had a military assistance program reaching back over six years, and air operations dating over four years.

In addition to mentioning U.S. desires to aid the legitimate government of Laos and to protect Thailand's borders, the President offered a most cogent reason for American aid to Laos when he said:

...We are trying above all to save American and allied lives in South Vietnam which are threatened. By the continual infiltration of North Vietnamese troops and supplies along the Ho Chi Minh Trail, Hanoi has infiltrated over 100,000 men through Laos since this administration took office, and over 500,000 all together. Our air strikes have destroyed weapons and supplies over the past four years which would have taken thousands of American lives...We are also supporting the independence and neutrality of Laos as set forth in the 1962 Geneva Agreements. Our assistance has always been at the request of the legitimate government of Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma which the North Vietnamese helped establish...

The President would not divulge details of U.S. aid to Laos, but made the following declarations:

- the United States has no ground forces in Laos.
- no American stationed in Laos has ever been killed in ground combat operations.
- the U.S. flies reconnaissance and combat support missions for Lao forces when requested by the Royal Laotian Government. Interdiction of enemy materiel occurs over areas held or contested by Communist forces, and such flights occur only when requested by the RLG. The level of air response and U.S. aid has increased only as the number of NVA troops in Laos and their level of aggression has increased.

In response to inquiries about the number of U.S. personnel in Laos the President stated:
The total number of Americans directly employed by the U.S. Government in Laos is 616. In addition, there are 424 Americans employed on contract to the government or to government contractors. Of these 1040 Americans, the total number, military and civilian, engaged in a military advisory role or military training capacity numbers 320. Logistics personnel number 323.

Although the President had made his policy clear, a skeptical and aroused Congress was to take a close look at expenditures in support of Southeast Asia MA Programs. DEPCH and the RLAF were to experience tightened fiscal controls and restraints very early in the new year.

MAP/MASF Aid to the RLAF - 1970

New budget constraints and financial difficulties ushered in the New Year. Requisitioning had virtually ceased during the first calendar quarter of 1970, due to non-receipt of the total funding of the FY 70 Dollar Line Program Requirements. Continuing Resolution Authority (CRA) was requested to sustain day-to-day requirements, but was granted for only $500,000 - with the stipulation that it be used to cover only aircraft spares. (In actuality, the amount was sufficient for only 30 days of aircraft spares.) Fortunately, total funding of all MASF Laos Dollar Lines was received during the second calendar quarter (the last fiscal quarter) of 1970, and normal requisitioning was resumed.

The renewed Congressional interest in military assistance to Southeast Asia, however, caused CINCPAC to more carefully administer the aid to Laos. Stressing CSF's concern that anticipated tightening of budgetary constraints (with their attendant, tighter management controls) dictated that increased attention be paid to the MAP/MASF Flying Hour
Program, CINCPAC imposed tighter controls over that program. To accomplish this, CINCPAC now required a quarterly report (based on the previous four quarters' experience) which either confirmed or recommended changes to the currently authorized flying hours. DEPCH investigation had shown that most quarters had actually been underflown, and DCH-AF took action to adjust the CINCPAC Flying Hour Authorization. Thus, they would give a more realistic comparison of program requirements versus actual experience in the future. DCH-AF warned that he would "be extremely hard-pressed to predict our flying requirements any closer than a 10 percent deviation, due to the fact that our actual flying requirements are directly predicated on enemy activity." 185/

The continuing acceleration of enemy offensive activity caused the total FY 71 Air Force MASF program to be set at $132.3 million, of which $59.5 million was placed in Shortfall.* Most of this amount was for ammunition, but aircraft and aircraft-support Shortfall was also significant. The FY 70 ceiling had to be raised from $96 million to $123.4 million in March of 1970 to fund additional aircraft, a rapidly rising combat sortie rate, high equipment attrition rates, and increased ammunition expenditure. By October 1970, DEPCH had received the programmed CRA funding for the FY 71 Dollar Lines, and had requested and received some additional CRA funding to support additional UH-34 helicopters and an increased AC-47 sortie rate. DEPCH's desired MASF ceiling increases

*Shortfall - the deficit amount by which the estimated budget fell short of providing all necessary materials and services.
were subjected to close scrutiny by CINCPAC, and the FY 72 Air Force MASF program was approved at a slightly lower level, as follows:

(In millions of dollars)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Approved</th>
<th>Shortfall</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Materiel/Services</td>
<td>39.5</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>41.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ammunition</td>
<td>33.2</td>
<td>38.8</td>
<td>72.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>..6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>..6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>73.3</td>
<td>40.6</td>
<td>113.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order to reduce the ceiling increases as much as possible, DEPCH began to recompute munitions requirements. In December 1970, at the OGDEN Mission Support for SEA meeting, the MASF Laos ammunition requirements were reset at 2500 sorties per month for CY 71, vice 3000. By early 1971, DEPCH warned that the FY 71 funds were rapidly being depleted by the increasing combat activity, and that the programmed FY 72 funds might be insufficient. A further reduction in ammunition costs resulted from a re-evaluation of the average ammunition required per sortie. RLAF pilots were often known to expend ammunition merely to collect the brass from the shell/bullet casings. These they sold on the market to provide themselves, their commander, or their unit with extra cash. In January 71, AIRA provided CSAF more realistic sortie rate requirements for CY 71 and CY 72; the emphasis had shifted from arbitrary sortie rates toward actual mission requirements, increased mission control (with greater utilization of FACs) and more accurate Bomb Damage Assessment (BDA). The improvement was attributed by DCH-AF to "AIRA's analysis of requirements, his personal influence with the FAR/RLAF and the guidance
he has provided."187/

Increased combat activity brought about a requirement for an additional operating location and resulted in greater losses and damage. Muong Soui was again added to the existing six bases in the spring of 1970. (It had been used during the first half of 1969.) Later, when it fell, temporary sites were used.

IRANs and drop-in maintenance on RLAFC/AC-47 aircraft continued to be performed by Thai-Am in Bangkok under a DEPCH contract. (DCH-AF reported that the Mobile Maintenance Team had not been used during the first quarter of CY 70.)188/ To preclude excessive down time on the AC-47s, some maintenance was also performed by Continental Air Service at Vientiane.189/

Enlargement of the T-28 inventory to 77 (with a UE of 86) by early 1970 brought increased maintenance requirements as well as increased battle damage problems. The Air America facility at Udorn performed major crash battle damage repair as well as IRAN and Phase Inspections—all of which were beyond Det. 1's capability.190/

The installation of the single and dual T-28 egress systems continued, although DEPCH continued to support the AmEmb Vientiane position of an all-dual-equipped fleet. SEAOR funding for the additional egress system was approved by 7AF and forwarded to CSAF for approval and funding.191/ Fortunately, seven additional T-28D aircraft programmed as attrition replacements under the USAF FY 70 MASF Program came with Yankee Ejection Systems installed. These aircraft, which came from USAF excess, were reconditioned prior to delivery.192/
Delivery to Laos of at least some of fifty T-28B aircraft from U.S. Navy resources was also planned. These aircraft were first to be modified to the T-28D-5 configuration, and Air Force Logistics Command (AFLC) placed a freeze on all T-28D materials in order to support the conversion schedule. The first of an initial shipment of seven aircraft was to be in-country not later than December 1970.193/

Other aircraft transactions involved four O-1 aircraft received from the 504th TASS at the very end of 1969. DCH-AF stated that the aircraft were "in a deplorable condition. [They] could not be utilized to support the Raven FAC program until an IRAN was performed...by Air America."194/ The four aircraft were placed in service during the fourth quarter of FY 70. Four additional O-1 aircraft were programmed as attrition replacements for Laos under the FY 70 USAF MASF Program. These aircraft were excess to PACAF requirements and were furnished at no cost to the MASF Program. They were scheduled for delivery in "as-is" condition by the end of September 1970.195/

Three AC-47s, equipped with the MXU-470A weapon system, were received at no cost from USAF excess in June of 1970.196/ The recently-acquired RLAF AC-47 capability continued to be in demand by all Lao military region commanders. C-47 MTT training at Det. 1 continued to prepare pilots and maintenance personnel to meet the increased demands. The third C-47 class graduated at Udorn on 6 March 1970, and the fourth class started in May. Unfortunately, the DEPCH request for a permanent C-47 MTT was disapproved; however, TDY augmentation continued to be approved. Subsequently, the fourth class graduated on 2 October 1970.
and the fifth on 7 January 1971. By January 1971 the C-47 MTT consisted of only six USAF personnel, a reduction of 15 since its inception in February 1968. Training was now conducted by an all-Lao faculty, with USAF personnel providing management guidance and quality control, standardization, and evaluation.

