CHRONOLOGICAL SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT EVENTS CONCERNING THE LAOTIAN CRISIS.

FIRST INSTALLMENT: 9 AUGUST 1960 TO 31 JANUARY 1961

(Revised Version)

HISTORICAL DIVISION
JOINT SECRETARIAT
JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF
27 FEBRUARY 1961

"REPRODUCTION OF THIS DOCUMENT NOT TO BE MADE WITHOUT PERMISSION OF ISSUING OFFICE."

SPECIAL HANDLING REQUIRED
Not Releasable
To Foreign Nationals

Copy 15 of 15 copies
23 April 1961

NOTICE OF REVISION

Dwing to the accession of additional material
this document has been revised as of this date by the
substitution of pages 34 - 110 for the original pages
34 - 93.

S. V. SCOTT
Colonel, Artillery
Chief
# Table of Contents
(Revised)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Introduction</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1-1x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Chronology**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date Range</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9 August - 31 August 1960</td>
<td>1-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 September - 20 September 1960</td>
<td>9-23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 October - 31 October 1960</td>
<td>24-39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 November - 30 November 1960</td>
<td>40-48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 December - 31 December 1960</td>
<td>49-71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 January - 31 January 1961</td>
<td>72-107</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Glossary**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviations</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important Personages</td>
<td>109-110</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

"Laos is a peaceful country and the Lao people are dedicated to peace; yet Laos for more than twenty years has known neither peace nor security." Thus did the Laotian King Savang Vathana describe the anomaly that is Laos today. A nation with scant natural or human resources, Laos has been the scene of continual skirmishing between East and West. In the struggle for Laos, both power blocs seek the realization of distinct political and military objectives. Moreover, on the ideological plane, victory in Laos would be symbolic of ascendancy in Southeast Asia, in this manner, the contest in Laos becomes a "play-within-the-play" in the world struggle. To the victor in Laos might accrue successes grossly disproportionate to the political domination of this diminutive jungle kingdom. Understandably, therefore, the US Government, in its national policy on Laos, has manifested continuing concern about the Communist threat to Laos, and has been designed to prevent Communist domination of the kingdom.

In 1954, the national policy promulgated the following courses of action concerning Laos:

1) Make every possible effort, not openly inconsistent with the U.S. position as to the armistice agreements, to defeat Communist subversion and influence, to maintain and support friendly non-Communist [government] in ... Laos ... .

2) Urge that the French promptly recognize and deal with ... Laos ... as [an] independent sovereign [nation].

3) Strengthen U.S. representation and deal directly, wherever advantageous to the U.S., with the [government] of ... Laos, ...

4) Working through the French only insofar as necessary, assist Laos, ... to maintain (1) military forces necessary for internal security and (2) economic conditions conducive to the maintenance and strength of non-Communist areas

5) Expose Communist violations of the Armistice in Indochina.

6) Conduct covert operations on the maximum feasible and productive scale in support of the foregoing policies.
In the next few years, Laos failed to achieve stability—a stability earnestly sought by the US. The US responded to this unsettled condition by accelerating the tempo of its efforts in Laos. On 5 September 1956 the policy approved for Laos provided that the US would:

1) Seek to strengthen the determination of the Royal Government to resist subversion and to maintain its independence.

2) In order to prevent Lao neutrality from veering toward pro-Communism encourage individuals and groups in Laos who oppose dealing with the Communist bloc.

3) Develop an attitude of confidence on the part of Lao leaders that the UN Charter, SEATO, and U.S. support provide a favorable basis for Lao resistance to Communist pressure and inducements.

4) Encourage and support close bonds between Laos and Thailand, including such political associations, economic cooperation, and joint military planning as feasible.

5) Support the expansion and reorganization of police, propaganda, and army intelligence services, provided anti-Communist elements maintain effective control of these services.

6) Continue support of the Royal Lao Army to assure internal security and provide limited initial resistance to an attack by the Viet Minh.

7) Terminate economic and military aid if the Lao Government ceases to demonstrate a will to resist internal Communist subversion and to carry out a policy of maintaining its independence.

In 1958 US policy remained virtually unchanged. Only minor changes were made, and these modifications were included in the NSC policy on Laos for 1960.

The basic US policy toward Laos prevailing at the time of the August coup provided that the US would:

1) Provide military assistance for the development and support of Lao armed forces capable of maintaining internal security against Communist subversion or other elements hostile to U.S. interests and providing limited initial resistance to Communist aggression. Encourage Laos to formulate and implement a broadly conceived security plan, including both internal and external security, which encompasses the services of all branches of the Royal Government, civil and military.

---

1. NSC 5612/1, dtd 5 Sep 56. CCS 092 Asia (6-25-48) (2), sec 26, BP Pt 6.
2) In the provision of U.S. assistance, direct our programs to the promotion of social and economic progress and unification of Laos, thus helping maintain the confidence of the Royal Government in its anti-Communist, pro-Free World 'neutrality.'

3) Continue to promote conditions engendering confidence by Lao leaders that the UN Charter, SEATO, and Free World support provide a favorable basis for Lao resistance to Communist pressure and inducements, and at the same time continue to impress upon the Lao the need for a sense of responsibility and recognition that too drastic actions may have adverse international implications.

4) Encourage the Lao to observe constitutional and legal processes as providing the soundest basis for the growth and vitality of democratic institutions; discourage resort to force in political affairs.

5) Encourage the Lao Government to give emphasis to programs tending to reorient disaffected elements of the population.

6) Encourage and support cooperation between Laos and other Southeast Asian countries, particularly Thailand, Viet Nam, the Philippines, Malaya, and Burma, including such joint effort in the anti-subversion, economic, communications, and military fields as is feasible.

7) Develop greater mutual understanding and cooperation with the French in the furtherance of common Free World objectives.

8) Strongly support "the UN presence" and expanded UN technical assistance in Laos, and make a special intensified effort to encourage other friendly nations to assume a larger share of responsibility for the support of the country.

Programs Evaluation Office (PEO) 1954-1960

The Geneva Accords did little to allay US fears that the Laotian Army, in the post-Geneva years, would provide neither an effective agency for internal security nor an adequate deterrent to Viet Minh aggression. Following the Geneva Conference, the French continued to furnish military advice to Laos, although the French Military Mission (FMM), reduced in strength, ceased assigning personnel to train the combat arms of the FAL. It soon became apparent that additional assistance was necessary if the Laotian Army was to develop into a capable fighting force. The US initiated such military aid through the US Operations Mission (USOM). The USOM, organized in January, 1955, as a mechanism of the US Country Team to administer the US dollar-aid program, was

1. (P) NSC 6012, 9150/9105 (11 July 60), 25 Jul 60.
now charged with the additional assignment of providing financial support for the Laotian military establishment.

It soon became apparent that the magnitude of the program required a separate organization. Late in 1955, therefore, the Programs Evaluation Office (PEO), an agency of the Department of Defense, was established, ostensibly as a section of the USOM but actually operating as a separate element of the US Country Team. The personnel of the PEO were all civilians, but, since their duties involved knowledge of military matters and equipment, the majority of them were reserve or retired military personnel. The PEO was occupied chiefly with the preparation of budgetary requests and the procurement of supplies. It paid the salaries of Laotian military personnel and furnished most of the military support to the armed forces of Laos, and carried out other activities designed to improve the economic and political situation in Laos. Perhaps the principal problem of the PEO was the difficulty experienced in its attempts to insure that US equipment was being put to proper use.

In December 1958, it was determined that the PEO should play a still more active role. Plans were made for augmenting the organization with military personnel in a covert role. CINCPAC recommended that an active duty general officer be assigned as Chief, PEO. Brig Gen John A. Heintges was assigned this task. Prior to assuming his new duty, Heintges was ordered by CINCPAC to survey the Laotian situation and propose a major reorganization of US military activities in Laos.

The conclusions of Gen. Heintges' survey provided a basis for a far reaching plan to: 1) reorganize the PEO by increasing its military personnel; 2) aid in training the FAL; and 3) improve the logistics of the armed forces in Laos.

To aid in training of the FAL, the plan envisioned: 1) providing personnel to form joint US/French teams to train each of the twelve regular ANL battalions; 2) assigning a field grade
officer to each region headquarters to supervise the training teams; 3) activating a training center at Seno Air Base to train recruits and MOS specialists; 4) supplementing and complementing French training of the technical services; 5) providing US military training and advisory teams for specialized assistance in internal security training (special forces and PSYWAR); 6) increasing the Laotian quota at the U.S. Army Infantry School, to allow for 60 additional PAL representatives to take three months courses.

Since, however, operational training of the PAL was a responsibility of the French, these recommendations could be implemented only after coordination with the French government. On 29 May 59 the French concurred in the "Heintges Plan," as it was now called. The agreement stated that the special training team efforts would be in effect for from six months to a year, but it allowed for a review of this provision. (On 31 December 1959 CINCPAC recommended that the program be extended for another year.)

The "Heintges Plan" was forwarded to the Assistant Secretary of Defense, ISA, by CINCPAC on 13 December 1958, and at his suggestion, many of the proposals were adopted. In February, 1959, the now "Mister" Heintges assumed command of the PEO. His staff was reorganized and increased by nine US Army officers and eight NCO's traveling in civilian status. His recommendations for the improvement of logistical support of the PAL were taken under consideration by the Department of Defense, many were favorably acted upon in 1959. More important, all the proposals to improve the training of the PAL were adopted during 1959.

The new organization was just beginning to function in its expanded mission, including a more active logistic, advisory, and technical training role, when armed insurgency broke out in July 1959. The gravity of this situation and the consequent increase in the PEO workload resulted in a request for additional personnel. CINCPAC approved the request and warned the JCS that existing French and US efforts in training and logistics were not
satisfactory in developing the FAL. Additional US advice and assistance were vital, CINCPAC stated, if deficiencies were to be corrected and the competence of the FAL increased to the standard required to meet the Communist challenge. He noted that while PEO had to be adequately staffed, the only long range solution would be the formal establishment of a MAAG.

On 17 February 1960 General Phoumi, the Laotian Minister of Defense, in a letter to the Chief PEO, requested a one year extension of US training effort in Laos.

