos DA IN 86152, 18 Feb 61

18 Feb

CINCPAC drew the attention of the CHJUSMAG, Thailand, and CHPEO, Laos, to the part of the NNC proposal (see items 2, 10 February) that "contained the thought that Lao training could be conducted primarily [REDACTED] In CINCPAC's opinion, this idea was put forth by the "State Department Planners" either "in the context of their latest political plan which would eventually neutralize Laos and remove PEO from the scene," [REDACTED]

CINCPAC directed the addressees to make the following assumptions:

1. That a full-scale MAAG would not be authorized for Laos but that the PEO operation would continue.
2. That, in order to insure future political stability in Laos, US military objectives continued to be to aid the FAL in maintaining internal security, to conduct delaying operations against external aggression, and to prevent seizure of Laos by the Communists.

Having made these assumptions, the addressees were requested to comment on how training of the FAL should be conducted in the future (see item 23 February).

(S) Msg, CINCPAC to Chiefs JUSMAG Thailand and PEO Laos, 182010Z Feb 61.

18 Feb

The Commonwealth Secretary in New Delhi asked the following four questions in regard to the NNC, Ambassador Bunker

informed the Secretary of State:

1) Who was going to determine what arms importations were "legal?"

2) Would Souvanna be asked to join the RLG?

3) How were "the others" to be brought into support of the plan?

4) Would Sihanouk be informed in advance of King Vathana's declaration?

The US Ambassador said he had not answered these questions in exact detail for he wished to avoid as much as possible the GOI's "ever-ready suspicion of US dictating Lao policy."

(C) Msg, New Delhi to SecState, 1758, 19 Feb 61.

18 Feb

The Soviet Government informed the British Ambassador in Moscow that it favored an international conference on Laos to provide a new basis on which the ICC could function. As reported to the Department of State by the British Embassy in Washington, the Soviet position was that changed conditions since the Geneva Conference of 1954 called for a new international gathering, either of the type called for by Sihanouk (see item 1 January) or like the Geneva Conference.

According to the British Embassy, the Soviet Government gave the British Ambassador in Moscow two draft messages. The first message was an invitation from the Co-chairmen of the Geneva Conference (Great Britain and the USSR) to the US, Canada, Burma, Thailand, and South Vietnam calling for an international conference to give the ICC new instructions. The second draft message was from the Co-chairmen to Nehru asking him to convene the ICC in New Delhi or some other convenient place where it would consider what further powers it would require to perform its assigned functions effectively.

(S) Msg, SecState Circular 1241, 19 Feb 61.

18 Feb

Souvanna Phouma reacted favorably to the presentation of the NNC concept by US Ambassador Garner in Cambodia; however, Souvanna appeared "deaf" to British urging that he take part in a broadened Boun Oum government (see item 16 February). The US Ambassador to Cambodia, in reporting on the Souvanna-Garner conversation to the Secretary of State, said that Souvanna also indicated that he still favored a national union government with PL participation, but he stated that a "non political" one headed by the King would be acceptable. He envisaged the latter arrangement as an interim measure until new elections could be held, perhaps in three to four months.

(S) Msg, Phnom Penh to SecState, 1056, 18 Feb 61.

19 Feb

King Savang appealed to the peoples of the world to respect the neutrality of Laos and invited the governments of Cambodia, Burma, and Malaya to form a Neutral Nations Commission with the mission of "denouncing all foreign intervention . . . which would result in imperiling of the kingdom's independence integrity and neutrality."

The King's speech followed closely the content of the draft provided him by the US (see item 10 February)

except that it did not invite Sihanouk to head the Neutral Nations Commission.

Ambassador Brown reported to the Secretary of State that he had been told by the Laotian Foreign Minister that, while the King favored a reorganized government, Phoumi and others opposed it for fear they would lose their jobs as ministers.

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1553, 18 Feb 61, and 1561, 19 Feb 61.

19 Feb CINCPAC approved a recommendation of the CHPEO [redacted] assume responsibility for support of all Meo guerrilla forces (see item 21 February). These forces, according to CHPEO, consisted of 2,000 Meo and some additional tribesmen. MAP support had been given the authorized 2,000 for initial issue of equipment. [redacted] with few exceptions, provided resupply for this group and all supply for the guerrillas in excess of the authorized 2,000.

(S) Msgs, CHPEO Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 86158, and CINCPAC to CHPEO Laos, DA IN 86161, both 19 Feb 61.

20 Feb The Secretary of State called in the Soviet Ambassador and told him that the US Government hoped the USSR would permit the Laotian Government and Neutral powers of South-east Asia to "work out [a] solution which will minimize controversy and permit prompt implementation" in Laos. The Secretary said that the new US Administration wished to see Laos "independent, a genuine neutral unaligned in its international relations but free to exercise its sovereign right to manage its own affairs and to provide for its national integrity." The US Government was, therefore, prepared to cooperate fully to help carry out the proposals of the King of Laos for neutralizing his country (see items 17, 18 February), and it hoped the Soviet Union would do the same.

In response to the Soviet proposal for an international conference to work out a settlement of the Lao situation (see item 18 February), the Secretary said that the US was opposed because such a conference would be "public and stimulate debate and would not be as conducive to [a] settlement as [a] quieter approach." (See item 28 February for the Soviet reply.)

(C) Msg, SecState Circular, 1265, 22 Feb 61.

20 Feb Vietnamese Foreign Minister Mau declared that the NNC was a good approach to the peaceful settlement of the Laotian problem. It would be difficult, he told US Ambassador Durbrow, for the Communists to continue an airlift and other aid to Laos if a NNC could confirm the facts.

The Vietnamese Foreign Minister was also pleased that King Savang had made such a firm appeal. He was convinced that all important Laotian leaders, having failed to work out a solution themselves, were now looking to the King for guidance. But Mau was not certain whether Souvanna would accept a position in the Boun Oum regime. In his opinion it was imperative that Souvanna be included in the government as a Cabinet member, but not as Premier.

The Vietnamese Foreign Minister agreed with Ambassador Durbrow that basically Sihanouk feared the Communists, and

he tended to concur that the Burmese had the same attitude. Although Mau initially questioned why India was not a member of the NNC, he subsequently agreed that the RLG as well as other western powers might not desire Indian participation in view of India's record on the ICC in Laos and Vietnam.

In conclusion, the Vietnamese Foreign Minister declared that it was important for all Southeast Asian countries to work together to prevent the Communists from taking over in Laos. If they were successful there, he said, they would try the same tactics in other countries.

(S) Msg, Saigon to SecState, 1385, 20 Feb 61.

20 Feb

The Philippine Government, in an aide-memoire given to the US Ambassador in Manila, said that the neutralization of Laos under the NNC held the promise of a feasible peaceful solution. However, the government had certain misgivings regarding the US proposal. An NNC constituted only on the invitation of the RLG, the note said, would be impotent to deal with non-compliance from within or without. In addition, the permanence of Laotian neutrality rested on such undependable factors as the reaction of the USSR, the likelihood of a Viet Minh agreement, and the inclusion of Souvanna and the PL in the government.

The Philippine Government also believed that the use of neutral nations such as Burma and Cambodia in the NNC would give respectability to the theory of neutralism, which could demoralize US allies in Asia.

The Philippine note suggested that the neutralization of Laos could be accomplished more directly and effectively by a United Nations Commission. The aide-memoire further noted that the NNC was outside the SEATO context, thereby diminishing SEATO influence. This loss of influence could be avoided by using a UN Commission, which would function in the same manner as the NNC but have the advantage of being a neutral body under higher authority than SEATO.

(S) Msg, Manila to SecState, 939, 20 Feb 61.

20 Feb

The Malayan Prime Minister declared that his country would be willing to be a member of the NNC (see item 10 February) reported the US Ambassador to the Secretary of State. He doubted, however, that the Communists would find a solidly anti-Communist Malaya acceptable as a member of the NNC, particularly when his government had just recently furnished arms to Vietnam to fight the Communists there.

(S) Msg, Kuala Lumpur to SecState, unnumbered [Control 11926], 20 Feb 61.

21 Feb

The Secretary of State informed the US diplomatic posts in countries concerned with the Laos crisis of the principal reservations expressed by governments consulted on the NNC proposal. He listed the Department responses thereto, to be used in discussions of the Neutral Nations Commission with the host governments:

1. Adequacy of neutral nations' resources to ensure the neutral status of Laos. The Department of State believed that the neutral nations had sufficient trained personnel to maintain adequate supervisory machinery. Technical and administrative assistance might be provided the commission by the UN Secretary General if necessary.

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2. Necessity to broaden the Laotian Government.
The Department recognized that the Laotian Government should be broadened to represent all non-Communist elements but should not include the Pathet Lao. The King's declaration of neutrality (see item 19 February) and Phoumi's plan to offer Souvanna a government post should attract broader domestic and international support for the present government.

3. Desirability of an international conference prior to establishment of the Neutral Nations Commission to set terms of reference for it. The Department believed that recent Chinese Communist criticism of the new US Administration, as well as Soviet behavior in the Congo and the UN General Assembly, indicated that a large conference would only "exacerbate international tensions over Laos rather than reduce them."

4. Desirability of obtaining Soviet approval of the NNC plan prior to its implementation. The Department believed that the Soviets would probably have rejected the proposal if it had been presented to them prior to implementation and would have insisted on an international conference. Soviet rejection of the Neutral Nations Commission, once it was launched, would clearly put the onus of failure on them.

5. The difficulty of determining which military aid agreements were legal. The Department believed the Neutral Nations Commission would make its determinations on the basis of the King's announcement of 19 February (see item). Despite doubts that the existing government was not fully representative of the Lao people, Communist aid to the Pathet Lao could hardly be "defined as pursuant to international agreement," even by the most skeptical neutrals.

(S) Msg, SecState, Circular, 1258, 21 Feb 61.

21 Feb

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Reacting to CINCPAC's authorization to the CHPEO (see item 19 February), the Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA) pointed out to CINCPAC that support of the original 2,000 Meo had already been authorized as part of 29,800 men in the auto-defense forces to be supported by DOD funds.

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(S) Msg, OSD to CINCPAC, Def 990855, 21 Feb 61.

21 Feb

In an interview with Ambassador Brown, Phoumi discussed 1) his ideas for broadening the Lao Government and 2) his attempt to obtain an interview with Sihanouk. With regard to 1), Phoumi stated his intention to offer Souvanna either the Deputy Premiership, the Ministry of Public Works, or the Foreign Ministry, and to broaden the Government to include other prominent political leaders. A major difficulty, according to Phoumi, would be finding a premier of sufficient stature to "ride herd on such diverse 'hautes personalities' as Boun Oum, Phoui, and Souvanna." Phoumi claimed that he had suggested to the King that His Majesty head such a Government, but the King had refused on political grounds. With regard to 2), Phoumi stated

that Sihanouk had said he would be too busy for an official visit until April but would not object to an earlier private visit.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1578, 21 Feb 61.

21 Feb Phoumi informed Ambassador Brown that the RLG was fully aware of the dangers created by the presence of Chinese Nationalist irregulars in Laos. Four to five hundred of them had been recruited for the FAL, but only from among Chinese irregulars who had lived in Laos "a long time" (see item 16 February).

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1577, 21 Feb 61.

21 Feb Ambassador Trimble informed the Secretary of State that the Cambodian Government had declared that it would be unable to participate in the NNC. Cambodia declined for the following reasons:

1 The unilaterally proposed commission would not be able to verify all foreign interference without agreement of the authorities in control of the eastern provinces of Laos.

2 The Cambodian Government believed that a Commission could be set up only after an international conference, as proposed by Sihanouk, had been able to lead the great powers into renouncing any interference into Laotian internal affairs.

3 A definitive settlement of the Laotian problem could not be obtained until the Laotian people had a complete international guarantee that they would be allowed fully to select a government of their own choice.

(Two days later the Cambodian Information Ministry Daily News Bulletin published Cambodia's official refusal to serve on the Commission.)

(S) Msg, Phnom Penh to SecState, 1068, 21 Feb 61;

(U) Msg, Phnom Penh to SecState 1079, 23 Feb 61.

22 Feb The Secretary of State suggested that the US Ambassador urge the Laotian Government to defer any reaction to and, above all, avoid any public mention of, the reported Cambodian refusal to participate in the NNC (see item 21 February). A change in Sihanouk's position, said the Secretary, would be "far less unlikely" if the initial refusal were not made public.

(S) Msg, SecState Circular 1271, 22 Feb 61.

22 Feb The US Ambassador to Japan reported to the Secretary of State that, according to a Japanese official, the US proposal for a NNC (see item 10 February) had made a "good impression" in the Foreign Office. Continuing, however, the official had stated that the Japanese Foreign Office considered the following three points important:

1. The fact that Boun Oum's government was the only legal one in Laos should not be stressed too much, because it was important to "bring back Souvanna and associate him [with the] present RLG." To give too much importance to Boun Oum would make the return of Souvanna more difficult.

2. The ability of the NNC to control effectively the shipment of arms to Laos was the most critical feature of

the NNC plan. Since the US did not propose to stop arms shipments until the NNC was able to prevent the Communists from doing so, it was doubtful that the Pathet Lao would deprive themselves of Communist aid until arms shipments to the RLG had stopped.

3. A long-term policy should be developed and implemented for Laos going "beyond the tactical solution of present state of hostilities," and providing a "broader basis for governmental stability and strong recognition by all concerned of advantages of Lao neutrality."

(S) Msg, Tokyo to SecState, 2391, 22 Feb 61.

22 Feb The JCS informed CINCPAC that his objections to US support for two additional Thai RCTs (see item 15 February) had prompted an investigation to determine whether the "decision" of 23 January (see item) was "intended to be permissive rather than directive."

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 990721, 22 Feb 61.

22 Feb Chinese Communist Foreign Minister Chen Yi charged that the US support for King Savang's proposal for a neutral Laos marked "the start of [a] new US scheme [to] bury [the] Geneva Agreements and use [the] prestige of neutral countries to legalize [the] rebel clique in Laos." The "sole correct way" to solution of the Laos problem according to Chen Yi, lay in an enlarged Geneva Conference as proposed by Sihanouk (see item 12 December 1960), reactivation of the ICC, and recognition of the Souvanna Government. Chen Yi's remarks were made at a diplomatic reception in Peking and were reported by the US Consul General in Hong Kong to the Secretary of State.

(OUO) Msg, Hong Kong to SecState, 1420, 24 Feb 61.

23 Feb Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko denounced the NNC proposal (see item 10 February) and insisted that the solution to the Laotian problem lay in adherence to established agreement and procedures--such as the Geneva Agreement and the ICC. The US Minister in Moscow reported to Secretary Rusk that Gromyko (in conversation with British Ambassador Roberts) had acknowledged that King Savang Vathana's declaration, which he called a US proposal on the NNC was considered by the Soviets to show an improvement in the US attitude on the Laotian problem. But he declared that the new proposal was the US way of getting around the Geneva agreement and procedures. Also Gromyko viewed the proposal as a US attempt to exclude Poland.

In response to Roberts' remarks on the disadvantages of a public airing of controversy in a new conference, Gromyko said the situation was serious and must be discussed among responsible powers.

(C) Msg, Moscow to SecState, 1993, 23 Feb 61.

23 Feb In response to a request from CINCPAC for comments on the future conduct of the training of the FAL (see item 18 February), CHPEO stated that, provided certain conditions were satisfied to make possible effective supervision, a Neutral Nations Commission would not jeopardize the operations of the PEO. These conditions were as follows:

1. Any agreement for a neutral Laos should provide for a Laotian internal security force of fixed composition and strength.

2. The RLG should have the right to request a foreign military training mission of a size agreed upon in advance. All other foreign military bases and troops should be prohibited.

3. All training should take place on Laotian soil to avoid the appearance of trying to deceive the Neutral Nations Commission.

(S) Msg, CHPEO to CINCPAC, DA IN 87292, 23 Feb 61.

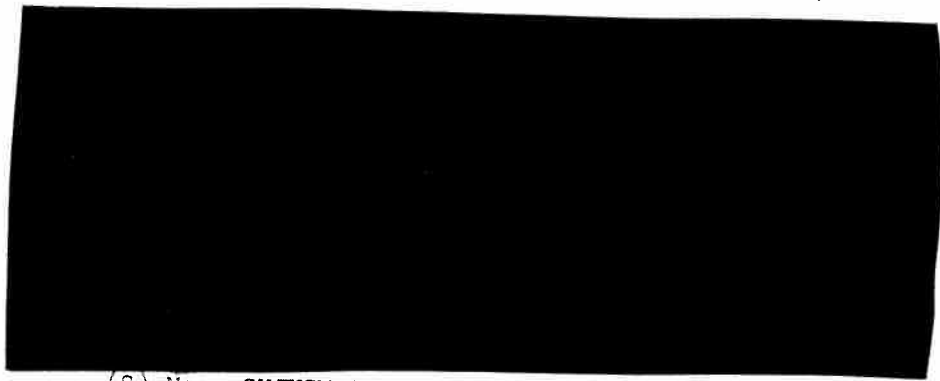
23 Feb CHPEO advised CINCPAC that Air America was not able to operate the 20 additional helicopters approved for commitment to Laos (see item 26 January). In CHPEO's opinion, so large a requirement could best be met by employing a complete sanitized US unit.

(TS) Msg, CHPEO Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 87244 23 Feb 61.

23 Feb A Pravda article stated that the legal government of Laos, recognized as such by the Lao people and "an international scheme" was that headed by Souvanna Phouma.

(OUO) Msg, Moscow to SecState, 2001, 23 Feb 61.

24 Feb



(S) Msg, CHJUSMAG Thailand to CINCPAC DA IN 92201 24 Feb 61.

24 Feb Vietnamese Secretary of State Thuan declared that since King Savang Vathana had put forth a good proposal for dealing with the Laos problem, he saw no reason to abandon it just because Cambodia had declined to participate. Reporting this statement to US Secretary of State the US Counselor of Mission in Saigon stated that Thuan had agreed with the US view that if another country should be needed to replace Cambodia, Tunisia would be a good candidate. It could be pointed out that Tunisia had served on a UN committee to conduct an investigation in Laos in 1959.

(C) Msg, Saigon to SecState, 1400, 25 Feb 61.

24 Feb In the belief that the existing composition of the Laotian Government was the key obstacle to realization of the Neutral Nations Commission plan, the Secretary of State instructed Ambassador Brown to continue to "press energetically" for a broadened regime. The Secretary requested further comments on two approaches to a broadened Laotian Government: 1) Phoumi's concept of a cabinet of former premiers and deputy premiers; and 2) a government headed by some other prominent and generally respected Laotian such as Kou Abhay (see item 27 February).

(S) Msg, SecState Circular, 1288, 24 Feb 61.

25 Feb Premier U Nu announced that Burma would not participate in the NNC, since such participation would imply Burma's

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recognition of the Boun Oum Government. Cambodia's proposal for a 14-nation conference also was not acceptable to Burma.

U Nu declared that Burma wanted the people of Laos to choose their own government. In order to achieve this, he said, the following three steps were necessary: 1) the big powers of both the East and West must take their hands off Laos; 2) the major political parties in Laos must accept the principle of a free and fair general election; and 3) a commission of neutral nations must be formed to supervise the elections.

Burma would be ready to serve on such a commission, U Nu added, if it were the desire of all concerned.

(OUO) Msg, Rangoon to SecState, 637, 25 Feb 61; NYT, 26 Mar 61, 16.

25 Feb SEATO's Secretary General Pote Sarasin endorsed King Savang Vathana's call for a NNC as the "best solution for Laos," and one "which will permit Laos to have [a] chance to develop," reported Ambassador Johnson to the Secretary of State.

