MAP AID TO LAOS 1959 - 1972
25 JUNE 1973

HQ PACAF
Directorate, Tactical Evaluation
CHECO Division

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The counterinsurgency and unconventional warfare environment of Southeast Asia has resulted in USAF airpower being employed to meet a multitude of requirements. These varied applications have involved the full spectrum of USAF aerospace vehicles, support equipment, and manpower. As a result, operational data and experiences have accumulated which should be collected, documented, and analyzed for current and future impact upon USAF policies, concepts, and doctrine.

Fortunately, the value of collecting and documenting our SEA experiences was recognized at an early date. In 1962, Hq USAF directed CINCPACAF to establish an activity which would provide timely and analytical studies of USAF combat operations in SEA and would be primarily responsive to Air Staff requirements and direction.

Project CHECO, an acronym for Contemporary Historical Examination of Current Operations, was established to meet the Air Staff directive. Managed by Hq PACAF, with elements in Southeast Asia, Project CHECO provides a scholarly "on-going" historical examination, documentation, and reporting on USAF policies, concepts, and doctrine in PACOM. This CHECO report is part of the overall documentation and examination which is being accomplished. It is an authentic source for an assessment of the effectiveness of USAF airpower in PACOM when used in proper context. The reader must view the study in relation to the events and circumstances at the time of its preparation--recognizing that it was prepared on a contemporary basis which restricted perspective and that the author's research was limited to records available within his local headquarters area.

ROBERT E. HILLER
Director of Operations Analysis
DCS/Operations
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FOREWORD

Under our constitutional form of government, the United States military is subordinate and responsive to the decisions formulated by the elected civilian leadership. An understanding of American involvement in Laos requires some knowledge of the political considerations, both Laotian and American, which led to that involvement.

Prince Souphanouvong organized the Pathet Lao (PL) (or "Lao National" movement) in 1949, and with Viet Minh (VM) support vowed to fight until the last vestiges of French colonial rule were removed from Laos. In effect, the Pathet Lao also declared itself against the Lao Issara (or "Free Lao" movement), and against the pro-Western ruling circle in Vientiane which had agreed to a compromise solution with the French.

In 1950, the United States joined with Cambodia, France, Vietnam, and Laos in a Pentalateral Agreement in an attempt to stabilize Southeast Asia against communist-inspired "national liberation" movements such as the Pathet Lao. American economic assistance to the Royal Laotian Government (RLG) in support of this Agreement further emphasized American interest in Laos. This study traces, chronologically, the role of United States aid to Laos from these beginnings through the end of Fiscal Year 1972.

The emphasis of the study is on American military aid to Laos 1959-1972. In view of the fact that the RLG has been battling for survival almost from its beginnings in 1954, the military focus of this study is hardly surprising. Beset at first by indigenous Pathet Lao foes, the RLG subsequently became involved in the ever-expanding war between North and
South Vietnam when Laotian territory was used as a logistics pipeline for North Vietnamese Army (NVA) penetration of South Vietnam.

The signatures on the 1962 Geneva Agreements guaranteeing Laotian neutrality were hardly dry when superpower jockeying to protect national interests set the stage for intervention and involvement in Laos. While the United States withdrew its personnel under the terms of the Agreement, North Vietnam increased the size of its already large troop contingent within Laos.

In an effort to counter increasing Communist usurpation of what remained of Laotian neutrality, the United States expanded Military Assistance Program (MAP) aid to Laos in 1963. Logistically supported through the Bangkok-based Deputy Chief, Joint United States Military Advisory Group, Thailand (DEPCH/JUSMAGTHAI), MAP aid was both overt and covert.

Unfortunately, most of the DEPCH documentation of MAP aid to Laos through 1966 was destroyed when the organization moved from Bangkok to Udorn RTAFB in November 1971; fortunately, much information from the earlier years could be reconstructed from the tri-service Journal of Military Assistance* (Journal of Mutual Security prior to 1960) which terminated publication in March 1972. From 1966 on, the quarterly reports from the Senior Air Force representative at DEPCH form the basis for the documentation.

While this study concentrates primarily on the great "success story"

*Prepared and published quarterly by the Evaluation Division, Directorate of Military Assistance and Sales, DCS/Systems and Logistics, Hq USAF.
of MAP aid to Laos - that of the Royal Laotian Air Force (RLAF) - it does not wish to detract from the contributions made by the United States Army and the United States Navy. Both services have borne financial and advisory burdens along with the United States Air Force.

The author gratefully acknowledges the assistance of the following individuals: Colonel Ray W. Bauman and Colonel Joseph W. Mejaski, the senior Air Force representatives at DEPCH, who granted incisive interviews; Major General James D. Hughes, then Deputy Commander, 7/13AF, and Lt Col John Garrity, Jr., then of Hq 7/13AF Current Intelligence, for the penetrating insights they provided.

This is not an operational study. However, several CHECO and CORONA HARVEST reports have touched on the subject of MAP aid to Laos in the operational context. For the benefit of those wishing to delve further into the subject, a short list of pertinent studies is provided:

**Project CHECO Reports**

(S/AFEO/LD) Air Operations in Northern Laos (a continuing series of studies from 1969 to the present)

(S) The Royal Laotian Air Force 1954-1970

(S/AFEO) Air Support of Counterinsurgency in Laos, July 1968 to November 1969

(TS/NF) USAF Control of Air Strikes in Support of Indigenous Lao Ground Forces

**CORONA HARVEST Report**

(S/NF) Waterpump 1964-1965 (Tells the story of the first USAF detachment at Udorn, RTAFB. The detachment trained RLAF pilots.)
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION: THE POLITICAL FRAMEWORK, 1954-1959

Following the defeat of French forces by the Viet Minh at Dien Bien Phu in 1954, the various components of the crumbling Cochin China colonial empire began to assert their new national identities. The Lao group, eth­nically a part of the Thai people, was the culturally and politically dominant force in the new nation of Laos. The Lao, who dwell in the plains and valley, looked with disdain upon the Meo and Yao mountain tribes who had migrated from southwestern China in the 19th century, and on the abor-iginal Kha tribes of Indonesian stock who inhabited the upland areas of southern Laos. In Vientiane, the ruling group, basically composed of the Thai Lao, continually denied the minorities in Laos the chance for upward social mobility. Ethnic rivalries led time and time again to military and political coups, which have kept internal Laotian affairs from stabilizing to this day. Although the 1954 Paris Conference granted Laos complete control over its military, political, diplomatic, judicial, and economic affairs, it would take more than a treaty to organize the diverse elements of Laotian society into a cohesive nation. Internal rivalries and injustices led to an increasing popularization of the Pathet Lao, which in turn led to increasing United States concern about Laos.