The International Supervisory Control Commission for Laos (ICC)

The Geneva Agreement ended the rebellion against the French in the territories that had been French Indochina, but could not end the contentions amongst the indigenes. It was necessary, therefore, to establish a continuing body to secure compliance with the terms of the agreements.

The International Supervisory Control Commission for Laos (soon dubbed ICC), comprised of India, Poland and Canada, was the instrument created for the supervision and implementation of the Geneva Agreements in that country. Under the terms of these agreements all Vietminh troops and all but a small, specified number of French troops were to be withdrawn from the country; moreover, Laos was barred from entering military alliances or accepting the establishment of foreign bases on its territory. The agreements also stipulated that the Pathet Lao forces were to withdraw to the two northern provinces of Sam Neua and Phong Saly, which they were to administer in collaboration with the Royal Laotian Government. The agreements further stipulated, however, that before elections could be held in these provinces, the two factions must reach an accord on the political and military administration of the area.

By 19 November 1954 the ICC could report that all terms of the armistice agreements had been met with one exception: the question of the military and political administration of Sam Neua.
and Phong Saly remained unresolved. During the next year the Royal Government wavered between a policy of firmness advocated by the US and the policy of extreme caution advocated by France, the UK, and the ICC. After a long period of serious fighting and fruitless negotiations, the Government informed the ICC on 9 November 1955 that no agreement could be reached with the Pathet Lao, and that, therefore, the elections in Phong Saly and Sam Neua would have to be conducted without agreement. Because the authority of the Laotian Government had not been re-established in the two provinces, however, the National Assembly postponed the elections until December 1956.

By early 1956 the growing seriousness of the Pathet Lao rebellion, together with the mounting activity of the US in Laos, indicated that in future months Laos would occupy a crucial place in the politics of the cold war. The ICC for Laos tried to exert pressure on the Royal Government to avoid hostilities. But its influence on the Royal Government was seriously impaired by the attitude of the Commission members toward the Pathet Lao. The Polish member sided with the Pathet Lao in every dispute, and the Indian, reflecting Nehru's charitable approach to Asian neutralism, gave the Pathet Lao the benefit of every doubt. The Canadian, intent upon avoiding charges of favoritism, generally acceded to the Indian chairman. Often ignoring the most flagrant violations of the armistice by the Pathet Lao, the ICC tended to restrain the Royal Government on those rare occasions when it was considering more forceful action in the northern provinces.

An agreement between the PL and the RLG was finally reached on 19 November 1957. The authority of the Lao Government over the provinces of Sam Neua and Phong Saly was recognized, and the integration of 1,500 Pathet Lao troops into the Laotian Army was arranged. The Government had been agitating for the removal of the ICC for some time; in May 1958, it announced that all its obligations under the Geneva Agreements had been fulfilled and
that it would henceforth recognize the UN as the sole arbitrative body. The ICC advised the RLG that following the elections in May of 1958 its task in supervising the Geneva Agreements on Laos would be fulfilled. The ICC, however, adjourned on 19 July 1958, without legally dissolving. Thus, although its members left the country, it was not disestablished but merely suspended.

In the next two years several efforts were made to reconvene the commission. Following the North Vietnam-Laotian border violence in January 1959, the Laotian Government formally protested against an alleged occupation of part of its territory by North Vietnamese troops and requested that a UN observation mission be sent to the disputed area. In turn, in a letter of 25 January to the Indian Chairman of the ICC for Laos, North Vietnam protested against an alleged Laotian violation of the frontier. The letter also accused the RLG of an infringement of the Geneva Agreements by "repressive measures" against the Neo Lao Hak Xat and by large-scale importation of US arms. It requested a reconvening of the adjourned ICC.

In a note to the UK in March 1959 the USSR suggested that as co-chairmen of the Geneva Conference they should request the ICC to resume its work of supervision and control as soon as possible. This request was seconded by Communist China who charged that, in threatening to resort to military means against the Pathet Lao, the RLG had committed a "serious violation" of the Geneva Agreements "tantamount to launching a civil war in Laos." The North Vietnamese Government similarly condemned the Laotian Government's action and demanded that the ICC return to Laos immediately. On 9 June 1959 the UK rejected the Soviet proposal. The RLG, said the UK, had consistently acted in accordance with the Geneva Agreements; the integration of the Pathet Lao troops in no way infringed the agreements.
On 10 June 1960, precursory to his later actions (see item 14 Nov 60), Prime Minister Nehru called for the reconvening of the ICC. Describing the situation in Laos, Nehru said that some of the Indo-Chinese states had been subjected to "outside pulls" which had become "stronger on various sides" and had given rise to problems. The existence of the ICC, he charged would be "a sobering and balancing factor" in this situation. "Unfortunately for us, . . . we have accepted a certain responsibility in the Indo-Chinese States as chairman of the Commission," he continued, "and it is a difficult and embarrassing task; . . . the Government of India did not propose that the Commission should go against the will of the Laotian Government, but that advice should be given to that Government to agree to reconvene the Commission."1

No results followed from the initiative of the Indian Prime Minister, but in midsummer the situation came dramatically to a head. The Kong Le coup, which opens the following chronological summary of the last six months of Laotian history can only be considered in the context of past developments in the ICC, the PEO, and Basic US National Policy. As the following should convincingly prove, a strong causal nexus exists between recent Laotian history and the struggle of the power Blocs; a struggle in which the three skeins traced above play no little part.

9 Aug

Captain Kong Le and his 2d Laotian Paratroop Battalion, supported by armored units, seized complete control of Vientiane, the administrative capital of Laos. Pro-Western Premier Tiao Somsanith and other government and military leaders were in the royal capital, Luang Prabang at the time.

(U) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 229, 11 Aug 60; NYT, 10 Aug 60.

9 Aug

The Secretary of State, Christian Herter, advised the US Ambassador to Laos, Winthrop G. Brown, that the policy of the US Government was "to assist in any feasible way" any "determined effort which [the] legitimate government under [the] King's direction might make to restore its authority." Therefore, the Secretary "would not wish in any way [to] complicate or have our friends complicate" any such attempt. The prospect of a "neutralist government . . . dedicated to another fruitless round of negotiations with Pathet Lao" appeared to Secretary Herter as one fraught with danger to the independence of Laos.

(C) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 141, 9 Aug 60.

10 Aug

Kong Le's group, under the title of "High Command of the Revolution," established an Executive Committee headed by Kong Le to administer civil and military powers until a new government could be invested. In a radio broadcast, the paratroop captain stated his "most important goal" to be a "true neutral policy," and called for an end to Lao fighting Lao. He also advocated accepting assistance from all countries "for constructive projects." During 10 years of freedom, according to Kong Le, the Lao people had suffered injustices, misery, and maltreatment from a corrupt minority of political leaders who used foreign aid to enrich themselves. Foreign aid had also been used by the donors to exploit and enslave the Lao.

(C) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 268, 12 Aug 60 and 256, 11 Aug 60; NYT, 11 Aug 60, 3.

10 Aug

At a meeting in Bangkok General Phoumi Nosavan, Minister of Defense in the Somsanith Government and a staunch anti-Communist, revealed to an American Embassy officer his plans for military action to suppress the rebellion. Phoumi stated he planned an attack by paratroops to retake the Vientiane airport, followed by the employment of additional air-transported forces to "oust the revolutionary group." Phoumi's headquarters was to be in the town of Savannakhet.

(TS) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 221, 10 Aug 60.

10 Aug

The Secretary of State instructed Ambassador Brown to deliver the following message to Premier Somsanith:

My government . . . continues to support fully [the] legally constituted government of Laos. It considers rebellion an internal affair of Laos and is sure that, under his Majesty's leadership your government can restore peace to [the] Kingdom through quick and decisive action.

(The message was received by the Premier on 12 August, reportedly, with "great happiness.")

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 264, 12 Aug 60;
(C) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 150, 10 Aug 60.
The following actions were approved by the State and Defense Departments to implement the US policy of support of the Royal Laotian Government:

1. Designation of two senior Programs Evaluation Office (PEO) liaison officers to Forces Armée Lao (FAL) commanders at Luang Prabang and Savannakhet. These officers were to process requests for logistical support, furnish intelligence, and carry on PEO functions as practicable.

2. Use of Military Assistance Program Materials in Thailand for support of Royal Laotian Government military operations.

3. Reinforce CAT aircraft (contract aircraft) at Bangkok. One or two aircraft would be immediately available to transport members of the Royal Laotian Government.

The JCS authorized CINCPAC to employ actions 1 and 2 as he deems "responsive to the current situation."

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 161, 12 Aug 60; (S) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, 981358, 12 Aug 60, JCS Secretariat.

In a statement broadcast over a Hanoi station, the Central Committee of the Neo Lao Hak Xat Party (NLHX), the political head of the pro-Communist Pathet Lao, declared that its followers in Laos had avowed their full support of the coup staged in Vientiane by Kong Le.

The Party proposed that the forces of Kong Le's "revolutionary committee" and the Pathet Lao combine action to oppose all US "imperialist schemes." Further, the party suggested the formation of a coalition government composed of representatives of various nationalities and of "patriotic and progressive political parties."

NYT, 13 Aug 60, 4.

In a Laotian National Assembly meeting, the majority of the members passed a vote of "no-confidence" in the Somsanith Government. (On the next day members of the National Assembly flew from Vientiane to Luang Prabang to report the vote to King Savang Vathana.)

NYT, 15 Aug 60, 1.

In an appraisal of the Laotian situation for the JCS, CINCPAC made the following points:

1. By presenting himself as preferable to an outright Communist takeover or bloody civil war, the avowed neutralist Prince Souvanna Phouma stood a good chance of capturing the Kong Le movement and using it as a means to seize power.

    a. In view of Souvanna's record of favoring close relations with the Communist powers, his collaboration with the NLHX, and his opposition to the US training effort, he did not present a happy solution from the US point of view.
3. If Souvanna or someone "even worse" came to power, the US would "be confronted with a situation requiring reassessment of our current military policies." (S) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 1400452, 14 Aug 60, JCS Secretariat.