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1505, 25 Feb 61.

26 Feb CINCPAC recommended to the JCS that the following measures be taken to provide additional air support needed to recapture the Plaine des Jarres:

1. Supply additional airlift through CAT or other means.

2. [REDACTED] B-26 aircraft to attack enemy convoys and supply dumps in the Plaine des Jarres area.

3. Encourage Lao pilots to use their T-6 aircraft for bombing.

4. Pursue further the use of AD-6 aircraft piloted by Vietnamese volunteers.

5. Recruit US volunteers to fly AD-6 aircraft, thereby, providing a means for successfully combatting any Communist prop fighters operating in the Plaine des Jarres area.

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS 262255Z, 26 Feb 61.

26 Feb Phoumi advised Ambassador Brown that the RLG had decided to ask the Nationalist Chinese Government to remove all its irregulars from Laos except those accustomed to living there and not under direct orders of the Nationalist Government.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1602, 27 Feb 61.

27 Feb Ambassador Johnson reported to the Secretary of State that, in a discussion regarding Burmese and Cambodian refusals to accept the NNC concept, the Thai Foreign Minister had indicated that he agreed the US should seek to bring pressure on Rangoon and Phnom Penh to meet the US point of view. This course was preferable to giving up the NNC proposal and "doing anything" that might be interpreted as a US unilateral move to meet the Communist viewpoint.

Consideration should also be given according to the Foreign Ministry to the possibility of selecting two other

countries to serve on the NNC. He suggested Japan and Tunisia.

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1513, 27 Feb 61.

27 Feb

In response to the Secretary of State's instructions to press for a broadened RLG (see item 24 February) Ambassador Brown stated that, although the composition of the RLG had been an obstacle to the success of the NNC plan, the more fundamental difficulties had been the Communist refusal to accept the concept of the NNC, and the existence of a rival "government." The Ambassador agreed, however, that the RLG needed more personal ability and prestige and a wider representative character if it was to govern effectively and pursue a probably arduous and prolonged military effort.

To make the RLG more representative, Ambassador Brown proposed a government composed of all former premiers and deputy premiers. Phoumi would be retained as Minister of Defense for this government, and several key personages with "special characteristics," such as family and tribal influence, would also participate. The Ambassador felt that the disadvantages of the King heading such a government outweighed the advantages. Therefore, Brown concluded, unless Boun Oum was considered too great a liability, he should remain as the Prime Minister. Khou Abhay was too aged and feeble to head a government, and there were, in Ambassador Brown's view, no other "prominent and generally respected Lao" available.

The Ambassador was also of the opinion that a way should be left open for Souvanna to enter the Government on honorable terms in spite of his recent statements at Sam Neua and Xieng Khouang that he would never compromise with Boun Oum or Phoumi.

The Ambassador saw "merit" in the opinion of former premier Sananikone that there should be a new government, not merely a reorganization of the existing one. Not only would formation of a new government be a dramatic act, but it would, according to Brown, eliminate the "taint of illegality" attached to the present one.

The question of fundamental importance in a governmental reorganization, according to the Ambassador, was the probable effect on the RLG military effort. In the Ambassador's opinion, a "more comprehensive and respectable government should appeal even more to [the] officer corps" than the present one.

Finally, the Ambassador cautioned that the present RLG was a "one man (Phoumi) government," and that, so long as Phoumi spent most of his time in "mending his political fences," the war effort would suffer. The Ambassador recommended that Phoumi "be told in unmistakable terms that . . . his primary effort must be directed toward retaking the Xieng Khouang-Plaine des Jarres area, in order to be able [to] negotiate from . . . strength."

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1591, 27 Feb 61.

27 Feb

Souvanna Phouma was described by a close associate as "bitter, determined, farther left in [his] views" and "bent on [a] showdown with [the] King." In a conversation with Ambassador Brown, this associate, who had been with Souvanna

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in Phnom Penh since December, reported that the former premier still believed he had broad popular support and could control the Pathet Lao. Despite recent declarations to the contrary, Souvanna would still be willing to come back as premier of a coalition government excluding extremists or as deputy premier in a transition government under Khou Abhay.

(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1598, 27 Feb 61.

28 Feb

The Soviet Union rejected the NNC plan (see item 20 February) and proposed instead an international conference to 1) consider measures to "normalize" the situation in Laos, and 2) issue new terms of reference for the ICC. The Soviet position, as given to the Secretary of State by the Soviet Ambassador, was that the US, by supporting the NNC idea, was proposing to abandon the Geneva Agreement and replace it with a new commission for which there was no legal basis. The Geneva Agreement was still in force and provided the legal basis for its instrument, the ICC. However, because of changes in the situation, the Geneva Agreement on Laos was no longer adequate. For this reason, a new conference was necessary to provide additional powers for the ICC.

(C) Msg, SecState, Circular 1302, 28 Feb 61.

1-2
Mar

The US Ambassador to Cambodia reported to the Secretary of State that Souvanna had returned to Phnom Penh after a nine-day trip to Hanoi and Xieng Khouang.

According to an official Cambodian Government press release, Souvanna claimed that his "government" controlled three-fourths of Laos, namely the provinces of Phong Saly and Sam Neua, a great part of Xieng Khouang and Luang Prabang, and part of the south. Souvanna admitted that his "government" was receiving aid from Communist countries. But without it, he declared, "we would be crushed due to [the] enormous aid that our adversaries [are] receiving from [the] US, Thailand, Taiwan, and SVN."

The following day Ambassador Trimble, in a message to the Secretary of State, reported Michael Field's comments regarding the trip to Xieng Khouang. (Field, a London Telegraph correspondent, had accompanied Souvanna on his trip.) He told Trimble that the Russians he had met had been most vehement in insisting that the USSR would not permit Laos to become a pro-West neutral. Field was strongly convinced that the Bloc attached the greatest importance to the convening of a 14-nation conference. In response to Trimble's question as to why the RLG proposals had not met alleged USSR objectives, Field emphasized that their emanation from the Boun Oum Government had made them "highly suspect" to the Bloc.

(OUO) Msg, Phnom Penh to SecState, 1108, 1 Mar 61; (U) Msg, Phnom Penh to SecState, 1121, 3 Mar 61; (C) Msg, Phnom Penh to SecState, 1116, 2 Mar 61.

2 Mar

The CHPEO informed CINCPAC that he had again emphasized to Phoumi the US concern over Phoumi's formation of six additional special FAL battalions (see item 6 February). Phoumi claimed that these units were only temporary and would be phased out when the four new infantry battalions (see item 6 February) became operational. He "fallaciously" pointed out, according to CHPEO, that the Laotian Government had not asked for US support for the six battalions because they were being equipped with arms taken from Auto-Defense units. Pay, said Phoumi, was being provided from other than FAL sources.

(S) Msg, CHPEO Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 89202, 2 Mar 61.

2 Mar

The Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA) informed the Chairman, JCS, that the Department of State had agreed, if necessary, to conduct negotiations with the French Government for continued training of the FAL by the US (see item 9 February). (TS) Memo, Asst SecDef (ISA) to CJCS, Laotian Training Advisory and Assistance Group Activities in Laos (C), 9 Mar 61, 1st N/H of JCS 1992/923.

2 Mar

The JCS recommended to the Secretary of Defense that he seek negotiation by the US of a formal agreement in principle with Pakistan to provide US lift and support for a Pakistani force "package" to be employed in Laos if necessary. The Pakistani Government had committed such a force consisting of a brigade group, a fighter squadron, and a destroyer for SEATO Plan 5/60 (Combatting Communist Insurgency in Laos), and it had been earmarked as part of the SEATO General Reserve Force. However, said the JCS, the demonstrated reluctance of several member nations to support "meaningful" SEATO assistance to Laos raised the possibility that the US might have to commit a force unilaterally or join a multi-lateral force drawn from only some of the SEATO powers to

prevent Laos from falling to the Communists. Pakistan, Thailand, and the Philippines were the SEATO powers most likely to join the US in such an effort.

(TS) JCS 1992/918, US Lift and Logistic Support for Pakistani Forces Committed to SEATO Plan 5/60 (C), 2 Mar 61.

2 Mar In reply to Ambassador Brown's recommendations of 27 February (see item), the Secretary of State said he concurred in general with the Ambassador's excellent analysis and recommendations but had the following comments:

1. He agreed that a government composed of former Premiers and Deputy Premiers offered an advantage, but the addition of figures chosen for special characteristics might make the government subject to attack as a hand-picked pro-West group.

2. Although the Secretary accepted the validity of Brown's arguments against the King heading such a government, he commented that ultimately it might be the best way to resolve the political problem along lines that would be satisfactory to the United States.

3. He recognized the difficulty in dropping Boun Oum from a reorganized government but considered that if he remained as Premier, the new government would be an easy target as "new Boun Oum government." The Secretary of State agreed that Khou Abhay was unsuitable for the premiership, and suggested the name of Prince Khamphan who, though weak, would give the government royal cachet.

4. He agreed that the door should be left open for Souvanna but did not consider that the effort to bring about a new government should hinge on his inclusion. The "posture," he declared, should be increasingly to force Souvanna into a position where he would "clearly bear the onus" for not working with a representative and respected government and where his strength clearly depended on Communist support.

5. Although he agreed it was necessary that Phoumi devote more attention to the war effort, Secretary Rusk believed, nevertheless, that the Laotian General needed to bring about a change of government. Rusk thought it would be best, therefore, to urge Phoumi to form a new RLG to that he could then devote his full attention to pushing the war against the PL, especially in the Plaine des Jarres.

6. The Secretary concurred in the proposed policy for the RLG but suggested that Brown consider recommending that in liberated areas the RLG should carry out a publicized policy of granting amnesty to former PL adherents and integrating them into the national community. This, concluded the Secretary, would serve as an example to those still in rebellion.

(S) Msg, SecState Circular 1323, 2 Mar 61.

2 Mar US Ambassador Trimble informed the Secretary of State that, according to the Burmese Ambassador to Cambodia, Souvanna had stated that he was thoroughly convinced of the necessity of a 14-nation conference. Souvanna felt that if agreement could be reached on holding such a meeting, the issue of a "legal government" could be resolved by the King appointing a "caretaker" government composed of civil servants and technicians.

Souvanna also had stated that the conference should concentrate on the following three principal tasks: 1) an immediate cease-fire; 2) determination and elimination of foreign interference; and 3) creation of a commission to supervise free elections in Laos which would provide the basis for forming a new representative government.

(C) Msg, Phnom Penh to SecState, 1126, 3 Mar 61.

3 Mar

A French Embassy officer informed the Secretary of State of a conversation between the French Ambassador to Cambodia and Souvanna. The Laotian was alleged to have said that he was convinced that the Communists could still be prevented from dominating the situation but time was growing short. He also said that Souphanouvong agreed with him that Laos should follow a Cambodian-type socialism. According to Souvanna, this would not be a serious danger to Western positions, to which he remained "very attached."

Souvanna had seen Pham Van Dong, North Vietnamese Premier, and Giap in Hanoi, and they had told him that their Government would be "content" to see the re-establishment of true neutrality in Laos. The Bloc's strong reaction against the US, Souvanna reported, was the result of information they had received that the US had surveyed Plateau du Traninh to set up rocket launching sites.

(Secretary Rusk passed this information to Ambassador Brown on 6 March.)

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 934, 6 Mar 61.

3 Mar

Ambassador Trimble informed the Secretary of State that, in addition to clarifying the US position on the Laotian King's proposal for an NNC (as set forth in the Secretary of State's message of 14 February - see item), he had informed Cambodia's First Minister of US concern that the Bloc "would" merely use the 14-Nation Conference as a propaganda forum. This would increase rather than decrease international tension, he said.

Ambassador Trimble, also reported that he had explained the US attitude on a reorganization of the RLG. The US favored a RLG with a broadened base to include all representative elements. Naturally such a government would include Souvanna. The King must be the point of departure in forming such a government since he was the only one who could count on the support of the Laotian population. Trimble then added that the US was against Communist representation in the government itself, but not against legally-elected NLHX members being seated in the National Assembly.

(C) Msg, Phnom Penh to SecState, 1124, 3 Mar 61.

3 Mar

In a letter to President de Gaulle Prince Sihanouk expressed the belief that had the proposal to re-activate the ICC been quickly implemented it would have offered "certain possibilities" of restoring peace in Laos. But, unfortunately, opposition to this plan deprived it of the "possibility of bringing about a cease-fire and [an] end to foreign interference."

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The most recent proposal to create a "'Commission of Experts in Foreign Interference'" [the NNC], the Prince declared, was also destined to fail, despite strong US support. Because of the existence of two de facto governments in Laos, the Cambodian Government was "obliged decline to accept proposal which because of its unilateral character alone unable have concrete results." Therefore, Prince Sihanouk concluded, a conference of countries most interested in Laotian problems was becoming increasingly urgent, "while precarious balance of forces can be maintained."

(Sihanouk's letter to de Gaulle was made public by the French Government on 27 March, and on 28 March Ambassador Gavin reported its contents to the Secretary of State.)

(U) Msg, Paris to SecState, 4068, 28 Mar 61.

3 Mar According to the New York Times, US Ambassador Thompson said that during a talk with Foreign Minister Gromyko he had requested a meeting with Premier Khrushchev to give him a message from President Kennedy. The message was reported to express hope for an improvement of Soviet-United States relations, and to include President Kennedy's views on the situation in Laos.

(U) NYT, 4 Mar 61, 1.

3 Mar At a White House meeting the President instructed the Chairman, JCS, to prepare a plan for recapture of the Plaine des Jarres (see item 9 March) and to recall CINCPAC, CHPEO, and one officer of the PEO staff to Washington for consultations.

(S) Memo for Record, Admin Asst to CJCS, 3 Mar 61, CJCS-091 Laos (2) 1 Mar 61; (S) Memo, CJCS to JCS, 6 Mar 61, CJCS-091 Laos (2), 1 Mar 61.

4 Mar Secretary Rusk informed Ambassador Brown that a British Embassy official had reported highlights of a conversation between Phoumi and the British Ambassador to Laos. The Laotian General, Secretary Rusk said, had expressed a desire to visit Phnom Penh. Phoumi particularly desired to explain to the Cambodian Government that King Savang's proposal for a NNC had been conceived essentially to prepare for an international conference of the type proposed by Sihanouk.

In addition, Phoumi had pointed out to the British Ambassador that the internal and international aspects of the Laotian situation were now so interconnected that a domestic settlement could no longer be sought independently from an international agreement; a conference therefore was necessary.

The British Ambassador in Laos had been non-committal on the conference idea. But, Secretary Rusk said, the British diplomat had encouraged Phoumi to meet with Souvanna.

The Secretary of State told Ambassador Brown that he considered it most undesirable for Phoumi to take the line he had proposed in advocating an international conference. "You should explain this to Phoumi," the Secretary continued, "and be sure he understands [the]

dangers inherent in [an] international conference idea." It would be better, the Secretary concluded, for Phoumi to talk with Souvanna and/or Sihanouk along the lines of the discussion between the US Ambassador to Cambodia and the Cambodian First Minister (see item 3 March).
(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 929, 4 Mar 61.

4 Mar

The British Foreign Office informed the US that in the UK Government's reply to the USSR draft proposals (see item 18 February) the British planned to tell the Soviets that they were willing to accept the Russian draft letter to Nehru, calling for a revival of the ICC. The British said that they would also state that they were not yet prepared to express any additional views concerning a conference until the USSR had given its own further views on: 1) Laotian representation at the conference; 2) the kind of settlement that might come out of the meeting; and, 3) how to insure that discussions would be constructive, and "not just a propaganda exercise."

Finally, the British planned to inform the USSR that they would reserve their position on the Soviet draft communication--further, discussions in the ICC might help to clarify whether the conference would be necessary and could fruitfully be held.

The British Counselor of Mission in Washington, in discussing the proposal with Secretary Rusk, said that his government saw no harm in sounding out the Soviets and giving them a reply. In addition, the British did see an advantage in getting the ICC into action in New Delhi.

The British Foreign Office did not agree with the US view that a "broadening" of the RLG would bring the crisis in Laos nearer to a solution. In their opinion, the only change of government that could end the fighting would be to have Souvanna as Prime Minister of a "government of center" without any representation of the Phoumi/Boun Oum Group. However, they doubted that such a government could be created at this stage or that the PL would agree to any settlement without bringing "international machinery" into play.

Furthermore, the British believed that the military situation in Laos was much too dangerous for the West to just sit around and wait for events, and they feared that there was a serious risk that the Communists might try to push toward an international conference by unleashing further significant military action in Laos.

(S) Msg, SecState, Circular 1337, 5 Mar 61.

5 Mar

The Secretary of State instructed US Ambassador Thompson in Moscow that in his forthcoming discussion with Khrushchev, he should refer to the Secretary's meeting with the Soviet Ambassador on 28 February (see item), and bring out the following points:

1. The US was disappointed in the Soviet reply to the NNC concept (see item 28 February) because it failed to clarify Soviet objectives. The conference proposed by the Soviets, to which the participants would

go with issues unresolved and the purposes of the conference undefined, could be source of increased tensions. The net result might well be that a political settlement having failed, the situation would become a military issue.

2. In order to seek a common ground for a political settlement of the Laotian problem the US wanted to make its position "crystal clear." The United States believed there was a potentially highly dangerous situation in Laos. The US flatly rejected the Soviet statement that this situation had been brought about by US military support of the RLG. This support had not been nor was it even intended to be used to threaten any of Laos' neighbors, and the present US arms delivery to the RLG was no more than it had been during the past five years. However, recently, there had been a massive Soviet airlift of arms and ammunitions to the PL forces in the eastern provinces, and the presence of Viet Minh technicians was widely known. This build-up of PL forces supported by the Viet Minh could only lead to an ascending state of conflict. The US wanted to avoid such a consequence and hoped that the USSR also wanted to do the same.

3. The United States considered that recognition of Souvanna's "government" as a legitimate one was untenable both in fact and in law. The US therefore "must conclude that Soviet support of Souvanna Government is power play to push Communist cause in Laos."

4. The United States was prepared, as a token of good faith, to have its military assistance to Laos screened by a Neutral Nations Commission and to examine the possibility of channeling all economic aid through some appropriate international mechanism.

5. The United States believed sincerely that a common basis of understanding could still be found and would appreciate a more detailed statement of what the Soviets might consider an acceptable basis of settlement.

(S) Msg, SecState to Moscow, 1439, 6 Mar 61.

5 Mar

The Secretary of State advised Ambassador Trimble that he should present to Souvanna as soon as possible the US policy for a neutral Laos (see item 14 February). In addition to recommending that he follow the line of argumentation he had used with the Cambodian First Minister (see item 3 March), the Secretary of State also gave the Ambassador the following guidance:

1) The genuine desire of "this administration" to bring about a neutral Laos, fulfilling many of the objectives for which Prince Souvanna had allegedly been working, should be impressed upon Souvanna. The unique opportunity to play a truly patriotic role in responding to the invitation to return to Laos and participate in the process of broadening the government and unifying all elements willing to cooperate for the salvation of his country should be pointed out to Souvanna. Further, it would be appropriate to remind him that US future plans for Laos envisaged a continuation of very substantial economic aid.

2) Souvanna should be warned that to follow the line he was reported to have enunciated in PL headquarters of encouraging Communist and PL forces to attack the established government of Laos was fraught with the utmost danger. It could only result in bloodshed and unnecessary hardship. The US was willing to exert considerable effort to achieve a satisfactory situation in Laos through some device such as the NNC. At the same time, however, Souvanna should be left in no doubt as to US determination to thwart the purposes of the Communist forces that were threatening the security of Laos and Southeast Asia.