The 1954 Geneva Convention

The 1954 Geneva Convention on Indochina, insofar as it concerned Laos, called for a coalition government in which the Pathet Lao were
to participate. It was against a background of the cold war and fervent anti-communism in American political circles that Secretary of State John Foster Dulles refused to sign any accord with the People's Republic of China and other communist nations. Symbolic of the 1954 Geneva Convention was the famous "handshake incident" when Dulles refused to shake Chou En Lai's outstretched hand. Although unwilling to sign the agreements, American diplomats stated that the United States would respect them and "refrain from the threat or use of force to disturb them."  

All parties agreed to respect the articles of the July 20, 1954, Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities in Laos. Among the more significant provisions:

- Article 6 prohibited introduction of foreign military troops, although 1,500 French officers and NCOs were permitted.
- Article 7 prohibited establishment of any new military bases.
- Article 8 permitted two French military establishments, not to exceed 3,500 men.
- Article 9 prohibited the introduction of armaments, munitions or military equipment (except a specified amount necessary for Laotian defense).
- Article 13 called for the withdrawal of French and Viet Minh forces from Laos (except those French forces permitted under Articles 6 and 8).
- Article 14 called for the withdrawal of Pathet Lao forces to the provinces of Phong Saly and Sam Neua pending a final political settlement among all Laotian parties.
Article 25 created the International Commission for Supervision and Control in Laos.* Canada, India, and Poland were to station observers in Vientiane, the political capital of Laos.

Early United States Assistance to Laos 1955-1959

In December, 1955, the United States established a Program Evaluation Office (PEO) to advise the American Ambassador to Laos on requirements for and use of military equipment. Staffed by Department of Defense (DOD) civilians, the small group reported directly to the Commander-in-Chief, Pacific Command (CINCPAC). The 1954 Geneva Accords, and a further clarification of them in 1956, stated that only the French were to provide military advice and training to the Laotians. However, an apparent lack of interest and progress on the part of the French led to an increased importance for the PEO in 1957, and its manning was increased from 10 to 60 authorized spaces.

Laotian politics were subject to often-strange eccentricities, such as the agreements growing out of the relationship of the half-brothers Prince Souvanna Phouma and Prince Souphanouvong. Souvanna Phouma headed the neutralist faction in the Laotian political spectrum, while Souphanouvong led the communist Pathet Lao. An agreement between the two in November 1957 called for placing the two Pathet Lao-occupied northern provinces under Royal Laotian Government (RLG) administration, and for integrating the two existing PL battalions into the Royal Laotian Armed Forces (RLAF), locally known as the Forces Armees' Royales (FAR). As an adjunct to this internal agreement, elections were to be

*This body was later known as the International Control Commission (ICC).
held in which the Neo Lao Hak Zat (NLHZ)--the "Lao Patriotic Front," the political arm of the Pathet Lao--could compete as a legal political party. In the ensuing election, the PL and its sympathizers gained only 14 out of 59 seats in the legislative assembly. Souphanouvong, who had a degree in public works engineering, took charge of the Ministry of Planning in the new government. American foreign aid officials, who now had to deal with the newly-legalized indigenous communists, began to report in 1958 that the "country appeared to be headed for a communist takeover." Accordingly, the PEO staff was augmented once more, this time by active-duty U.S. military personnel posing as civilians. By the end of 1959 PEO strength had increased from 60 authorizations to 531, including:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Military</th>
<th>Civilian</th>
<th>Lao Civilian</th>
<th>Philippino Civilian</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>239</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>531</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the 239 military personnel, 17 were assigned as advisors to the fledgling Army Aviation Branch of the FAR.

The integration of the two PL battalions became the stumbling block in internal Laotian politics. Souphanouvong wanted them integrated as cohesive units, while the other political factions demanded that they be scattered throughout the FAR. In the absence of subsequent agreement, the first PL battalion remained intact at Xieng Ngeun (near the royal residence city of Luang Prabang), and the second PL battalion remained at Xieng Khouang on the Plaine des Jarres (PDJ) plateau (some 150 miles northeast of Vientiane). The PL forces refused diffusion into the FAR,
which would have negated their military and political power, and chose instead to remain intact and in control of those regions they had held since 1954.

Unable or unwilling to resolve their differences, Souphanouvong and Souvanna Phouma went their separate ways and were replaced in August 1958 by a new cabinet under Phoui Sananikone. The new government scrapped neutralist policies and embarked on a solidly pro-Western course, and Phoui Sananikone stated:

As far as peaceful coexistence is concerned, we shall clearly inform neighboring countries and the world that we shall coexist with the Free World only. We trust only those countries that really and sincerely support us.

American planners apparently feared a Czechoslovak-type infiltration if communist factions were allowed to be in the government; the accession and actions of the self-proclaimed anti-communist Sananikone were therefore initially welcomed. United States interest in Laos was best summarized by a December, 1960, New York Times article, which discussed the strategic importance of the small and backward state:

Its loss to the communists would open up long borders of friendly powers such as Thailand and South Vietnam to infiltration by the communists. It was also felt here that the loss of Laos to the communists would be an irreparable blow to United States and Western prestige throughout Asia.

Perhaps emboldened by American expressions of support, Sananikone embarked on a program to eradicate the Pathet Lao, many of whom were Kha tribesmen and therefore considered "inferior" in an ethnic sense by the ruling Thai Lao group to which he belonged. As a result, one of the two
PL battalions nominally integrated into the FAR dispersed itself throughout Laos, and the second battalion sought refuge in North Vietnam. On 4 September 1959 the Sananikone government appealed to the United Nations (UN) for an emergency force to counter what it charged were attacks by communist-led rebels supported by North Vietnam. The United States supported this Laotian request in the UN, which appointed a special subcommittee to investigate the allegations. Its findings were (1) that North Vietnamese arms and soldiers had been used by the PL rebels, but (2) the evidence was inconclusive as to whether or not NVA units had participated in the attacks.

Status of the Laotian Army Air Force in 1959

In 1959 the Laotian Army Air Force (LAAF) was a very modest one. By 1959, MAP aid had provided a total of 16 aircraft to the LAAF, including six C-47, six L-19, and four L-20 aircraft (two from French Expeditionary Forces excess). The LAAF personnel strength in March 1959 was as follows:

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<th>Authorized</th>
<th>Assigned</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pilots</td>
<td>721</td>
<td>567</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Aircrew</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Aircrew</td>
<td>638</td>
<td>543</td>
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Eighty-eight students included in the above totals were in training in France, and 85 French Mission Advisors were on duty with the LAAF Composite Squadron. This Composite Squadron, based at Vientiane, was
comprised of three flights: the transport flight equipped with C-47s, a liaison and training flight equipped with L-19s, and an observation and reconnaissance flight utilizing the L-20s. The mission of this squadron was primarily that of logistical support, and none of the aircraft were armed. 