Ambassador Brown, in a message to the Secretary of State, attributed the fall of the Somsanith Government to the following causes: 1) the constant fighting of Lao against Lao; 2) "irregularity of pay"; 3) alleged corruption in the handling of US aid; 4) improperly conducted elections; and 5) unnecessary provocation of the Pathet Lao through too close an alliance between the Somsanith regime and the West, lack of contact with Hanoi and Peiping, and exclusion of the NIHX representatives from the Assembly.

With regard to Phoumi Nosavan, the Ambassador felt that "despite genuine efforts by Phoumi to clean up corruption and improve army administration, and his definite program of civilian type assistance by the FAL to [the] population, Phoumi has become to many the symbol of purely military power, thought to be often abused, and thus far unsuccessful in achieving the Lao's main desire, namely, peace at home and with his neighbors! An effort by Phoumi to take control by force would certainly be opposed by Great Britain, France, and the U.N.; Cambodia would be antagonized, and the Chinese and North Vietnamese Communists might intervene.

Therefore, concluded the Ambassador, "despite Phoumi's undoubted abilities and strong pro-Western attitude, it should be made unmistakably clear to him that [the] U.S. opposes any effort on his part at military effort [to] regain control of or split [the] country." (S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 288, 15 Aug 60.

Premier Somsanith submitted his resignation, and the King asked Souvanna Phouma to form a new Government (S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 290, 15 Aug 60.

Souvanna's Cabinet was approved by the National Assembly. He himself took the portfolios of Foreign Affairs and Defense in addition to the Premiership.

Souvanna told the Assembly that his aim was to restore internal peace in Laos and to pursue a "really neutral" foreign policy while respecting all treaties Laos had signed with foreign countries. He stated that his country would accept aid from all countries if it were given "without strings." Laos, he added, would foster all existing good relations and would seek new friendships with other countries if they were not "enemies of Laos."

In a message to Ambassador Brown, Under Secretary of State Douglas Dillon expressed dissatisfaction with the Souvanna Government, pointing out that it contained a known leftist, was weak and inexperienced, and was at the mercy of Kong Le. Apart from the international complications, the principal reason for withholding support of an attack against Vientiane had been the
overwhelming desire of the Lao to avoid bloodshed, and
doubts as to whether army commanders outside Vientiane
would follow Phoumi in an attack on the city (see item
10 August). If Phoumi attacked and failed, he might be
eliminated as a force in Laos and the Army might be
seriously divided.

In Dillon's opinion, all-out support of Phoumi was
unacceptable to the US. Aside from Viet-Nam and Thailand,
US allies would probably not support such a policy. And
return of Phoumi to power with US support in a bloody
coup would probably lead to the build-up of opposition
forces and his eventual overthrow. At the same time
US prestige would probably suffer seriously.

Mr. Dillon felt, therefore, that Phoumi and the FAL
should be held together as a counterpoise to the
situation in Vientiane. For this purpose he had
been authorized to give Phoumi limited financial support
to meet FAL's urgent need for supply. For the present,
the US would continue to work with the Souvanna Govern-
ment, preserving US assets in the country against the
day when action might have to be taken to prevent
unacceptable developments.

(TS) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 188, 17 Aug 60.

18 Aug

Leaflets dropped on Vientiane declared the formation of
the "Committee Against the Revolutionary Group,"
composed of military officers and with General Phoumi
Noeavan as its chairman. Accusing Kong Le of forcing
the resignation of the Somsanith Government and inviting
domination of Laos by the Chinese Communists, the
Committee claimed its purpose was to restore order in
Vientiane so that the government could function normally.
(U) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, G-33, 22 Aug 60.

18 Aug

Ambassador Brown recommended to the Secretary of State
that, in view of the danger of a clash between the
Souvanna Government and the Phoumi-led FAL, the King be
persuaded to bring pressure on both factions to
compromise. Dillon, as Acting Secretary, approved and
proposed that the Chief of the UN Mission in Vientiane
attempt to persuade the King. (See item 19 August.)

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 315, 17 Aug 60;
(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 203, 17 Aug 60.

18 Aug

The French Government's position on Laos, given by an
embassy officer to the Department of State, contained
the following points: 1) Souvanna was trying to give
"reasonable direction" to Kong Le's Revolutionary
Committee, his investiture as Premier had been carried
out in a manner assuring "maintenance of legality and
the Constitution," and he therefore should be "discretely
encouraged" so long as his policies did not endanger
Lao or Western interests; 2) Phoumi's movement in the
south posed a grave danger of hardening the Laotian
Government's position to the detriment of the West and
of inviting intervention by the Thais and South
Vietnamese; 3) the French commander at Seno had been
instructed to support only representatives of the legal
government; and, 4) support of Phoumi would endanger
Souvanna's achievement of what the French sought for
Laos--a neutral government oriented toward the West.
(C) Msg, SecState to Paris, 725, 19 Aug 60.
19 Aug  After agreeing on 17 August to a request by the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs (ISA) for their assistance in drafting a memorandum to be sent from the Secretary of Defense to the Secretary of State urging support of General Phoumi, the JCS forwarded, a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense along the desired lines. "Since," stated the JCS, "the situation may take a turn for the worse within the next few days, we recommend that General Phoumi be informed immediately that the U.S. will render him necessary support in his efforts to regain control of the Laos Government." The JCS also recommended that the necessary assistance, particularly aircraft, be provided to General Phoumi as soon as practicable. (See item 23 August.)


19 Aug  The Chief of the UN Mission in Vientiane, having agreed to seek the King's views on the current Laotian crisis, went to Luang Prabang (see item 18 August). Denied access to the King, he was received by the Secretary General of the Royal Palace who stated that His Majesty was not aware of negotiations between Phoumi and Souvanna and had to be "kept outside the conflict." Questioned about the King's refusal to sign the Royal Ordinance appointing members of the new Government, the Secretary General claimed that the Assembly had acted under military pressure and implied that no proper decision could be reached until the military dispute was settled. (An envoy dispatched by the new Government to report the confirmation of the Souvanna cabinet to the King was arrested upon his arrival in Luang Prabang.)

(U) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, G-31, 22 Aug 60; NYT, 20 Aug 60, 8.

19 Aug  The JCS provided CINCPAC with a copy of recently approved, consolidated and revised Terms of Reference for the PEO, Laos. (Up to this time the PEO had been operating under terms of reference set forth in a series of letters and messages during 1955; the new terms resulted from action initiated by CINCPAC in November 1959.)

(S) SM-797-60, derived from JCS 1992/826, 27 Jul 60, JMF 9155.2/5191 (23 May 60).

20 Aug  General Ouane Rathikone, who had resigned when the Souvanna Government was formed, accepted reappointment as Commander in Chief of the FAL, with Kong Le as his deputy commander.

NYT, 21 Aug 60, 19.

20 Aug  The British Foreign Office view of Laotian affairs was expressed to an American Embassy officer by the Head of the Southeast Asia Department as follows: 1) Kong Le was typical of Asian Nationalist leaders, and "after he has climbed down somewhat," an effort should be made to live with him; 2) Souvanna was more of a free agent than the US recognized and should be strengthened; and 3) reassertion of a position of power by Phoumi would endanger the long-term stability of the country and would invite another coup.

(S) Msg, London to SecState, 887, 20 Aug 60.
21 Aug  
CINCPAC commented to the JCS that a compromise between Souvanna and Phoumi seemed predicated on passive acceptance of adjustment to the left in Laos. US interests would best be served by refusal to recognize the Souvanna Government on the ground that it was not legally invested. The US should encourage negotiations but assist Phoumi with "money and discreet transportation through Thailand so that he could increase pressure on Vientiane and be ready to move quickly if disorder broke out there." The US should also encourage the King and other anti-Communist elements to hold out and make clear to the "French-British-Zellweger" types that pressure to secure royal approval of the Souvanna Government would not work.

The JCS concurred in CINCPAC's view that Phoumi should be supported. (See item 23 August 60.)

(S) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 202317Z, 21 Aug 60; (TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC 981872, 24 Aug 60 (JCS Secretariat).

22 Aug  
A US Embassy officer in Thailand reported to the Department of State that initially Thailand had reacted to the Kong Le coup with indecision. However, after meeting with Phoumi, Prime Minister Sarit of Thailand conferred with his generals on 15 August and decided to assist Phoumi in efforts to oust rebel forces from Vientiane. Up to this time, such assistance had been covert.

In the opinion of the Ambassador, the resolution of the Laotian crisis would be deeply significant for future US-Thai relations, because the Thai would blame the US for failure to act decisively in support of the pro-Western Somsanith Government if it were successfully replaced by a neutralist regime including Communists or pro-Communists.

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, Unnumbered, 22 Aug 60.

23 Aug  
Souvanna Phoumi, after repeated futile efforts to negotiate with General Phoumi and his group, flew in a US plane to confer with the General at Savannakhet. He was accompanied by General Ouane, a representative of Kong Le, a member of the UN staff, and a US military attache. Upon his return to Vientiane, Souvanna reported agreement had been reached. There would be no fighting, no more radio propaganda or leaflets, and, in a few days, "all would go to Luang Prabang before [the] King and political problems would be solved by constitutional means."

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 371, 23 Aug 60; NYT, 21 Aug 60, 1; 22 Aug 60, 4; 24 Aug 60, 5.

The Ambassador in Laos reported that arming of villagers around Vientiane, including those in areas friendly to the Pathet Lao, had been going on for some time, and had reached the point where this militia was a substantial military factor. Reportedly, Pathet Lao regulars and sympathizers had also been integrated into the defense of Vientiane.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 371, 23 Aug 60.

23 Aug  
At a State-Defense meeting on Laotian policy, the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff took the position that the US should give to Phoumi, as "our only hope in Laos," an expression "of our strong support to the point of fulfilling any reasonable
military request by him." Failure to do so would allow Phoumi to "slip and Laos will end up with a neutral, if not pro-Communist government" (see item 21 August).

The Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, who, with the Assistant Secretary for Far Eastern Affairs, represented the Department of State, agreed that "Phoumi despite his lack of popularity was our best bet as a staunch anti-Communist." He should, therefore, be given explicit "assurances of our complete support of him and willingness to honor quickly any reasonable request from him."

(TS) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 226, 23 Aug 60.