(S) Msg, SecState, to Phnom Penh, 774 and to Vientiane 930, 5 Mar 61.

6 Mar

Ambassador Trimble reported to the Secretary of State that he had carried out the instructions contained in the Secretary's 5 March message (see item). The discussion with Souvanna had brought out the following "highlights":

1. Souvanna had asserted that only he could save Laos; that 90% of the country was behind him and his policy of neutrality. Given the choice, the Lao would choose him rather than the Phoumi/Boun Oum group or the Pathet Lao. What was required in Laos, Souvanna had declared, was a national union government composed of all three of these elements.

2. As an immediate step, Souvanna had expressed strong support for the dissolution, by the King, of the Boun Oum Government (Souvanna said he would never serve in an enlarged Boun Oum Government), and the creation of an apolitical government at which time he [Souvanna] would submit his own resignation. This government could be presided over by the King himself with a First Minister, or the King could designate the President of the King's Council as Prime Minister. It would be composed of civil servants, ambassadors, etc., who would prepare for general elections. Elections, Souvanna had continued, should be supervised by an international commission, and the countryside disarmed, except for the police. The outcome of these elections, Souvanna declared, should determine the composition of the new government.

3. Souvanna had expressed the belief that the ICC could do a better job than the NNC in Laos. Although at first Souvanna had taken the position that a 14-nation conference was essential, he ultimately had agreed with Ambassador Trimble that a conference would not be necessary if interested countries made written unilateral declarations recognizing and supporting the neutrality of Laos.

4. Souvanna also had expressed the opinion that the Bloc did not want a Communist Laos. He stated that Mao Tse-tung, Chou En-lai, and others had told him that they "wanted [to] prevent Laos from becoming [a] Western base because [the] Chicoms and DRVN need peace for [the] next 30 or 40 years in order [to] develop their countries." A Communist Laos would only bring insecurity to them, as the "US would not accept it."

The Bloc, Souvanna had commented, looked upon Laos as a buffer.

When questioned as to whether the Soviets, in view of their substantial build up of military equipment in the Plaine des Jarres area, would permit areas under PL control to return to the Laotian Government, Souvanna declared with great assurance that they certainly would; Laos would not permit "otherwise."

(C) Msg, Phnom Penh to SecState, 1141, 7 Mar 61.

6 Mar

According to an official Cambodian press release, Sihanouk, in a message to Chou En-lai, had said that he and his Government fully shared the Chinese Communist viewpoint that it was indispensable to preserve the spirit and principle of the 1954 Geneva Accords. Sihanouk had declared further that the problem posed by two governments in Laos was inseparable from that of settling the problems of civil war and foreign military assistance to the two sides.

The best solution, Sihanouk had declared, would be a cease-fire and cessation of foreign interference followed by reciprocal self-dissolution of both governments and the formation of a new government of national union. The principal and urgent task of the new government should be the preparation for free elections.

(S) Msg, Phnom Penh to SecState, 1142, 7 Mar 61.

6 Mar

According to an official Cambodian press release, North Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Van Dong declared that both the origin and the immediate cause of the present dangerous situation in Laos resided in US intervention in the internal affairs of that country with a view to transforming Laos into an American military base. This would, Pham Van Dong warned, constitute a "permanent threat to our security."

Dong also stated that the only "radical" solution to the situation was to put an end to US intervention and assure respect for the basic national rights of the Lao people, as stipulated in the Geneva Accords. The North Vietnamese official also stated that he fully endorsed Sihanouk's proposal for a conference.

(The message was published in the Cambodian official news bulletin on 15 March. The US Embassy reported its contents to the Secretary of State the same day.)

(U) Msg, Phnom Penh to SecState, 1194, 15 Mar 61.

6-7
Mar

According to a PEO intelligence report submitted to CINCPAC, FAL units of Force SST retreated under enemy attack and gave up RJ 7-13. The enemy attacks began with platoon-size probing actions supported by artillery. When FAL company-size units gave way before these probes, the enemy committed two companies in a well executed turning movement. At this point the FAL forces gave up their positions and retreated rapidly. By the morning of 7 March they had withdrawn north and south of RJ 7-13.

(S) Msg, CHPEO Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 93661, 15 Mar 61.

7 Mar

In response to an inquiry from CINCPAC, Chief JUSMAG

[REDACTED]

(S) Msgs, CINCPAC to JCS, 081927Z Mar 61; 081923Z Mar 61.

7 Mar

The US Ambassador to the USSR, commenting on the British proposed reply to the Soviets (see item 4 March), told Secretary Rusk that he believed the "important thing at present is to keep situation fluid."

The Soviets were confident, he said, that the military situation in Laos and the attitude of the Asian neutrals, as well as the British and French desire for compromise, would permit them to be very firm about a conference.

Under the circumstances, Ambassador Thompson believed there was some advantage to the British proposal, for ICC discussions in New Delhi. It would keep the Soviets engaged in finding a forum for a negotiated settlement, and it would keep the Chinese Communists out of the picture until a better idea of Soviet intentions was obtained.

(S) Msg, Moscow to SecState, 2107, 7 Mar 61

7 Mar

Ambassador Brown told Secretary Rusk that the RLG was sending Phoumi, Bouavang Norasing, and Ngon Sananikone to Phnom Penh on 9 March to confer with Souvanna. During a discussion on Phoumi's proposed trip, the US Ambassador had told Phoumi that Souvanna was leaving on a world tour on 11 March, and the US felt that his meeting with Souvanna would be very important. Phoumi had replied that he intended to explain the RLG policy of neutrality to Souvanna and also tell him of the RLG's desire to form a new government that would contain all nationalist elements, including Souvanna. Ambassador Brown had agreed that such a government would be highly desirable. Further, the US would be inclined to give full support to any government of national reconciliation which the Laotians themselves worked out, providing: 1) the PL was not included; and 2) Phoumi remained in charge of military affairs.

The US Ambassador also had advised the Laotian General that the US thought it would be important in his talks with Souvanna to stress the King's proclamation that he and the government of Laos bore no ill will to any Laotian and had a spirit of conciliation and friendship for all.

Ambassador Brown had pointed out to Phoumi that Souvanna's idea of supplemental elections, which might give the NLHX a voice in the Assembly, but not in the government, might be "usefully accepted." Phoumi had

replied that he had considered this and had no objections to it. In addition, he had agreed with Brown that Souvanna's suggestion for general elections at this time was premature.
(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1636 and 1642, both 7 Mar 61.

7 Mar

In a message to the Secretary of State, Ambassador Trimble reported that Prince Sihanouk had claimed Laos was now divided between pro-Bloc and pro-West supporters and that there were no real neutralists left. Sihanouk had also asserted that, if a settlement could not be reached in the near future, the only alternative would be a divided Laos, a prospect he greatly deplored.

(C) Msg, Phnom Penh to SecState, 1149, 7 Mar 61.

8 Mar

Commenting on the proposed British reply to the Soviets (see item 4 March), Ambassador Brown declared that British acceptance of the proposal for the reactivation of the ICC would "spell doom" to the NNC since the two were "mutually exclusive." The doom of the NNC would be a "propaganda blow to US initiative," and redound unfavorably on the King.

Further, an ICC meeting would be likely to accelerate rather than preclude an international conference. In Ambassador Brown's opinion, if a reactivated ICC decided it needed new instructions, the Soviets would use the meeting to argue for a Geneva-type conference for which Poland and India would probably vote.

Ambassador Brown did not agree that a government headed by Souvanna and excluding the PL and the Boun Oum-Phoumi group, as suggested by the British, was the only one that would be capable of ending the fighting. He pointed out to Secretary Rusk that both the RLG and Souvanna had expressed a willingness to serve under the King as Prime Minister, and that even one of the King's close relatives might be satisfactory, providing an agreement was reached on the rest of the Cabinet. This was the key question, Brown said, since it would determine whether Souvanna would dissolve his "government" and join or abet the successor to the present RLG. Moreover, he continued, it was by no means certain that creation of a government headed by Souvanna would, in itself, stop the fighting since the PL did not take orders from him. His premiership, however, would probably make "the other side more inclined in this direction."

In conclusion Ambassador Brown expressed the opinion that, until the US and Great Britain arrived at an agreed position on the military situation, the two countries would probably have difficulty in pursuing together the same international political courses of action.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1657, 8 Mar 61.

8 Mar



[REDACTED]

(TS) Msg, OSD to CINCPAC, DEF 991467, 8 Mar 61.

9 Mar

In response to the Presidential instructions of 3 March (see item), the JCS produced a "Concept for the Recapture of the Plaine des Jarres." The JCS plan was designed to seize this base complex and deny it to the enemy. The plan called for preliminary interdiction operations by aircraft and Meo guerrillas, followed by a two-pronged FAL attack from the East and South, and culminating in an airborne assault with which the two ground attacking forces were to link up.

The JCS recognized that the FAL lacked the means to execute this operation. Recapture of the Plaine des Jarres would require reinforcement from the US and other friendly powers. The JCS recommended, therefore, that the following reinforcing measures be taken:

1. Increase the guerrilla capability in Laos by expanding the existing 3,000-men Meo irregular force as rapidly as possible by 1 April.
 2. Provide 16 "sterile" B-26s in order to interdict enemy lines of communication, destroy supply dumps and installations, and fragment troop concentrations.
- [REDACTED]

3. Provide 16 additional helicopters to CAT for airlift and pickup in forward areas lacking landing fields for fixed wing aircraft. These aircraft were to be provided by the Department of Defense. The crews, "sheep-dipped" and ostensibly employed by CAT, were also to come from the Department of Defense. Maintenance was to be furnished by a Marine Corps maintenance unit.

4. Provide the necessary airlift by reinforcing CAT with four C-130s, three DC-4s, and a C-47. To shorten the turn-around time of the CAT aircraft, authorize the USAF to airlift supplies to Vientiane.

5. Reinforce the FAL artillery support by obtaining four volunteer Thai batteries of 105-mm howitzers.

6. Furnish the necessary operational and logistical advice and technical assistance by augmenting PEO Laos and JUSMAG Thailand.

Recognizing that the will to win was as important as the means, the JCS urged remedial action to improve the leadership in the FAL. According to the JCS, failures in leadership had resulted from the fact that Phoumi was "devoting most of his time to coping with governmental problems, instead of fighting the war." These problems had arisen "largely from efforts by the United States, the United Kingdom and France to persuade

Phoumi to broaden his government base and 'win support of the Lao people.'" These problems, combined with the "conflicting pressures of diverse family interests and distrust of his subordinate leaders," had made Phoumi feel insecure. His refusal to retain battle-tested, successful leaders in crucial command positions had been one result of this distrust. In addition, doubts as to the extent of US support had contributed to Phoumi's feelings of insecurity.

To improve Laotian leadership, the JCS recommended the following:

(1) The US mission in Laos should be directed to accept as a matter of overriding priority the military mission of recapturing PDJ and should support Phoumi accordingly.

(2) Present efforts to broaden the base of the RLG and to seek a political solution should be given secondary priority to enable Phoumi to concentrate on the PDJ military operation.

(3) US influence with other governments should support these priorities. Other governments should be informed that it is our judgment that a satisfactory political settlement is not attainable until there is an improvement in the military situation.

(4) All US personnel, including the Ambassador and the United States Mission, should impress upon Phoumi the importance of putting his best commanders in the field and relieving inept officers who are losing battles for him.

(5) Above all, the additional air and artillery support and logistic means needed to capture the Plaine des Jarres should be provided. The Chief, PEO, should be authorized to inform Phoumi of support to be provided, operations to be undertaken and results expected.

(TS) "Concept for the Recapture of the Plaine des Jarres," 10 Mar 61, JCS 091 Laos (2), 1 Mar 61.

9 Mar

The President approved the following 17 military courses of action for Southeast Asia:

1. [REDACTED]

2. DOD to supply 16 H-34 helicopters [REDACTED]

3. [REDACTED]

4. DOD to provide a maintenance base and 300 maintenance personnel for the 16 helicopters.

5. DOD to make available four C-130s to CAT.

6. [REDACTED]

7. [REDACTED] the C-47 and three DC-4s with crews.

8. USAF to resume direct supply delivery to Vientiane in case of emergency.

9. Department of State to obtain up to four 105-mm howitzer batteries from Thailand.

10. DOD to augment PEO Laos and JUSMAG Thailand by approximately 100 personnel each.

11. DOD to make available on Okinawa eight B-26s with necessary spares.

12. [REDACTED]

13. [REDACTED]

14. Department of State to draft instructions to Ambassador Brown for approval by the President.

15. CHPEO to press Phoumi to improve the quality of FAL leadership.

16. [REDACTED]

17. [REDACTED]

(TS) Msgs, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 991705, 11 Mar 61, and JCS 991727, 13 Mar 61.

9 Mar

According to the New York Times, US Ambassador Thompson and Soviet Premier Khrushchev met in the Siberian city of Novosibirsk to discuss international issues confronting the two nations.

(U) NYT, 10 Mar 61, 1.

10 Mar

According to FAL reports, Muong Kassy, a village about 20 miles south of RJ 7-13 on Route 13, fell to the Pathet Lao. The FAL claimed it was establishing a blocking position 10 miles south of the captured village.

(S) Msg, CHPEO Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 91842, 10 Mar 61.

10 Mar

A joint communique, signed by Phoumi and Souvanna at the end of their two-day meeting in Phnom Penh, declared that the two parties recognized that a policy of "strict neutrality and conventional neutralization" of Laos constituted the fundamental basis for regaining peace and national concord. Both leaders agreed that foreign interference must cease in order to permit the restoration of a climate of mutual confidence for national reconciliation. This could only be accomplished, the communique pointed out, with the aid of an impartial commission which could operate over all of Laos.

General Phoumi affirmed his confidence in Prince Souvanna as the "only Lao statesman" able to serve as a link with the NLHX, and, the communique said, Prince Souvanna assured the General he would do all he could

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to achieve a national reconciliation. However, Prince Souvanna declined General Phoumi's invitation to return immediately to Laos, saying that he could better serve a reconciliation by residing at Phnom Penh rather than at Vientiane.

Prince Souvanna suggested a meeting at Phnom Penh of representatives of the three groups whose forces were now facing each other in Laos, with a view toward finding a definite solution to the national problem. General Phoumi, the press statement continued, accepted the principle of the meeting but stated that it could not take place until after cessation of foreign interferences.

Both parties, the communique concluded, agreed to further discussion.

(The communique, although signed on the morning of the 10th, was not made public until the following day.)

Upon returning from Phnom Penh, Phoumi and members of his delegation gave the following account of their meeting with Souvanna. The delegation had asserted, Ambassador Brown informed the Secretary of State, that Souvanna had been "very insistent" about a meeting of the three representatives which would decide the future cabinet. He also had been "insistent about an international conference" like the 14-Nation Conference proposed by Sihanouk. Phoumi added, however, that Souvanna had been willing to solve the crisis step by step.

The delegation had stated that, after a cease-fire and cessation of delivery of foreign arms, the "first" step would be to have a neutral commission (Cambodia, Burma, Malaya) make a fact-finding tour of all of Laos. The "second" step would be to convene an international commission that would receive the findings of the NNC and would guarantee the neutrality of Laos. Finally, the "third" step would be a round table conference between Phoumi, Souphanouvong, and Souvanna.

Meanwhile, in Phnom Penh, the Laotian Ambassador to Cambodia reported his version of the meeting to the US Counselor of Mission. The Laotian diplomat's version, while agreeing in many respects with both the official communique and the RLG delegation's account, differed on the following points. The Laotian declared that although Souvanna had not rejected a neutral commission idea at the appropriate stage, he had insisted that the "first" step should be an "immediate" meeting of representatives of the three groups to reach an agreement on a cease-fire and formation of a central government of nonpolitical figures, which would prepare for elections. The elections would be followed by the formation of a national union government.

The US diplomat asked the Laotian representative if Phoumi had been disappointed with the results of the visit. The Laotian Ambassador had replied "slyly" that Phoumi had not been at all disappointed. Phoumi

had not expected Souvanna to accept his proposals and his visit had been just a maneuver, designed to show people in Laos that he had done all in his power to bring Souvanna back to Laos and into the RLG.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1669, 10 Mar 61;
(C) Msg, Phnom Penh to SecState, 1167, 10 Mar 61; (U)
Msg, Phnom Penh to State, 1169, 11 Mar 61.

11 Mar

Ambassador Brown reported to the Secretary of State additional details of the Souvanna-Phoumi meeting, as provided by Phoumi. According to Phoumi, Souvanna had stated that if he returned at once to Vientiane he would lose his influence with the other side; he could be more useful, therefore, in Phnom Penh.

Souvanna also had stated that his interpretation of the NNC proposal was the same as Sihanouk's. Phoumi had explained that the NNC was, in essence based on Sihanouk's proposal; Souvanna had then agreed that the NNC was better than the ICC, and stated that he would attempt to persuade Sihanouk to accept the chairmanship of the NNC.

Ambassador Brown had reminded Phoumi that the US had serious reservations about an international conference. Phoumi had replied that he thought it might be possible to avoid a conference by stalling and "otherwise," after the NNC had begun to operate.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1671, 11 Mar 61.

11 Mar

Secretary Rusk told Ambassador Brown that US reaction to the Phoumi-Souvanna talks was one of "guarded optimism." If Souvanna's initial attitude was a sincere reflection of his willingness to cooperate, and if Phoumi's reports of their meetings were accurate, it might be the beginning of a workable rapprochement of an indigenous character.

However, the Secretary cautioned Ambassador Brown that any undue haste, "unilaterally or multilaterally," in attempting to "stage manage" every facet of the delicate situation might be counterproductive.

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 952, 11 Mar 61.

11 Mar

The JCS requested CINCPAC to supply [REDACTED] 16 H-34 or HUS helicopters "at a time and place mutually agreeable," and to be prepared to move the necessary maintenance personnel for 20 such helicopters to Thailand when directed (approved actions 2 and 4; see item 9 March).

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 991704, 11 Mar 61.

12 Mar

Recalling the disastrous influence that Dien Bien Phu had had on the Geneva Conference, the Secretary of State expressed deep concern to Ambassador Brown over the probability that the Communists might take advantage of the seemingly conciliatory climate to make a major military effort in Laos. The Secretary of State told Ambassador Brown that this would place the Soviets in a most advantageous position to negotiate or, to communize Laos by force of minority element backed by Viet Minh personnel and Soviet supply.

Secretary Rusk Stated that every effort, therefore, should be made now to re-establish the situation with

the military means available. At the same time, he added, preparations must go forward against the possible deterioration of the situation and the necessity of raising the level of military actions.

The US still believed that a political settlement that would insure the genuine independence and integrity of Laos (similar to Austria's neutrality) was the best solution. In view of the present exploration for a political settlement and the danger that the Communists might attempt to push their military advantage, it was essential, Secretary Rusk declared, that the US be prepared to give the RLG additional military support. It was also necessary that the RLG be so reorganized as to obtain international recognition and to make the position of the alleged Souvanna "government" untenable. Therefore, the Secretary of State requested Ambassador Brown to review the situation along these lines with Phoumi, and perhaps with the King. If possible, the US Ambassador was instructed to "push" Phoumi's suggestion of having either the King or a member of the Royal family assume the Premiership, with Boun Oum and Souvanna as Deputy Prime Ministers.

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 957, 12 Mar 61.