The Laotians began to indicate dissatisfaction with the support furnished by the French Military Mission in 1959, and, consequently, established closer ties with the United States. The French, sensitive to their diminishing role and influence in Southeast Asia, were finally persuaded to agree to Franco-American "joint-teams" to conduct training. To preserve the letter of the 1954 Geneva Agreement, only French Officers were responsible for supervising the joint training. Each French officer had an American deputy, however, and agreement was reached that 65 of the French Military Mission advisors were to be replaced by U.S. or Philippino personnel.

During FY 1959, the LAAF received $524,000 under the MAP, primarily in the form of consumables and spare parts. The total value of the assistance provided the LAAF from 1950-1959 was approximately $1.5 million. An additional $935,000 remained to complete the 1959 MAP for the LAAF; this amount was programmed primarily for two additional C-47s and five L-20s. These aircraft had been funded but not delivered at the end of FY 1959. (For details of the FY 1959 LAAF program see page 145.)
MAP aid to Laos was at the modest figure of approximately 1.5 million dollars in 1955, but jumped drastically to some 26 million dollars in 1956 after the PEO was established in-country. During the trial period of accommodation between Souvanna Phouma and Souphanouvong, aid decreased to some $4.2 million in 1957, but increased to $5 million in 1958 when the two factions could not resolve their differences and were replaced by the Sananikone government.

Total United States foreign aid to Laos during 1959 amounted to some $28.5 million of which $6.8 million was in the form of military assistance, $20 million in defense support, and $1.7 million in technical cooperation. Although direct MAP aid accounted for only about 25 percent of the total American aid to Laos, it had helped the Laotian government to maintain internal security and protect its frontiers from external communist incursions. By facilitating the establishment of a stable environment, MAP aid also helped to create a favorable environment for economic progress. From the Pentalateral Agreement of 1950 to 1959, total U.S. military assistance to Laos amounted to $54,792,000. U.S. economic assistance during the same period totaled $187,781,000.
Disunity and Revolution

Increasing world interest in Laos resulted in a lessening of authority of the Laotian government. For example, Royal influence, as well as Soviet, British, and UN pressure, dissuaded Prime Minister Sananikone from prosecuting his scheduled trials of the top pro-communist leaders, including Prince Souphanouvong. Feeling stripped of power, Sananikone resigned on 31 December, and was replaced on 3 January 1960 by a government composed of Laotian military commanders who appointed Prince Somsanith as Prime Minister.

Some eight months later, an unexpected revolution, led by Kong Le, a 26-year-old paratroop captain of mixed Laotian and tribal parentage, put an end to the government of Prince Somsanith. On 9 August 1960 Kong Le captured the administrative capital of Vientiane, and returned Souvanna Phouma to power as the interim Prime Minister. Kong Le's actions were ascribed to conflicting motivations: some contended that a growing dissatisfaction with subsistence-level pay in the armed forces had caused the revolt, while others said that Kong Le wanted to end the ordeal of internecine strife among Laotians, and hoped for a reconciliation between the government forces and the Pathet Lao.

An orderly transition from a pro-western to a "neutralist" government seemed within the realm of possibility. At this juncture, however, General Nosavan, aided by Prince Boun Oum, pulled out of the provisional government
and announced a rightist counter-rebellion. Because the hoped-for reconciliation among all factions now seemed remote, this action forced Souvanna Phouma to suspend negotiations with the Pathet Lao. An American assessment of this state of affairs concluded that:

The current status is, in effect, a three-way struggle for power, with the legal government of Prince Phouma, backed by the paratroopers of Captain Kong Le, holding forth in Vientiane, and expecting an attack from General Nosavan's force. At Savannakhet, in the south, General Phoumi Nosavan, who is still a staunch advocate of pro-Western alignment, claims the loyalty of the Laotian Army and has reportedly sent an expedition against Vientiane. In the north, around Sam Neua where troops loyal to General Nosavan are in defense positions, Pathet Lao elements have resumed activity designed to force Prince Phouma into a pro-communist position.

The United States attempted to discourage a conflict between Nosavan and government forces, pointing out that only the Pathet Lao and the Communists would benefit from such a development. Due to the great instability in Laos, U.S. MAP aid, at a trickle since the August coup, was officially suspended by October 1960.

In November, Soviet intervention on behalf of leftist elements caused the U.S. to look at Laos again. The initiation of a Soviet airlift to leftist/neutralist forces on November 23, 1960, caused the U.S. to openly support the Nosavan-Boun Oum group. Souvanna Phouma--unable to control the now leftward-leaning Kong Le, as well as other dissident factions in Vientiane--fled to Cambodia on December 9, 1960. The Soviets then delivered artillery and heavy mortars to Kong Le and airlifted weapons and other military supplies to the Pathet Lao. By the end of December, a counter-offensive by the rightist forces brought both the
royal capital of Luang Prabang and the administrative capital of Vientiane under their control. On December 17, 1960, the U.S. State Department made public a note to the Soviet Union which charged that nation with violating the 1954 Geneva Accords by airlifting arms and ammunition to the Pathet Lao and Kong Le's rebel forces. The Soviet Union in turn accused the U.S. of similar transgressions in aiding the Nosavan-Boun Oum group. Meanwhile, in Laos, both sides began to consolidate their positions, with the Pathet Lao and Kong Le's forces capturing Xieng Khouang and the PDJ.

Having installed itself in Vientiane, the Boun Oum government called on the UN for aid at the end of December 1960. It alleged a full-scale foreign invasion of its territory. In many ways the charge was similar to that which the Sananikone government had made a year earlier, and, as before, UN findings were inconclusive and UN action was generally lacking.

MAP Aid to the LAAF - 1960

During 1960 the U.S. continued MAP aid to build up the LAAF. (See page 147 for the total 1960 program.) Runway improvements, particularly at Vientiane (Wattay), the LAAF's main base of operations, were extensive. Some $910,000 in MAP funds were made available to provide a C-124 landing and handling capability at Vientiane. The United States government loaned four SH-19A aircraft to Air America under the operating and maintenance contract it had with that firm. These aircraft provided helicopter support to the LAAF which was at that time incapable of operating and supporting
this type of aircraft. One additional C-47 was programmed for the LAAF as a replacement for an aircraft lost in March 1960.

Attempts were made to increase the manpower and training status of the Laotian forces. Combined French-U.S. training began on 1 September 1959 with 12 U.S. Field Training Teams participating. By March 1960, some 3,761 Laotian troops had gone through short training courses taught by the joint team and by the Royal Thai Army. The latter training was conducted under a Thai-Laotian agreement signed in September 1959. Personnel strength of the Laotian Army was approximately 29,000 men who were organized into 28 battalions (24 infantry, one artillery, two parachute, and one armored cavalry). These were augmented by some 2,999 National Police and 20,000 Auto Defense (home guard/militia) troops.