26 Aug

The Lord Privy Seal stated the British position on Laos to an officer of the US Embassy as follows: 1) a firm government should be established quickly because the Pathet Lao was becoming increasingly active; 2) Phoumi and Souvanna should be encouraged to work together to provide such a government, which could then deal with Kong Le from a position of strength; and 3) the US, while holding the FAL together, should avoid encouraging Phoumi to use force against the Souvanna Government.

(S) Msg, London to SecState, 1002, 25 Aug 60.

28 Aug

In response to a directive from Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA), the Chief, PEO Laos, submitted a plan for military action to revitalize the Laotian Army so that it could bring the Pathet Lao under control, and thereby create a favorable climate for civil administration and cold war operations. Essential to the success of the plan was adequate and timely fiscal and logistical support. The plan, which would take about 26 months to carry out, called first for reorganizing and adequately equipping the Laotian Army, then conducting field operations to defeat the Pathet Lao.

(S) Msg, CH, PEO LAOS to CINCPAC, 25R502, 28 Aug 60; (S) Msg, OSD to CINCPAC, DEF981980, 25 Aug 60 JCS Secretariat.

29 Aug

The National Assembly of Laos convened in Luang Prabang. Thirty-four assembly members came with Prince Souvanna from Vientiane and twenty-two arrived with General Phoumi Nosavan from Savannakhet. The first action of the Assembly was to accept the resignation of the Tiao Somsri Government. After King Savang Vathana had officially approved its resignation, he asked Prince Souvanna to form a new Government.

(NYT) 30 Aug 60, 6.

30 Aug

The US Ambassador to Thailand, Alexis Johnson, discussed the Laotian crisis with Thai Premier Sarit who was "bitter" over the failure of the US to give stronger support to General Phoumi. As a result of the course of events culminating in the return of Souvanna to power, Sarit was of the opinion that the Pathet Lao were in control of Vientiane, thus placing Communists on the borders of Thailand. This was a matter of profound concern for the Thai Government.

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 396, 30 Aug 60.
The National Assembly met at Luang Prabang and approved unanimously the new compromise Government of Souvanna Phouma. The new cabinet included five members of the Somsanith Government, including General Phoumi as Deputy Premier and Minister of Interior. The King accepted the new Government and its leaders departed, Phoumi to Savannakhet to liquidate his revolutionary committee, and Souvanna to Vientiane to explain the composition of the new Government to Kong Le. The paratroop captain, who at first stated his opposition to the inclusion of General Phoumi in the cabinet, announced his acceptance of it the following day.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 446, 31 Aug 60; NYT, 31 Aug 60, 4.
The US Ambassador in Paris provided the Secretary of State with the comments of the Chief, Indo-China Affairs, of the French Foreign Office on the situation in Laos. The French official indicated that his government was not happy with Phoumi's presence in the Laotian Government and was especially unhappy about his appointment as Vice Prime Minister. Souvanna would find his hands tied by Phoumi and be unable, therefore, to solve the major problems confronting the government. Moreover, Phoumi's elevation to the Cabinet risked the renewal of the same type of Communist harassment experienced by previous anti-Communist governments. The French official also stated that Kong Le's continued attempts to dictate to a legitimate Government of Laos could not be tolerated, but he was mildly optimistic that Souvanna could handle Kong Le.

(C) Msg, Paris to SecState, 891, 1 Sep 60.

The Department of State expressed concern to Ambassador Brown over the failure of Phoumi to return to Vientiane and take up his duties in the Government—occasioned apparently by fear for his personal safety. The Ambassador was requested, therefore, to inform the Department concerning 1) Souvanna's attitude toward Phoumi's return and 2) the power and influence wielded by Kong Le. (See item 5 September 60.)

(5) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 270, 2 Sep 60.

In a message to Ambassador Brown the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs appraised the Laotian situation at the time of the investiture in office of the Souvanna Government as follows:

1. While Kong Le had apparently accepted the new Government, his position was not yet clear, and until this question was resolved the scope for constructive action seemed limited at best.

2. While the US could not forget Souvanna's "tendencies toward self-delusion and shiftiness," he seemed again as in 1955 to "have wide support" as the leader whom the Laotians generally considered to be the best qualified to achieve their "deeply desired but elusive goal" of "quietude" after a period of prolonged conflict.

3. The new Cabinet represented an "exceptionally broad spectrum of Lao political life," encompassing "all shades except Pathet Lao," and two minor tribal groups. The only known leftist in the Cabinet was Quinim Pholsena, and it was significant that he had been shifted to a "relatively minor portfolio" from Interior (the post that he held in the Souvanna Government proposed on 15 August but never approved by the King). On balance the Cabinet was anti-Communist and pro-West. However, it remained to be seen whether it could function effectively or endure long with such disparate elements.

4. Souvanna had taken office under conditions which seemed favorable for his announced policy of restoring peace in the country and ending fratricidal
warfare. While it was not at all certain how representative was Kong Le's rebellion, it remained significant that it was generated from within an elite unit of the FAL, consistently assessed by the US as strongly anti-Pathet Lao.

5. The Kong Le coup had also pointed up personal frictions among senior Lao military leaders and serious dissatisfaction among junior officers. The US had to assume, therefore, that the FAL had been weakened for the time being and the Pathet Lao strengthened, morally and materially, by receipt of arms and by its infiltration of the Vientiane area.

6. The great question was the extent to which the Souvanna Government would attempt to placate the Communists. Souvanna had called for general amnesty and reconciliation, had sought a meeting with the Pathet Lao leader Prince Souphanouvong, and reportedly had mentioned integrating a Pathet Lao battalion into the FAL and 50 Pathet Lao civil servants into the Administration. The US feared that the Pathet Lao would seek to enmesh Souvanna in protracted discussions and eventually extract major concessions. While anti-Communist ministers, notably Phoumi, should help arrest such a trend, it should be remembered that in the past Souvanna had kept discussions to himself and had often acted on his own without Cabinet approval.

7. With regard to Souvanna's announced policy of "genuine" neutrality, the US must be prepared to see its allies, except for Thailand and Vietnam, either acquiesce in or welcome such a policy.

In spite of these hopeful signs, the Ambassador was directed to caution Souvanna that the US, while sympathetic to the efforts of the Premier to restore peace to his country, could not support him if he came under "substantial control" of the Communist-dominated Pathet Lao. (See item 5 September 60).

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 269, 2 Sep 60.

In response to the 2 September inquiry (see item) by the Department of State, the US Ambassador to Laos responded as follows:

1. Souvanna had assured the Ambassador that he was most anxious for Phoumi to come to Vientiane and take up his duties.

2. Kong Le's influence, though "difficult [to] define precisely," was "undoubtedly still considerable." His military influence would be significant so long as he remained in control of the 2d Paratroop Battalion and as long as it was located in a position to influence events in the Vientiane area. Kong Le's political influence remained strong because of the popularity of the stated objectives of his coup (see item 10 August 60). Souvanna, however, had "considerable influence" over the paratroop captain, and General Ouane was attempting "gradually [to] isolate Kong Le from his key officers." He believed, therefore, that although
Kong Le [was] still a key figure, his capacity to "cause trouble" was gradually decreasing.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 459, 3 Sep 60.

4 Sep

The Ambassador to Laos reported to the Secretary of State that the "essential next step" in Laos was to arrange Phoumi's participation in the Laotian Government to help make it work and to provide pro-Western influence and "back-stiffening." Phoumi had stated, to a PEO officer, that his reasons for not returning to Vientiane were 1) it was not safe, and 2) his return would constitute acceptance of a regime which was turning the country over to the Communists. The Ambassador therefore recommended that, in addition to seeking the clarifications and giving the warnings directed by the Department (see item 2 September 60), he 1) send Phoumi a message stating categorically that the US would not support him if he acted alone, and 2) try to persuade Premier Sarit of Thailand to urge Phoumi to enter the Government and fight for his objectives from within. (See item 5 September 60.)

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 462, 4 Sep 60.

5 Sep

The Pathet Lao broadcast its reply to Prince Souvanna's offer of negotiations. They listed the following four conditions that would have to be met before discussions could begin: 1) immediate dismissal of all right-wing ministers from the new Government; 2) an immediate end to fighting in Laos; 3) release of all political prisoners in the country; and 4) a policy of strict neutrality, diplomatic recognition of all countries regardless of their form of government, and acceptance of "unconditional aid" from any country.

6 Sep 60, 10.

In response to instructions from the Department of State (see item 2 September 60), the US Ambassador to Laos put the following questions to Premier Souvanna:

1. Could Phoumi be genuinely afraid for his safety? Souvanna replied, "Why should he be? He will sleep with me, eat with me, stay in my house."

2. What did he expect from the Pathet Lao? Souvanna replied that they should lay down their arms in order to be reintegrated into Laotian national life.

3. Did he expect the PL to ask for new elections? Souvanna answered that they probably would, in which case the Government was in an awkward position because, as a result of partly rigged elections, there was not a single Pathet Lao deputy. He did not, however, intend to have any Pathet Lao in the Government.

4. Did he expect the Pathet Lao to ask for diplomatic relations with Hanoi and Peking? Souvanna replied that, in view of the representation from Nationalist China, he did not see how he could avoid it. A possible alternative would be to invite Moscow but not Peking or Hanoi.

5. What was his attitude toward the Army? Souvanna replied it was essential to preserve it.
6. What did he think of the PEO? Souvanna said, "I think we should not renew the contract."
(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 465, 5 Sep 60.

5 Sep
In response to the recommendation of Ambassador Brown (see item 4 September 60), the US Ambassador to Thailand urged upon the senior Thai officer responsible for contacts between Sarit and Phoumi the desirability of Phoumi's taking up his position in the Government, stating that the US was prepared to furnish such support as feasible to help the Laotian Government control Kong Le. The Thai officer replied that Phoumi feared for his personal safety and would not go to Vientiane unless Souvanna lived up to an alleged agreement to appoint General Bounleuth as FAL Commander in Chief.
(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 427, 5 Sep 60.

5 Sep
In view of Phoumi's position as reported by the US Ambassador to Laos (see item 4 September 60), the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs directed the Ambassador to present to Souvanna the following US "views:"

1. The US desires to support the Souvanna Government with Phoumi as a member, but it does not see how any meaningful support could be rendered in a situation where the Laotian Government was unable to establish control of its administrative capital, and a key figure in the cabinet was unable safely to enter the city.