A total of ten AC-47 aircraft were in the MAP inventory and were all operational as of January 1971.* The maintenance picture for these aircraft and associated equipment was generally favorable. IRAN and Phase Inspections continued to be performed by Thai-Am in Bangkok, but on a more limited basis. All AC-47 and approximately one-third of the C-47 phase inspections were now accomplished in-country, and plans called for a full capability by the end of CY 1971, with Thai-Am then acting only as a quality control agency. All MXU-470 gun repair was transferred from the Thai-Am contractor to an in-country location on 15 December 1970.197/

Other aircraft actions involved the U-10 and T-41. The three U-10 aircraft used by MASF Laos as interim substitutes for O-1/U-17 aircraft were transferred to MAP Thailand, and all MASF Laos UH-34G helicopters were converted to "D" models by June 1970.198/ The only other significant aircraft program for CY 1970 was the funding under the MASF FY 71 Program of six T-41D aircraft. These aircraft had to be produced in CONUS, and were slated for delivery in-country by the close of FY 71. This marked the introduction of this type of aircraft into the RLAF inventory.199/

*The flying hour authorization per month for the C-47 aircraft was established at 35 hours, that for the AC-47s at 65 hours.
An interesting development pertaining to aircraft and MAP/MASF support took place in the first quarter of FY 71. A Khmer MAP supply account (DCAP) was established under the DCH Air Force Liaison Officer at Udorn RTAFB for follow-on spares support for T-28 aircraft assigned to the Khmer Republic. A bi-weekly Khmer Air Force (KAF) C-47 resupply shuttle was implemented between Udorn and Phnom Penh to transport the needed parts. By the second quarter of FY 71 four KAF T-28 (Project Peace Chess) IRANs had also been completed by Air America at Udorn. Although the Military Equipment Delivery Team, Cambodia (MEDTC), with offices at Tan Son Nhut and Phnom Penh, continued to perform most of the MAP aid to the Khmer Republic, DEPCH was involved in the servicing of KAF T-28s.

The increased aircraft UE necessitated a consolidation of the Udorn T-28 Supply Account (DLAR) with the Air America Supply Account (DLAP), and this was accomplished by January 1971. DCH-AFLO initiated a program to mechanize the merged DLAP account, but after a preliminary study a CINCPACAF team recommended retention of the manual system.

In the personnel area, by 1 July 1970 Det. 1's fifty-man TDY Depot Maintenance Assistance Team and eight-man T-28 Ejection Team were replaced when USAF pipeline personnel, newly added to Det. 1's and the 432nd Combat Support Group's Unit Detail Listing (UDL), arrived on a one-year PCS assignment.

A UDL* for the RLAF was also drawn up by a CINCPAC manpower representative, but it did not include the Neutralist and Meo personnel since they were not paid or promoted by the RLAF. This revised UDL,

*The UDL was at that time known as the Unit Manning Document (UMD).
which identified 238 officers and 1595 enlisted personnel, was awaiting approval in January 1971. A machine-run listing of RLAF personnel had also been accomplished; it identified individuals by name, rank, serial number, AFSC, and schools attended. DCH-AF asserted that "this management tool has eliminated the 'professional', school attendee, and has provided an instrument for personnel selection and assignment."203/

Training, in Thailand, CONUS, and Laos, continued to present problems. Several courses during the first and second quarters of FY 71 had to be cancelled because of insufficient numbers of qualified students. To alleviate this problem, the new AIRA released some selected, well-educated FAR officers for input into T-28 pilot training. With this breakthrough, training plans called for an 80 pilot/year production to attain the authorized strength of 129 combat-ready pilots. One of the immediate consequences of this action was the cancellation of the volunteer Thai "Firefly" T-28 pilot augmentation program on 5 October 1970.204/ For the long term, it was also hoped that the infusion of the FAR officers into the RLAF would improve command and management.

In June 1970 the Journal of Military Assistance candidly assessed the RLAF and the MASF Program supporting it, stating:

The...RLAF is comprised of four composite squadrons, all of which are assessed a C-1 combat capability rating. The ability of these units to perform their mission is, however, completely dependent upon the assistance provided by the U.S. either directly or indirectly, and if this materiel and personnel aid were to be terminated, the units would soon become non-operational. With this U.S. support, the RLAF has one of the highest sortie rates of any free world Air Force; U.S.
observers report that the dedication and valor of the fighter pilots approaches the unbelievable, with some having flown more than 1,000 actual combat missions. The only element that provides flying support to the RLAF is a pool of twenty Thai pilots who, on a daily basis, obtain T-28s from a USAF Detachment at Udorn and fly to Vientiane where the aircraft are loaded with ordnance, and targets are assigned by the Lao Military Region Commander. In summary, if Laos were faced with only minor insurgency, the RLAF could assume responsibility... but [it] obviously cannot cope with the current massive aggression by North Vietnamese forces, and must continue to receive USAF support to contain the enemy...

The increased mission requirements called not only for additional aircraft and training, but also for either the expansion and modernization of existing facilities or the creation of new OLs and Forward Operating Locations (FOLs). The DEPCH program included:

Vientiane/Wattay - the main airfield in Laos, and adequate for sustained operations. The airport was equipped with an Air Operations Center (AOC) supporting air operations staged out of Vientiane, a Joint Operations Center (JOC) to coordinate RLAF/FAR operations, and a Combined Operations Center (COC) to coordinate all air activity in Laos. Modernization programs included additional maintenance facilities, a parking apron and protective aircraft revetments.

Ban Houei Sai - capable of handling only limited air operations. A temporary AOC is established during periods of sustained operations. Runway useful only during daylight and good weather. An all-weather capability was programmed.

Savannakhet - site of the major RLAF maintenance facility and an AOC. Resurfacing of the runway became the priority item.

Luang Prabang - the main T-28 base in MR I. It is equipped with an AOC. Very vulnerable to
enemy attacks because of its location. Repair of aircraft revetments, improvement of the parking ramp, runway rehabilitation and hangar construction were immediate priorities.

Pakse - the main RLAF base for operations in southern Laos. Equipped with an AOC. The base also served commercial air operations. Taxiway and runway rehabilitation were priority items.

There seemed to be some confusion regarding the MAP Laos aircraft UEs, and DCH-AF presented the following FY 71 authorized UE:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aircraft</th>
<th>FY 71</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RT-28</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T-28 Tactical</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T-28 Training</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AC-47</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-47</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O-1/U-17 FAC</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O-1/U-17 Utility</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O-1/U-17 Training</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UH-34 RLAF</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UH-34 Air America</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The status of the RLAF, and the MAP/MASF effort needed to support it, was reflected in the following 31 December 1970 Aircraft Inventory and Utilization Report:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item Description</th>
<th>Total Quantity Programmed MAP/MASF</th>
<th>Quantity Received To 31 Dec</th>
<th>Total Active 31 Dec*</th>
<th>Total Hours Flown 2nd Qtr FY 71**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AC/C-47A/D***</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>3,163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T-28B/C/D****</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>7,270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O-1A/E/F*****</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>4,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U-6A</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U-17A/B******</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1,014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UH-34D*******</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>12,175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U-4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T-41</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Attrited aircraft deducted from total quantity received.

**Estimated for in-country operations since RLAF had no established accounting system.

***AC-47 hours RLAF: 1174; C-47 hours RLAF: 1989

99
*****T-28 FAC hours: 538  Other: 6732
*****0-1 FAC hours: 4514; 0-1 RLAF hours: 286
*****U-17 FAC hours: 796; U-17 RLAF hours: 218

****** 17 UH-34s controlled and operated by RLAF. Hours flown: 2724;
30 UH-34Ds DOD controlled, flown by Air America. Hours flown: 9451
(For details of the FY 70 MAP/MASF see p. 168.)

Organizational Changes for DEPCH

A CINCPAC-directed Manpower Study of DEPCH was performed during the
latter part of 1970.* Several interesting recommendations, later to be
directive in nature, came out of the study. Of particular consequence
to the USAF portion of DEPCH was the recommended deletion of the Air
Force Division in a functional realignment of the whole DEPCH organiza­
tional structure. A recommended, sizeable reduction in the DEPCH UDL
(from 272 military and civilians to 215 military and civilians) was to
come partially out of previously authorized Air Force slots.209/ The
DCH-AF reacted to the proposed change by reporting:210/

The CINCPAC Manpower Team recommended JMP for
DEPCH deletes the Air Force Division and
realigns the organization along functional
lines. The recommended reorganization is
workable; however, deletion and downgrading
of key USAF manpower positions (Udorn 0-5/
0046 to 0-4/4416 etc...) is deemed unten­
able. These changes were recommended despite
our reklama... Additional reklama will be
undertaken in an attempt to retain materiel
expertise essential to successful mission
accomplishment.