LAAF personnel strength (the LAAF was a part of the Army) in March 1960 was as follows:

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Authorized</th>
<th>Assigned</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pilots</td>
<td>721</td>
<td>567</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jet Conventional</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Flying</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical</td>
<td>630</td>
<td>519</td>
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<td>Conscripts</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>--</td>
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</table>

The 519 "assigned" figure included 59 attending training in France, while the 15 "miscellaneous" attended a French-operated training school in Vientiane. The clandestine U.S. Military Advisory Group (MAG) considered LAAF personnel authorizations--if kept filled--adequate to support the
mission. Due to such factors as low pay and limited resources of qualified manpower, however, manning was only at 70 percent of the authorized figure.

1961 - Year of Super-Power Involvement

The year 1961 saw the Soviet Union and the United States continuing to support the opposing factions. Aircraft with Soviet markings were repeatedly observed and photographed on supply runs to the Pathet Lao and leftists who had launched an offensive from the PDJ and succeeded in cutting the road linking Vientiane and Luang Prabang. Truck and air support from North Vietnam aided the rebels, even though the Soviets and the North Vietnamese denied their presence in Laos. They accused the U.S. of interference instead.

The United States responded quickly to increased Soviet aid. It gave the LAAF six T-6 aircraft, and replaced many PEO staff members with 400 Special Forces personnel known as White Star Mobile Training Teams. Some four months later, on 19 April 1961, the clandestine MAG surfaced with a U.S. Government announcement of its establishment. Inasmuch as the Soviet Union and North Vietnam had violated the 1954 Accords by providing assistance to the Pathet Lao/leftist rebels, the Laotian Government of Boun Oum felt justified in making the request for a uniformed Joint United States Military Assistance Group (JUSMAG) to Laos. The Laotian Government no longer felt itself bound by those provisions of the accords which the Soviets had breached. By the same token, this position enabled the U.S. to establish a Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) under the provisions of the 1950 Pentalateral Agreement.
Personnel strength of the JUSMAG, including civilians, soon reached 1,220 advisors. While the military contingent concerned itself primarily with the training of Lao units (some in Thailand), other U.S. agencies initiated their own programs. In May, the Central Intelligence Agency—known as Controlled American Source (CAS)—began training Meo hill tribesmen in Military Region (MR) II (see Figure 2) under the leadership of Vang Pao. CAS soon supervised the guerrilla operations of these irregular, but highly effective, units.  

Although the Soviets and their allies claimed that only the government of the self-exiled Souvanna Phouma was legitimate, they were ready to negotiate following this American display of determination. At western insistence, and with cautious Soviet acquiescence, the ICC (which had been adjourned in July 1958 at Laotian government request) reconvened on 28 April to arrange a cease-fire in the Laotian conflict. The western powers, in turn, agreed to a Soviet proposal for a 14-nation conference to settle all aspects of the Laotian question. This conference convened in Geneva on 12 May 1961.  

The conferees in Geneva agreed to deal with three Laotian delegations: representatives of the Boun Oum Government, the Souvanna Phouma neutralists, and the Pathet Lao leftists. These factions had concluded a tenuous "truce" prior to the arrival of the ICC, but sporadic fighting continued among their forces on the home front. All attempts to form a single "coalition government" for Laos failed. Old antagonisms between Boun Oum and Souvanna Phouma flared up, and the Pathet Lao seemed in no hurry to conclude an agreement. Indeed, the Pathet Lao preferred instead to stall negotiations in order to
extend and consolidate its area of control in Laos. By the end of the year, the 14-nation Geneva talks had progressed to virtual agreement on all points. If a single Laotian government had existed, these nations would probably have been able to guarantee Laotian freedom and neutrality.

MAP Aid During 1961

During 1961 the United States strengthened its program with tribal guerrilla units. For example, the CAS Meo guerrillas harassed Pathet Lao forces in the PDJ region of Central Laos. In addition to the CAS-trained and supervised Meo guerrillas in MR II, MAAG Laos began to equip and train similar units composed of Kha tribesmen, who lived in the Bolovens Plateau region in southeastern Laos. General Nosavan agreed to support the Kha guerrilla units as part of the Auto Defense Corps (Home Guard) program. The Pathet Lao also had made overtures to the Khas, but were unwilling or unable to deliver the promised economic aid. The Khas, while not particularly pro-Laotian, were well-disposed toward any group which gave them economic and military aid. When MAP-equipped, these forces proved to be among the most effective troops available to the Royal Laotian Government, even though their loyalty was more to their tribe than to Laos. (For details of the FY 1961 MAP program see p. 149.)

MAP Aid to the Laotian Air Force (LAF) - 1961

In 1961, MAP aid to the LAF strengthened the Composite Squadron and supplemented it with Air America. Twelve pilots were trained in Thailand, and became regularly assigned pilots for the MAP-supported Composite Squadron, supplementing the five pilots already assigned to the T-6 flight.
They were to provide the nucleus of a trained pilot force for the planned MAP T-28 flight. Fourteen of these T-28 "Nomad" aircraft were approved and funded under the FY 1961 MAP for the LAF. These aircraft were modified to a ground support configuration (Nomad) and were to replace the T-6Gs in the LAF's Composite Squadron. Delivery of these aircraft was slated for late in FY 1962. Seventeen more HUS-1 (H-34) helicopters were added to the FY 1961 program and were operated by Air America under a lease contract.

The Year of New Accords - 1962

Agreement among the powers meeting at Geneva appeared imminent in early 1962, but mutual distrust among the three Laotian factions had to be allayed, and recriminations ended, for any satisfactory agreement to take place. General Nosavan's determination to not support any government headed by Souvanna Phouma was broken by U.S. aid program curtailments. Thus, on 23 June 1962, a provisional coalition government headed by neutralist Souvanna Phouma was installed at Vientiane. The new coalition government appointed a delegation to represent it at the Geneva Conference, which resumed on 2 July. With only a single Laotian delegation to deal with, the Conference soon concluded its work. On 23 July 1962 the Declaration on the Neutrality of Laos was concluded by the 14 nations meeting in Geneva. Basically, it reaffirmed the 1954 Accords, spelling out the following items in detail:

(4) It [Laos] will not enter into any military alliance or into any agreement, whether military or otherwise, which is inconsistent with the neutrality of the Kingdom of Laos; it will not allow the establishment of any foreign military base on
Laotian territory, nor allow any country to use Laotian territory for military purposes or for the purposes of interference in the internal affairs of other countries, nor recognize the protection of any alliance or military coalition, including SEATO;

(6) Subject to the provisions of Article 5 of the Protocol, it will require with withdrawal from Laos of all foreign troops and military personnel, and will not allow any foreign troops or military personnel to be introduced into Laos.