2. Government control of Vientiane could be achieved by appointing a commander of military forces in the city, personally loyal to the Government, and the movement of a battalion of new troops to Vientiane.

The Ambassador was instructed to inform Phoumi of this presentation but to warn him that the US would not support a separatist movement. (See item 6 September 60.)
(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 275, 5 Sep 60.

6 Sep
Pursuant to instructions of the Department of State (see item 5 September 60), Ambassador Brown sent Phoumi the following telegram:

Have today urged strongly on Souvanna importance insuring your safety Vientiane. He assures me you entirely safe. USQ believes your participation in government most important. US cannot support you in any separatist movement or effort resolve situation by force.
(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 476, 6 Sep 60.

6 Sep
The US Ambassador to Laos called on Souvanna and made the following points (see item 5 September 60):

1. Bounleuth should be given a high command post; to which Souvanna replied that he would be made deputy chief of staff.

2. The 2d Paratroop Battalion should be withdrawn from the city; to which Souvanna replied that the Battalion was in the process of withdrawing.
3. Troops satisfactory to the government should be brought into the city; to which Souvanna replied that there were already five or six battalions present.

In response to a question from the Ambassador as to what had been done to reassure Phoumi of his personal safety, Souvanna replied, "I have sent him [a] telegram asking he have confidence in me and return."

(5) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 474, 6 Sep 60.

7 Sep

The US Ambassador in Paris reported to the Secretary of State that although the French Foreign Office believed that Souvanna's overtures to the Pathet Lao had been unwise, it felt that Phoumi constituted a "greater danger" to FAL stability than Souvanna's dealings with the pro-Communist group. The French did not expect that these contacts would result in a change of the country's basic pro-Western orientation.

In outlining the difference between the French view of Phoumi and that of the US, the Foreign Office said its Government believed that Phoumi no longer represented a "useful political force." He had sought to establish personal control over the FAL and to use it for his own political ends. Phoumi himself, continued the Foreign Office, had revealed that he had prepared a coup in December 1959.

The French believed that Laos should have a strong government, but not a "strong man" and should devote itself to achieving stability through administrative and social reforms. Phoumi could play a "useful" role in Souvanna's Government as a counterpoise to Kong Le and to leftist pressures, but any political role beyond this "constituted danger for peace of area."

A further aspect of the Laotian problem that the French disliked was the Thai support of Phoumi. This could lead to SEATO involvement as the result of Thailand pursuing a "strictly national-interest policy" in Laos. In a treaty area, concluded the Foreign Office, no one country had the right to pursue a "unilateral" policy which might put other members in a difficult position.

(6) Msg, Paris to SecState, 966, 7 Sep 60.

7 Sep

Fearing that, unless Phoumi rejoined the Government soon, Souvanna would eject him from the Cabinet, the Secretary of State directed the Ambassador to Laos to inform the Premier that 1) Phoumi should be retained in the Cabinet, 2) that the US could support neither a Phoumi-led military attack on the legal government nor a government which appeared to be about to yield to impossible conditions imposed by a Communist-led Pathet Lao, 3) therefore, the steps recommended by the Department (see item 5 September 60) to assure Phoumi's safety in Vientiane should be taken (see item 8 September 60). In addition, the Ambassador in Bangkok was to attempt to persuade Premier Sarit to urge Phoumi to return to Vientiane. (See item 9 September 60.)

(6) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 285, 7 Sep 60.
8 Sep
In accordance with his instructions (see item 7 September), Ambassador Brown discussed Phoumi's participation in the Laotian Government with Souvanna. The Premier then agreed to further concessions designed to encourage General Phoumi to return to Vientiane: 1) General Bounleuth to be deputy chief of staff; 2) General Amkha to be deputy commander in chief instead of Kong Le; and 3) Phoumi to be allowed to bring with him a paratroop battalion of his own choice. (S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 487, 10 Sep 60; and 492, 8 Sep 60.

8 Sep
In Saigon two high Vientnamese Government officials expressed to a US embassy officer their opinion that the US had handled the crisis in Laos "abominably." The US, said the Vientnamese, had permitted a situation to develop which would lead to a Communist takeover of the country. They felt that the US should have "backed up" Phoumi. The two officials also asked if the US would let the Communists take over South Vietnam if a similar situation developed there. (S) Msg, Saigon to SecState, 558, 8 Sep 60.

9 Sep
Premier Sarit, accepting the proposal made to him by the US Ambassador in Bangkok (see item 7 September 60), sent a message to Phoumi urging him to return to Vientiane. (S) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 451, 9 Sep 60, and 462, 10 Sep 60.

10 Sep
In an interview at Savannakhet, an embassy officer and the US Military Attaché to Laos urged Phoumi to return to Vientiane to take up his position in the government. The two US representatives stated their case in consonance with the US position as described in cables to the Embassy in Laos (see items 5 and 7 September 60). Shortly before the end of the interview Phoumi stated that an announcement would be made in a few minutes of a revolution against the Souvanna Government in the name of Boun Oum.

In the announcement, broadcast from Savannakhet, Boun Oum declared his Revolutionary Party had seized power and abolished the Constitution to protect the country from the Souvanna Government which had opened the country to Communist aggression from North Vietnam. (S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 501, 502, and (U) 503, all 10 Sep 60.

10 Sep
The Secretary of State directed Ambassador Brown to seek an audience with King Savang and make the following points:

1. The US believed that Laos was, for the first time since independence, facing a real threat of dismemberment, a situation which would aid the PL on achieving its objective of taking over the country.

2. Under these circumstances the US saw no peaceful solution unless the King exerted his authority. The US wished to know how the King viewed the situation and what were his views and wishes. (See item 13 September 60.) (S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 294, 10 Sep 60.
13 Sep

In response to instructions of the Secretary of State, the Ambassador in Laos called on King Savang in Luang Prabang and urged that the King act to resolve the crisis confronting Laos (see item 10 September 60). The King refused to take action, stating that Souvanna had the power to restore order; let him do so or resign. According to the King, no reconciliation between Souvanna and Phoumi was possible. The former believed negotiations with the Pathet Lao were necessary; the latter believed they would be fatal. In the Ambassador’s opinion, the King clearly favored Phoumi and would “do his best by inaction [to] force Souvanna's resignation.” (S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 522, 13 Sep 60.

15 Sep

The Ambassador to Laos informed the Secretary of State that, in view of the critical state of Laotian affairs, the US should announce support of Souvanna “wholeheartedly and openly,” thereby supporting both the “greater segment of national feeling” and the “legally constituted government.” Such a policy would also command the respect of major allies and powerful neutrals such as India. It would also be the “surest way [of] keeping Kong Le and his cohorts under control . . . .”

The Ambassador believed that, before giving full support to Souvanna, the US should be assured by the Premier that there would be 1) no negotiations with the Pathet Lao until the Laotian Army was reunited, 2) no Pathet Lao in the Cabinet, 3) no recognition of Communist China, North Vietnam or the Soviet Union, and 4) no elections. In addition, Souvanna should agree to direct General Ouane to establish direct relations with regional military commanders in order to facilitate PEO support of the regions, and the PEO teams should be allowed to stay until their job was finished.

There were, according to the Ambassador, two alternatives, both unacceptable. The first was all-out support of Phoumi/Boun Oum, rejected because Phoumi was in revolt against the legal government and had lost stature as the leader of anti-Communist forces because of the revolt of his elite troops and advocacy of a policy of force rather than reconciliation. The second alternative, “inaction leading probably to [the] resignation of Souvanna,” was “uncertain and risky” because the Pathet Lao would take advantage of a gradually deteriorating situation.

The Ambassador recommended, therefore, that he be authorized to tell Souvanna that, if the Premier gave the necessary assurances, the US would support him completely, and that all aid to Laos would be channeled through his government. The Ambassador recommended also that if his recommendation were approved, he be allowed to see Phoumi personally to inform him of the decision to support Souvanna. (See item 16 September 60.)

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 536, 15 Sep 60.

15 Sep

In a message to the JCS, CINCPAC said that he had refrained from offering recommendations on the situation in Laos because he had regarded the problem as falling primarily into the political area. However, there had
been no satisfactory political solution. The FAL was beginning to disintegrate into factions, and its capacity to contain the PL was rapidly diminishing. This, said CINCPAC, obviously jeopardized all previous US efforts in Laos and left that country in a militarily untenable position. Therefore, CINCPAC recommended that certain measures be undertaken in order primarily to salvage the FAL and secondarily to assist the Laotians to preserve their country's independence. CINCPAC then listed five recommended measures which the JCS passed on to the Secretary of Defense on the next day. (See item 16 September 60.)

(S) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 142358Z, 15 Sep 60, JCS Secretariat.

16 Sep

In a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense the JCS expressed their belief that in view of the existing serious situation in Laos "an immediate and aggressive support of General Phoumi, which he has not yet received, would be desirable." However, the JCS pointed out, General Phoumi no longer held office in the "legal Royal Lao Government," and refused to join the Government. Accordingly, the JCS, in agreement with the views of CINCPAC (see item 15 September 60), proposed that the Secretary of Defense recommend to the Secretary of State as a matter of urgency that the following measures be undertaken:

"a. Commence supplying FAL units via Phoumi using PBO in lieu of Ouane/Souvanna channel . . . . .

"b. Advise Phoumi to prepare for submittal to King broadest possible successor government to Souvanna Phouma with distinguished, anti-Communist civilian (Boun Oum or Kou Abhay) as Prime Minister. If need be, Souvanna Phouma could be included in harmless post or given major diplomatic assignment to prevent exploitations by PL.

"c. Encourage Phoumi with King's blessing promptly to liquidate Kong Le coup group even at cost of some bloodshed.

"d. Persuade Sarit to arrange discreet transit of FAL troops through Thailand from Savannakhet to Vientiane.

"e. Prepare promptly establish new government as 'Neutral' not through rapprochement with bloc but through reiteration of traditional Laotian neutrality." (TS) JCSM-415-60, derived from JCS 1992/847, 16 Sept 60, JWP 9155.2/9105 (12 Aug 60).