12 Mar The Secretary of Defense informed the Secretary of State, the Director, CIA, and the Chairman, JCS, that the President authorized the movement, as promptly as possible, of eight CAT B-26 aircraft and crews from Taiwan to Thailand (approved action 11, see item 9 March).

(TS) Memo, SecDef to SecState, Dir CIA, CJCS, 13 Mar 61, CJCS-091 Laos (2), 1 Mar 61.

12 Mar The Chairman, JCS, informed the Secretary of Defense that CINCPAC had ordered two sanitized HUS-1 helicopters airlifted to Bangkok for assignment to Air America (approved action 2; see item 9 March).

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 991727, 13 Mar 61.

13 Mar The Department of State informed US Embassies abroad of a lengthy conversation of the Secretary of State with the British and French Ambassadors.

The Secretary had stated that the US did not believe the military situation in Laos hopeless. The Secretary had speculated, however, that perhaps the Phnom Penh discussions had made the FAL field commanders less aggressive; on the other hand the prospect of a settlement possibly had moved the PL to enlarge its control.

The Secretary had stressed to the Allied diplomats the importance of removing the pretense of legality which a Souvanna "government" afforded the Communists. Until this "front" had been removed, either by Souvanna's return to Vientiane to participate in the RLG or by his removal to Paris, the US did not, according to the Secretary, "look forward" to the early convening of an international conference which would immediately debate the legality of the two governments. Furthermore, to

reconvene the ICC would lead to such a conference, since the ICC, as India had frankly specified, required further terms of reference.

The British Ambassador had queried the Secretary on the timing of the British reply to the USSR proposal for the reconvening of the ICC; the Secretary had stated that the US favored further delay of the reply "pending developments and further discussions."

French Ambassador Alphand had reiterated the French position that a tripartite approach to the Soviets was necessary. Alphand had also noted that, in the French view, Ambassador Thompson's approach to Khrushchev had omitted two essential points - reference to the Geneva Accords as the essential basis for any solution in Laos, and recognition that there must be a place for the NLHX in the Laotian political structure.

The Secretary had replied, concerning the necessity of NLHX representation, that the US would not object if the NLHX won some seats in an appropriately elected Assembly. But "this [was] quite different," the Secretary had concluded, "from [a] place in [the] government itself."

(C) Msg, SecState Circular, 1384, 14 Mar 61.

13 Mar

The US Minister in London informed the Secretary of State that British Foreign Office reaction to the Phoumi/Souvanna meeting (see item 10 March) was "guarded" because of lack of information. They were encouraged, however, because the two factions were trying to find a solution.

(S) Msg, London to SecState, 3653, 13 Mar 61.

13 Mar

The Secretary of Defense, "in accordance with the authority granted . . . by the President this morning," told the Chairman, JCS, to "take the necessary action" to accomplish the following: 1) arrange for the de-mothballing of 16 additional B-26s and the "sheep dipping" of 16 additional B-26 crews; 2) instruct Admiral Felt to arrange for the use of five Laotian T-6s, piloted by Laotians [redacted] on bombing missions.

The B-26s and crews were to be "made ready for operations" but were to be retained in the continental US.

(TS) Memo, SecDef to CJCS, 13 Mar 61, CJCS - 091
Laos (2), 1 Mar 61.

13 Mar

The Chairman, JCS, reported to the Secretary of Defense that CINCPAC had alerted a Marine Air Base Squadron for movement to Udorn to support 20 HUS-1 helicopters (approved action 4; see item 9 March).

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 991727, 13 Mar 61.

13 Mar

At a conference between representatives of the Joint Staff [redacted] the decision was taken to seek the 16 volunteer helicopter pilots required to implement approved action 3 (see item 9 March) from the Marine Corps before turning to the other services.

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 991823, 14 Mar 61.

14 Mar

The JCS authorized CINCPAC to make all necessary preparations for bombing with T-6 aircraft in Laos. ✓

This authorization included the positioning of bombs in Vientiane and the use of [redacted] Lao pilots. However, the use of napalm was prohibited.
(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 991799, 14 Mar 61.

14 Mar

Ambassador Brown informed the Secretary of State that, according to Phoumi, Indian Ambassador Ratnam in Laos had been pressing King Savang for a return of the ICC or even an enlarged ICC to Laos, the enlarged ICC to include Cambodia and Burma, but not Malaya. Ratnam had argued that the advantage of the ICC was that it was already in existence, and could begin to operate immediately with recognized authority.

Phoumi had stated he had countered the Indian diplomat's efforts by suggesting to the King that, if the ICC was to be enlarged, Malaya should be included. Furthermore, the ICC should be a "new" commission rather than an enlarged one.

Phoumi, in explaining to the US Ambassador why he had not discussed his proposal of a reorganized government with the King, had stated his belief that any reorganized government should "start from [the] beginning," with Souvanna participating. Any reorganized government "before that" would necessarily be temporary and unable to "take positive attitudes," and this, Phoumi had declared, would be undesirable for the country and the war effort.

Ambassador Brown had summarized, in response to a query from Phoumi, the US positions, as follows: 1) the US was pleased that Phoumi supported the NNC and was prepared to consider, albeit not enthusiastically, a conference called to ratify and implement the actions of the NNC, but was opposed to a conference before the activation of the NNC, believing that such a conference would produce a "propaganda field day" in which the interests of Laos would likely be submerged; 2) the US wholeheartedly approved of the effort Phoumi was making towards reconciliation of the nationalist elements in the country; and 3) the US felt that the military effort should be "continuous," and was prepared to support Phoumi in this effort.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1693, 14 Mar 61.

14 Mar

The JCS informed CINCPAC that he was "authorized to airlift supplies direct to Vientiane when in your judgement supply requirements are sufficiently urgent" (approved action 8; see item 9 March).

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 991798, 14 Mar 61.

14 Mar

The JCS reported to the Secretary of Defense [redacted] the additional C-47 for employment in Laos required by approved action 7 (see item 9 March).

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 991823, 14 Mar 61.

14 Mar

The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in accordance with instructions from the Secretary of Defense, ordered Lt. Gen. T. J. H. Trapnell, Commanding General of the XVIII Airborne Corps, to depart on 15 March on a survey and familiarization visit to the Southeast Asian area. Gen. Trapnell was ordered to do the following:

1. Personally appraise the adequacy of the US plan for the recapture of the Plaine des Jarres.

2. Examine the extent to which Phoumi had re-assigned his military leaders to assure that the most competent leaders were in command of the forward areas.

3. Appraise the relationships between Ambassador Brown, Admiral Felt, General Boyle, and Phoumi, and determine the extent to which Ambassador Brown was exerting positive or negative influence on the approved program.

Gen. Trapnell was to plan his mission so as to return to Washington by approximately 25 March (see item 31 March).

(TS) Memo SecDef to CJCS, 10 Mar 61; (TS) Memo, CJCS to Lt. Gen. T.J.H. Trapnell, CG, XVIII Airborne Corps (STRAC), CM-133-61, 14 Mar 61. Both in CJCS-091 Laos (2).

14 Mar

The US Charge d'Affaires in Phnom Penh reported to the Secretary of State that Souvanna had asserted that creation of the NNC and convocation of a 14 (or 13)-nation conference should be simultaneous. Laos should not be a participant in the conference because there would be endless debates over who should be its representatives. Instead, Souvanna had stated, representatives of the three factions should meet at the time of the conference to reach agreement on internal problems - such as elections. Their decisions would be communicated when appropriate, to the conference for action by the NNC. At this point, the international conference might be adjourned. Following the elections and formation of the new representative government, Souvanna had said, the conference could be reconvened to "arrange for necessary guarantees of neutrality of Laos and Cambodia."

(S) Msg, Phnom Penh to SecState, 1186, 14 Mar 61.

15 Mar

The US Ambassador in Paris informed the Secretary of State that recent talks with the French Foreign Office had indicated that their initial reaction to the Phoumi/Souvanna talks was one of "guarded optimism." However, the Foreign Office was skeptical that a political solution could be found as easily as Souvanna and Phoumi seemed to believe.

(C) Msg, Paris to SecState, 3810, 15 Mar 61.

15 Mar

The Secretary of State told US Embassies abroad that Ambassador Thompson had discussed with Premier Khrushchev (see item 9 March) the US objective of a "truly neutral but truly independent Laos." Thompson had assured the Soviet Premier that the US position on Laos was not one "of maneuver," but one based on a genuine effort to reach its stated objective.

Khrushchev had commented, Secretary Rusk said, that the US statement regarding a neutral Laos differed "agreeably" from the usual US position on neutralist policies of individual states. The Premier also noted his government's endorsement of Sihanouk's 14-Nation Conference and Soviet support for Souvanna as the head of the "legitimate" RLG. Later in the US-Soviet talk

Khrushchev had observed that "aggravating military conflict" should be avoided, and efforts for a peaceful solution should be continued, although a concrete way to accomplish this might not yet be clear.

(S) Msg, SecState, Circular 1387, 15 Mar 61.

15 Mar

The official Cambodian news bulletin published a note from Chinese Communist Premier Chou En-lai to Prince Sihanouk. In the note Chou En-lai insisted that the solution of the Lao questions be based on the principle and spirit of the Geneva Accords. The Chinese Premier asserted that the convocation of Sihanouk's proposed conference constituted the only reasonable and practical solution to the Laotian question. The Chinese Premier declared that any other solution "setting aside [an] enlarged Geneva Conference," would not be favorable to peace in Laos and to the "detente in Indochina and SEA."

(U) Msg, Phnom Penh to SecState, 1193, 15 Mar 61.

15 Mar

Prince Souvanna Phoumi departed Phnom Penh on his world tour. (See items 23, 25, 29, and 31 March.)

(C) Msg, Phnom Penh to SecState, 1196, 15 Mar 61; (C) Msg, Hong Kong to SecState, 1504, 16 Mar 61.

15 Mar

In response to the Secretary of State's 11 March message (see item), Ambassador Brown stated that he agreed the US should not attempt to "stage manage" events in Phnom Penh too closely. Brown believed, however, that the US should be prepared for certain proposals that would probably arise, such as: 1) a proposal for a "change in composition NNC to substitute India for Malaya, or to combined commission or enlarged ICC" (see item 14 March); 2) a proposal for a "fairly immediate" cease-fire; and 3) a demand that the cessation of the delivery of supplies to the PL be matched by a cessation of US supplies to the FAL, or at least by their reduction or supervision.

Ambassador Brown informed Secretary Rusk that he had not pressed Phoumi for an immediate reorganization of the RLG (see items 12, 14 March); the US diplomat did not want to give Phoumi "too much" impression that the US lacked confidence in his government.

In conclusion, Brown told the Secretary of State that he still had reservations regarding the King's entrance into the political arena directly, and suggested that "this card be played"

only if it would result in Souvanna's either participating in the RLG or dissolving his own "government."

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1694, 15 Mar 61.

15 Mar

CINCPAC recommended to the JCS that each of the 16 helicopters [REDACTED] be provided two pilots and a crew chief. The original plan to furnish only one pilot per helicopter would "prove dangerous and give inadequate support," said CINCPAC (approved action 3; see item 9 March).

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 991885, 15 Mar 61.

15 Mar

The JCS reported to the Secretary of Defense that [REDACTED] B-26s were ready to take off from Taiwan for Thailand as soon as the Department of State obtained the necessary clearances (approved action 11; see item 9 March).

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 991885, 15 Mar 61.

15 Mar

The JCS reported to the Secretary of Defense that Meo forces under arms were estimated by their commander to be about 3,300. [REDACTED] supplying equipment to additional Meos as fast as they could be assembled to receive it. In view of the fact that at least 3,000 additional Meos, according to the Meo commander, were available for action against the Communists, [REDACTED] to organize and equip an additional 1,000 over and above the 4,000 already planned for (approved action, see item 9 March).

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 992064, 17 Mar 61.

16 Mar

In a message to the Secretary of State, Ambassador Brown stated that, according to the Australian Ambassador, Australia was reluctant to provide military support to the Boun Oum Government.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1706, 16 Mar 61.

16 Mar

The JCS reported to the Secretary of Defense [REDACTED] four civilian crews to fly C-130s. US Air Force Pacific was preparing a 10-day refresher course for the crews (approved action 6; see item 9 March).

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 991987, 16 Mar 61.

16 Mar

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

(TS) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1647, 16 Mar 61.

16-17
Mar

The US Ambassador to Laos reported to the Secretary of State that, according to Phoumi, a Chinese Nationalist representative had begun negotiations with the RLG for the removal of Nationalist irregulars from Laos to Formosa.

On 17 March, reported the US Ambassador to Thailand to the Secretary of State, the first plane load of Nationalist irregulars took off for Formosa.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1704, 16 Mar 61;

(C) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1675, 17 Mar 61.

17 Mar

Ambassador Brown informed the Secretary of State that, according to Phoumi, the second Phnom Penh meeting with Souvanna (14, 15 March) had ended in failure. Phoumi had reported that Souvanna told the RLG delegation that he had been "roundly criticized from all quarters" as a result of the joint communique issued after Phoumi's first visit (see item 10 March), and he had been forced to change his position. He now insisted, therefore, that the "first" step would have to be the convening of a 14-nation conference.

Ambassador Brown reported that Souvanna had shown the Phoumi delegation a letter from Souphanouvong stating that the Pathet Lao recognized Souvanna as the only representative of the Government of Laos. The PL would continue to support Souvanna, Souphanouvong had stated, "so long as [he] followed line of policy agreed with PL."

An RLG press communique (issued after Brown's conversation with Phoumi) declared that the RLG delegation had gone to Phnom Penh to renew contact with Souvanna and to implement as soon as possible the resolutions adopted by the two leaders at the first meeting. Souvanna, however, had announced that he was leaving on a world tour the following day.

It appeared that Souvanna, the communique declared, in eluding previously agreed-upon commitments, had not been able to "play [the] part of intermediary" as he had undertaken to do. Further, by his departure at a time when "all Lao must be present and must rally together to find [the] solution to [the] national crisis," Souvanna had proved once again, as on 9 December (when he had fled Vientiane), his "incapacity to lead or even to influence activities" of the pro-Communists.

In a separate message to the Secretary of State, Ambassador Brown expressed the opinion that the results of the second Phnom Penh meeting clearly indicated that Souvanna was following the straight PL-Soviet line. It was either because he was unwilling or, more likely, unable to influence that line in any sense of acting as a true mediator, the Ambassador added.

Souvanna's departure on a world tour, Brown said, eliminated the possibility of progress toward a political solution through RLG negotiations with him in the near future. It appeared to Brown, therefore, that if an effort were to be made to achieve progress on the political front in the near future, it would have to be done by discussions with the Soviets.

Brown suggested that it would be worthwhile to have Ambassador Bruce talk with Souvanna while he was in London. If the US should be prepared to accept a conference after the activation of the NNC, and Souvanna could be convinced of this, Bruce could encourage him to attempt, on this basis, to bridge the gap between the two sides.

On the same day, Ambassador Trimble reported to the Secretary of State from Phnom Penh that the Laotian Ambassador to Cambodia had reported that during the meeting, Souvanna, under pressure by Souphanouvong, had taken the position that a meeting of the three leaders should take place at the same time, rather than before the international conference, so that decisions reached by the leaders could be guaranteed by the conference. The Laotian diplomat had added that Souvanna had stated that if there were a conference, he would return immediately from Europe.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1714, 17 Mar 61;
(U) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1716, 17 Mar 61; (S)
Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1718, 17 Mar 61; (C) Msg,
Phnom Penh to SecState, 1209, 17 Mar 61.

17 Mar Ambassador Johnson reported to the Secretary of State that the necessary arrangements with the Thais concerning stationing B-26s and helicopters in Thailand had been completed (see item 16 March). Movement of aircraft to Udorn and Takhli could now proceed. X

(TS) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1671, 17 Mar 61.

17 Mar The JCS reported to the Secretary of Defense that on Taiwan a second group of [REDACTED] B-26s was ready for operations. These planes were waiting for crews to be provided by the USAF (approved action 11; see item 9 March).

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 992064, 17 Mar 61.

18 Mar The Secretary of State informed US Embassies that the results of his meeting with the Soviet Foreign Minister had been "quite negative." The US had endeavored to find out what the Soviets really had in mind for Laos, but Gromyko had been "completely elusive," refusing to give substantive answers and repeatedly returning to the Soviet proposal that discussions on Laos must begin with an international conference. Mr. Rusk also stated that, although it had been agreed that the objective of both nations was a neutral and independent Laos, Gromyko would not discuss the means to achieve this end.

(S) Msg, SecState to Moscow, 1529 (et al.), 18 Mar 61.

18 Mar CHPEO reported to CINCPAC that Phoumi was "rather desperate and cannot be persuaded to go on the offensive on any front. His concept now is to dig in and to hold what he has." J

(TS) Msg, CHPEO Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 94444, 18 Mar 61.

20 Mar The JCS informed CINCPAC that they considered it "basic to future operations" that the situation in Laos be restored by the recapture of RJ 7-13, followed by implementation of the original plan to recapture the Plaine des Jarres. The JCS requested CINCPAC's recommendations regarding reinforcements of personnel or materiel needed to retake RJ 7-13.

The JCS also requested CINCPAC's comments on a plan to reinforce the Meos northeast of the Plaine des Jarres with small FAL units in order to "disrupt the enemy sanctuary."

With regard to the employment of B-26s (see item 9 March), the JCS advised CINCPAC that "it would be desirable to make the first strike with the maximum number of aircraft in order to gain surprise and to obtain fullest shock effect." The JCS did not visualize a partial commitment of the B-26s unless such action became necessary to prevent capture of the capital or some similar major set back. The fire power from even eight of the aircraft, however, could achieve decisive results. In conclusion, the JCS requested CINCPAC's comments on the effects of an initial strike using 8, 12, or 16 aircraft against supply dumps, heavy weapons and transport, or in close support of troops.

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 992240, 20 Mar 61.

20 Mar

The JCS reported to the Secretary of Defense that the Air Force had delivered four C-130s to Okinawa for transfer to CAT (approved action 5; see item 9 March).

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 992185, 20 Mar 61.

20-21
Mar

CINCPAC replied that additional artillery was far less important than the determination of Phoumi to launch an attack and the ability of his commanders to carry it out. "Until such time as CHPEO can assure us that Phoumi wants to fight and will fight for recapture of 7-13 road junction and PDJ [Plaine des Jarres]," commented CINCPAC, "we are spinning our wheels in talking about [REDACTED] for four 105 batteries."

(TS) Msgs, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 992241, 20 Mar 61; and CINCPAC to JCS, DA IN 95339, 21 Mar 61.

21 Mar

A White House meeting resulted in a reversal of US policy for a political solution of the crisis in Laos. As reported by the Secretary of State to Ambassador Brown, the US would now agree to a meeting of the ICC and the holding of a 14-nation conference. The US had consistently opposed these courses of action (see items 23 and 31 December, 7, 18, 23 January, 20 February), while the Communist Bloc had favored them (see items 22 December, 11, 18 January, 1, 2, 11, 18, 23, 28 February).

The US policy decisions concerning a military solution, however, would remain unchanged. Approved courses of action (see item 9 March) would continue to be implemented in order to meet all eventualities.

In addition, said the Secretary, the US should prepare an appeal by the RLG and the King for military intervention by SEATO, and bring about the presentation of this appeal in the event that the PL offensive did not cease. The US would expect SEATO to respond to this appeal by placing a SEATO force in Thailand (see item 23 March).

The Secretary of State instructed Ambassador Brown to describe to Phoumi and Savang the proposed policy. The Ambassador should emphasize that the US remained committed to a peaceful settlement but was determined to preserve the independence of Laos, by whatever means necessary; the Ambassador should also urge that the Laotian leaders must, during this major test of PL and Soviet intentions, rally the morale of the FAL and the RLG.