Article 1a of the Protocol clarified the latter provision when it explained that "the term 'foreign military personnel' shall include members of foreign military missions, foreign military advisors, experts, instructors, consultants, technicians, observers and any other foreign military persons, including those serving in any armed forces in Laos, and foreign civilians connected with the supply, maintenance, storing, and utilization of war materials." Article 5 of the Protocol permitted the French government, "as an exception," to "leave in Laos for a limited period of time a precisely limited number of French military instructors for the purpose of training the armed forces of Laos." However, this was to be done only on condition that "the Laotian Government considers it necessary."

During 1962, the military situation in Laos remained generally quiet, and the only major action was the rout of government forces by the PL in the northern town of Nam Tha. Pathet Lao/leftist troops continued to consolidate their holdings, and would not allow extension of government control over areas they dominated. It was not until December that the ICC, recently reinstated by the Geneva Conference, was allowed to
investigate charges that Viet Minh (North Vietnamese) troops were present in PL-held territory. Naturally, under such controlled conditions and with the Polish member of the Commission supporting the Communist view, little of a substantive nature was accomplished.

The new coalition government was composed of four groups: the Pathet Lao, the "Souvanna neutralists," the "Vientiane neutralists," and the former Royal Laotian Government of Boun Oum. A novel, but generally unworkable, plan called for unanimous agreement on actions of the Defense, Interior, and Foreign Ministries. The Government agreed to form a unified national army of 30,000 men comprised equally of Royal Laotian Army (General Nosavan), Neutralist, and PL forces. A national police force composed of 2,000 men from each of these factions was also envisioned. Comparative strengths of the forces controlled by each of the factions in December 1962 was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Force</th>
<th>Strength</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Royal Laotian Army (RLA)</td>
<td>53,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pathet Lao army</td>
<td>19,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutralist army</td>
<td>10,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The desired integration progressed slowly. Later, due to mutual suspicion and distrust, it did not progress at all.

An interesting development at the close of the year was the falling-out between Kong Le's neutralists and Pathet Lao forces on the PDJ. Kong Le had not appeared sufficiently subservient to the PL, and was denounced as a bandit. The PL then set up a more pliant rival "neutralist" commander in the region, and Kong Le rapidly came to an accommodation with the Souvanna Phouma faction in Vientiane. At the Prime Minister's request, Air America
instituted a supply airlift from Udorn, Thailand, to Kong Le's forces on
the PDJ. One of the Air America aircraft was shot down by anti-aircraft
(AA) fire, and the PL charged that Air America "supplied bandits and would
be dealt with accordingly." 51/

MAP Aid During 1962

As of 12 March, $44.9 million in equipment and supplies and $11.1
million in training assistance had been approved and funded under the FY
1962 MAP for Laos. Army items accounted for $19.1 million of the materiel
funded, and Army training assistance amounted to an additional $8.9 million.
Equipment valued at $25.8 million was earmarked for the LAF/RLAF, with
$0.9 million of the aforementioned training funds set aside for Air Force
training. Some $7.3 million of total Air Force funding defrayed the costs
of Air America's airlift contractual services. Naval training accounted
for $1.3 million of the total funded amount. 52/ (For details of the total
FY 1962 MAP program see p. 151.)

MAP Aid to the LAF/RLAF - 1962

The unsettled conditions in Laos during 1962, and the lack of suit-
able facilities, led to the transfer of most MAP-provided training for
LAF pilots to other countries. Neighboring Thailand became the main site
of the third-country pilot training. By March, 24 pilots had graduated,
raising the total number of LAF pilots to 39. 53/

By the end of the year, the LAF had been redesignated as the Royal
Laotian Air Force (RLAF), since it had no neutralist or Pathet Lao counter-
part. Technically a part of the Army, the RLAF was to be integrated into
the 30,000 man national force detailed earlier, if and when this concept reached fruition. A Pathet Lao attempt to dominate the RLAF failed due to the lack of rated officers in the PL ranks. The Soviet Union, desiring to make its presence felt, gave the coalition government nine aircraft and one helicopter and flew the aircraft until Laotian crews could be trained. The Russians may have intended this gesture to help the indigenous Lao Communists break the Air America monopoly. (Air America, as a "private" enterprise, was not prohibited by the 1962 Accords; in fact, it performed much of the internal airlift operations in Laos.) Air America was soon denied the use of many facilities which had been at its disposal at Wattay Airport in Vientiane, presumably since these facilities were needed to support the Soviet aircraft. This situation changed again when the Russians refused to supply Petroleum, Oil, and Lubricants for their gift aircraft, for the U.S. controlled the only good supply of fuel on hand. The French, who were allowed a military mission under the Accords, agreed to turn over Seno Air Base (northeast of Savannakhet) to the Laotian Government. French withdrawal from Seno was in progress at year's end.

Developments After the Accords

The only party which acted with dispatch to comply with Article 6 of the 1962 Geneva Accords (calling for the withdrawal of foreign military forces from Laos) was the United States. On 17 September JUSMAG Laos began its exit, and by 6 October the announcement was made that the last of 666 American military advisors had left. On the other hand it soon became obvious that the North Vietnamese (Viet Minh) forces were not complying
with the Accords. The single ICC check point in the PDJ logged only about 40 Viet Minh leaving Laos, although the estimates of VM presence there ran as high as 10,000. (Accurate counts were impossible since the PL refused to permit the ICC or the Phouma government free movement within the territory it controlled.)

It soon became evident to the United States that the Phouma government would be unable to resist Communist pressure with French assistance alone. As early as 5 September 1962, CINCPAC declared that "U.S. objectives required continued support to the FAR as an autonomous anti-Communist fighting force until such time as it was consolidated into the forces of a truly neutral Laotian government." To implement any required action, a portion of the withdrawn JUSMAG/MAAG Laos personnel remained in nearby Thailand to render any necessary aid. Many civic projects, formerly handled by MAAG Laos, were assumed by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). This was possible because civilians not engaged in military activities were not prohibited by the Geneva Accords.

Air America continued its subsistence airlifts to the Meo and Kha guerrillas, but now did so under USAID contracts. The assumption was that no violation of the Accords was involved as long as the airlifted cargoes were not munitions. The PL vehemently protested these airlifts, however, as a violation of the Accords, and launched a series of attacks on Meo strongholds in reprisal. Pro-western Laotians contended that PL/VM attacks were a violation not only of the Accords, but of the internal cease-fire agreement. The PL responded that it was merely engaged
Thus the stage was set, not only for future internal Laotian developments, but for the implementation of a "MAAG in-exile" by the United States to aid the legal Laotian Government.
CHAPTER III
EVOLUTION AND ESCALATION 1963-1965

Tripartite Composition of MAP Aid

After the withdrawal of JUSMAG/Laos in October 1962, its functions were assumed by three components which continue to exist at the time of this writing. The division was as follows:

1. Requirements Office, United States Agency for International Development (RO/USAID). This office operated in-country as an integral part of USAID/Laos and was responsible to the Director, USAID/Laos.