16 Sep

In response to the recommendations of Ambassador Brown (see item 15 September 60) the Acting Secretary of State replied as follows:

1. He agreed with the Ambassador that the US could not give "full support to Boun Oum/Phoumi camp . . . . leading to their assumption of power," because it would probably drive Kong Le and his forces into alliance with the Pathet Lao, would alienate major allies and the Lao people, and would probably fail because Phoumi,
lacking internal popular support and international sympathy, might eventually be replaced by a neutralist government willing to make greater concessions to the Communists than those contemplated by Souvanna.

2. The Acting Secretary agreed with the Ambassador that inaction would be risky as it might prolong the existing stalemate.

3. Full support of Souvanna, as recommended by the Ambassador, was not acceptable to the Acting Secretary. Such action would vindicate Kong Le, would be opposed by the King, would have an adverse impact on Thailand and Vietnam, and would result in the US being "shocked by Souvanna" who just does not have the "qualifications...required to hold Laos against PL military and subversive tactics."

As an alternative, the Acting Secretary proposed that the US "seek [to] bring to life [a] new government which would be acceptable to [the] majority [of] patriotic elements." The Ambassador was accordingly instructed to seek an audience with the King, if by 19 September Souvanna's resignation was not imminent. In the audience, the Ambassador was to propose that the King call to Luang Prabang the leading figures of the country including Souvanna and Phoumi. They should try to make the Souvanna government as constituted on 30 August function, or, failing that, to devise a new government under a widely respected figure and including both Souvanna and Phoumi (see item 21 September 60).

Ambassador Johnson reported to the Secretary of State from Bangkok that he was "appalled at [the] additional adverse effects" such a policy as Brown's would have on Thailand.

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 316, 16 Sep 60;
(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 491, 16 Sep 60.

16 Sep

Ambassador Whitney forwarded to the Secretary of State the UK Foreign Office's comments on a possible solution of the Laotian crisis. The UK considered the Laotian problem to be an "internal" matter and was opposed to the idea of an appeal to the UN. Further, on the grounds that the risk of Communist intervention was too great, the UK opposed the idea of open intervention either unilaterally by a Western power or by SEATO. Although the UK believed Souvanna's chances of remaining Prime Minister were "waning," it considered it necessary for the West to "continue to push Souvanna."

(On 22 September the Ambassador concluded his report on the Foreign Office's reaction to the Laotian crisis. The UK claimed that the Souvanna Government had offered the possibility of some form of settlement with the Pathet Lao that would have brought neutrality, peace, and stability to the nation. The UK doubted that it would be possible for Phoumi and Souvanna to work together in whatever new government might emerge in Laos. Moreover, if the Phoumi faction regained its pre-August 9 influence, the UK believed that the same "pressures" that had caused the coup would build up again.)

(S) Msg, London to SecState, 1387, 16 Sep 60; (C) Msg, London to SecState, 1488, 22 Sep 60.
In response to reports that Pathet Lao forces were attacking Phoumi's garrison in the northeast Lao town of Sam Neua, the Acting Secretary of State directed that the military supplies (see item 22 August 60) available in Thailand for Laos be airlifted directly to the beleaguered garrison at once.

The Ambassador to Laos was to inform Phoumi, Souvanna, and the British and French Ambassadors that this action was purely military to meet a security threat and was not intended to have political implications.

(On 18 September 1960 Ambassador Brown reported the delivery of a plane load of ammunition and 125 paratroopers of Phoumi's 1st Battalion to Sam Neua.)

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 315, 18 Sep 60;
(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 554, 18 Sep 60.

Prince Souvanna declared that the PAL was attacking Sam Neua because the military commanders of that city were loyal to General Phoumi and Prince Boun Oum. On 20 September, acting under orders from General Phoumi, the Commandant of Sam Neua refused aid from the Royal Government.

NYT, 18 Sep 60, 16; 21 Sep 60, 4.

The US Ambassador to Laos, in commenting on the Acting Secretary of State's proposal for a new Lao Government (see item 18 September 60), remarked that "I just don't see any respected figure on the horizon whom [the] King is likely to choose who could have leadership qualities or authority necessary to control Kong Le, or to avoid being widely considered as [a] Phoumi/US stooge."

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 555, 18 Sep 60.

CINCPAC, in a message to JCS, referred to comments from the US Ambassador to Laos that indicated Phoumi was thinking of fomenting a general mutiny among PAL troops and junior officers. The addition of this disruptive force to the various stresses and strains then being applied to the PAL, said CINCPAC, could only accelerate the defection of the PL units in the PAL. Souvanna's attitude in this regard was, in CINCPAC's opinion, an additional argument in favor of CINCPAC's previous recommendation to support PAL units through Phoumi. (See item 15 September 60.)

(S) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 12147z, 19 Sep 60, JCS Secretariat; (S) Msg, Vientiane to JCS, 556, 18 Sep 60.

A Pathet Lao broadcast declared that all PL armed units had been ordered to cease military activities in northern Laos. This order, the broadcast said, was to affirm the movement's support of Prince Souvanna's neutralist government.

NYT, 21 Sep 60, 4.

The first open clashes between Souvanna's forces and those of the "Revolutionary Committee" took place near Paksan on 20 September. (The following day Premier Souvanna claimed that government forces had halted the advance of the attackers and that they
had withdrawn to Paksane. On the 22 September, the RLG announced that the government forces, led by Kong Le, had recaptured the town.)

NMT, 22 Sep 60, 1, 4; 23 Sep 60, 4.

21 Sep

In a televised address, Premier Sarit reviewed the Lao situation which Thailand had been "considering with utmost anxiety and concern because it has shown from the beginning obvious signs of Communist influence." Vientiane, said Sarit, was under Communist influence, a situation which, if it persisted, would place all Laos in Communist hands.

The Thais continued Sarit, had no desire to interfere in any manner in the internal affairs of Laos. But if Laos were to become a danger to Thailand, Sarit said, Thailand would defend itself and would receive assistance and cooperation from friendly nations of the Free World.

(U) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 523, 21 Sep 60.

21 Sep

Ambassador Brown informed Souvanna, in response to instructions from the Acting Secretary of State, that the US had decided to urge the King to bring together the leading personalities of the country in order to form a new government (see item 16 September 60). Souvanna replied that he was fully in accord with such a policy and that some reconciliation and agreement must take place. Asked if he would step down as Premier if the King desired it, Souvanna replied, "I am ready to retire."

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 579, 21 Sep 60.

22 Sep

The Ambassador to Laos, in accordance with instructions from the Acting Secretary of State, urged the King to call an assembly of notables for the purpose of forming a new government (see item 16 September 60). The King replied that the military situation had to be taken care of first, and that he was accordingly calling a meeting of senior military commanders to find a consensus for strong defense against the Pathet Lao. Then the political situation would be dealt with. The King said that the government would be reshuffled, but that he would like to keep Souvanna as Premier and have Phoumi as Commander in Chief of the FAL.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 593, 22 Sep 60.

22 Sep

The US Ambassador to France informed the Secretary of State that the French strongly believed that the US suggestion to King Savang that he form a new government represented "interference in Lao internal affairs." According to the French, the US had not used "all available means" to persuade Phoumi to cooperate loyally with the legal Government. To the contrary, Phoumi had enjoyed a position of favor resulting from direct provision of supplies and money by the US. Consequently, Souvanna had been unable to unite the country, and the Pathet Lao was profiting from the resulting weakness.

In strong terms the French expressed their "regret" that the US had not consulted them before proposing to King Savang the formation of a new government. Although admitting US primary responsibility in Laos, the Foreign Office pointed out that the French had
extensive political, economic, and military interests not only in that country but also in other parts of Southeast Asia. They were "keenly aware" that if this action of the United States should lead to a "critical situation" in Southeast Asia, France would also have to pay the consequences while being a "victim of policy" in whose formulation it had been permitted no voice.

(C) Msg, Paris to SecState, 1219, 22 Sep 60.

In a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense the JCS suggested that certain steps be taken "in order to have in being at the appropriate time a plan for the United States to offer Laos to assist that nation in defeating Communist insurgency." The JCS believed that when conditions in Laos became stabilized under a government friendly to the US, that government should be encouraged to adopt a national course of action designed to remove the insurgent threat. They believed that such steps were vital to the preservation of Laos' freedom, and important in excluding the necessity for implementing US or SEATO war plans. The JCS suggested that the following steps be taken:

a. The enclosed draft outline plan, prepared for the Royal Laotian Government, should be forwarded to the US Ambassador in Laos and his Country Team for study, comment and further development.

b. A joint State-DOD-ICA directive should be issued to cause the preparation of estimates of US personnel, materiel, and budgetary support required for execution of the national emergency plan of the Royal Laotian Government.

c. The expanded national plan of the Royal Laotian Government and the estimate of US support required should be reviewed jointly by the US Government agencies concerned.

d. Action should be taken to obtain the agreement and cooperation of France and the United Kingdom to include combined France/US training and operational advice to civil and military agencies.

e. When policy approval and budgetary support arrangements have been completed by US Government agencies, the US Ambassador to Laos should be required to initiate action to gain acceptance of the plan by the Royal Laotian Government.

f. Provided the plan for counter-insurgency operations is approved and implemented by the Royal Laotian Government, US personnel, materiel, and budgetary support should be provided according to the ability of the country to receive and effectively utilize such support.

In conclusion the JCS recommended that the Secretary of Defense act to obtain support of the draft outline plan and the Joint State-DOD-ICA directive, and
thereafter have both documents transmitted to the Ambassador and his Country Team and to CINCPAC for necessary action. (See items 5 October and 19 October 60.)

(TS) JCSM-419-60, derived from JCS 1992/482, 23 Dec 60, JMP 90:0:3360 (27 Apr 60).

23 Sep

Two officers of the US Embassy called on Boun Om and Phoumi in order to state the US policy position on Laos (see item 16 September 60), and to urge Phoumi to attend the meeting of military leaders as requested by the King. Phoumi replied that the US "badly misunderstood" the Savannakhet position. No separatists, Phoumi and Boun Om were loyal to the King but felt he should either appoint a strong leader or assume leadership himself. However, there was no need for a meeting of military leaders at Luang Prabang because the split in the country was political and not military. It was between Communists and non-Communists, with Vientiane already red "up to the neck."