(TS) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 992, 21 Mar 61.

21 Mar

Ambassador Bruce reported to the Secretary of State that, at a meeting at the Foreign Office, British officials had expressed the opinion that at this late date, the only alternative to an international conference on Laos would be the "actual occupation of Laos." The British had also commented, Bruce said, that it was quite probable the Soviets were insisting on a conference because it was the only thing the Russians and Chinese had been able to agree upon in the Laotian situation.

Ambassador Bruce also informed Secretary Rusk that it appeared that the British Government continued to regard Souvanna as the only person capable of bringing about a government of national unity in Laos. The British feared, however, that he had come "dangerously close" to jeopardizing this position by a too deep involvement with the Communists and premature negotiations with Phoumi.

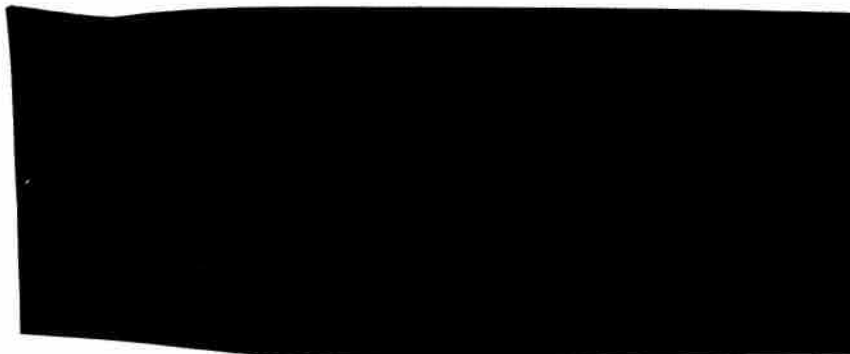
(S) Msgs, London to SecState, 3801, 3802, 21 Mar 61.

21 Mar

Ambassador Johnson cabled the Secretary of State that the French Ambassador to Thailand had been "strenuously attempting to impress upon Paris" the importance of the coming SEATO conference to the French position in Southeast Asia. The French Ambassador recognized, said Johnson, that the basic problem was that France from the beginning had been a reluctant member of SEATO; he had implied that France did not actually accept the concept of SEATO but believed rather that the Southeast Asian nations should be neutral. Thus the French often seemed to pursue only obstructionist policies in SEATO. The French diplomat considered it essential that the SEATO conference discuss and resolve differences in the SEATO members' views on the organization; the French Ambassador had no indication, however, of the French Government's attitude.

(C) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1697, 21 Mar 61.

21 Mar



[REDACTED]

(TS) Msg, SecState to Bangkok, 1442, 21 Mar 61.

21 Mar

CHPEO reported to the JCS on steps taken by Phoumi to improve leadership of the FAL (approved action 15; see item 9 March). Since 9 March the Laotian leader had replaced one FAL Groupe Mobile Commander and was planning to replace two others. Of these officers, two were considered by PEO to be competent combat leaders. The third officer, "while not energetic in . . . [a] subdivision command has [a] reputation as [an] experienced combat leader." Of the three remaining forward area commanders, PEO considered one to be "a doer of demonstrated ability," another to have done "fairly well" with a combat command, and the third to be a "very weak commander" who had "failed to take decisive action to save [the] Plaine des Jarres."

The overall army commander in the Luang Prabang area, reported the CHPEO, had been well schooled at the French Ecole de Guerre but was a poor logistic planner and was "not decisive." He did not accept guidance from US advisers and did not want US training teams with units in contact with the enemy.

The CHPEO also listed 15 other officers whom he considered to be "competent leaders."

In an over-all evaluation of the military leadership in Laos, CHPEO pointed out that the Laotian Army was young, that most of its officers had only limited professional training, and that combat experience until November 1960 had been limited to local anti-guerrilla operations. The major obstacle to improved military leadership was the practice of appointing commanders because of their political and family connections rather than their ability.

(S) Msg, CHPEO Laos to JCS, DA IN 95300, 21 Mar 61.

21 Mar

The first group of four B-26s had arrived by this date at Takhli, Thailand, according to a report from the JCS to the Secretary of Defense (approved action 11; see item 9 March).

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 992266, 21 Mar 61.

22 Mar

The French Ambassador in Washington presented to the Department of State the French view of the proposed British conditional acceptance of the Soviet proposal for reactivation of the ICC (see item 3 March).

The French considered the British demarche as a first move to which the USSR would probably not agree without further negotiations. The French believed that the US, UK, and French Ambassadors in Moscow should conduct negotiations, which should include the following subjects: 1) cease-fire, 2) control of cease-fire, 3) cessation of foreign aid to Laos, and 4) a return to the status provided by the Geneva Agreement.

Finally, the French Ambassador stated that his government had agreed to an international conference

on Laos but considered that preparations for the conference should be carefully made and prior agreement should be reached with the USSR on the "principles of settlement.

(S) Msg, SecState to Paris, 3888, 22 Mar 61.

22 Mar Ambassador Brown reported to the Secretary of State that, according to the Australian Ambassador to Laos, Boun Oum had declared that a reorganization of the Laotian Government was definitely not being considered.

(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1747, 23 Mar 61.

22 Mar The Secretary of State instructed the US Ambassadors to Thailand, Australia, Pakistan, the Philippines, Canada, South Vietnam, Korea, Taiwan, Japan, and New Zealand to inform their respective host governments, at the highest appropriate level, of the following:

As evidence US determination seek peaceful settlement Lao crisis US has authorized Co-Chairman Geneva Conference convey to Soviet Co-Chairman that US would be prepared agree convening ICC and 14-nation conference provided that as essential prerequisite Communist supported Pathet Lao offensive stop immediately and discussions between Lao leaders toward broadened RLG reopened. However, as alternative course, in event Soviets unresponsive our conciliatory offer which includes conference proposed by Soviets, we also proposed consultations in SEATO in order be prepared move promptly to assist Lao Government militarily.

The Secretary of State also instructed the Ambassadors to inform the host governments that the US was "fully determined" to undertake the alternative course of action [SEATO] in the absence of prompt Soviet compliance with the request for the cessation of hostilities. The Secretary went on to say that readiness measures for this course of action were now proceeding; if the PL offensive did not cease, the RLG request for SEATO intervention could be expected "soon." The US hoped, the Secretary continued, that SEATO could agree on a course of action that would provide "favorable, adequate and prompt response" to the RLG request.

(S) Msg, SecState Circular, 1445, 22 Mar 61.

22 Mar The Secretary of State informed Ambassador Brown that the Canadian government had been informed of the US position on the proposed British acceptance of the Soviet proposal to reconvene the ICC (see item 22 March) but Canada had not yet decided whether or not to participate in the ICC. The Canadian Ambassador had declared that his government was fully aware of both the urgency of the situation and the magnitude of the US concession that the new course of action represented. The guiding considerations for Canadian participation remained, however, the consent of the RLG and a reasonable expectation of the success of the ICC. The Canadian Ambassador had conjectured that a "strictly limited role" for the ICC would meet this second "consideration."

Secretary Rusk asked Ambassador Brown to determine if there would be any difficulty in obtaining RLG consent to such a role for the ICC.

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 996, 22 Mar 61.

22 Mar

US Ambassador Roundtree informed the Secretary of State that Pakistan's President Ayub appeared to be less than enthusiastic about Ambassador Harriman's explanation of the new US policy to accept a cease-fire in Laos followed by an international conference (see item 21 March). Although Ayub was not directly critical, he seemed dissatisfied that the US was ready to make concessions and had expressed the fear that this would mean at the minimum, a divided Laos and possibly a Communist take-over.

(S) Msg, Karachi to SecState, 1622, 22 Mar 61.

22 Mar

Ambassador Brown outlined in a memorandum cabled to the Secretary of State an "additional idea" on Laos as "a supplement to and not a substitute for other plans."

The US foreign policy premise as laid down in the President's inaugural speech was, said Brown, to approach the Communists with "both carrot and stick." Concerning Laos, the NNC had been the carrot, an enticement which the Communists had not indicated they were inclined to accept as long as they could continue "beating us with a stick." Therefore, the immediate task of the US was to seize the stick and so apply it to the Communists as to make the carrot more attractive.

US military aid to Laos had in the past, Brown continued, been premised on the furnishing to the FAL of the means to cope with purely internal opposition; SEATO had been created "to react against 'aggression by means of armed attack.'" Ambassador Brown thought it possible, however, that the "integrity and sovereignty and political independence of Laos may be eventually lost without [the] enemy ever having to resort to that 'aggression by means of armed attack' which is [the] only written basis for SEATO action."

Thus, as the RLG military situation deteriorated, the Communists were using their stick to "beat" the RLG and the US into an international conference, the results of which could only be unfavorable if the military situation remained unchanged. If, then, negotiations were to serve any useful purpose for the US, it "would be well for them to be preceded or accompanied by a reversal in military trends." However, the UK and France shied away from the use of SEATO forces and the neutrals viewed with alarm the prospect of the injection into Laos of Western armed forces and planes.

However, according to Ambassador Brown, there did exist among both the neutrals and the Allies a "large area of agreement" on the fact of a "foreign Communist presence" on the rebel side in the form of Soviet airlift and Viet Minh technicians, advisers, and cadres. Therefore, asked the Ambassador, "why should not RLG openly make this kind of presentation, utilizing . . . factual intelligence already available?" The RLG might

then call for assistance from friendly powers to "equalize" and "compensate for" Communist intervention. Actions like those taken by the Communists could then be carried out. Such actions were as follows:

1. unlimited use of aircraft, including helicopters, for transport purposes;
2. assignment of artillery teams to selected FAL units;
3. introduction of LTAG and PARU teams to work with FAL components to develop "hunter-killer" teams and "to effect [a] general improvement in [the] overall effectiveness" of FAL units for internal security missions in friendly rear areas,
4. the scattering of communication, medical, and psychological warfare specialists throughout FAL ranks;
5. the assignment of command and tactical advisors at "many echelons," with "perhaps a scattering of key [redacted] South Vietnamese] combat cadres";
6. the use of Thai, South Vietnamese, or Philippine engineer units to assist with highway and airfield programs;
7. the expansion of Meo guerrilla warfare units and the initiation of similar programs with other minorities.

The advantages of such courses of action were, as listed by Ambassador Brown:

1. the "stiffening," the increase of capability and morale, of the FAL;
2. reduction of the dangers of escalation, by justifying the RLG appeal as a "meeting tit for tat" of Communist moves;
3. demonstration to the Communists, the allies, and the neutrals that the US would not allow Laos to be conquered by armed force that did not meet the SEATO definition of "aggression by armed attack";
4. initiation of a policy that the British and French would be "particularly hard pressed to oppose," since the policy would be a response to an appeal the premise of which they accepted; and
5. "If, by remote chance, SEATO as an organization would respond to [the] RLG appeal or at least approve individual participation by member countries it would give SEATO a new lease on life."

Ambassador Brown averred that this memorandum was not "a proposal for limited war in [the] expectation that by military means alone [the] RLG can recoup [the]

country." He warned that this proposal might "provoke severe escalation," a risk which the US must weigh. Finally, Ambassador Brown recommended that, the initiation of any of the suggested actions should be preceded by consultation with the allies and, possibly by purposeful advance hints to the USSR of the direction in which the US "may have to head" if the Communist activities in Laos were not scaled down.

(TS) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1744, 22 Mar 61;
(TS) Msg, SecState to Moscow, 1567, 23 Mar 61.

22 Mar

The Deputy Director of the Joint Staff, JCS, reported from Bangkok to the Director of the Joint Staff that the military situation in Laos was critical and would become progressively worse unless additional action were taken. The biggest problem, in the opinion of the Deputy Director, was the "lack of determination, will and leadership on [the] part of FAL and Phoumi."

The Deputy Director recommended that Admiral Felt

[REDACTED] go to see Phoumi and lay the entire problem on the line." (See item 29 March.)
(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 220917Z Mar 61.

22 Mar

In view of the increased seriousness of the situation in Laos, CINCPAC established DEFCON 2 for the following forces:

1. All forces earmarked for and in direct support of JTF 116 in CINCPAC OPlan 32-59 (Phase II Laos).
2. All US forces earmarked for and in direct support of SEATO Field Forces OPlan 5/61.
3. All US forces earmarked for and in direct support of CINCPAC Outline Plan X-61 (Laos).

CINCPAC established DEFCON 3 for all forces earmarked for and in direct support of JTF 116 in CINCPAC OPlan 32-59 (Phase II Viet Nam).

The remainder of the Pacific Command forces were placed in DEFCON 4.

(TS) Msg, DA to CGUSCONARC, DA 992338, 22 Mar 61 (quoting CINCPAC Msg to JCS, DTG 212235Z Mar 61).

22 Mar

The JCS reported to the Secretary of Defense that, by this date, the following actions had been taken to implement the approved courses of action (see item 9 March):

1. The Services had been requested to meet the following quotas for helicopter crews: Army, 10 pilots and 10 crew chiefs; Marine Corps, 14 pilots and 20 crew chiefs; Navy, 10 pilots and 20 crew chiefs. (The decision to employ only Marine Corps crews, see item 13 March, had been changed.)

2. [REDACTED]

3. The 16 USAF pilots needed to man B-26s had been selected

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 992354, 22 Mar 61.

23 Mar

The Secretary of State spelled out to Ambassador Brown the details and implications of the proposed Laotian appeals (see item 21 March). It was intended, the Secretary stated, that the Laotians would appeal simultaneously to SEATO for military intervention, and to the UN requesting an emergency Security Council meeting. It was essential that the appeals be simultaneous, the Secretary emphasized, because a SEATO response without an appeal to the UN would result in a request for a Security Council meeting by the USSR or other UN members, causing the initiative in the UN to rest "with others" who would likely introduce a resolution calling for the withdrawal of SEATO troops from Thailand. If military action became necessary in Laos, the Secretary continued, the RLG should not address its appeals until military preparations were so far advanced within SEATO as to enable the positioning of forces within Laos in "a matter of hours" after the Security Council had received the Laotian appeal. The SEATO moves should not be still in progress during the Security Council meeting because this would place the US in the undesirable position of having to fend off proposals designed to impede the SEATO efforts.

In separate messages, the Secretary of State provided Ambassador Brown with the contemplated texts of the Laotian appeals and of a proposed US resolution to the Security Council, and with a timetable of the anticipated actions. The timetable planned was as follows:

1. D minus an unspecified number of days. Prior decision by those members of SEATO who intend to respond militarily to the Laotian appeal that they will initiate immediate movement of their military forces into Laos upon receipt of the Laotian appeal.

2. H hour. Dispatch of Laotian appeal to SEATO, at which time the movement of military forces into Laos begins.

3. H plus 1 hour. Announcement by the US and other SEATO members that military forces have been dispatched to Laos in response to the Laotian appeal.

4. H plus 1 hour. Dispatch of appeal by Laotians to the Security Council.

5. H plus 12 hours. The SEATO military forces should have taken up their positions in Laos, securing those areas designated.

6. H plus 24 hours. The Security Council meeting would begin; the US would, with other Security Council members, submit a resolution embodying the following provisions:

- (a) A call for the immediate cessation of hostilities in Laos;

(b) A call for the immediate termination of all infiltration of personnel or supply of arms or of other materials across the frontiers of Laos;

(c) An expression of the hope that the International Commission for Supervision and Control of Laos can be convened as soon as possible and that it will be able to verify the effectiveness of the cease-fire;

(d) An endorsement of the convening of an international conference as proposed by the Chief of State of the Kingdom of Cambodia and by the United Kingdom to seek ways to protect the independence, territorial integrity, and neutrality of the Kingdom of Laos;

(e) A call upon all governments concerned to respect the independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity, and neutrality of Laos; and

(f) A call upon all governments concerned to cooperate fully with the implementation of this resolution.

(TS) Msgs, SecState to Vientiane, 1000, 1026, 1027, 23 Mar 61; (TS) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 1025, 24 Mar 61.

23 Mar

President Kennedy announced at a press conference that the situation in Laos was potentially dangerous, and he warned the Communist world that "no one should doubt our resolution" to preserve an independent, neutral Laos. The President declared that if there was to be a peaceful solution to the Laotian crisis, there must be a cessation of the present armed attacks by "externally supported Communists." If the attacks did not stop, the President warned, the US in close cooperation with its allies, and in accordance with the wishes of the Laotian Government, must consider what further response would be required.

"I want to make it clear . . .," he stated, "that all we want in Laos is peace and not war, a truly neutral Government and not a cold war pawn, a settlement concluded at the conference table and not on the battlefield."

(U) NYT, 24 Mar 61, 1; Washington Post, 24 Mar 61, A12.

23 Mar

Ambassador-at-Large Harriman reported to the Secretary of State that he had conferred at New Delhi with Souvanna Phouma (see item 15 March). Souvanna had reiterated to Harriman his familiar theme that Laotians should be left to settle their own problems. Souvanna had claimed that both Kong Le and Pathet Lao troops were loyal to him and would agree to a cease-fire if he requested it.

Souvanna also had stated that the NNC proposal, favored by the US, was not possible since the NNC would have no authority from which to receive instructions. Moreover, according to Souvanna, "Laotian Law [was] tied to [the] Geneva Accords." These Accords linked together the Indo-Chinese countries and "provided [for] the solution their problem simultaneously with

assistance respective ICCs." To Ambassador Harriman's reminder that Souvanna himself had ended the work of the ICC in Laos, Souvanna had rejoined that he had asked for only an adjournment of the ICC--therefore, the ICC was still legally in existence.

In a more general discussion of the Laotian problem, Souvanna had made the following points:

1. He was still the Prime Minister.
2. The weakness of Laos was that only the NLHX was an organized and united party among the political factions.
3. The Laotians were overwhelmingly non-Communist and could be saved from communism if action were taken quickly. Since the time was short, the ICC should be convened immediately; convening the 14-Nation Conference would occasion too great a delay.

Souvanna had repeated to Ambassador Harriman his plan for the solution of the Laotian problem (see items 2 and 14 March). Souvanna also stated that he had not returned to Vientiane because such a return would destroy the support and authority that he required to reunite Laos; he was now traveling around the world to gain support for his plan.

(C) Msg, New Delhi (Harriman) to SecState, 2144, 23 Mar 61.

23 Mar

In an aide-memoire to the USSR, the British Government replied to the Soviet call for reactivation of the ICC (see item 18 February). The British proposed that the Soviet Union and Great Britain issue a request for an immediate cease-fire in Laos. If the Soviet Union concurred in this proposal, the British Government would agree to ask Nehru to convene the ICC in New Delhi. The commission would be instructed to verify the effectiveness of the cease-fire in Laos.

Great Britain also accepted the Soviet proposal for an international conference. The aide-memoire stipulated, however, that the conference should meet only after the ICC had reported that the cease-fire was effective, and it was hoped that would be accomplished within two weeks.

The British declared that the international meeting should be attended by members of the Geneva Conference, and strongly endorsed Sihanouk's suggestion that certain other nations join the meeting.

In conclusion, the note stated that Britain could not recognize the so-called "government of Prince Souvanna Phouma" and that a neutral Laotian Government of national unity would have to be constituted before the conference could reach any decision. Therefore, the British hoped that Laotian leaders would resume the talks that had been started in Phnom Penh. If the new government was not formed by the time the Conference assembled, the RLG could not be represented at the meeting, and the first task of the conference members would be to constitute a new Laotian Government.

(U) NYT, 24 Mar 61, 1, 60.