*The study was authorized at the end of 1968.
Subsequent manpower realignments, while affecting the total number of personnel assigned, did not appreciably alter the effectiveness of DEPCH. This remained true until the move of DEPCH from Bangkok to Udorn, but this will be discussed in the next chapter.

Under the Air Force Division concept, DCH-AF's duties were described thus:

1. Advises and makes recommendations to the DEPCH and the RLAF on all matters pertaining to policy on organization, equipping, training, and employment of all Air Force assets pertaining to the host country MAP.

2. Commands Det. 9, 1131st Special Activities Squadron (SAS).

3. Provides staff surveillance of all maintenance, operations and training functions at Udorn (Det. 1, 56 SOW/Air America). This function was performed by the Air Force Liaison Detachment at Udorn (3 officers, 8 enlisted men).

4. Performs all other Air Force Division logistical and operations functions necessary to support the mission of DEPCH.

5. Monitors RLAF maintenance support and daily flying activity.

Summarizing his role, one DCH-AF stated:

...we feel that the Air Force Division should remain intact in order to accomplish the many Air Force peculiar requirements and to preclude the necessity of maintaining an almost continuous Ad Hoc type committee for resolution of Air Force requirements. We also feel that any reorganization which would eliminate the Air Force Division would not save manpower but would, in all probability, require additional personnel in the accomplishment of Air Force requirements, many of which are unique to a Military Assistance and Advisory Group (MAAG).
The elimination of the Air Force Division, the manpower cuts, and the recommended organizational changes were but a few of the items covered in the detailed CINCPAC study. More important than these specific recommended changes were some of the "considerations" gathered by the CINCPAC team through interviews, a review of the Terms of Reference (TOR), operational audits, and work samplings. These "considerations" would lead to far-reaching changes in the TOR and in the location and direction of the DEPCH organization in 1971. Among the many "considerations" indicative of a need for change were: 213/

1. "DEPCH is not a MAAG in the traditional sense. Since DEPCH has little or no advisory role and cannot perform end-item usage assurance, it acts as a jobber or middle man to a great extent. DEPCH processes the requirements established by RO/USAID into a Military Assistance Program (MAP), requisitions accordingly, and once the material arrives in Thailand, manages its transportation so requirements are filled by contractual arrangements."

2. "Integrating all aviation training into a single composite unit at Udorn should improve the quality of flying and leadership training..."

The CINCPAC study concluded by stating: 214/

Considering that the above constraints result in a severely fragmented MAP operation, and the added unusual and "sometimes bureaucratic" constraints imposed, DEPCH appears on balance to be effectively managed on all levels.
DEFeH PRIOR TO DELETION OF THE AIR FORCE DIVISION

DEPUTY CHIEF
ASSISTANT DEPUTY CHIEF*

PERSONNEL AND ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISION
OPERATIONS DIVISION
LOGISTICS DIVISION
AIR FORCE DIVISION
AIR FORCE LIAISON OFFICE**

Assigned strength of DEFeH as of 12 Feb 71 included 28 Army Officers, 10 Air Force Officers; 48 Army Enlisted Men, 25 Air Force Enlisted Men; 5 U.S. Civilians, and 174 Local Workers. The 5 Civilians and 174 Local Workers were paid by the Navy. Total DEFeH assigned strength was 290.

* headed the Air Force Division (O-6)
** located at Udorn RTAFB


FIGURE 6
limited resources to attend schools. However, the training at Udorn and in CONUS continued to the extent possible under the unfavorable tactical situation. Commenting on the situation, the Assistant Deputy Chief said:

While the RLAF is still a long way from self-sufficiency in conducting their own training in-country, they have contributed increasingly to the USAF effort at Udorn. At the present time there are four T-28 IPs, two UH-34 IPs, four AC-47 IPs, two UH-34 enlisted instructors, and sixteen C-47 enlisted instructors. We have programmed seven T-28 enlisted instructors in the FY 72 program...The Udorn training facility...will continue to develop a viable RLAF cadre with emphasis on middle management personnel capable of sustaining greater in-country self-sufficiency as the tactical situation becomes more permissive.

Although the RLAF personnel survey and the establishment of a UDL had eliminated some of the perennial students from the training program, criteria for selection to attend training remained, at best, flexible. As the Assistant Deputy Chief put it:

No feasible formal aptitude test or proficiency test is available for use in student selection by the RLAF. Selections are based primarily on the potential shown during basic training, matching of education, experience, background, etc., an oral examination and recommendations of commanders. The Air Attache and the Requirements Office USAID do have considerable influence in selection of students for flight training and some of the more advanced courses. Undoubtedly, a few selections are made based on family and/or political connections.

In praising the new computerized UDL, he went on to say:

Introduction of automatic data processing has appreciably reduced the malassignment of personnel in the Royal Lao Air Force. All
the enemy was not forced, as he had been in past years, to retreat
due to lack of supplies. Consequently, at the end of 1971 the
PL/NVA held more territory in northern (Barrel Roll) and southern
(Steel Tiger) Laos than at any time prior to the 1962 cease-fire.

During 1971 a combat readiness evaluation of the 63 FAR/FAN
battalions in the five Lao Military Regions showed marginal capability.
Conducted by U.S. Army Field Representatives, the evaluation examined
such factors as overall strength, leadership, officer/NCO strength,
organization, combat equipment, tactical proficiency, and training.
As a result of this evaluation, nineteen FAR/FAN battalions rated
combat ready, eighteen were regarded as marginally combat ready,
and twenty-six were graded as not combat ready.* The most frequent
causes for the "non-combat ready" status findings were poor leader­
ship or undermanning. A certain amount of subjectivity pervaded
the ratings, perhaps, since each evaluation was based on the field
observation of units by a single U.S. officer covering a large geo­
graphical area.216/

A U.S. Navy evaluation of the Lao River Flotilla (LRF), a part
of the FAR, was more positive. Basically, the team concluded that
the LRF was adequate for the function it had to fulfill - that of
patrolling the Mekong River and other waterways to interdict enemy
supplies. While the Navy team recommended the addition of four small

---

*By April 1971 there were also some 12 battalions of U.S.-funded
Thai "volunteers" (Project LGC) in Laos. They were supplied through
DEPCH and RO/USAID channels, but were controlled principally by CAS.
Political and Military Events - 1971

The following characterization of the war in Laos came from an intelligence expert with more than five years experience in Southeast Asia - a man who had flown in Vietnam, been a FAC in Laos, worked on the AIRA staff in Vientiane and, at the time of these observations, was serving on the HQ 7/13AF Intelligence staff.

Well, I think that the situation in both 1971 and up to the present time has not appreciably changed from what it has been over the last ten years... that during the dry season the enemy goes on the offensive and takes vast amounts of terrain, and in the wet season the friendlies go on the offensive and try to take back as much as they can, but never quite succeeding. And each year the enemy takes a little bit more, and we retake a little bit less...

There is little to add to this evaluation, except to note that the PL/NVA made further inroads into Laos in 1971 than at any previous time. Normally, during the wet season, government troops attempt to drive the PL/NVA from the PDJ and other areas taken from government control during the dry season. In 1971, the absence of the expected rains during the wet season gave the enemy additional time to entrench in the areas it held and denied the FAR/FAN and irregular forces the logistics advantage they had enjoyed during previous years. The unusually dry "wet season" allowed the enemy to bring in additional supplies along its LOCs, particularly the route from North Vietnam through Sam Neua Province. As a result,
Two of the promised T-28-D-10 Peace Prop aircraft arrived at Udorn in late June 1971, but they were an inadequate replacement for the six T-28s lost during the last quarter of FY 71. As FY 71 ended, the MASF Laos T-28 inventory stood at 59 aircraft.

Due to further combat losses and the repayment of T-28s to the RTAF, the net growth of the RLAF was disappointing during the latter half of CY 71: only 72 T-28s were active by December, 1971. However, nine additional MASF Laos Peace Props were allocated for delivery in April 1972 and January 1973.

The O-1F status changed significantly in January 1971, when USAF concurred with CINCPAC's recommendation to provide seventeen O-1Fs from USAF assets in exchange for twelve RLAF O-1E/Gs to be transferred to the VNAF. Sixteen of the seventeen aircraft had been transferred to MAP Laos by April. (The seventeenth had crashed en route.) Further complicating the exchanges were five O-1As which were transferred from the RLAF to the RTAF. By this time, however, the RLAF had O-1A, O-1D, and O-1F aircraft; consequently, DEPCH requested an AFR 57-1 Class V Combat Required Operational Capability (ROC) to modify all RLAF O-1A and O-1D* aircraft to the O-1F configuration. In a message from the DEPCH to 7AF, the rationale for the request was stated:

*Nine O-1As and seven O-1Ds. Seventeen O-1Fs were on-hand. The seven O-1Ds had been drawn from U.S. Army excess in CONUS, and were delivered during early FY 72.
rivercraft to the LRF's inventory, it rejected any plans for adding sophisticated equipment.217/

The overall political situation remained as it had been in previous years.