Phoumi refused to attend the meeting of military leaders because 1) it would be useless, and 2) Luang Prabang was not safe.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 597, 23 Sep 60.

24 Sep

In an effort to achieve maximum accord on Laos, representatives of the US, the UK, and France met at the UN and produced a working paper which received the general approval of the respective foreign ministers. The paper stated the following common objectives: 1) prevent the collapse of Laos; 2) prevent strife between the non-Communist elements; 3) preserve the territorial unity of Laos; and 4) conserve the ability of Laos to resist Communist pressures from without and within.

Two steps to be taken by the three signatory powers immediately to meet the common objectives were: 1) promote a maximum degree of coordination, and 2) make it known that while the three Governments were acting independently there was unity among them.

A subsidiary problem, but one important to the common objectives of the three powers in Laos, was to end the critical shortage of petroleum products in Laos brought about by the closing of the Thai-Lao border on 9 August. For this purpose the respective ambassadors in Bangkok should bring appropriate pressure on the Thai Government.

(S) Msg, New York to SecState, Secto 9, 24 Sep 60; (S) Msg, New York to SecState, Secto 10, 24 Sep 60.

25-29 Sep

Premier Souvanna requested US help in airlifting petroleum products from Phnom Penh in order to circumvent the Thai embargo (see item 9 August 60). In response, the US Government directed Ambassador Johnson to urge Premier Sarit to permit free movement of civilian supplies to Vientiane. The Ambassador pointed out that the embargo had little effect on the Pathet Lao but was alienating Lao public opinion. The Thai Government replied that it would be willing to consider petroleum shipments to Vientiane for the "public welfare" upon receipt of a request for such shipments from the Lao Government.
On the 28th, the Thai representative announced at a meeting of the SEATO Council that a Laotian Government request for a shipment of petroleum products was "being considered" by his Government. (See item 26-27 October 60.)

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 608, 25 Sep 60;
(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 340, 26 Sep 60;
(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 559, 23 Sep 60, and 558, 29 Sep 60.

26 Sep

The Pathet Lao resumed its attack on Sam Neua. Although the garrison's commander described the situation as "very, very serious," he said he would take help and orders only from the Revolutionary Committee in Savannakhet. He admitted, however, that he had received only one company of paratroopers from Savannakhet since the crisis started. (See item 16 September 60.)

(On 28 September the town fell to Kong Le and the Pathet Lao.)

NYT, 27 Sep 60, 4; 29 Sep 60.

28 Sep

Ambassador Brown reported that several Laotian military leaders, including Ouane and Phoumi, met with the King at Luang Prabang. Phoumi and Ouane reportedly agreed to a cease-fire in the Pakse area and agreed to work together against the Pathet Lao; for the time being, however, they decided to keep their commands independent of each other.

The King was also reported to have indicated displeasure with Souvanna and a desire for a new government headed by someone else. According to Ouane, Phoumi proposed Boun Oum as Premier and Souvanna and Souphanouvong as Deputy Premiers. (S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 646, 29 Sep 60.

28 Sep

In a cable to the Department of State, the US Embassy in London reported the British Foreign Office opinions on possible results of proposed Phoumi-Souvanna talks in Luang Prabang (see item 16 September 60). Kong Le, said the British, would resist any arrangements which would give Phoumi the power to retaliate against the coup leader. Further, Phoumi would not give up his present "power position" unless he, too, could be assured against retaliation. Turning to the idea that Souvanna and Phoumi might work together under a mutually agreed upon Prime Minister, the Foreign Office suggested Phoumi Sananilkone as the man to head the new Government.

(C) Msg, London to SecState, 1563, 28 Sep 60.

29 Sep

Premier Souvanna admitted to Ambassador Brown that negotiations were under way for an exchange of diplomatic missions between the Lao and Soviet Governments. In response to Brown's warnings of the dangers inherent in such a course, Souvanna replied that the exchange of diplomatic envoys was necessary to satisfy the craving of the Lao people for a policy of neutrality.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 626, 27 Sep 60.
In a statement to the UN General Assembly, Prince Sihanouk, the Cambodian Chief of State, urged an end to foreign influences and pressures in Laos and suggested that the two "Bloc" agree to remove Cambodia and Laos from "the list of their zones of rivalry," and consider them as buffer states. This neutrality belt should be "seriously and solemnly" guaranteed by the Western Powers and their allies. (See item 12 December 60.)

(U) Msg, New York to SecState, 846, 30 Sep 60; NYT, 30 Sep 60, 8.
The Secretary of State directed Ambassador Brown to inform King Savang that, in view of the deterioration of military and political leadership in Laos, "no further payment of troops or other forms of aid [were] to be forthcoming until" the King 1) assumed leadership of the Government himself or named a Premier other than Souvanna, and 2) named a Commander in Chief who could unite the bitterly divided remnants of the FAL.

However, the Ambassador was informed that the suspension of aid did not preclude supplying troops in action against the Pathet Lao or on the front lines, even if the necessary supplies had to be procured from stocks outside the country. Specifically, the direct aid to Phoumi already authorized (see item 15 September 60) was to be continued. (TS, Eyes Only) Msgs, SecState to Vientiane, 365, 1 Oct 60; Vientiane to SecState, 662, 20 Oct 60; (TS, Eyes Only) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 358, 3 Oct 60. Both in C/JCS O91 (Laos).

In a statement broadcast over the Hanoi radio, the NLHX announced that, providing the following conditions were met, it was ready to negotiate with Souvanna's Government:

1) Establishment of a coalition Government, to include Pathet Lao representation in the Cabinet.

2) Establishment of diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, Communist China, and North Vietnam.

3) Laotian opposition to SEATO, and an end to the UN "presence" in Laos.

4) An end to attacks on the Pathet Lao movement and the release of all its members in prison.

5) Continued opposition to the Right-wing forces that rebelled against the neutralist Government.

Premier Souvanna announced at a press conference that he was sending representatives to resume control for the Government of Sam Nuea. These representatives were stopped by the Pathet Lao and prevented from carrying out their mission.

The US Ambassador to Laos severely criticized Premier Souvanna for dismissing Generals Phoumi, Bounleuth and 25 other officers. The Ambassador pointed out that the efforts of the past weeks for renewed unity and understanding within the FAL had been placed in jeopardy just as they were beginning to show signs of success. This situation was made worse by the fact that on 30 September Kong Le had told the press he had been urging Souvanna for several days to sign the dismissal order.

The Ambassador then emphasized the need for political discussions soon for the purpose of finding
agreement between the Souvanna and Phoumi factions. The Premier replied by urging the Ambassador to use US influence to persuade Phoumi to accept the Souvanna Government, which was the legal regime, and to disband the Revolutionary Committee at Savannakhet. (S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 658, 1 Oct 60.

3 Oct

Ambassador Brown, while agreeing that it was "imperative [to] get the King [to] bring political figures together and force unity" (see item 1 October 60), warned the Secretary of State that forced removal of Souvanna was unwise because 1) neither the King nor any political figure could be found to replace him, and 2) it would "have consequences in terms [of] PL insurgence . . . almost impossible to combat in [the] present stage [of] disintegration [of the] country and [the] FAL.

(TS, Eyes Only) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 669, 3 Oct 60, JCS 091 (Laos).

3 Oct

After renewed attacks by Kong Le, the JCS authorized CINOPAC to take immediately any or all of the following actions to prevent another defeat, which could be fatal to the portion of the FAL loyal to Phoumi:

1. Provide necessary arms and supplies.
2. Deliver the Lao military battalion training at Lopburi, Thailand, to Phoumi at whatever location CINOPAC felt best.
3. Air-lift other Phoumi forces as desirable.
4. Direct Chief, PEO, to attempt to persuade Generals Ouane and Phoumi to make a joint effort to save Laos. (See item 4 October 60.) (S) Msg, JCS to CINOPAC, 983752, 3 Oct 60, JCS Secretariat.

4 Oct

The US Ambassador in Paris reported French Foreign Office reactions to the situation in Laos. The French believed that the situation required the US, the UK, and France to give "joint and energetic" support to a Laotian program of national unity in support of the King and to a legal government from which the PL would be excluded. The French also emphasized that they saw no alternative to Souvanna. To remove him in the present crisis, they said, could lead only to "chaos."

The Foreign Office pointed out that the guarantees they had received from Souvanna not to include the PL in his Government and to seek the unity of his country were in accord with the Tripartite Agreement on Laos (see item 24 September 60).

Souvanna had done all he could to unify the nation, the Foreign Office continued, but Phoumi had reneged from the very start on his dutifully agreed upon at Luang Prabang. Souvanna was in a "very weak" position. The Army, badly split, was becoming increasingly ineffectual. Phoumi was losing control even over the troops in the south, and this, the Foreign Office pointed out, left the field "dangerously" clear for the Pathet Lao. (According to French
reports, on three occasions Phoumi's troops had defected to the PL, and it was the French belief that in the 2d military region, the PL could do just about anything it wished.)

Although the French had no objection to the US proposal to make a third attempt (see item 16 September 60) with the King to reconcile Souvanna, Phoumi, and Boun Oum, they had no "illusion" concerning its chances of success. They did not believe Phoumi would agree to a reconciliation and pointed out that his proposal for Souphanouvong's acceptance in the Government was clearly not consistent with the three-power agreement. The US proposal to advise King Savang to appoint a new Government and to inform him that the US would not support Souvanna would be, according to the French, the "height of folly" at this time. Further, the Foreign Office believed that in taking this step without previous consultations with the French, the US was violating the "parallel action" envisaged in the Tripartite Agreement. It was "obvious," the Foreign Office declared, that there was "no unity between Western allies."

(TS) Msg, Paris to SecState, 1358, 4 Oct 60, JCS 091 (Laos).

4 Oct

Pursuant to instructions from the JCS (see item 3 October 60), CINCPAC ordered Chief, PEO: to approach Phoumi and Ouane and attempt their rapprochement; to employ CAT airlift for the movement of Phoumi's supplies and personnel; and to deliver the Lopburi contingent to Phoumi at the place where it was most needed.