2. Deputy Chief, JUSMAG, Thailand (DEPCHJUSMAGTHAI, or, more simply, DEPCH), headquartered originally in the Capitol Hotel, Bangkok, and since 15 Nov 1971 at Udorn Royal Thai Air Force Base (RTAFB). This organization was directly responsible to CINCPAC for managing the MAP/MASF aid for Laos and was known as "MAAG-in-exile."

3. Augmented Air Attache (AIRA) and Army Attache (ARMA) staffs which provided intelligence data and assisted in operational requirements. (There was no Defense Attache.) These staffs were responsible to the U.S. Ambassador to Laos.

Objectives of the MAP for Laos

MAP (and later MASF) aid to Laos was designed to further the following objectives:

1. To support the Armed forces of the Royal Lao Government (RLG), to defeat insurgency in areas that were, or could come under, RLG control.
2. To disrupt the flow of North Vietnamese forces and materiel through Laos into the Republic of Vietnam.

3. To support the RLG, and to assist in maintaining its policy of non-alignment.

Mission of DEPCH/JUSMAGTHAI

Working through authorized channels, the DEPCH was to assist the Royal Laotian Government Armed Forces, neutralists, and paramilitary forces to attain and maintain the capability to insure internal security against communist-inspired subversion and insurgency and to provide maximum feasible resistance to communist-inspired external aggression. Specifically, this mission required:

1. Planning, programming, requisitioning, receipt, and storage of MASF/MAP materiel in Thailand, and onward shipment of such materiel to Laos.

2. Representing CINCPAC in supervising the management of the Laos MASF/MAP (to include materiel and training).

3. Keeping CINCPAC informed of in-country use of MASF/MAP materiel with the implied requirement of keeping CINCPAC informed of the success and use of Laotian personnel trained under MASF/MAP.

4. Maintaining liaison with the RO/USAID staff and with the U.S. military attaches (ARMA/AIRA) in Laos.

5. Being prepared to establish all or part of the DEPCH organization in Laos, if and when so directed.

The Deputy Chief role and contribution was as an assist to the American Ambassador in Laos, and as a support and assistance agency designed to make the tasks of the lightly-manned in-country staff agencies easier.
Mission of RO/USAID

In-country supervision and implementation of the MASF/MAP program was the responsibility of the Requirements Office, USAID, which was authorized 30 U.S. civilian personnel attached to USAID/Laos and approximately 172 civilian personnel (local and third country technicians). The RO/USAID was technical/service oriented and paralleled the DEPCH commodity manager organization. In accordance with the Terms of Reference (TOR), established jointly by the State and Defense departments, RO/USAID was directly responsible to the Ambassador to Laos for the determination of military logistical requirements. Such requirements were channeled through the Director, USAID, and were formulated in coordination with DEPCH. RO/USAID, as the in-country U.S. logistical organization, distributed all MASF/MAP materiel to, and monitored its use by, the Laotian Armed Forces. In-country supervision of the MASF/MAP Training Program was exercised by the Office of the Assistant for Plans and Programs, RO/USAID. The RO/USAID training element proposed programs and forwarded them to FAR, ARMA, AIRA, Commodity Managers, and DEPCH for coordination. DEPCH monitored the program, and was the administrative procuring agency for the requested CONUS and overseas training.

The In-Country Military Attaches

The Army Attache (ARMA) and his staff provided planning assistance to the RLG military, i.e., both FAR and Forces Armee Neutralistes (FAN). Each of the five Military Regions had a field ARMA, who performed two primary functions--operations and intelligence. The Operations Division
assist in the training and operations of the FAR. All training matters were coordinated with RO/USAID and DEPCH. The Intelligence Division, located at Vientiane, prepared Laotian situation reports and defense intelligence summaries.

The Air Attache (AIRA) was primarily engaged in targeting and controlling air strikes (mainly USAF), and in operating five facilities located at Savannakhet, Long Tieng, Luang Prabang, Pakse, and Vientiane. The principal training mission of AIRA was to assist RLAF personnel in establishing and maintaining training programs in intelligence, aircraft operations, aircraft maintenance, and in associated communications fields. The majority of the AIRA advisory effort, however, appeared to be devoted to gathering intelligence, suggesting targets to be attacked by the RLAF, and recommending ordnance loads to be used in such attacks.

The interrelationship of these three primary components of NASF/MAP aid to Laos is best illustrated in the chronological narrative which follows. (Figure 3 shows the Ambassador and his "in-country" team. DEPCH was physically located at Bangkok until late 1971; thereafter, although located at Udorn RTAFB, he was still considered a part of the "in-country" team.)

A Year of Shifting Alliances - 1963

Pathet Lao obstructionism in the new "neutralist" government rendered Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma's efforts at achieving unity ineffective.
A repetition of the old communist pattern took place: destroy that which you cannot control.

Due to power shifts and changing alliances, the Laotian political situation continued to confuse observers. When PL influence over the erstwhile leftist/neutralist Kong Le slipped near the end of 1962, he was denounced as a bandit and an attempt had been made to replace him with the dissident neutralist, Colonel Deuane. This had led to several clashes among these rivals in the PDJ. As long as Kong Le controlled the bulk of the neutralist Army, Phouma's position as Prime Minister seemed secure; but had the PL succeeded in placing their puppet at the head of these forces, then a "neutralist" leader of definite leftist leanings would have emerged. It was already true that some of the ministers in Phouma's cabinet were anything but neutral, and many of them voted with Souphanouvong. Chief among these was Foreign Minister Quinim Pholsena, who actively fomented neutralist dissidence on the PDJ. Following the assassination of Pholsena in April, Souphanouvong and most of the leftist cabinet ministers departed Vientiane for PL headquarters at Khang Khay. No formal dissolution of the Phouma government took place, however, and Souphanouvong loudly proclaimed that no decision of the government was valid without his concurrence under the unanimity rule. Phouma and Souphanouvong agreed to meet on the PDJ during June to discuss reunification, but at year's end the PL faction had still not returned to Vientiane.

On the military scene, PL troops, aided by their allies, drove Kong Le's neutralist forces from the eastern part of the PDJ. Under the pressure of these events, Kong Le edged into closer cooperation
with the pro-western rightist leader of the FAR, General Nosavan. As a result, the Soviets suddenly halted delivery of ammunition and spare parts for the weapons they had supplied to Kong Le during the previous two years. In order to keep Kong Le's forces in the field, the United States replaced the Soviet weapons and began furnishing his FAN with the necessary support. The PDJ was split among the royalist forces of the FAR, the neutralist forces of the FAN, and the pro-communist PL.