23 Mar

CINCPAC reported that the approved augmentation of PEO Laos and JUSMAG Thailand (approved action 10; see item 9 March) had been completed. The augmentations were as follows: PEO, 27 officers and 34 enlisted men; JUSMAG, 26 officers and 48 enlisted men.

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 992473, 23 Mar 61.

23-24
Mar

A C-47 aircraft assigned to the US Air Attache, Vientiane, was shot down over the Plaine des Jarres while performing a reconnaissance mission.

On the follow day, the Directorates of Intelligence and Operations of the Joint Staff, JCS, informed the Secretary of Defense of the circumstances and effectiveness of the aerial reconnaissance conducted by the Air Attache aircraft.

The Deputy Director for Operations, Joint Staff, cited the 17 December 1960 authorization for these flights (see item). The reconnaissance missions, flown on a regular basis, were with the knowledge of and at the request of the RLG. The Deputy Director stated that the Air Attache, although assigned to Saigon where the aircraft was based, was also accredited to Laos.

The Director of Intelligence, Joint Staff, reported that the reconnaissance flights of the attache aircraft had been of "great intelligence value," providing the "most reliable reports of enemy troop dispositions and movements."

In a country where road travel in many areas is practically impossible, and communications non-existent, ground reconnaissance was nonproductive. Ground reconnaissance even when completed was accomplished mostly by non-American sources of unknown reliability. Until air reconnaissance was started, the employment of government forces against enemy troops was, of necessity, conducted on a reaction basis. Limited Lao Army resources were wasted on operations based on a lack of tactical intelligence or on no intelligence at all.

According to the Director of Intelligence, the reconnaissance flights had particularly revealed the following:

1. Visual and photographic evidence of Soviet planes in Laos.
2. Vehicular movements of military columns from North Viet Nam into Laos.
3. Identification and location of some enemy weapons and deployment.
4. Location of some enemy supply points and ammunition dumps.
5. Location of enemy troop concentrations.
6. Information on the condition of the main roads in Laos and border areas.
7. Location, configuration, and capacity of airfields in Laos.
8. Location of new enemy communication facilities including pinpointing of relay stations and aircraft homing devices.

(TS) Memo, Deputy Director for Operations, Joint Staff to SecDef, "Reconnaissance by Attache Aircraft in Laos," 24 Mar 61, CJCS 091-Laos (2); (TS) Memo, Director for Intelligence, Joint Staff to SecDef, "Intelligence Value of US Air Attache Aerial Reconnaissance in Laos," J2DM-96-61, 24 Mar 61, CJCS-091-Laos (2); (S) Msgs, USARMA Vientiane to DA; DA IN 96698, 24 Mar 61; DA IN 96746, 24 Mar 61.

24 Mar Ambassador Brown reported to the Secretary of State that he had informed King Savang of the US plan to propose through the British to the USSR a termination of hostilities (see item 22 March). The King had commented that the termination should not be a case of the government forces disarming themselves and sitting placidly by while the "other side," without shooting, bettered its position. Additionally, the King had declared that a cease-fire would have to involve the removal of the Viet Minh from Laos.

To Ambassador Brown the King had appeared unenthusiastic about the proposed meeting of Laotian leaders to form a widely-based government to represent Laos at the international conference. In this context, the King had particularly insisted that Souvanna "did not represent anything." With regard to the international conference itself, the King had anticipated that the Chinese Communists would attempt to inject the Taiwan dispute into the proceedings and thereby cause the conference to lose sight of the Laotian problem.

King Savang had approved of President Kennedy's 23 March proclamation (see item) and had agreed with Ambassador Brown that military efforts should be continued "with unremitting vigor" during the search for a peaceful solution. The King had been critical, however, of the leadership, tactics, and logistical planning of the FAL.

Savang considered that "Souvanna was cleverly being used by Communists to serve their ends," Brown reported. Souvanna was always inclined to follow the last man who talked to him, the King had averred; therefore, Souvanna's world tour, since its itinerary placed the Communist nations last, was part of "the Communist game."

The King had expressed disappointment, Brown reported, in SEATO's actions to date. If efforts for a peaceful settlement failed, the Laotian Chief of State had declared, the RLG would have no alternative but to call for outside help. If SEATO were disposed to act, the King could see no difficulty in the RLG making the appeal to that organization (see item 23 March).

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1755, 24 Mar 61.

24 Mar President Kennedy, in a message to Prime Minister Nehru, urged that the Government of India assume a leading role in arranging a cease-fire in Laos and in making arrangements for that country to become a truly neutral nation, free from outside interference.

(U) NYT, 25 Mar 61, 1.

24 Mar The Charge d'Affaires in New Delhi informed Secretary Rusk that Prime Minister Nehru, in two speeches before Parliament, had noted the critical and urgent nature of the Laotian issue on which war or peace depended. Nehru had welcomed the UK proposals for reconvening the ICC and holding an international conference (see item 23 March) and expressed the hope that current efforts would succeed in stopping the fighting and the importation of arms.

Mr. Nehru had also declared, the Charge reported, that there would be no solution to the crisis in Laos unless various parties or groups were represented in the government and a policy barring commitment to any military alliance was followed.

(C) Msg, New Delhi to SecState, 2183, 28 Mar 61.

24 Mar Ambassador Bruce told the Secretary of State that the British Foreign Office thought that a Laotian Government of national union would be difficult to achieve "at any stage," but that the results might be more satisfactory if the attempt were made now, rather than at the international conference.

The British were also convinced, Ambassador Bruce said, that Souvanna was the only logical person to lead the national union government. Some Pathet Lao would also have to be brought in if the government were going to be acceptable to the Communists.

(S) Msg, London to SecState, 3862, 24 Mar 61.

24 Mar In reply to Prince Sihanouk's 3 March letter (see item), President de Gaulle agreed that the reconvening of the ICC would have been the best way to deal with the Laotian problem. However, since this had not come about, De Gaulle favored a program embracing a cease-fire, an immediate halt in arms shipments, the organization of a truly representative government, and the convocation of a conference.

At the very least, De Gaulle continued, there should be an end to the fighting so that an international conference could undertake its task of finding a "durable solution" to the Laotian problem. Such a solution, he asserted, would confirm the independence, integrity, and neutrality of Laos.

(The French President's reply was not made public until 27 March; Ambassador Gavin reported its contents to the Secretary of State on 28 March.)

(U) Msg, Paris to SecState, 4068, 28 Mar 61.

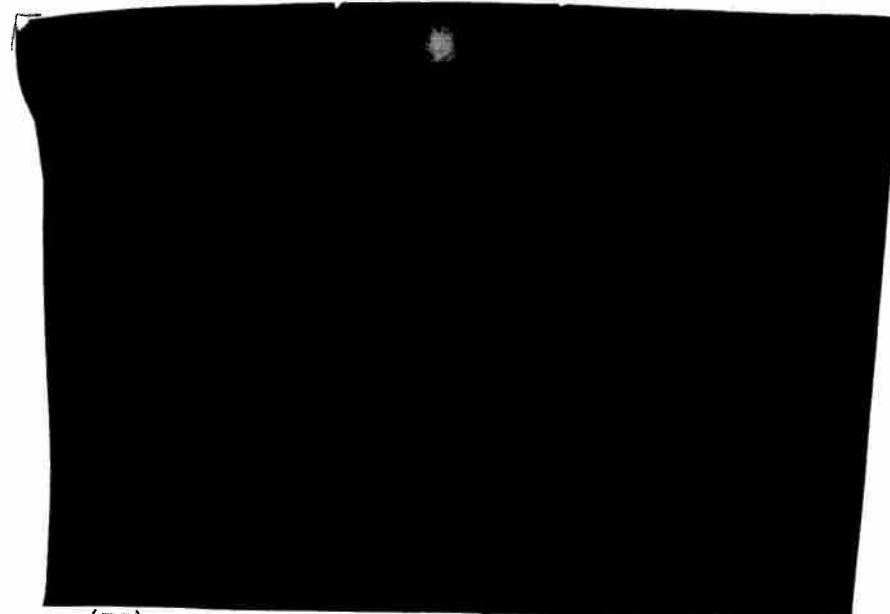
24 Mar US Ambassador Hickerson informed the Secretary of State that he had briefed Philippine Foreign Minister Serrano on the current US willingness to accept the cease-fire in Laos to be followed by an international conference (see item 22 March). Serrano had declared, the Ambassador reported, that "we might as well write Laos off." If the Soviets "had any sense," Serrano had stated, they would accept the British proposal and then go on with their infiltration to gain control of a so-called neutral Laos. If the Soviets did not accept the proposal they would repeat the Korean action and get Chinese and North Vietnamese to do their fighting for them in a local war. Serrano was absolutely convinced, however, that the Soviets would not risk a world war over Laos.

(S) Msg, Manila to SecState, 1103, 24 Mar 61.

24 Mar The US Charge d'Affaires in Tokyo informed the Secretary of State that Japan's reaction to the President's proclamation (see item 23 March) was favorable. Japan's Minister of Foreign Affairs had declared that the neutralization of Laos was completely in line with Japan's thinking, since it was closely related to cessation of armed assistance and would remove Laos from the cold war struggle.

(S) Msg, Tokyo to SecState, 2763, 24 Mar 61.

24 Mar



(TS) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 1724, 23 Mar 61; and Sec State to Bangkok, 1473, 24 Mar 61.

24 Mar

CINCPAC forwarded to the JCS an outline of CINCPAC Oplan X-61, the operations plan for multinational military operations in Laos. The plan provided for operations in support of RLG forces endeavoring to suppress and defeat Communist-supported insurgent forces. It was based upon a combination of CINCPAC Oplan 32-59 (Phase II-Laos) (see item 16-17 December 1960) and pertinent portions of SEATO Field Forces Oplan 5/61. Oplan X-61 was based upon the following assumptions:

1. The RLG would appeal to SEATO for military assistance.
2. The US, Thailand, the Philippines, Pakistan, and possibly Australia would join in the operations.
3. Entry into Laos would be an administrative movement by friendly forces into key cities to free FAL forces for combat operations.

The plan contained, inter alia, the following provisions:

1. General Situation. Communist-supported insurgent forces were on the offensive and making significant gains toward the key cities of Vientiane and Luang Prabang; the available FAL force had been committed to the maximum and appeared unable to halt the advance and regain the initiative; external assistance would be required to release FAL forces from key urban areas so that they might be committed to front line combat operations.

2. Friendly Forces.

- a. US forces:

1. Forces committed to the Multinational Task Force (MTF) Laos:

- 3 FMFPAC battalions
- 1 FMFPAC air group
- 1 USARLAC airborne battle group
- 1 PACAF mobile strike force
- 1 USARLAC brigade task force
- US Army logistic command

11. PACOM forces supporting MTF Laos:

- 2 PACFLT carrier task groups
- PACAF 15th AIRDIV, augmented by 1 130 squadron from CONUS.

b. Thai forces:

- 1. 2 infantry battalions
- ii. 1 ranger company
- iii. 1 fighter-bomber squadron
- iv. 1/2 transport squadron
- v. 1 regimental combat team

c. Philippine forces:

- 1. 1 medical detachment
- ii. 1 engineering company

d. Pakistani forces:

- 1. 1 brigade group
- ii. 1 fighter squadron

e. Australia (if participating):

- 1. 1 fighter squadron
- ii. 1 infantry battalion

(The USARLAC brigade task force, the Thai regimental combat team, the Pakistani forces, and the Australian fighter squadron were to be held in reserve and phased in when and if directed by the Commander, MTF (CMTF). If, in addition, British Commonwealth forces were made available subsequent to the implementation of the plan, they too would be placed in reserve.)

3. Mission. To deploy rapidly forces of the US, Thailand, the Philippines and Pakistan and possibly Australia to secure and defend key cities in Laos in order to release FAL forces for combat operations against insurgent forces. Be prepared to conduct further military operations as may be directed.

4. Concept of Operations. The MTF would secure key cities including Paksane, Vientiane, and Savannakhet, and the key Mekong River crossings in the vicinity of these cities. Forces would be prepared to deploy to other key areas, such as Luang Prabang, if directed. (The message detailed the deployments of each of the units of the MTF.)

5. Command Arrangements. The Commander of the MTF would be the commander of the US 3rd Marine Division, and he would have a Thai as deputy commander. Component commanders would be provided by the US, and deputy component commanders by the Thais; staff representatives as might be appropriate would be provided by the other participants. The national

integrity of the units would be maintained under national commanders.

6. Logistic Concept. Logistic support would remain a national responsibility under the plan.

7. Reaction Times. The total reaction time for the initial elements of the MTF was four days, under the assumption that the order to execute would be given from DEFCON 2 without prior warning and without the prepositioning of forces. (See item 29 March for JCS action on OPlan X-61.)
(TS) Msg, Admino CINCPAC to JCS et al., 240658Z Mar 61.

25 Mar The US Charge d'Affaires in Wellington informed the Secretary of State that she had briefed a senior External Affairs officer on the current US position to accept a cease-fire in Laos, to be followed by an international conference (see item 22 March). A copy of the President's public statement on Laos (see item 23 March) also had been presented.

According to the New Zealand External Affairs officer, both the Prime Minister and the Acting Prime Minister had already been given the substance of the US position. The Acting Prime Minister had sent "instructions" to his representatives in Washington, London, and Bangkok to the following general effect:

1. New Zealand's objections to a SEATO military intervention remained as previously expressed.
 2. The general situation, however, had been altered somewhat by US efforts toward a political settlement that had been met by Soviet foot-dragging and stepped-up supply to PL forces.
 3. The New Zealand Government estimated that the Soviets did not want a showdown over Laos at the present time.
 4. US military plans as described in Washington appeared to be reasonable.
 5. US proposals involved a calculated risk but under the circumstances it was probably worth taking.
- (C) Msg, Wellington to SecState 407, 25 Mar 61.

25 Mar In a message to the Secretary of State, the US Ambassador to Moscow expressed the opinion that negotiations on Laos with the USSR should now be carried on by the British. But to be prepared in the event of a call from Khrushchev, the Ambassador requested guidance concerning the US position on the following.

1. Did the US envisage the continuation of the "favored position" given France by the Geneva Accords?
2. In the event of a cease-fire, was the US prepared to agree to suspension of arms deliveries pending the conclusion of an international conference?
3. How would a broadened RLG participate in the conference be formed?
4. If Souvanna insisted, was the US prepared to accept the participation of the Pathet Lao in such a government?

In reply, the Secretary of State declared that:

1. The US would strongly support the French initially in efforts to maintain their privileged position, but the Secretary did not see how this position could be maintained if effective arrangements for training Lao security forces by a neutral country "could be" satisfactorily arranged.

2. In the event of a cease-fire, the US was not prepared to agree to the suspension of arms deliveries until effective arrangements for screening all arms deliveries to Laos could be worked out.

3. The US envisaged that the Lao Government would be broadened by conferences among Lao leaders, particularly Souvanna Phouma and the present RLG.

4. Although the US up to this time had consistently rejected PL participation in a "broadened" RLG, it was "conceivable that in [the] context of [a] workable NNC and [a] membership [of] strong anti-Communist elements in the Government" the US would agree to granting the PL one or two minor portfolios.

(S) Msg, Moscow to SecState, 2279, 25 Mar 61; (S) Msg, SecState to Moscow, 1587, 25 Mar 61.

25 Mar "In a message to the Secretary of State, the US Ambassador in Moscow commented on Ambassador Brown's 22 March policy recommendations on Laos (see item). Should the Soviets become aware of Brown's suggestion for a "carrot and stick" approach, commented the Ambassador in Moscow, they might reject the British proposal for a cease-fire and an international conference (see item 23 March). And if the Soviets should reject the British note, the steps that Brown had outlined would probably not prevent further deterioration of the military situation, for they would no doubt be offset by increased Soviet and Viet Minh support.

If the Soviet reply proved to be a temporizing one, Thompson continued, the proposed steps might lead the Soviets to think that the West was engaging in a maneuver to stabilize the military situation pending the rainy season.

Finally, Ambassador Thompson pointed out that, if the Soviets should agree to a cease-fire, the "carrot and the stick" approach would obviously be unwise.

(TS) Msg, Moscow to SecState, 2277, 25 Mar 61.

25 Mar The US Charge d'Affaires in Saigon informed the Secretary of State that Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem had reacted favorably to the current US position to accept a cease-fire in Laos, followed by an international conference (see item 22 March).

Diem had expressed the opinion, the US diplomat reported, that the President's public statement on Laos (see item 23 March) was "very good." The Vietnamese President had asserted that it was necessary to "hold firm," and that if the objective of a neutral and non-Communist Laos could not be achieved by negotiation, "we must be ready to act." Diem had also noted that if Laos could not be held, then both Viet Nam and Thailand, as well as Cambodia, would eventually fall to the Communists.

(S) Msg, Saigon to SecState, 1522, 26 Mar 61.

25 Mar Ambassador Gavin reported to the Secretary of State that he had conferred with Souvanna Phouma in Paris, presenting to him the current summary of the US position toward Laos.

The US position, according to the summary, remained to support the independence and integrity of Laos as a neutralized state unaligned in its international relations. To insure this objective, the US was attempting to arrange a peaceful settlement of the Laotian question; thus the US had supported the NNC proposal. The US was not opposed in principle to an international conference but was concerned because there appeared to be no mutually acceptable basis for settlement among the proposed conferees. Under these circumstances, the US feared that the Communist intervention might continue despite the convening of the conference. Moreover, the failure of such a conference--a distinct possibility in the view of the US--would increase the likelihood of an enlargement of the conflict. However, if a de facto cease-fire could be arranged in a few days, the US was prepared to agree to the meeting of the ICC and the holding of the 14-Nation Conference. If the Communists did not halt their offensive, however, the US would "consider other measures."

It had furthermore been the constant policy of the US that the non-Communist elements in Laos should be reconciled so that a widely representative RLG might be brought forth. To that end, the US hoped that Souvanna would return to Phnom Penh and resume talks with the Phoumi group; in the US view, Souvanna Phouma had an essential role to play in the salvation of his country.

Souvanna expressed pleasure at the new US position, reported Ambassador Gavin, and stressed that Soviet arms were not being supplied to the Pathet Lao but to the Kong Le forces who were in turn supplying some arms to the Pathet Lao. The Western press reports that the war in Laos was between Communists and anti-Communists were not accurate, according to Souvanna; the Kong Le forces were stronger than the Pathet Lao and had but one goal: the support of Souvanna.

Gavin also reported that the Laotian leader had stated to the British Ambassador that the "greatest single stumbling block to the final solution of the Laotian problem was the US refusal to accept the Pathet Lao in the government."

(S) Msgs, SecState to New Delhi (Harriman), 2579, 21 Mar 61; Paris to SecState, 4021, 25 Mar 61, and 4032, 27 Mar 61.

25 Mar The Chairman, JCS, in a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense, recommended that "the sternest protest" be addressed by the US to the USSR, and perhaps to Red China and Communist Viet Nam, demanding the return, "expeditiously and unmolested," of Major Bailey (the Assistant US Army Attache, Laos, who had been a passenger in the C-47 reported shot down by the Pathet Lao on 23 March 1961; see item).

The Chairman pointed out that the destroyed aircraft was assigned to the Air Attache, Viet Nam, who was at the same time the accredited Air Attache to Laos. The aircraft was "by all the rules of diplomatic procedure" free to fly anywhere in Laos if the RLG approved. Major Bailey was a

properly accredited US representative to the RLG, as was each of the other commissioned members of the crew.