MAP/MASF Aid to the RLAF - 1971

The RLAF continued to be the great success story of U.S. MAP/MASF aid to Laos, but increased activity and the hardened enemy stance encountered during 1971 required that more attention be given to combat aircraft. Additional deliveries to replace aircraft lost during the intensified combat operations became a primary goal for DEPCH. The RTAF loaned ten T-28s as immediate attrition replacements. Of these aircraft, eight were routed to Det. 1 and two to the Air America facility (both on Udorn RTAFB) for extensive maintenance after the acceptance inspections revealed the poor condition of the aircraft. The average repair cost per borrowed RTAF aircraft turned out to be $12,900, a figure which did not include four engine changes. The RTAF aircraft were badly needed, however, to replace the eleven RLAF T-28s lost during the third quarter of FY 1971.218/

"Project Peace Prop" was instituted to produce the T-28-D-10 aircraft required to meet U.S. SEA commitments. Laos was scheduled to receive seven T-28s under the FY 70 MASF program, and thirty-six under the FY 71 program. An add-on to Project Peace Prop expanded from fifty to seventy-two the number of T-28s being produced. These Peace Prop aircraft were refurbished at a Fairchild Hiller facility.
...a mixed fleet of O-1A, O-1D and O-1F models will be unsatisfactory and difficult to support... a standard fleet will best serve U.S./Laos interests, i.e., simplified spare parts support, pilot training, maintenance training and aircraft maintenance support. This program will allow the RLAF to much more rapidly assume a greater role for support, operations and maintenance... the modification will be accomplished by Air Am under existing contract. Total cost including materiel will be funded by Laos MASF program.

In addition to the requested Combat ROC modification of the O-1 aircraft to the O-1F model, all existing U-17A aircraft on the MASF Laos UE had been converted to U-17B models by October 1971. The five additional aircraft scheduled for delivery during FY 72 would all be U-17B models with standardized engine/instrumentation packages.224/

Several interesting developments occurred during 1971 with regard to the RLAF C/AC-47 capability. The DEPCH contract with Thai-Am for C-47 IRAN and Phase Inspections was reduced by some $200,000 (from the FY 71 contract of $374,500) as the RLAF continued to increase its maintenance capability by accomplishing all AC-47 Phase Inspections in-country.225/ In his January 1972 report, the Assistant Deputy Chief (who was the senior Air Force representative on the DEPCH staff under a reorganized internal staff structure which had eliminated the old Air Force Division) proudly reported that:226/

A significant milestone in training efforts occurred in December 1971 when the C/AC-47 MTT at Udorn was terminated. Future training efforts will be conducted in-country at Savannakhet by an all-Lao (RLAF) instructor cadre, which has been qualified by MTT.
O-1 FAC Aircraft Over Laos

FIGURE 87
versions, temporarily entered RLAF service with the primary aim of supporting the Thai volunteer battalions. Part and parcel of Thai Government acquiescence to the volunteer project was the American promise of fast evacuation of wounded Thai volunteer personnel. While the Secretary of Defense had directed the loan of the UH-1Ds to the RLAF, he was equally firm in directing their return from the RLAF on 1 June. 230 /

Other aircraft activity involving third-country nationals centered around the continued DEPCH aid to the Khmer Air Force. As previously mentioned, Project "Peace Chess" IRANs, CBD repairs, and Phase Inspections for KAF C-47s and T-28s were performed either by Thai-Am or Air America under existing contracts with DEPCH. Several KAF aircraft that had completed repairs were then fitted with gun pods, bomb racks, and armament systems by armament personnel at Det. 1, 56 SOW, Udorn RTAFB. T-28 pilot and maintenance training for the KAF was also occasionally provided by Det. 1. 231 /

Rounding out DEPCH aircraft transactions in 1971 were the deliveries of the programmed T-41s. Two of these aircraft arrived at Udorn on 15 and 20 March 1971, respectively, with the final four arriving at Udorn on 26 June. These aircraft were to be used at Savannakhet for pilot training, thereby releasing four O-1s for FAC missions. 232 /

Although the RLAF was providing much of its own training at this juncture, the increased combat conditions during 1971 made it difficult for the RLAF to support the third-country and CONUS training effort. The RLAF simply could not spare the people from its
A new chapter in the RLAF C-47 capability opened in mid-1971 with the introduction of UC-47 flareships to the RLAF inventory. The requirement had been established for eight flareship aircraft, and by July one aircraft was in operation, with several additional aircraft modified and crewed by January 1972.227/

Ambassador Godley, following a review of the C-47 role, requested DEPCH to obtain authorization to raise the C-47 UE from sixteen to twenty. The Ambassador cited the new in-country C-47 training and the flareship capability as justification for the additional aircraft. On the latter point, he emphasized that aircraft:228/

Currently assigned to RLAF cannot be made available or drawn upon due to priority missions in direct support of the conflict. Four C-47 aircraft within the existing cargo fleet have been configured for flare ship utilization and redesignated UC-47 "Starlight" aircraft. To develop this vital combat capability within RLAF for support of night illumination requirements over Laos it was necessary to restrict the use of these aircraft to flare-drop use only. While dual utilization is possible at some time in the future, the initial training and introduction phase will require total commitment of these aircraft to the Starlight mission.

An increasing workload also affected the RLAF/Air America UH-34D helicopter force which experienced an upsurge in use due to intensified combat. By January 1972, there were 54 UH-34Ds in the MASF Laos inventory. Thirty-eight of these helicopters were operational, with 17 being used by the RLAF in-country (one by the UH-34D MTT at Udorn) and 21 by Air America under contract. The remaining 16 were in storage as attrition replacements.229/ UH-1D helicopters, in both medical evacuation (MEDEVAC) and gunship (SLICK)
personnel identified as having been school trained, either in CONUS or Third-Country, have a punch card. The resulting machine run enabled quick identification of those persons not assigned in the fields for which they have been trained. It also resulted in a reduced number of training spaces requested in CONUS.

Due to the inability of the Royal Lao Government to pay for a training program, the primary source of training funds was from the U.S. MASF program. As U.S. funds became harder to obtain because of Congressional limitations, several abuses of the MASF monies came to a halt. Chief among these was the payment of "ghost soldiers" in the FAR. A comprehensive personnel strength survey of the FAR (including the RLAF) in 1971 resulted in the removal of over 3000 "ghost soldiers" from the payroll. These "ghosts" were either fictitious or deceased personnel for whom someone in the FAR collected pay.

The in-country training programs were strengthened and enhanced by an increased emphasis on English language training at the Vientiane and Savannakhet schools. Savannakhet also boasted the new T-41 preliminary pilot training program begun in April 1971. Within three months, six T-41 Instructor Pilots and twenty pilot trainees had successfully completed the course. An RLAF O-1 FAC training program began in-country on 1 December 1971, and the C-47 MTT at Udorn was terminated that same month when C-47 training moved to Savannakhet. Planning continued toward the goal of moving the UH-34 training in-country in FY 73. Det. 1, with DEPCH approval, submitted a plan
through Air Force channels for creating a replacement training unit at Udorn. The unit would be Lao manned and managed under the supervision of highly-trained maintenance, operations, and training advisors. DEPCH had submitted the same plan to the Ambassador in Vientiane through AIRA, and awaited the outcome of their evaluation at year's end.\textsuperscript{236}

Naturally, these force preparations - from acquisition of new aircraft to RLAF training - were all indicative of the increased combat activity in 1971.* Between July 1970 and December 1971, T-28 sorties doubled and AC-47 missions more than tripled.\textsuperscript{237}

Increased combat sorties meant increased expenditures for munitions. Consequently, the FY 72 Air Force Program, originally programmed at $78.5 million, rose to $110.8 million with the addition of $29.9 million shortfall for increased munitions requirements and $2.4 million shortfall for materiel and services.\textsuperscript{238} Also as a result of increased sortie levels, more extensive facilities were required; thus, many facilities were upgraded or completed. For example, the parking apron, cantonment area, and ammunition area were completed at Luang Prabang. At Pakse, the C-47 parking area was completed, and the runway, apron, and hangar repair program was 62 percent completed. At Savannakhet, a major design project was under way. It included such diverse structures as flight crew

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\*At that time, total government force levels were about 60,000 men while enemy forces totaled almost 97,000. For a breakdown of these figures see p. 173.
facilities, a control tower, and a revetted ammunition storage area. Finally, at Wattay/Vientiane, the dispensary and security towers were completed. Perhaps the greatest improvement at Wattay was the installation of a TRN-17 TACAN set by the 1st Mobile Communications Group (MC Gp) late in May 1971. The TACAN unit, which was on loan from the 1st MC Gp, was first maintained by the 1974 Communications Squadron, but Air America soon assumed the responsibility under a DEPCH/RO contract. Ambassador Godley and the DEPCH desired the unit to have a more permanent status, and USAF approval for a long-term loan came by October.