As if the existence of three separate armies were not enough to confuse the issue, 1963 saw the emergence of two air forces. The RLAF, part of the right-wing Royal Laotian Army of General Nosavan, had been receiving U.S. MAP support for several years; now it had a neutralist competitor. The Royal Laotian Government Air Force (RLGAF), built around a nucleus of the Russian "gift aircraft,"* set up headquarters at Vientiane. (The RLAF remained primarily at Savannakhet.) The seizure of Seno Air Base (near Savannakhet) from the already-withdrawing French Military Mission strengthened the RLAF position, and deprived the fledgling RLGAF of one of the best airfields in Laos.

Charges and countercharges continued to cloud the political situation in Laos at the end of 1963. Phouma made it clear that he was determined to continue working for a unified and neutral Laos, and that he considered the Pathet Lao a screen for activities by Peking and Hanoi Communists, who needed Laos as a supply base for Viet Cong operations in South Vietnam. The ICC was still attempting to obtain free movement and inspection rights in all of Laos, but its efforts were nullified by the continued intransigence.

*Seven LI-2s, two AN-2s and one MI-4 helicopter.
MAP Aid to the RLAF - 1963

Some MAP aircraft deliveries were held in abeyance pending the clarification of the Laotian political situation. Five UH-34 helicopters, operated in behalf of the RLAF by Air America, were declared excess due to the reduction in scope of the Air America contract with Laos; but to help the RLAF maintain its airlift capability, the U.S. released a MAP programmed C-47. Six of the 14 T-28s programmed under MAP were delivered to the RLAF. Concurrent with the delivery of the six T-28s, the RLAF's T-6 aircraft were returned. The addition of the T-28s bolstered RLAF capabilities to support government ground operations. Further, deliveries of four C-47 aircraft, three UH-34 helicopters, and three U-17 light aircraft augmented RLAF transport capability. Transition and refresher training in the new aircraft for RLAF pilots was provided in Thailand, since the Geneva Accords precluded the introduction of USAF Mobile Training Teams into Laos. (For details of the FY 63 MAP see p. 153.)

Year of American Commitment - 1964

Political factionalism continued to plague Laos in 1964. Although Souvanna Phouma continued efforts to get them back, the Pathet Lao still refused to return and take an active part in the tripartite government. Militarily, the spirit and substance of the 1962 Accords were still flaunted; each side accused the other of instigating transgressions and claimed to have only been responding to these provocations. During mid-year, extensive clashes occurred between the Viet Minh/Pathet Lao
forces and the FAR in the area between the PDJ and Paksane. Kong Le’s neutralist FAN forces were forced off the PDJ, and were badly shaken by combined VM/PL offensives.

The decline in the effectiveness of the "neutralized" coalition government of Souvanna Phouma led to an abortive coup in April. General Kouprasith Abhay, representing the right-wing faction, seized power in Vientiane and announced that the Phouma government had been deposed for failure to achieve national peace and harmony. When the U.S. indicated a strong disapproval, along with a determination to deal only with the coalition government, the revolutionary committee settled for a "reorganization" of the Phouma Government rather than its overthrow. Backed by the United States, Phouma announced that the right-wing political element had been dissolved and merged with his own neutralist faction. This action was more a face-saving device for the errant rightists than a victory for the neutralists; right-wing elements outnumbered the neutralists five to one in the new coalition, and controlled most of the new Laotian Unified Military Command. This situation, coupled with Phouma’s replacement of some of the absent PL ministers by his neutralists, led to PL charges that neither the merger nor the naming of new ministers was legal without PL concurrence. In reply, Souvanna Phouma stated that he could not allow all government operations to cease merely because some cabinet ministers would not return to Vientiane and perform their duties.

In an effort to resolve their differences, Phouma met his half-brother Souphanouvong in Paris during the summer, but no agreement was reached.
Souphanouvong insisted that the fourteen "Geneva Powers" be reconvened to consider the new troubles in Laos; Souvanna Phouma insisted that a cease fire and return of recent military gains be a precondition for such talks. The U.S., while not opposed to another Geneva meeting, viewed the prospects of such a gathering as rather fruitless. That assessment was based on Communist violations of the 1962 Accords. The Soviet Union seemed lukewarm to the idea, feeling, perhaps, that any results would benefit the Red Chinese, who were eager for the meeting. As a consequence of pressure from the opposing factions, the meeting did not take place.

Responding to the repeated and flagrant Pathet Lao/Viet Minh violations of the cease-fire arrangements and the 1962 Accords, Phouma ordered his forces to counterattack. Additionally, he requested U.S. reconnaissance flights to keep track of the attacking Communist forces. This request was honored, and U.S. Navy aircraft responded to the task. After one of these aircraft was shot down over the PDJ, fighter cover was added, but one of these aircraft also fell prey to Communist gunners. The request for U.S. assistance by the legally constituted Laotian government was met in all Communist capitals by denunciation of Phouma as a "U.S. puppet." The Communists also pointed out that such U.S. flights violated the Accords, which forbade the intervention of foreign troops in Laos. All these charges were leveled at a time when North Vietnamese (Viet Minh) intervention in behalf of the Pathet Lao was increasing steadily. By year's end the situation remained largely unchanged, but RLA forces had regained some lost ground and had succeeded in clearing the road between Luang Prabang and Vientiane (Operation
Triangle). RLG and beleaguered neutralist forces were immensely aided by tactical support missions flown by the RLAF with its newly-acquired T-28s. Interdiction raids by RLAF T-28s also hampered PL supply operations, and were beginning to affect PL morale. 71/  

MAP Aid in 1964

Initial MAP support for Laotian troops was predicated upon a 46,500 man force level, which included 40,000 FAR and 6,500 FAN troops. By the end of 1964, MAP aid was programmed for some 67,200 men. These included not only the FAR/FAN, but the irregular Auto Defense Corps, which had been trained, in part, by CAS.

Pursuant to section 614(a) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended, President Johnson found it important to the security of the United States to continue to provide military assistance to Laos. Consequently, he authorized the expenditure of up to $31.5 million for defense items for Laos for FY 65. By December 1964 some $31.2 million had been funded under the FY 65 MAP, of which $23.1 million was earmarked for the provision of equipment and supplies; training assistance and other support services accounted for the remaining $8.1 million. The acceleration of combat operations in Laos was cited as the reason for increase over previous year levels, with the bulk of MAP monies going for consumable items such as ammunition, explosives, and POL.

Each service provided funds for the program. Funding under Department of the Army (DA) FY 65 MAP totaled $12.6 million, with ammunition a key item (although two U-17As and one T-28 were also included). Navy MAP funding by the end of 1964 accounted for $1.3 million, and was
primarily in support of the provisioning for four UH-34D helicopters used chiefly for Search and Rescue (SAR) missions. In all, $0.8 million was funded for training assistance, of which $600,000 was funded under the Army program and $200,000 by the Air Force. Of the remaining "other services" provided to Laos, the Air Force funded $7.1 million of the total amount. Some 85 percent of Air Force funding was in support of the technical assistance program.