The Chairman recommended further that the protest to the Soviets demand a full report of the circumstances of the incident and of the fate of the other passengers, and the immediate return of any survivors or bodies, as well as the aircraft and its equipment.

The Chairman viewed the consideration of his recommendation by the "highest levels of the US government to be a matter of the greatest urgency," since it could be expected that the Communists were "devising some course of action to exploit the situation" (see item 29 March).

(S) Note by Secys on "US Reaction to C-47 Incident in Laos," JCS 1992/945 (31 March 1961), Laos Special File III, R&RA.

25 Mar CINCPAC reported to the JCS that in the past week FAL blocking positions north and south of RJ 7-13 had held against enemy probing attacks. On the southern edge of the Plaine des Jarres FAL units had withdrawn to the vicinity of Tha Thom following an abortive attempt to take the enemy blocking position at Ban Ta Viang.

(S) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, DA IN 97367, 26 Mar 61.

25 Mar CHPEO recommended to CINCPAC the assignment of RB-26 aircraft to supplement the inadequate tactical air reconnaissance capability available to the PEO.

(S) Msg, CHPEO Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 97297, 25 Mar 61.

25 Mar CHPEO informed Phoumi that bombs for the T-6s had arrived in Laos and would be kept in PEO custody until released by the US Government. CHPEO reported that Phoumi had been informed of the arrival of the bombs because FAL personnel had discovered that bombs for T-6s were in Laos.

(TS) Msg, CHPEO Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 97217, 25 Mar 61.

25 Mar The JCS reported progress to the Secretary on the implementation of the 9 March approved courses of action (see item) as follows:

1. CINCPAC had approved a request by CHPEO to substitute 75-mm pack howitzers for the 105-mm howitzer batteries the Thais were to be asked to provide Laos. The smaller weapons were to be procured from the Republic of China and manned by the FAL.

2.

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 992681, 25 Mar 61.

26 Mar At a meeting in Key West, President Kennedy and Prime Minister Macmillan agreed that the West's military and political posture must be one that would not encourage the Soviets to think they could succeed in a military take-over of Laos. This posture, including demonstration of a united front at the SEATO Conference, was in turn "intended to facilitate [a] peaceful settlement" leading to a neutral Laos.

The President and Prime Minister also agreed that if it proved impossible to bring the Soviets to the peace table, it should be clear that the West would not accept a Communist take-over in Laos.

(C) Msg, SecState Circular 1478, 28 Mar 61.

26 Mar Ambassador Johnson informed the Secretary of State that the Thais were very bitter about the British proposal to the Soviets calling for an immediate cease-fire followed by an international conference (see item 23 March). The Thai Foreign Minister had referred to it as a "sell out," Johnson reported. Furthermore, in Thai opinion, the Soviets would be "fools" not to accept the proposal. The Thai had liked the President's speech very much, said Johnson, but had felt that it was not consistent with the British approach to the USSR.

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1744, 26 Mar 61.

26 Mar In Bangkok for the SEATO conference, Secretary Rusk held conversations with two of the leading Asian representatives to the conference. As reported by the Secretary to the Department of State, SEATO Secretary-General Sarasin, a Thai, stated that the conference must obtain substantial results in order to bolster the courage of the peoples of Southeast Asia. The Thai statesman emphasized the need for unity among the treaty members and expressed the belief that the European members were concentrating on their own regional interests at the expense of Southeast Asian interests.

In another conversation, reported Secretary Rusk, Philippine Foreign Minister Serrano expressed strong opposition to the reconvening of the ICC and the calling of the 14-Nation Conference. The Filipino stated that the strong military position of the PL would cause the USSR to insist that the PL be given either equal or predominant representation in any broadened government. If the other powers were not willing to accept this situation, the Filipino foresaw a divided Laos. Serrano doubted that the UK and France would support combined SEATO military operations in Laos. His instructions were, therefore, to explore these questions: (1) what action could SEATO take if the cease-fire proposals did not succeed? and (2) what capability had SEATO to deter aggression in Southeast Asia? The Filipinos were conducting this exploration with a view to reassessing their security arrangements.

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, SECTO 6, 26 Mar 61; (C) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, SECTO 5, 26 Mar 61.

26 Mar CHJUSMAG Thailand reported that Marine Air Base Squadron-16 at Udorn was ready to receive and service aircraft. (This completed action on approved course of action 4; see item 9 March).

(TS) Msg, CHJUSMAG Thailand to JCS, DA IN 97556, 26 Mar 61.

27 Mar Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko, during a meeting with President Kennedy, indicated that the Soviet Government was aware of the President's great interest in the Laotian "question" and was familiar with the US position regarding it. Gromyko stated that with the prospect of a settlement in the offing, "both sides must now show restraint and take steps to prevent [the] conflict from spreading." His government's reply would come shortly, the Foreign Minister added.

President Kennedy, emphasizing the urgency of a reply, pointed out that a cease-fire was of first importance in order to prevent a further spread of the conflict.

(C) Msg, SecState, Circular 1478, 28 Mar 61.

27 Mar The SEATO Council of Ministers convened in public session at Bangkok. Opening remarks were delivered by the various delegates. Secretary of State Rusk in his presentation attacked the concept that the peoples of Southeast Asia were innocent victims in the struggle between external power blocs; rather, the Secretary stated, these peoples were objects in the path of a would-be aggressor. The Secretary regretted that the meeting was forced to occupy itself primarily with security matters related to Laos and Viet Nam when the more basic purpose of the organization was to assist the peoples of Southeast Asia in the development of their human and material resources. Finally, the Secretary assured his audience that the US would "live up to its responsibilities" and would assist those defending themselves against "armed minorities directed, supplied and supported from without."

(OUO) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, SECTO 19, 27 Mar 61.

27 Mar Phoui Sananikone stated to a US Embassy officer that the present "dictatorial" government was antagonizing the majority of the population and leading the country rapidly to disaster, and that the King was the only person left in whom the majority of Laotians had confidence. The ex-Premier also stated that, if Laos was to be preserved as a nation, the following political solution should be implemented immediately:

1. The King, after persuading Phoumi and Boun Oum to step down, would designate himself Premier; on his own initiative, the King would select competent, patriotic and reasonable noncontroversial ministers who would satisfy the population's desire for a truly representative government.

2. Upon investiture, the King would renew his appeal for international assistance in achieving a "politico-military solution," and request a 14-nation conference as proposed by Sihanouk. (Phoui hoped a cease-fire could be effected while the conference was still in the organization state.)

3. The National Assembly, after legally investing the King's government, would not be dissolved, but recessed indefinitely. (A standing committee could pass temporarily on necessary laws.)

4. The Government, headed by the King, would remain in office until general elections were held, probably in early 1962.

5. King Savang could remain most of the time in Luang Prabang, delegating to the Vice-Premier the authority to conduct routine affairs. His Majesty could come to Vientiane as the situation dictated.

According to Phoui, the only problem in this proposal lay in persuading the King to request the present government to resign. Although Savang disapproved of the present government, he feared Phoumi, the ex-Premier declared.

From an international viewpoint, Phoui continued, the advantage to a government headed by the King would reside

in the fact that nations such as Cambodia, India, Burma, and France would be obliged to give it full recognition. Although the Communist bloc would undoubtedly quibble over its legality, they would find it hard to maintain recognition of Souvanna's "government" in face of world opinion and the fact that even the Communists had never questioned the King's status. Thus, Phoui stated, a question over Laotian representation at the international conference could not arise (see item 31 March).

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1775, 28 Mar 61.

27-28
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Secretary Rusk reported to the Department of State the substance of the first closed session of the SEATO Council of Ministers. During this session, reported the Secretary, each of the member nations had expressed its views on the Laotian crisis and SEATO response thereto.

Lord Home, Foreign Minister of the UK, had stated that Laos was fundamentally weak and could not exist without external aid. Noting the meager results of US aid, Lord Home had averred that political stability had to be achieved in Laos and aid channeled through international machinery. The British representative had summarized the steps required, in the opinion of Her Majesty's Government, to achieve political stability for Laos: agreement on a cease-fire; the reactivation of the ICC; and the convening of the 14-Nation Conference. In addition, Lord Home said that SEATO should refrain from statements or actions that would prejudice such a settlement.

Pakistani Minister of External Affairs Qadir had agreed that SEATO should not so act as to prejudice the desired political settlement, but he had added that SEATO must, on the other hand, make clear that existing obligations would be fulfilled.

Prime Minister Menzies of Australia had supported the idea of a neutral Laos and broached the possibility of a UN guarantee of that neutrality.

Philippine Foreign Minister Serrano had questioned the viability of the Laotian state as a neutral, since the Soviet bloc would not refrain from subversion. He stated also that his government had suggested through diplomatic channels a UN guarantee of the neutrality of Laos but that the suggestion had not yet elicited any reaction.

Prime Minister Holyoake of New Zealand had announced that his government would accept either the ICC or the Neutral Nations Commission to investigate the extent of outside interference in Laos. Holyoake agreed that the Soviets would probably accept the US proposals, but he emphasized that the free world must pursue a policy of boldness and firmness if the Soviets refused the British proposals.

Secretary Rusk had reviewed the recent Laotian past, noting persistent Communist efforts to upset the Geneva Accords, unsatisfactory performance by the Laotians themselves, and "frustrations and mistakes" in US efforts. The Secretary described the US position as a "two-track approach" -- a peaceful solution and, if required, military action. The object of this approach was a neutral Laos, the Secretary continued, "as we understand neutrality, not as the Communists may attempt to define it."

French Foreign Minister Couve de Murville had endorsed the British proposals and stressed the need for patience and determination in the anticipated negotiations. If these negotiations should fail, said the Foreign Minister, each member of SEATO should then consider the situation in order to find the appropriate means to prevent at Communist take-over in Laos.

Thai Foreign Minister Thanat Khoman had concluded the addresses by urging the need for a common and unified SEATO response to the Communist threat noting that such unity had not existed in the past.

(S) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, SECTO 20, 27 Mar 61 and SECTO 24, 28 Mar 61.

27-29
Mar

Ambassador Stevenson presented to the Secretary of State in a series of messages, his views upon the proposed "stimulation" of appeals by the RLG to SEATO for armed intervention and to the UN requesting a Security Council meeting (see items 21, 23 March). The Ambassador's first point was that the US must be able to tell the Security Council, at the time of its convening to consider the Laotian appeal, that the US would be prepared to withdraw its troops "at a point that will be politically viable." Ambassador Stevenson considered that "unless our statement and our resolution are explicit on when and under what conditions we are prepared to withdraw, we will be in grave trouble at the UN"; the "withdrawal language" would then be forced upon the US at some point in the UN proceedings.

Ambassador Stevenson also urged that further consideration be given to seeking UN political action before the US employed troops in Laos. The establishment of a UN observation group in Laos would more effectively insure the independence and neutrality of that country than the operation of the ICC or the continued presence of US or SEATO forces, according to Stevenson. This action was, moreover, possible under the present UN political climate. The Ambassador presented at length the rationale for this belief, and tactics and resolutions that could be used by the US delegation.

(On 30 March, Acting Secretary Bowles informed Ambassador Stevenson that the Department of State was giving "careful study" to these "thoughtful comments and recommendations.")

(TS) Msgs, New York (USUN) to SecState, 2631 and 2634, 27 Mar 61; 2647 and 2648, 28 Mar 61; 2663 and 2664, 29 Mar 61; (TS) Msg, SecState to USUN New York, 1847, 30 Mar 61.

28 Mar

The Chairman, JCS, informed CINCPAC that, because of the present delicate political situation, "higher authority" wished to avoid the landing of US aircraft in Laos at this time except in an emergency. Accordingly, the US airlift of howitzers and ammunition should end at Bangkok, and CAT aircraft should be used for movement to Seno.

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 992870, 28 Mar 61.

28 Mar

The Charge d'Affaires in Tokyo told Secretary Rusk that Japanese Foreign Minister Kosaka fully supported the new US/UK proposal calling for an immediate cease-fire, followed by an international conference (see item 22 March). Kosaka also stated that his Government would use all its influence to support a cease-fire and political settlement of the Laotian crisis, the Charge reported.

(S) Msg, Tokyo to SecState, 2792, 28 Mar 61.

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28 Mar The US Ambassador in Kuala Lumpur reported to Secretary Rusk that in a press interview the Malayan Acting Prime Minister, Razak, had asserted that, should there be any outbreak of war in Laos as a result of foreign intervention, the Malayan Government would not permit the use of its territory as a base for operations.

Malaya wanted a peaceful solution to the Laotian problem, Razak had declared, and his country would support any proposal that would bring peace in Laos, including the 14-Nation Conference proposal.

After the press interview Razak had pointed out to the US Ambassador that he had carefully avoided implying that the British Commonwealth troops now in Malaya could not be moved elsewhere for use in operations in Laos. Only actual operational use of bases was prohibited. Razak explained that, when and if the internal security of Malaya became involved, the defense agreement with the UK would be invoked.

(S) Msgs, Kuala Lumpur to SecState, 486 and 487, 28 Mar 61.

28 Mar The JCS reported to the Secretary of Defense that [REDACTED] C-130 crews had completed refresher training under PACAF and were assembling on Okinawa (approved action 6; see item 9 March).

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 992788, 28 Mar 61.

29 Mar The SEATO Council of Ministers unanimously approved the following resolution:

Consulting together as provided in the Manila Pact, the SEATO Council has noted with grave concern the continued offensive by rebel elements in Laos who are continuing to be supplied and assisted by Communist powers in flagrant disregard of the Geneva Accords.

The Council once more makes it clear that SEATO is a defensive organization with no aggressive intentions and reiterates, in the words of the Treaty 'its desire to live in peace with all peoples and all governments.'

The Council desires a united, independent and sovereign Laos, free to achieve advancement in ways of its own choosing and not subordinate to any nation or group of nations.

It is believed that these results ought to be achieved through negotiations and cannot be hoped for if the present fighting continues.

The Council notes with approval the present efforts for a cessation of hostilities and for peaceful negotiations to achieve an unaligned and independent Laos.

If these efforts fail, however, and there continues to be an active military attempt to obtain control of Laos, members

of SEATO are prepared, within the terms of the Treaty, to take whatever action may be appropriate in the circumstance.

The Council also noted with concern the efforts of an armed minority, again supported from outside in violation of the Geneva Accords, to destroy the government of Viet-Nam and declared its firm resolve not to acquiesce in any such takeover of that country.

Finally, the Council records its view that the organization should continue to keep developments in Laos and Viet-Nam under urgent and constant review in the light of this resolution.

The resolution as approved differed significantly from the "type of resolution" that Secretary Rusk on 27 March had stated to the Department of State he would attempt to obtain from the meeting. This desired resolution had declared "the firm resolve of the member countries of SEATO not to acquiesce in the overthrow of the Royal Lao Government by these Communist-supported rebels or to countenance the destruction of the territorial integrity of that kingdom." The desired resolution had stated unqualifiedly that "SEATO and its member countries will if necessary take whatever action may be appropriate in the circumstances"; the resolution had continued that "in the meanwhile the SEATO member nations agree each to furnish, in response to such requests as individually may be received from the Royal Lao Government, such defensive materiel and other support as members may deem necessary to support the Royal Lao armed forces in defending the sovereign independence of their country."

Secretary Rusk stated that at the council meeting, despite initial divergences, unanimity had been achieved on a "broadly satisfactory" resolution. The resolution represented widespread satisfaction among the ministers both as to SEATO unity and as to the relation of the resolution to the situation in Laos and to possible negotiations; the resolution was "more than we might have expected a few days ago."

According to the Secretary, the first five paragraphs of the resolution represented the general feeling that the peaceful nature of SEATO should be emphasized and that broad political objectives should be stated. The final three paragraphs represented the firm attitude of the SEATO powers and gave reassurances to the governments and peoples of SEATO members located in the area who considered themselves threatened by the Laotian situation.

The Secretary felt that in the conference as a whole, the US had achieved results "beyond expectations." The Secretary stated that, at the beginning of the conference, the Australians, Pakistanis, Filipinos, and Thais had had suspicions concerning SEATO's usefulness and particular apprehension concerning the formula presented in the UK note to the USSR (see item 22 March). On the other hand, the British and French had feared SEATO commitments unacceptable to them. From all indications, observed by the Secretary,

bilateral and trilateral conferences and discussions had succeeded in "resuscitating" SEATO. The Secretary stated that the passage of the resolution had been the focal point of the conference; this resolution had, at a critical juncture, provided the members opportunity to reassess their obligations to SEATO and commit themselves to its "solemn purposes." Altogether, the conference had been, in the words of a Philippine delegate, the most profitable of all SEATO conferences; but, the Secretary said, it was "only a beginning in the longer and much more difficult processes of keeping SEATO alive, unified and alert to its continued responsibilities."

(S) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, SECTO 17, 27 Mar 61, SECTO 29, 30 Mar 61; (S) Msg, SecState Circular 1489, 29 Mar 61; (C) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, SECTO 25, 28 Mar 61.

29 Mar Ambassador Thompson suggested to the Secretary of State that part of the Soviet opposition to the NNC and preference for the ICC might be due to the fact that the ICC fitted in with their concept of a "three-bloc world." In view of the US policy on this matter, he continued, it would seem important that the role of the ICC should be confined to verifying a cease-fire in Laos, and that the establishment of a broadened government and control of arms be assigned to the NNC.

Because of the Soviet concept of a three-bloc world, the USSR would resist this strongly, Ambassador Thompson declared. Reiterating his belief that there would be no possibility of establishing an NNC unless India was substituted for Malaya, Thompson suggested that it would be wise to begin now to prepare for such a shift. An alternative to Indian membership on the NNC might be the addition of Burma and Cambodia to the ICC, Thompson concluded.

(C) Msg, Moscow to SecState 2319, 29 Mar 61.

29 Mar The JCS approved CINCPAC's Outline Operation Plan X-61 for planning purposes (see item 24 March), subject to certain modifications. The JCS, stating that speed of execution and "a conspicuous international flavor" were the "paramount" considerations if military operations were directed in Laos, stipulated that the following paragraphs in Plan X-61 be modified as follows:

(1) Mission: Utilizing Asian combat forces integrated with US combat and logistic forces, conduct immediate military operations to ensure that stability and friendly control of Laos by assisting the RLG in eliminating Communist-controlled insurgency while being prepared to assist in maintaining the stability and friendly control of South Viet-Nam.

(2) General Concept.

a. A Multinational Force deploys rapidly to Laos securing certain key cities and crossings over the Mekong River in the vicinity within 48 hours after the order to execute is given. Without reducing the speed of initial US force deployments, all feasible emphasis will be placed on conspicuous utilization of the forces of Thailand, Pakistan and the Philippines; and on the adaptation and utilization of SEATO command concepts.

b. After the key cities and the nearby Mekong River crossings are secured, forces will

be prepared for further military operations as directed.

(3) Execution.

a. Deployment times be compressed to the minimum, avoiding slow movement through Thailand. Further prepositioning of forces to be achieved as necessary.

b. Within 48 hours from order to execute or ASAP, deploy following forces into Laos: one airborne battlegroup with support elements; minimum of one Marine BLT; Marine Air Group (-); minimum one Thai infantry battalion; and Pakistani, Philippine, and, if available, Australian forces with size forces and destinations to be determined by [CINCPAC].

c. Within 48 hours deploy PACAF Mobile Strike Force to appropriate bases in Thailand.

d. If not secured initially, appropriate forces be prepared to secure Luang Prabang if an emergency arises threatening Communist capture of the King.