Status of the RLAF, and the MAP/MA SF effort needed to support it, was reflected in the following 3 February 1972 Aircraft Inventory and Utilization Report:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item Description</th>
<th>Total Quantity Programmed MAP/MA SF</th>
<th>Quantity Received To 3 Feb</th>
<th>Total Active 3 Feb*</th>
<th>Total Hours Flown 2nd Qtr FY 72**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AC-47D</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1,503</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-47A/D</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1,985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T-28B/C/D</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>242</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>11,245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O-1A/E/F</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6,364</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U-5A</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U-17A/B</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1,302</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UH-34D</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>38***</td>
<td>10,899</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T-41</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1,150</td>
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<tr>
<td>U-4****</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Attrited aircraft deducted from total quantity received.

**Estimated for in-country operations, since RLAF has no established accounting system.

***Sixteen UH-34Ds were in non-flyable storage as advanced attrits.

****King's aircraft operated/maintained under USAID contract. MASF-supported through a cost-sharing arrangement.
Seventeen RT/T-28 aircraft were based at Udorn for training and supporting the RLAF.

Twenty-two UH-34D helicopters were based at Udorn. Twenty-one were operated by Air America in support of MASF Laos, one was used by the UH-34D MTT to train RLAF pilots.

Twenty-three 0-1/U-17 aircraft were flown by USAF personnel in support of FAC operations in Laos. One 0-1 aircraft was utilized for FAC training at Udorn.

Three C-47 aircraft were utilized prior to December 1971 by the MTT at Udorn RTAFB to upgrade RLAF flight crews and maintenance personnel. Four C-47s were in flyable storage at Thai-Am, Bangkok.

Forty-eight T-28 student pilots and two UH-34 student pilots were undergoing training at Det. 1, Udorn. Eleven RLAF instructor pilots (3 each UH-34; 8 each T-28) were included in this total.

Combat capability rating of the RLAF had to be conditionally applied as follows:

C-1: these units were currently engaged in combat operations, and were therefore considered to be operationally ready. However, the capability of these units to perform their mission was dependent on assistance from correct facilities, third country personnel and U.S. advisory personnel operating in Laos covertly, as well as overtly.

C-4: when considered independent of U.S. and third country financial, personnel and advisory assistance (a condition which did not exist) in keeping with the Geneva Accords of 1962; the units must be considered not operationally ready.

(For details of the FY 71 MAP/MASF see p. 170.)

CINCPAC Report Recommends DEPCH Revision

"DEPCH is still taking action to reclaim personnel reductions recently made to our FY 72 Joint Manpower Program (JMP). The situation since the last V-12 Report has not changed significantly."242/

Made by the DCH-AF in early 1971, these statements reflected the
results of the CINCPAC Manpower Survey of November 1970. The Survey recommended an across-the-board reduction of DEPCH personnel, including the elimination of the Air Force Division in Bangkok and the Air Force Liaison Office at Udorn. The duties of the Air Force Division and the AFLU were to be assumed by a new Plans and Training Division and by the Logistics Division. 243/ (Figure 8 shows the organizational schematic of military assistance to Laos as recommended by the 1970 CINCPAC manpower study.)

The FY 71 CINCPAC Performance Evaluation Group (PEG) Report on the effectiveness of DEPCH was conducted 9-12 February 1971. Its conclusions and recommendations were influenced by previous PEG Reports, the Manpower Survey, and, undoubtedly, by the renewed Congressional interest in Laos. Although critical of some aspects of DEPCH's methods of operations, the report concluded that: 244/

DEPCHIEF was considered to be effective. This determination was made despite the fact that DEPCH manpower resources were not being utilized for the full accomplishment of the mission and functional responsibilities delineated in the Term of Reference of DEPCHIEF. Their dedicated efforts to overcome and cope with the peculiar circumstances of a "MAAG in exile," in view of the restrictions imposed by the 1962 Geneva Agreement, were evident and noteworthy.

The MAP was effective. Despite the restrictions imposed by the 1962 Geneva Agreement, the U.S. has prevented the subjugation of Laos and has assisted that nation in maintaining its policy of neutrality. It is possible, however, that U.S. objectives could be met less expensively if planning and programming for, including the management of the utilization and maintenance of, U.S. provided military assets were centralized under the over-all cognizance of a single, senior military representative from the DOD situated in-country.
The last item, concerning a senior DOD representative, was explained further in the "Recommendations" section of the report: 245/

The proposal submitted by COMUSMACTHAI which, among others, provided for an O-7 to act as Defense Attache in-country appeared to be an effective means for improving the management and coordination of the Laos MASF program.

The DEPCH comment to the above was: "Concur." An even stronger DEPCH position was evident later in the PEG Report: 246/

...The DEPCHIEF believed that the quality of military advice being given to the U.S. Ambassador, Laos and the Royal Laotian Armed Forces could be improved if all the military competence and resources available to CINCPAC were channeled to the attaches through a senior military advisor, or DEPCHIEF...

It must be recalled that 1971 saw great Congressional interest in the U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia, particularly the monetary expenditures needed to support the Administration's policy. Laos, already scrutinized by the Symington Committee in 1969, received further attention as a result of the Moose-Lowenstein Report in 1971. The final result of the Congressional inquiry into U.S. aid to Laos was the so-called Symington Ceiling of late 1971, which set a dollar limit on aid to Laos. (It will be discussed in a subsequent section of this report.) As a consequence of the renewed Congressional interest, the recommendations made by DEPCH and CINCPAC for improving the cost-effectiveness of MASF aid to Laos received serious consideration at the highest levels of the government. DOD was especially anxious for an effective single-manager to coordinate the diverse elements of the MASF program, particularly since DOD
was paying for the steadily increasing aid effort to Laos. Particularly irritating to DOD was that much of the cost overrun could be attributed to the forces managed by the State Department, i.e., the CAS Meo guerrilla forces and Thai volunteers. As one DEPCH programs officer put it: "We are supplying forces over which we have no control. We can influence them only indirectly. Those managed by the State Department we have no influence or control over. Initially, when DOD assumed support for those forces they had carte blanche. Anything they wanted, they got - and DEPCH was the last to find out about it."247/

Several valid criticisms of the DEPCH structure in the 1971 PEG Report pointed out organizational weaknesses which had led to only a limited management of the ever-expanding MASF Laos program. Among the more notable observations made in the report were the following:

DEPCH PLANS AREA - ...the problem which affected the plans area...was partly due to the geographical separation of DEPCHIEF from the Mission he supported; but more particularly, it was attributable to other "built-in" limitations which precluded the exercise of adequate management and control by DEPCHIEF over certain aspects of the MASF program.... Unless positive action were to be taken at the CINCPAC and DOD levels to develop alternatives acceptable to the State Department that would modify existing arrangements affecting the degree of planning and management control to be exercised by DEPCHIEF, prospects for improvement would be illusory. DEPCHIEF...would continue as a rubberstamping middleman and would be precluded from maximum utilization of the expertise on his staff to assist the U.S. Mission in Laos in planning for a realistic military assistance program for Laos.248/

...The military assistance advisory effort, although improved by the augmentation of Project 404, was still inadequate. Additionally, the determination of MASF program requirements has continued to be the purview
of...RO/USAID and the military attaches in Laos under the direct supervision of the U.S. Ambassador, with only minimal control being exercised by the DEPCHIEF. 249/

DEPCH TRAINING AREA - As in prior evaluations, the major problem which affected the training area was the lack of an effective management agency to coordinate ARMA, AIRA, RO/USAID, DEPCHIEF and FAR/FAN actions in the development of an in-country training plan...250/

...DEPCHIEF, OUSARMA, OUSAIRA and RO/USAID are all independent co-equal agencies that must necessarily achieve results through cooperation without an overall military coordinator. For as long as this condition exists, unity of effort will be fractionalized and progress will be painfully slow...251/

DEPCH LOGISTICS AREA - ...the flow of munitions and materiel from entry ports in Thailand to Peppergrinder storage facilities, then onward to transfer points for entry into Laos, was considered to be responsive to RO/USAID requirements...DEPCHIEF's limited influence over logistical activity in Laos precluded adequate surveillance over the use of MAP-furnished equipment. Additionally, because of the current restrictions imposed on DEPCHIEF in-country accessibility, planning for and determination of requirements was ineffective and had resulted in gross changes to the FY 71 program.252/

As a result of a request by CINCPAC, COMUSMACTHAI had provided comments and recommendations relative to the management of the MASF program for Laos, including a proposed reorganization of DEPCHIEF. These comments recognized the need for a single in-country DOD manager, but also provided as an alternative the assignment of the logistical functions to USARSUPTHAI (U.S. Army Support Command, Thailand) and the assignment of the out-of-country training functions to COMUSMACTHAI. Under this proposal DEPCHIEF would remain the plans and programs coordinator, and would act as liaison between the Embassy in Laos and the supporting agencies. Further this proposal called for the relocation of the DEPCHIEF staff at Udorn...253/
* As of 12 Feb 71, 27 Officers, 53 Enlisted Personnel and 4 Civilians (U.S.) / 3 Civilians (Locals) were assigned to the ARA; 8 Officers, 50 Enlisted Personnel and 1 Civilian (U.S.) were assigned to the ARA. This total of 146 assigned 404 personnel rose slightly to 173 by January 1972.