As a somewhat curious adjunct, the French - who were the only foreigners allowed to keep their military in Laos under the Accords - strengthened the French Military Mission (FMM). The arrival in October 1964 of Brigadier General Le Fort and Colonel Deleris, both men of unusual distinction and background, indicated a new French enthusiasm to render MAP aid of their own. The French indicated that they would import French technicians to work in Laotian service depots, particularly ordnance, radio, and engineering depots. They also proposed establishment of a school of basic tactics for battalion and company commanders, and a "light infantry" school specialized in small unit commando tactics.72/ (For details of the FY 64 MAP see p. 155.)

Year of Escalation - 1965

Coups continued to plague the Phouma government in 1965. In February, following an abortive coup by the followers of General Phoumi Nosavan and General Siho failed, Premier Souvanna Phouma reorganized and strengthened his government, citing the coup as a justification. He then took advantage of the relative stability to have the Laotian National Assembly pass a constitutional amendment changing electoral procedures in times of stress.
To avoid the expiration of an old Assembly before a new one had been chosen, a new Assembly would be selected by an electoral college of "20,000 important people."

Since many sections of Laos were under PL control and could not participate in any elections, it seemed the most direct method of insuring the Phouma government's continued existence with its attendant claim to being the only legitimate constitutional government of all Laos. Prince Souphanouvong, speaking for the self-absented PL members of the government, denounced the constitutional changes as illegal. The ambivalent PL attitude toward the Vientiane government was best demonstrated by the fact that while denouncing it as illegal and unrepresentative on the one hand, it maintained low-level representation in the Government on the other. Phouma, for his part, continued to maintain that the PL were part of the 1963 coalition Government and could return to Vientiane at any time to resume their ministries and Assembly seats. Meanwhile, rather than have the Government immobilized by the PL walkout, he would continue to fill those vacancies on a temporary basis with right-wing and neutralist representatives. The election of a new Assembly under the "limited-suffrage" amendment caused little shift in the power structure, and underscored Phouma's control of the government.

The only visible challenge to Phouma's supremacy came from the "Jeunes," or "Young Nationlists," a political group who followed the leadership of Sisouk na Champassak, the Finance Minister in the Phouma government. Although a member of the Champassak clan of southern nobility, he was not subservient to the clan leader, Boun Oum. Rather, he led those
who favored government by younger men, men who would root out corruption
and inefficiency. In general, however, regional, family, and personal
loyalties continued to prevail over ideological attachments or any sense
of "nationality." 73/

On the military scene, scattered actions involving PL/VM forces
against FAR/FAN units continued on a small scale, and usually involved
nothing more than a few villages changing hands. FAR forces displayed
an improvement in confidence and capability, defeating PL/VM forces at
the battles of Dong Hene and Thakhek. (It should be noted, however,
that the communist attack on Thakhek was most probably a diversionary
move to cover up increased activity in the east along the Ho Chi Minh
Trail, a Communist infiltration route leading from North Vietnam through
southern Laos into South Vietnam.) The Meo irregulars, trained and
financed by the CIA, continued to harass the enemy in the PDJ. The
RLAF continued its airstrikes, largely over Route 7, the main supply
route from North Vietnam. North Vietnam aggravated the controversy by
claiming certain territories generally accepted as belonging to Laos.
Phouma's immediate response was to condemn the Hanoi government's annexa-
tionist designs on Laotian territory, and its continued armed interven-
tion in Laos. He called for a halt to the North Vietnamese use of the
Ho Chi Minh Trail and called upon the ICC to declare North Vietnam an
aggressor. Hanoi, in turn, accused the Phouma government of complicity
in the U.S. bombings of North Vietnam, and labeled Laotian evidence of
Viet Minh presence in Laos as fabrications. 74/
MAP Aid in 1965

A ground handling accident at Wattay Airport in Vientiane set off a chain reaction of fire and explosions that destroyed nine T-28s and one U-17, and caused considerable damage to several buildings. These losses represented a blow to the RLAF, which had experienced several combat and operational losses as well. Temporarily unable to fulfill its support and interdiction missions, the RLAF became operational again with the receipt of T/RT-28s from Vietnam and expedited deliveries of programmed MAP T-28s from the United States. Twelve T-28s were delivered during December 1965, with an additional 10 scheduled for March 1966 delivery. The delivery of two C-47s and one U-17 in the summer of 1966 completed the FY 66 MAP funding (excluding Navy funds). U.S. Navy MAP programmed nineteen UH-34 helicopters, including twelve helicopters funded previously under the Navy FY 1964-1965 MAP. (Deliveries of these helicopters were to be spread out over several years.) The deliveries, especially of the additional T-28s, augmented the RLAF interdiction and close air support effort which involved as many as 200 sorties per week. This air domination by Government forces was an invaluable asset in the struggle against PL/VM forces.75/

Due to the escalation of the conflict in South Vietnam, President Johnson authorized the use of up to $50 million to furnish defense articles to Laos in FY 66. The dollar value of the FY 66 Laotian MAP aid was expected to approximate some $63.3 million, but no Presidential determination was required for the $13.3 million of the program that covered defense services. In addition to protecting the free areas of Laos, it was felt that the additional aid would allow extensive interdiction
of communist lines of communication going through Laos and into South Vietnam.\textsuperscript{76} (For details of the FY 65 MAP see p. 157.)
CHAPTER IV
COMMITMENT AND CONTROVERSY 1966-1970

Political and Military Events - 1966

Elections for the 59-member Laotian National Assembly resulted in the selection of some 40 candidates who supported Souvanna Phouma and the tripartite government he represented. Once again, the most successful candidates represented regional and family interests rather than ideological movements. Most candidates also owed their election successes to the open backing of the Military Region commanders. The candidates backed by General Ouane Rattikone of MR I in the north, and those of General Phasouk Somly of MR IV in the south, were very successful. Candidates supported by General Vang Pao in MR II and General Bounponge Maktheparak in MR III were moderately successful. Phouma was to remain Prime Minister, as he had since 1962, and he continued the fiction of the tripartite government which never truly functioned. 77/7

Two command crises occurred in the Royalist/Neutralist forces during the year. During October Kong Le, who had risen to the rank of Major General, was removed from command of the FAN. This action had been brewing for some time, and subordinate commanders had at times defied Kong Le's orders in battlefield situations. Kong Le's sometimes domineering, sometimes vacillating leadership was largely responsible for his downfall, but cliques within the FAN had plotted for his removal as well. In addition, many leaders of the FAR welcomed this action as a further step in the eventual integration of FAR and FAN forces under a single command, preferably their own. For the time being, Souvanna continued to maintain that a