(4) Command Relationships. . . . Command relationships . . . should be modified and adapted as necessary to the end that the SEATO relationships will be achieved with the least practicable delay but with minimum disruption in current planning. [The 'SEATO relationships' were detailed by SEATO Field Forces Plan 5/61. Annex C of that plan stated, in part, that Thailand would provide the commander of the SEATO force; the US, the vice commander. The US Army would provide the commander of the SEATO field force, who would have primary responsibility for the conduct of military operations by SEATO forces in Laos; the Commonwealth Nations would provide the vice commander. Several force and component headquarters and staffs were also provided by Annex C.]

The JCS desired that CINCPAC provide them with the following information as soon as possible:

1. The date that CINCPAC forces would be in optimum position for the most rapid execution of the SEATO or multinational plan.
2. The estimated forces that could be deployed into Laos by unit and number of personnel within 24 hours of order to execute; within 48 hours; within 72 hours.
3. The assistance CINCPAC would require to assure success.

In a later message, the JCS, re-emphasizing the sensitivity of the political developments, cautioned CINCPAC to be "particularly mindful of the necessity for discreet movements." An appeal by the USSR to the UN Security Council based on the presence of SEATO or US "aggressive" forces near Laos and specifically in Thailand could, according to the JCS, destroy the present concept of timing (see item 21 March).

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 992897, 29 Mar 61, derived from Dec On JCS 1992/938 (29 Mar 61), Laos-Special-File-III, R&RA; (TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 992922, 29 Mar 61; (TS) SEATO Field Forces OPLAN 5/61 (12 Jan 61) JCS 9060/3100 (12 Jan 61), R&RA.

29 Mar The Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA), in a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense concerning the CJCS memorandum on the detention of Major Bailey (see item 25 March), related that

the President had read the memorandum and the subject had been discussed by Mr. Parsons, Mr. McGeorge Bundy and Mr. Bohlen. Their consensus was that the United States should play the story in low key because the plane carried photographic equipment, as well as a crew of reconnaissance experts, and was flying over a de facto combat zone. Their feeling was that the United States probably would not gain in world opinion by making a strong protest and that efforts should be devoted to securing Major Bailey's return.

(S) Note by Secys on "US Reaction to C-47 Incident in Laos," JCS 1992/945 (31 March 61), Laos Special File III, R&RA.

29 Mar According to a message from CINCPAC to JCS, Admiral Felt held a meeting with General Phoumi to discuss the Laotian situation (see item 22 March). After giving a briefing of the military situation, the Laotian leader stated that he had two requests: 1) expedite delivery of all material promised to the FAL; and 2) in view of the "Viet Minh invasion in the South," the US intervene overtly in Laos. Admiral Felt assured Phoumi that deliveries of equipment would be expedited. With regard to overt US intervention, however, convincing evidence of overt aggression by the Viet Minh and proof that the Laotians were willing to fight for their country would be necessary. Even if these conditions were met, continued the Admiral, a request for overt US intervention would have to be made through the proper diplomatic channels to the US Government in Washington.

The Admiral then urged Phoumi to go on the offensive. The FAL should not take unnecessary risks, but it was important that the Free World know that the Laotians were fighting for their country.

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, DA IN 98805, 30 Mar 61.

29 Mar The Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence made the following estimate of the "Communist military situation in Laos":

1. Strength. 11,000, including the equivalent of 26 light infantry battalions; 30 light infantry companies, 5 artillery batteries, 3 heavy mortar companies; 3 light anti-aircraft companies, and 1 armored car company.

2. Organization. Two distinct types were evolving: well-equipped regular troops, organized up to battalion level, employing "semi-conventional" tactics; and regional or local troops organized up to company level and responsible for local guerrilla activity and security of "liberated" areas.

3. Equipment. Infantry units armed with 60-mm and 81/82-mm mortars, 90-mm rocket launchers, 57-mm and possibly 75-mm recoilless rifles, 7.62-mm and .30 cal light and heavy machine guns, and miscellaneous rifles, submachine guns and carbines. Artillery units had Soviet 85-mm guns and US 105-mm howitzers. Anti-aircraft weapons included .50 cal and Soviet 14.5-mm dual heavy machine guns, and Soviet 37-mm and/or US 40-mm guns. Armored vehicles included US M-8 and

Soviet BTR-40 and BTR-152 armored cars. Estimated total: 12 105-mm howitzers; 8 85-mm guns; 12 120-mm mortars; 12 37-mm/40-mm AAA guns; about 20 armored cars.

4. Composition. Communist forces included several hundred former FAL troops and 3,000 hard-core Pathet Lao guerrillas. The remainder, recruited since August 1960, were relatively untrained. At least 500 North Vietnamese cadres, advisors and technicians, including heavy weapons teams, provided stiffening.

5. Logistics. The Communists were largely dependent on supplies from North Viet Nam, supplied by truck convoy over Route 7 and airlift to the Plaine des Jarres and by infiltration overland elsewhere. Daily deliveries to the Plaine des Jarres were estimated at 40 tons by air and 50 tons by road, with an accumulated stockpile of approximately 2,600 tons by 15 March. These supplies were estimated to be adequate to support all forces for 65 days of full combat.

6. Capabilities. The Communists were estimated to be capable of attacking Luang Prabang or Vientiane with up to six battalions, but their success would be "largely dependent on will-to-fight of friendly forces."

(S) Msg, ACSI to CGUSCONARC, DA 992946, 29 Mar 61.

29 Mar Minister Barbour informed the Department of State of the UK position the impending discussions with Souvanna Phouma (see item 31 March). The British considered that Souvanna's position was precarious; he did not control the Pathet Lao and he was not condoned by the Phoumi forces. In the British view, Souvanna's significance lay in his position between right and left where he could maneuver for the support of both. Should Souvanna become committed to either force, he would lose his power.

At the meeting with Souvanna the British intended to suggest to him that PL participation in the Laotian Government be limited to two insignificant cabinet posts in order to avoid the danger of a "Czech-type takeover." The British would also suggest to Souvanna that a considerable span of time would be required to re-establish the authority of the Laotian Government over the country as well as for Souvanna to organize support for himself. Therefore, the British would urge, Souvanna should work to postpone elections for at least one year.

The UK would warn Souvanna not to be "taken in" by the USSR and not to include Peking or Hanoi in his itinerary. Finally, the British would not encourage Souvanna to form a new government at this time.

(S) Msg, London to SecState, 3942, 29 Mar 61.

29 Mar The JCS reported to the Secretary of Defense that thirteen helicopters (approved action 2; see item 9 March) had arrived at Udorn. The fourteenth helicopter authorized by the directive had remained at Don Muang, Thailand, because of mechanical difficulties.

(TS) Msg, CHJUSMAG Thailand to JCS, DA IN 98396, 29 Mar 61.

30 Mar In response to a directive from the President, the Secretary of Defense submitted the following tabulation of military and economic assistance furnished to Laos.

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Military</u>	<u>Economic</u>
1955	\$ -- (Millions)	\$28.4 (Millions)
1956	27.4	36.6
1957	4.3	47.9
1958	5.4	36.3
1959	7.5	23.2
1960	13.4	31.8
1961 (1 Jul-31 Dec 60)	<u>5.4</u>	<u>9.9</u>
	\$63.4	\$214.1

The data given above was compiled from reports of normal operations of the Mutual Security Program and do not reflect emergency assistance given since August 1960.

(C) Memo, SecDef to White House Def Liaison Officer, 30 Mar 61, CJCS-091 Laos (2), 1 Mar 61.

30-31 Mar According to a report from the USAF, eight B-26s had departed the continental US for Okinawa where they would be delivered to volunteer USAF crews for further flight to Thailand (approved action 11; see item 9 March).

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 993224, 1 Apr 61.

31 Mar The Secretary of State told Ambassador Brown that he was encouraged by recent messages from Vientiane (see items 28, 31 March); they appeared to indicate an increasing awareness among Lao leaders that a new, more representative RLG must be created.

It was clear, the Secretary said, that the continued existence of two governments would prove an "insuperable handicap" to any political settlement and might eventually lead to a divided country--a solution the US believed to be inherently unstable and one that favored the Communists in the long run.

At the moment, Secretary Rusk said, the situation appeared to be that: 1) the present RLG was unable to win, either at home or abroad; the support needed to reunify the country; 2) the PL was in a position to demand participation in the government; 3) Souvanna, the only mediator between the two factions, apparently would not enter the RLG unless the PL were included; and 4) pressures for early elections would increase.

Secretary Rusk declared that the US continued to believe that inclusion of the PL now, at a time when they probably wielded considerable influence in the countryside and when non-Communist leadership was divided and disorganized, would be a dangerous course. For the same reasons, the US considered that early elections would be equally dangerous. On the other hand, Rusk continued, the US recognized that refusal to include the PL might lead only to a protraction of the present conflict; and, given the present military situation, refusal could lead eventually to a de facto division of the country. Therein, the Secretary said, "lies the difficulty."

In view of these considerations, renewed suggestions made in Vientiane, particularly by Phoui (see item 28 March), that the King head a new government had evoked interest in the US. If such a government were created, broadly based and composed perhaps of former Prime Ministers and Deputy Prime Ministers, it should acquire considerable status both in and out of Laos. It might be necessary, Rusk conceded, for the US to recognize that both Boun Oum and Phoumi might have to step down in order to keep the PL out. Phoumi might then hold only the position of FAL Commander in Chief.

The government, said the Secretary, could be labeled "provisional," with a declared limited objective of restoring political stability through return to constitutional processes. Souvanna could be offered a major portfolio and might accept it if he was convinced that the provisional government was the first step toward the reunification of the country. Elections for the National Assembly might then be deferred until the country was calm again--in perhaps one year. Once the elections were held, the Secretary declared, the provisional government would resign and a new government based on a new assembly could be invested.

The Secretary of State recognized the force of Brown's previous arguments against a royal government but pointed out that the alternative courses appeared equally perilous. Therefore, the Secretary requested the Ambassador's assessment of the following questions:

1. What were the prospects for setting up a new government under the King and how much pressure from the US would be required to establish it?

2. If in Brown's judgment such a government could be brought about, how should Souvanna be invited to participate?

3. If a Royal Government was not feasible, was there any other course that would permit the maintenance of a non-Communist RLG without PL participation or the holding of general elections?

4. Did the idea of a federal system have any merit?
(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 1053, 31 Mar 61.

31 Mar Minister Barbour informed the Secretary of State of the results of Souvanna Phouma's discussions with the British (see item 29 March), as reported to Barbour by a Foreign Office official. The British had been impressed by Souvanna and encouraged by his attitude. They believed that Souvanna was "uniquely" the individual who could help to bring about a political settlement and lead a neutral Laos.

Souvanna had told the British that he approved of their proposals to the Soviets (see item 23 March) and had informed Prince Souphanouvong of this approval. Souvanna had said that he would call upon his supporters (i.e., the Kong Le forces) to support the cease-fire when it was called by the Geneva Co-Chairman, but he was concerned that delays between the cease-fire, the establishment of the ICC, and the 14-Nation Conference would allow Phoumi to improve his position. The British had assured Souvanna that they understood that, as soon as the cease-fire was called, India would place the ICC machinery in action "almost at once" and

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that the 14-Nation Conference could be convened in a short time.

According to the British, Souvanna had seemed to appreciate the desirability of limiting the Pathet Lao representation in the Laotian government to "non-key" cabinet posts. Moreover, despite his reported over-confidence, Souvanna had been impressed with the British suggestion that he delay seeking elections in order to consolidate his position.

Souvanna had told the British, with regard to the proposed NNC, that he could agree to the participation of Cambodia and Burma, but objected to Malaya because it would not be a participant in the 14-Nation Conference. The British regarded this attitude, according to Barbour, as "not unreasonable."

The British Foreign Office official reporting these conversations to the US Embassy, stated that if the US would give Souvanna the backing it had given Phoumi, Souvanna "would respond well."

(S) Msg, London to SecState, 3980, 31 Mar 61.

31 Mar Ambassador Brown informed the Secretary of State of a conversation that had taken place between King Savang Vathana and the British Ambassador to Laos. King Savang had told the British diplomat that he "wholly approved and supported" the British proposal to the Soviets, calling for a cease-fire followed by an international conference (see item 23 March). Savang had indicated agreement that a cease-fire was the first requirement. Also, the British diplomat had asked the King if he had been giving any thought to a reorganized government, which might represent Laos at a conference. King Savang had replied tersely that the only way to arrive at such a government was to include the Pathet Lao.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1797, 31 Mar 61.

31 Mar The JCS reported to the Secretary of Defense that all but 17 of the helicopter pilots and crew chiefs [REDACTED] had arrived in Bangkok. The remainder, all Marines, were en route and were expected in Bangkok by 3 April (approved action 3; see item 9 March).

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 993098, 31 Mar 61.

31 Mar Ambassador Brown reported to the Secretary of State that Somsanith and Ngon Sananikone had informed a US Embassy officer that their views on the future of the National Assembly under a Cabinet headed by the King, differed widely from those of Phoui (see item 27 March). The two Laotians were convinced that following the King's investiture the Assembly must be dissolved, not merely recessed. A constituent assembly then would be formed for the task of drawing up a new constitution that would grant greater powers to the executive. The time gained thereby would enable the RLG to regain control of the country. It would also allow time for an international conference to get under way and for the achievement a cease-fire.

The initial composition of the King's cabinet would be limited to 8 or 10 competent "veteran" ministers, including Souvanna, if he responded to the King's invitation, Ngon had said. After the cease-fire, the King would invite Souphanouvong and possibly one other NLHX leader to join the cabinet, and he might add one or two additional experienced conservatives.

Both men had been emphatic that elections should not be held for a minimum of one year, and perhaps not for 18 months. The Communists, they asserted, could win "hands

down" if elections took place sooner.

(For reactions of the Secretary of State, see item 31 March.)

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1796, 31 Mar 61.

31 Mar



31 Mar The CHPEO recommended to CINCPAC that replacement T-6s not be provided to the FAL because of the ineffectiveness of the aircraft in the present operation.

According to CHPEO, the FAL had 5 of the original 10 T-6 aircraft left. Seven qualified T-6 pilots were available, and three more had been scheduled to complete training in Thailand on 28 March.

(S) Msg, CHPEO Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 99585, 1 Apr 61.

31 Mar After noting the observations contained in General T.J.H. Trapnell's "Report on Laos," the JCS submitted to the Secretary of Defense a memorandum containing their actions, comments, and recommendations on the report.

The Trapnell Report, transmitted to the JCS upon General Trapnell's return from an inspection tour of Laos (see item 14 March), contained the following observations:

1. As a military theater of operations, Laos provided limited areas in which conventionally organized regiments and battalions could operate effectively in a normal combat role.

2. Laos was "made to order" for guerrilla warfare.

3. The primary factor contributing to the Pathet Lao successes was the existence of Viet Minh advisors as "stiffeners" in Pathet Lao units down to company and lower levels. Otherwise, the Pathet Lao was composed essentially of the "same kind of people" as made up the FAL.

4. Phoumi's plan for retaking the Plaine des Jarres by 1 May was unrealistic. Phoumi could not retake the Plaine des Jarres before June without bombing. It was not certain that Phoumi could retake the plain before June even with bombing. In any event, the Plaine des Jarres should be eliminated as a Pathet Lao military base.

5. In order to provide a reserve to follow up a successful attack on the Pathet Lao, two regiments of the Royal Thai Army should be alerted for helicopter lift. All available B-26s should also be available to participate in this operation.

6. PEO personnel, by operating in civilian clothing, experienced certain morale and disciplinary difficulties and also failed to establish maximum rapport with the un-informed units to which they were accredited.

7. The desirability and feasibility of stepped-up unconventional warfare activities against the Pathet Lao was evident.

8. Army helicopters were "as natural for this country as guerrilla warfare."

9. Funds had been diverted from US-supported units to at least six non-US-supported battalions, resulting in "barefoot, unpaid, underfed, disgruntled soldiers" in the FAL.

10. The FAL force ceiling should be raised again to permit rotation of FAL battalions for retraining.

11. Neither the FAL nor the PEO had adequate intelligence and counter-intelligence assets and capabilities.

12. The FAL logistics staffs lacked the capability either to plan properly or to execute logistic missions required by the FAL combat units.

13. FAL training, other than that conducted by LTAGs, was nonstandard, widely varying as to quality and content, and sometimes not completed prior to the commitment of trainees to active operations.

14. An intensification of US and RLG propaganda was necessary to counter Communist efforts, to rally the population behind the government, and to subvert the Pathet Lao.

The memorandum detailing to the Secretary of Defense the JCS actions, recommendations, and comments, clearly indicated the importance the JCS attributed to General Trapnell's Report.

Trapnell had recommended the employment of 16 B-26s (or the number available if the situation deteriorated) to bomb military targets on the Plaine des Jarres; he had suggested further that there be no restrictions on the use of conventional air weapons, including napalm, and that these planes not be employed in the role of close support. The JCS approved this recommendation, commenting that its substance had been proposed by them in previous memoranda. They pointed out, however, that the B-26 could be "an excellent close support aircraft provided that adequate ground control personnel are available." The Secretary of Defense was requested to initiate such further actions as might be required to carry out the recommendation.

The JCS also expressed their approval of General Trapnell's recommendation that the PEO be converted to a MAAG, but conceded that such action was "dependent upon the clearing away of certain political obstacles." The JCS requested that, if this conversion could not be achieved in the near future, the Secretary implement an alternative recommendation of General Trapnell--that PEO personnel be authorized to wear US military uniforms.

The JCS reported that five of the recommendations by General Trapnell had been forwarded to CINCPAC for his comments and recommendations thereon, inasmuch as his responsibilities were directly affected and his views were

therefore, "a necessary prerequisite for a final decision." These five Trapnell recommendations were that:

1. US advisors should be placed down to FAL battalion level and additional [redacted] personnel should be integrated into the advisory group for placement from company down to squad level.

2. Helicopters should be armed to provide close support and armed reconnaissance.

3. PEO should be provided an organic intelligence production and counterintelligence capability.

4. Authorization should be granted for US support of nine additional FAL battalions.

5. A Joint Unconventional Warfare Task Force (JUWTF) should be established to wage an unconventional warfare and psychological warfare campaign.

Finally, the JCS informed the Secretary that two of General Trapnell's recommendations had appeared to be "susceptible to resolution by CINCPAC with or without assistance":

1) [redacted]

2) PEO advisors should be placed with key staff counterparts at FAL headquarters, particularly in logistical positions.

Accordingly, these two recommendations had been referred to CINCPAC with the request that he take such action as he deemed appropriate, "advising the Joint Chief of Staff of the action taken, and of his requirements for further assistance in such action."

[The Trapnell Report in its original form had included an additional recommendation that the US Ambassador to Laos be replaced. The Chairman had ordered this paragraph deleted when the report was "turned green." Advising the Joint Chiefs of this action and providing them with copies of the original report, the Chairman stated that he had taken this action because of the sensitivity of the recommendation and because he believed that the Chiefs could deal with it "amongst ourselves without the necessity of broad staffing." His action, said the Chairman, allowed "a full distribution for staff work on the reports without disseminating so widely" this recommendation.]

(TS) Memo, CJCS to SecDef, "Laos," JCSM-206-61, 31 Mar 61, derived from (TS) Dec on JCS 1992/943, "Report by J-5 on 'Report on Laos,'" 31 Mar 61, -Laos Special File IV, R&RA; (TS) Note by Secys to JCS on "Report on Laos," JCS 1992/936, 28 Mar 61, Laos Special File III, R&RA; (TS) Memo, CJCS to JCS, "General Trapnell's Report on Laos and Viet-Nam," CM-159-61, 28 Mar 61, CJCS-091-Laos (2).

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