The U.S. Navy funded the U.S. civilians and local workers.

CINCPAC thinking went beyond an eventual move of DEPCH to Udorn RTAFB, since CINCPAC OPLAN 5064 provided for the reintroduction of a MAAG into Laos if requested by the Laotian government. The staff of the U.S. Mission in Laos, however, did not envision implementation of such a plan because, as they saw it,\textsuperscript{254}...

...the NVA/PL objectives in Laos are tied directly to the NVA operations in South Vietnam. Therefore, any settlement in Vietnam would still require the NVA/PL to hold, or at least maintain control and have free access of, the eastern portion of the Lao panhandle. Under these circumstances, the situation would be the same as that which existed at the time of the Geneva Accords in 1962. It was felt that, during the negotiation of a settlement in South Vietnam, the removal of the U.S. elements supporting the Royal Laotian Government Armed Forces, including Air America operations, will be one of the bargaining points. Therefore, any plan which envisions the reintroduction of U.S. advisory elements in Laos was considered to be illusory.

One of the results of the PEG Report was the convening of a committee in Washington D.C. which concluded that DEPCH's effectiveness was at an all-time low. This judgment resulted in the June 1971 meeting of CINCPAC and AmEmb Vientiane personnel in Bangkok to draw up a new charter for DEPCH which would be acceptable to both groups.\textsuperscript{255}

A New DEPCH Charter and the Move to Udorn

The conference between CINCPAC and AmEmb Vientiane personnel took place in Bangkok on 24-25 June, 1971, to define a new charter and establish new Terms of Reference for DEPCH. DOD, as the principal U.S. financier of the war in Laos - including the State Department/CAS portion thereof - insisted on better management, coordination, and control of the increasing MASF expenditures. The DOD/CINCPAC

\*DEPCH personnel were not included in this meeting.
position was that (1) DEPCH should be moved from Bangkok to Udorn RTAFB to be closer to the area of his concern, (2) DEPCH should be charged with greater responsibilities, primarily that of military advisor to the American Ambassador to Laos, (3) DEPCH should have a single logistics pipeline for Army-procured materiel and Air Force munitions managed by United States Army Support Command, Thailand (USARSUPTHAI), (4) tour length at Udorn would be one year and unaccompanied (except for 28 key spaces identified as necessary for continuity, which would be two-year accompanied tours), and (5) an 0-7 be assigned as DEPCH.

AmEmb Vientiane took immediate issue with some of these points, particularly the possible assignment of an 0-7 who would serve as DEPCH and as principal military advisor to the Ambassador. AmEmb Vientiane objections and alternative proposals are summarized below:

- CINCPAC's desire to set up a Military Assistance Coordinator (MACLAOS) at Udorn, while commendable in trying to achieve better coordination and support for U.S. military activities in Laos, might tend to degrade the Embassy effort. As the alternative plan put it: ...we believe it is equally important to avoid changes in the structure of the Military Assistance Program which would degrade the authority of the U.S. Ambassador in Vientiane to control in-country operations ... the present system of command and control of in-country operations, directed by the U.S. Ambassador through the Country Team works satisfactorily in the unique politico/military environment of Laos.

In reference to the name change of DEPCH to MACLAOS, the Embassy objected that:

...any changes in the structure or nomenclature of U.S. assistance to Laos are susceptible to misrepresentations by adversaries and misunderstandings by friends...
The senior Air Force Representative clarified the latter point in an interview by adding:

...calling it MACLAOS was unacceptable from the State Department view because it had the connotation of another MACV. They were afraid that the Thais would not readily accept it, so they settled on the name DEPCH/Udorn as a short title...

At the same time, the Embassy noted:

- AMEMBASSY Vientiane agreed to the relocation of a strengthened DEPCH organization to Udorn.

- the DEPCH would act as the principal logistics coordinator for the Ambassador, and would serve as a member of the Country Team. DEPCH would manage the Laos MASF program under CINCPAC. RO/USAID functions would remain unchanged, but all MASF matters would be submitted through DEPCH. DEPCH would coordinate U.S. logistic support of indigenous military operations in Laos with the U.S. Mission in Vientiane, 7/13AF, COMUSMACVTHAI, and other agencies as required.

The question of an 0-7 as DEPCHi was not addressed in the Embassy reclama, but it was evident from the tone (which indicated minimal changes to the DEPCH structure) that this was not looked upon with favor by the Ambassador and the Country Team.

Controversy over the DEPCH role continued after the conference. A 12 July 1971 message from CINCPAC to JCS revealed a further divergence of the CINCPAC and Embassy views. Whereas the Embassy depicted DEPCH's new role as that of principal logistics coordinator for U.S. support of indigenous military operations in Laos, CINCPAC defined DEPCH's new role as that of "principal Military Advisor to the Ambassador to Laos to coordinate U.S. support of indigenous military operations in Laos."
In other respects, CINCPAC agreed to the modifications requested in the Embassy's alternative proposal. The organization would move to Udorn RTAFB before the end of 1971, but would not be called MACLAOS (it was tentatively called DEPCH/Udorn), and DEPCH would manage the MASF Laos program under CINCPAC, with all MASF matters to be funneled through DEPCH.\textsuperscript{263/} AmEmb Vientiane had been supported in its alternative proposal by AmEmb Bangkok, which was not surprising since the United States Ambassador to Thailand, Leonard Unger, had himself been Ambassador to Laos in the 1960s.\textsuperscript{264/}

While many of the divergent views were reconciled in the period from the June conference to the DEPCH move in November, some - such as the assignment of an O-7 as DEPCH in 1972 - had to be resolved later at the Secretary of State (SECSTATE) and Secretary of Defense (SECDEF) levels.

The long-discussed move to Udorn RTAFB was completed during 1971. In July, the Assistant Deputy Chief reported that: "DEPCHIEF has been directed by CINCPAC to move to Udorn RTAFB NLT 1 January 1972."\textsuperscript{265/} On 1 September 1971, the DEPCH Command Section relocated to Udorn RTAFB, and on 15 November 1971 the entire DEPCH organization became operational at Udorn after a complete unit relocation from Bangkok.\textsuperscript{266/} Commenting on the move, the Assistant Deputy Chief stated: "Basically, we were non-productive (in Bangkok). There was really no reason for us to be in Bangkok. Socially it was desirable, but from a practical point of view we should have been in Vientiane."\textsuperscript{267/} At least Udorn was closer to Vientiane than Bangkok had been.
The Symington Ceiling

As mentioned above, the result of Congressional interest in Laos was the Symington Ceiling. On 17 November 1971, the Symington Amendment, Section 505 of the Military Procurement Authorization Act, came into force. The rules for compliance with the ceiling of no more than $350,000,000 of MASF aid to Laos in FY 72 were established in December 1971. The first report of expenditures was due from DEPCH in January 1972, and costs for the first half of FY 72 had to be estimated from available records. The many reports required in the administration of this Act resulted in a significant additional workload for the reduced DEPCH staff.\(^\text{268/}\)

Individuals involved in the various programs with Laos found the Symington Ceiling probably desirable in theory, but difficult to administer in actuality. The Assistant Deputy Chief in 1971 stated that the\(^\text{269/}\)

hottest thing is the Symington Ceiling of $350 million a year. The thing is, that it has no relationship to our program; or to the money that we have. Symington applies only when the item "goes across the river" \(/\text{into Laos}/**.

A former Chief Programs Officer at DEPCH clarified the meaning of the $350 million ceiling for FY 72 when he said:\(^\text{270/}\)

Speaking strictly in a material sense, yes \(/\text{the ceiling is }$350 \text{ million for materiel transported to Laos}/ - except for our Air Force product which is chargeable (under Symington) as soon as we turn it over to the contractor here. We have an inventory of some $10 million here at Udorn, which could be reclaimed by DOD; but it is chargeable as soon as the contractor accepts it. Services, such as training conducted in Thailand, are charged even though they don't "cross the river."
Ammunition and major items of equipment stocked here in Thailand are not reflected, but DOD still has title to all that equipment. The DOD is subsidizing State quite heavily. . . . These are things that weren't taken into account when the Symington sub ceilings were established. Another handicap is that we don't know exactly what the DOD portion of this $350 million is. We've asked, and never received a satisfactory answer. They've told us that CIA could spend 75 million and State could spend 50. CIA has said that 75 million is not adequate anymore, and that they need - let's say - 82 million. Their contention is that this reduces the military portion of the 350 million, so they're spending toward the 82 figure.

Disregarding the added workload on DEPCH, the Chief Programs Officer added:

As a taxpayer I'm inclined to agree with Mr. Symington, although I think we are serving a purpose by being in Laos. . . . The most frustrating thing to me personally is that no one . . . will accept the fact of life that we can't control expenditures. It's well and good to sit at higher headquarters and say that you are charged with seeing that DOD does not spend more than its share of the $350 million ceiling, but in fact all of the authority to call in supplies rests with the Ambassador.

The Assistant Deputy Chief also noted positive aspects of the Symington Ceiling:

It's the greatest thing that's ever happened to us. Number one, it's focused the attention where it belongs - management of resources. It's forcing resource boards together. People are more cost conscious and cost-effective. It wasn't until the General showed up that people began to cooperate. I'm sure that within a few months we'll be able to live within the Symington limit, but right now we're not. It's caused better bomb damage assessment, it's caused a reduction in the sortie level and in the amount of ammunition per sortie.
Political and Military Events Through FY 72

One distinct difference appeared in the usual wet-season/dry-season pattern of the war in Laos in 1972, and a USAF expert on Laos characterized the difference as follows:

The only real change that I have seen is...that with the possibility of peace growing closer and certainly on the minds of many people, some of the direction has changed to the extent that it appears that the Royal Lao Government...has made up its mind that there is going to be a peace shortly, and have said that they must take and hold terrain...We've got to hold the PDJ. We've got to get Saravane and some of these other significant places. So take them at all cost, and hold as long as you can until the peace comes and then we will have it...I think we have seen, at the same time, that the North Vietnamese have had an attitude also that this was going to be the last year, and that they must take and hold terrain if at all possible. The only differences I have seen in these two opposing forces is that on both sides the leaders have said to take and hold terrain...But down at the soldier level the NVA...have said OK, we agree...and they have fought doubly hard this year, where it appears that among the friendly forces in Laos the average soldier has said "this is the end of the war, and I will be damned if I'm going to get killed the last year - let them have the terrain, regardless of what the Prime Minister or the King said"...Both sides this year have started many operations very diligently to take terrain. The Lao Government is just taking Pakson and Saravane in the south, and attempting to take the PDJ in the north. But, otherwise, the war has been exactly the same as it has always been.

Souvanna Phouma and Souphanouvong, along with their representatives, met several times during 1972. There was little doubt that the sudden willingness to resume negotiations was tied to the Paris talks between Washington's Henry Kissinger and Hanoi's Le Duc Tho. It was clear that no settlement concerning Laos could be reached by the two half-brothers
until Hanoi and Washington established clear-cut guidelines for an eventual cease-fire. Although the cease-fire failed to materialize prior to the end of 1972, the future of Laos remained tied to any agreement the Americans and the North Vietnamese might reach, and prospects for an imminent cease-fire were favorable.

MAP/MA SF Aid to the RLAF Through FY 72

The number of RLAF Operating Locations (OLs) changed from seven to five early in 1972 when two of the forward operating locations (FOLs) came under enemy attack; but by mid-1972 all of the original seven OLs were back in operation. Construction continued on most sites, but the revetted ammunition storage area being built at Pakse was destroyed by enemy action on 12 March 1972. DEPCH developed a new project to replace it.

Fiscal responsibility highlighted the last half of FY 72. The Symington Ceiling called for extensive accounting procedures, and the Assistant Deputy Chief noted that "extraordinary efforts will be required to stay within the FY 72 ceiling, and still accomplish all our objectives." Some of these efforts included the CSAF-directed consolidation of all DEPCH air contracts. By 1 July 1972 the flying and maintenance services performed by Continental Air Services, Inc. (CASI) of Vientiane and by Air America were consolidated under a single DOD (Air Force) account. The Air America contract totaled $41.3 million, and the CASI contract was worth $10.7 million. The Thai-Am contract for C-47 IRAN was decreased to only $15,000, as C/AC-47 maintenance was shifted to the RLAF. Those maintenance requirements for the C/AC-47s which were beyond RLAF capability were now
handled by CASI in Vientiane. Thai-Am, however, assumed Khmer T-2B Phase
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Inspections from Det. 1 in return.

In keeping with the spirit of fiscal responsibility, money was also
saved by decreasing the number of combat sorties. A message to DEPCH
through CINCPAC indicated that "fiscal guidance provides for only 3,000
tactical air and 200 gunship sorties per month." At the time this
message was written, it was assumed that USAF sorties could make up any
differences required by combat conditions, but this was before the 1972
NVA Spring Offensive began in South Vietnam. The RLAF, nevertheless,
managed to stay close to the guidelines: combat sorties for the period
January-March 1972 were 10,916 T-28 sorties and 704 AC-47 sorties.

DEPCH also contacted the vice president of Air America and the Commander,
Det. 1, 56 SOW, and requested their cooperation in minimizing or eliminating
requirements which were not mission-essential. The DEPCH goal was to reduce
the inventory by $1 million by 1 July 1972.

An element of fiscal responsibility was also to be added to the State
Department/CAS guerrilla operations. Both Project LGC (the Thai "volun-
teers") and Project ZAE (Vang Pao's Meo guerrillas) were to be financed
through DEPCH after 1 July 1972. While no direct Air Force funds went
to Project ZAE, some $4 million in USAF funds were programmed in FY 72
for LGC gunship support, and over $5 million was programmed for eight
UH-1M helicopters and supporting crews in FY 73. It must be recalled,
however, that the MASF Laos program was tri-service funded. The U.S. Army
funded FAR/FAN activities, USAF provided for the RLAF, and the U.S. Navy
provided the money for DEPCH's housekeeping, administrative, and TDY expenses.
Until FY 71 the Navy also paid for the Project 404 augmentation, but subsequently this expense was distributed among the services using it. DEPCH itself was a joint Army-Air Force organization headed by an Army colonel. After the elimination of the Air Force Division in July 1971, the senior Air Force colonel at DEPCH became the Assistant DEPCH. DEPCH went from the Weapons System Manager concept to the Commodity Manager Concept, and this presented problems when Army personnel had to learn proper Air Force requisitioning procedures for RLAF materiel. The old Air Force Division was absorbed by a joint Logistics Division, and by 1 July 1972 many of the initial problems had been eased or eliminated. Another organizational change came on 1 July when the senior Air Force colonel was designated the Vice Commander, DEPCH, and all items pertaining to air and the RLAF went through him.

Fiscal matters also played a role in aircraft procurement. A total of forty-nine T-28-D-10 Peace Prop aircraft were received during FY 72, of which ten were turned over to the RTAF as repayment for previously loaned T-28s. Only five T-28 aircraft were scheduled for delivery until August 1973 (one rebuilt, one Peace Prop, three Peace Trunk). With the rate of expected RLAF losses at two per month, the Assistant DEPCH estimated that the RLAF T-28 inventory would only be 59 aircraft by the end of FY 73. A follow-on program called Peace Post allocated 28 T-28s to MASF Laos, but delivery was estimated at sixteen months after an unawarded contract had finally been let. Project Peace Trunk, the releasing of some RTAF T-28 assets, offered the only immediate relief for increased attrition.
DEPCH also had to address himself to eventual follow-on aircraft types to supplant the ever-diminishing T-28 inventory. The AmEmb Vientiane position basically reflected that of DEPCH when the embassy stated that:

Recommend maximum effort be made to maintain present RLAF T-28 UE until FY 76. All sources of T-28 assets should be explored to achieve this end. Any candidate for replacement aircraft for T-28 would require a massive retraining effort, and would necessitate serious reduction of people now engaged in combat operations... do not consider A-37 or F-5 aircraft suitable replacements... the only USAF inventory aircraft that meets the criteria at the present time is the A-7. It would greatly increase the RLAF's close support capability and enable them to strike interdiction targets in a high threat environment... The Lao version of the A-7 need only be manual capable to preclude the high costs of the avionics package... The OV-10 would be an excellent aircraft for the FAC operation, and has also been requested by the Requirements Office as a follow-on aircraft for the O-1 fleet...

Meanwhile, CSAF had approved the standard O-1 avionics package for the RLAF fleet, and DEPCH had arranged for exchange and transfer programs with the RTAF to give the RLAF a standard O-1 capability. Accordingly, three RLAF U-17 aircraft were transferred to the Royal Thai Army in exchange for three O-1Ds. The RTAF transferred five O-1Ds to DEPCH for a future payback of five O-1As. The DEPCH attempt to convert all Laos O-1 aircraft to the O-1F standard also continued. Other aircraft actions, either contemplated or accomplished, included the DEPCH proposal to convert the RLAF/Air America UH-34 fleet to UH-1H aircraft. Meanwhile, Project Whitehorse, the UH-1 gunship program mentioned previously, was...
continued indefinitely, as was Operation Heavy Lift,* which was to have used CH-54 helicopters to move heavy equipment from one front to the other as the changing combat situation required.

The expansion of the RLAF Starlight flareship capability progressed slowly due to the limited availability of RLAF aircrews. In other conversion projects, all Yankee Egress systems for Peace Prop T-28 aircraft had been installed except for sixteen single egress systems. Conversion kits for the remaining aircraft were scheduled to arrive in November 1972.

The RLAF training effort, although by no means self-supporting, advanced toward that goal with the last UH-34 pilot class graduating at Udorn on 28 June 1972. Thereafter, classes were conducted in-country. Approval of a DEPCH proposal to "Laotianize" Det. 1, 56 SOW to the degree possible resulted in the assignment of 130 Laotian personnel as permanent party at Det. 1 during FY 73. This move should definitely accelerate Laos self-sufficiency in T-28 training. (The RLAF Aircraft Inventory and Utilization Table, Tactical Unit Status Table, and Training and Personnel Status Table are reproduced from the original 30 June 1972 V-12 Report on pages 179 through 182.)

An O-7 Becomes DEPCH

A former DCH-AF and Assistant Deputy Chief characterized the war in Laos thus:

*Heavy Lift, originally on a TOY basis, was to receive eight CH-47C aircraft. Air America would utilize the aircraft for heavy-lift and troop movements in support of NASF/Laos. This was to be accomplished by November 1972. Source: V-12 Rpt, 25 July 72, p. 5.
It's not a military war, it's a State Department war. In essence, you have several wars - AIRA, ARMA, and CAS operating independently; and USAID operates in their support. The DEPCH function has been strictly logistical support.

This, in essence, was the situation prior to the Bangkok meeting of 1971 which expanded DEPCH's Terms of Reference. DOD, as the principal financier of the "several wars" in Laos, wanted better coordination of the MASF effort; and - as a former DCH-AF said - "The DOD position was that they didn't want to buy off and become a scapegoat for something the State Department has been running for a few years." The differing interpretations of DEPCH's role under the new TOR - as principal logistics or as principal military advisor to the Ambassador - continued to cloud the issues, with AmEmb Vientiane/SECSTATE maintaining the former and CINCPAC/SECDEF maintaining the latter. Ambassador Godley, in particular, resisted the possible assignment of an 0-7 as DEPCH. A November 1971 message from Major General Searles, Deputy Commander, 7/13AF, to General Lavelle,

Godley made it clear to [Admiral] Moorer* that he preferred retention of an Army full Colonel as DEPCH/JUSMAGTHAI, and that he did not want a General Officer in this position. Moorer indicated that if Godley was happy with the situation, he would let it stand as is.

A USAF intelligence expert on Laos with experience in Vientiane added:

There were suggestions that maybe we should bring in a General grade officer. I remember one specific suggestion that came out of CINCPAC. . . .

*Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff.
They suggested moving a General [to Vientiane] who would work directly for CINCPAC, but would assist the Ambassador. Of course, all of this was greatly resisted. The Ambassador liked his organization as it was, and enjoyed having an ARMA and an AIRA. ... He did not want any outside influence, particularly a senior officer, who was not directly responsible to the Ambassador. ... I think, as most people know, that most of the para-military operations throughout Laos were based around CAS control of the irregular forces. CAS has a great deal of influence with the Ambassador. ... It is popularly thought that CAS more or less runs the country with the approval of the Ambassador. So, under these circumstances ... CAS did not want a General Officer coming in there trying to assert his influence, and perhaps even telling CAS what was wrong with their organization and how it should be run in a conventional military manner. ...

The controversy over the assignment of an O-7 and over DEPCH's new role continued throughout the fall of 1971. Then, a meeting held at Udorn laid the groundwork for future DOD actions. The USAF intelligence expert on Laos, quoted above, recalled* that there was:

... a staff meeting sometime in the fall of 71--I don't recall the exact date--held here at Hq 7/13. ... General Westmoreland came out from JCS ... for a conference which included the Ambassador, the Chief of CAS, AIRA, ARMA, General Searles, [and] General Westmoreland and some of his staff. The conference went on all day. I did not sit in on the meeting, and was not privy to all the discussions, but it all boiled around what was going on in Laos, and what we can do to make it better, and what is DEPCH going to do, etc. I had heard from various sources prior to this time that there was a move afoot within Laos that CAS wanted out. ... They had been running the irregular war there for many years ... they were in great debt as far as they money--always going over their budget every year. ... They were consistently losing the war--getting a lot of bad publicity out of it--and they had a tiger by the tail and would have liked to get out of the situation and turn it over to somebody else. This was a well-known rumor going around. There was also a rumor going around that the Army

*The reader should note the speculative nature of the quote, and that much of the information presented therein is at best second-hand.
wanted the job, and they wanted to take over and run
the Lao war as they had done in South Vietnam. . . .
I think the Army had aspirations along these lines in
Laos, too. . . . General Westmoreland . . . felt what
we needed was [to] "Get those civilians out of running
the war and move the Army in, and we can organize and
run it like we always have done throughout history." . . .
I think from General Westmoreland's visit a decision
probably was made--and I am speculating here quite
broadly--to get DEPCH up here as close to Laos without
having to penetrate Laos, and get an experienced infan-
try officer of the General grade involved in DEPCH so
he could start asserting some military influence on the
country team. . . .

Although the assignment of an Army 0-7 as DEPCH did not occur until
early 1972, many moves were in progress. Major General Searles noted in
an October 1971 message to General McNabb:

... concur with PACAF preliminary thinking ... that USAF should recommend Army retain DEPCH billet
as an O-6. ... . This interim function of logistic
advisor and manager to Godley does not warrant the
assignment of a general officer. For the moment,
Ambassador Godley acts as MACLOAS, and it is pro-
posed that DEPCHIEF, Udorn serve as his J-4. ... .
Both Ambassadors Godley and Unger are opposed to
assigning a General officer to DEPCHIEF, Udorn posi-
tion. There seems to be little reason to oppose
them at this time.

In speculating that an Air Force General officer might become DEPCH,
or that the DEPCH function could be assigned to Deputy Commander 7/13AF
as an additional duty, General Searles commented that: "... The Army
might use it as justification for another COMUSMAC THAI takeover attempt
on a quid pro quo basis, i.e., if USAF heads DEPCHIEF, Udorn, Army should
head MAC THAI." However, General Searles also pointed out that "many
assumptions would have to be verified before the Army could use the DEPCHIEF,
Udorn position as a stepping stone to a COMUSMAC THAI takeover. . . ."
Among these assumptions were: "... that U.S. support of the indigenous war in Laos would continue... after the war in Vietnam is concluded; that this effort would ultimately transcend in importance the role of COMUSMACV, and that DEPCHIEF, Udorn would achieve or approach the status of a unified subordinate command. ..." 296/

Discussions concerning this problem continued at the highest levels. An addendum to an interview with Major General Hughes* clarified the assignment of a General Officer. The assignment of an Army O-7 as DEPCH came about:

... per Secretary of Defense decision. ... Again, there is nothing in writing, but indications are that the decision resulted from a conversation between the Chairman of the JCS, Secretary of Defense, and Secretary of State. Secretary of State pushed to have the O-7 in that job. I believe the Chairman to the JCS was prompted to make his decision or recommendation by General Westmoreland's visit ... and his earlier recommendation in 1971. The decision was fought initially by Ambassadors Godley and Unger, but ... it received endorsement at the highest levels in Secretary of Defense and Secretary of State.

On 11 February 1972, Brigadier General John W. Vessey, Jr., USA, arrived at Udorn to become the DEPCH. The USAF intelligence expert quoted earlier:

... I understand from talking with General Vessey that his notification and assignment to DEPCH was something of a matter of hours or days. He had a logistical job at Sattahip here in Thailand, and all of a sudden he was called and told he was the new DEPCH. ...

*At the time of this writing, General Hughes was Deputy Commander, 7/13 AF.