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to CHPEO/Laos, 7049, 4 Oct 60, JCS Secretariat.

4-5 Oct

Two influential Thais, SEATO Secretary General Pote Sarasin and Acting Foreign Minister Boon Charoenchai, expressed approval of Sinhanouk's proposal for a "neutral belt" composed of Cambodia and Laos (see item 29 September 60). This provided that the two nations became truly "neutral" and not merely "neutralist" as a cover of respectability for Communist control. Sarasin pointed out that, in view of Phoumi's military and political ineffectiveness, the "neutral belt" might be the "only hope of salvaging anything" in Laos.

(U) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 501, 4 Oct 60; and 605, 5 Oct 60.

5 Oct

The Vientiane radio broadcast an announcement that the King had approved establishment of diplomatic relations between Laos and the Soviet Union.

(U) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 674, 5 Oct 60.

5 Oct

Enclosed in a letter to the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense transmitted a copy of a memorandum from the JCS to the Secretary of Defense on counter-insurgency operations in Laos, along with CINCPAC's draft plan and a proposed State-Defense-ICA message (see item 23 September 60). The Secretary stated that he agreed in principle with comments of the JCS and wished to make their recommendations and CINCPAC's draft plan available to the Secretary of State. The Secretary of Defense requested the Secretary of State's early comment on, or concurrence with, the proposed message. (See item 19 October 60.)

(TS) Ltr, SecDef to SecState, no subj, 5 Oct 60, JMF 9660/3360 (27 Apr 60).
In accordance with the instructions of the Secretary of State, the Ambassador to Laos in an audience with the King informed him of the cessation of US military aid and the conditions for its resumption (see item 1 October 60). In response, the King replied that he could not act on either condition. He would not take steps to bring about the replacement of the Souvanna Government nor would he appoint a new military commander.

In spite of repeated urging by the Ambassador who said that "if no action [were] taken all might be lost," the King, as he had done in the past, protested that as a constitutional monarch there was nothing he could do unless the Government resigned.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 683, 6 Oct 60.

The US Ambassador in Bangkok recommended to the Department of State that, "if assessment of [Phoumi's] capabilities [were] favorable," covert and semi-covert support be provided him as an intermediate stage before undertaking "exclusive overt support."

In either event the US should be prepared to give "categorical assurances we would back up [the] Thai and come to their aid if they got in trouble" participating in such action.

The Ambassador recommended that in order to make such intervention as effective as possible, "direct and effective operating relationships" be established between PEO and the US Embassy in Thailand.

(US, Eyes Only) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 615, 6 Oct 60, CJO'S 091 (Laos).

The US Ambassador in London informed the Department of State that, in the opinion of the British Foreign Office, it would be better if Phoumi were either "utterly" defeated or "integrated" into the Government, because his continuing opposition was forcing Souvanna to rely upon Pathet Lao support, thus giving the latter an opportunity to spread its influence. The "elimination" of Phoumi would permit Souvanna to take a stand independent of support from the PL, thereby placing him in a position of "increased strength" for negotiations with the pro-Communist group. At the same time, however, the Foreign Office believed that nothing should be done to "rupture" the cease-fire agreement, which they viewed as the "best hope" for the future peace and stability of the country.

From the British viewpoint, Souvanna was now the only leader who could bring Laos through as a non-Communist, although neutralist, country. There was no one else at the moment under whom disparate factions would be prepared to work.

The British believed that the US was being "somewhat disingenuous" in cutting off aid to Laos. Phoumi, the British said, would continue to obtain help from Thailand. Souvanna's Government, on the other hand, would suffer from an aid cut, to the profit of the Pathet Lao.

(S) Msg, London to SecState, 1700, 6 Oct 60.
In response to an inquiry from the JCS, CINCPAC recommended against the reinforcement of Phoumi's forces either by the Thai Police Aerial Resupply Unit or by the Thai Ranger Battalion because such action would constitute an invitation to overt intervention by the Viet Minh or Chinese Communists.

In CINCPAC's opinion, however, decisive action was needed to prevent all FAL forces loyal to Phoumi from being "disintegrated" piece-meal by the Kong Lei/Pathet Lao forces. This "disintegration" could only be prevented by outside support, including leadership by US advisers at battalion level. Mere supply, pay, and lift would not be enough in view of the serious weakness of Laotian military leadership.

Since military action could not take place in a vacuum, CINCPAC proposed the following political and military steps:

1. Ambassador Brown should tell the King that the US, determined to prevent the loss of Laos to Communism, was directing all its aid to the Savannakhet forces. If the King wished to cooperate he should immediately proclaim a new Government with Phoumi as Minister of Defense.

2. With or without the King, the US should move vigorously to support the Savannakhet group, including assignment of advisers at the battalion level.

3. If the King did not go along and if the Lao troops, even with US leaders, failed to fight, the US should abandon Laos and concentrate on the defense of Vietnam and Thailand.

(MSG) CINCPAC to JCS, 230446, 6 Oct 60; (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 8352, 7 Oct 60, JCS Secretariat.

In view of the King's unwillingness to assume the responsibility requested of him (see items 1 and 6 October 60), high ranking representatives of the JCS, CIA, Department of Defense, and Department of State met and agreed to make one last, desperate effort to work with Souvanna "as the legal facade of legitimate government," while supporting Phoumi and other anti-Communist forces at the same time. But continued support by the US for Souvanna was to be contingent upon "his concurrence with the following actions:"

1. Movement of the seat of government to Luang Prabang where it would be near the King and not emperiled by the Kong Lei threat.

2. The taking of all feasible steps to prevent Kong Lei from initiating action against any FAL units, and desisting immediately from any threat or hostile act against Savannakhet.

3. The taking of all feasible precautions, through Ouane and his forces, with the advice of the PEO, to preserve the Treasury assets of the Government

- 28 -
4. The desisting from negotiations with the Pathet Lao until the Government was able to talk from a position of unity and strength.

CINCPAC, with the cooperation of Chief, PEO, and Chief, JUSMAAG, Thailand, was directed to supply General Phoumi's forces directly, because the precarious political situation precluded supply through the centralized military agencies of the Laotian Government. Special military and political advisors were to facilitate the logistical operations and to insure that Phoumi understood the "overall plan and concept" under which direct supply was to be undertaken (see item 8 October 60). In particular, Phoumi was to understand that he would be subject to Souvanna Government if it met the conditions set forth above. The Department of State was to inform the French, British, and Australian Governments of the "overall plan;" the Ambassador in Thailand was to inform the Thai Government.

A special mission including the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs Parsons, Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs Irwin, and the Chief of Staff of CINCPAC, Vice Admiral Riley, were to go to the Far East to consult with the Ambassador, explain the "thinking and details" of the plan, and carry out "any other representation deemed advisable."

(TS) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 384, 8 Oct 60.

7 Oct

Premier Souvanna stated to Ambassador Brown that the Laotian Government was about to begin negotiations with the Pathet Lao (see item 11 October 60). These talks, according to the Premier, would be confined to 1) acceptance of the NLH as an equal member of the body politic through supplemental elections to the General Assembly; and 2) integration of a Pathet Lao battalion into the FAL.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 694, 8 Oct 60.

8 Oct

The JCS directed CINCPAC to furnish the operational and logistic guidance called for in the US policy decision to support General Phoumi (see item 7 October 60) as follows:

1. The Acting Chief, PEO, was to establish as large a permanent mission as he considered necessary with Phoumi's forces in order to carry out the missions. PEO personnel were not to serve in combat, however.

2. Transport of supplies was authorized and directed to Phoumi's forces in the 3rd and 4th Military Regions and to anti-Communist elements in the other regions as feasible.

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, 984040, 8 Oct 60, JCS Secretariat.

8 Oct

In response to an inquiry from the JCS, CINCPAC stated that: 1) US military advisory personnel in Laos were sufficient to provide adequate effective field advisory support to Phoumi in the operations envisaged; and 2) Laos MAP supplies at Bangkok were
not adequate to support combat operations, but would be so when outstanding PEO requisitions had been filled.

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, 939374, 7 Oct 60;
(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 8781, 8 Oct 60, JCS Secretariat.

8 Oct

The Secretary of State, in a message to Ambassador Brown, reported preliminary personal reactions from the British and Australian Embassies in Washington on the US proposed plan of action in Laos (see item 7 October 60).

Both Embassies had questioned the feasibility and desirability of moving the Government to Luang Prabang. They had seen a conflict between that proposal and the condition that Souvanna take steps to exert authority over Kong Le, and they had expressed concern that Kong Le, if isolated in Vientiane, would move even closer to the PL.

They had felt that Souvanna would have difficulty stopping negotiations with the PL whose representatives were already in Vientiane. The Australian Embassy expressed the opinion that, rather than preclude negotiations entirely, the US should try to set "clearly defined limits" for Souvanna, beyond which he could not go in negotiations with the PL.

(TS) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 389, 8 Oct 60.

9 Oct

As instructed, the Ambassador to Laos presented a démarche to Souvanna (see item 7 October 60). The Premier stated he had already considered moving the government to Luang Prabang and thought such a move could be arranged. He indicated there would be no difficulty in restraining Kong Le and safeguarding the assets of the government. To suspend negotiations with the Pathet Lao, however, would be very difficult, as the arrangements had already been made, and it was important to reach a settlement as soon as possible.

(TS) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 708, 9 Oct 60.

11 Oct

Ambassador Brown reported that negotiations between the Laotian Government and the Pathet Lao opened at the Prime Ministry in Vientiane. Quinim, recognized as the most leftist Cabinet member, according to the Ambassador, headed the Laotian Government delegation.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 744, 14 Oct 60;
(U) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 718, 11 Oct 60.

11 Oct

The Secretary of State informed Ambassador Brown that the French had given "general support" to the US proposed plan of action in Laos (see item 7 October 60). The French believed, however, that before the government was moved to Luang Prabang, definite means of governing and controlling Vientiane should be established. According to the French, there were "clear" indications of Kong Le-PL collaboration, and they believed it would be particularly serious to leave Kong Le alone in the capital without adequate control, especially because US aid to Phoumi had increased the risk of throwing Kong Le into the PL.
camp. Although the French had always regretted that Souvanna had entered into negotiations with the PL, they now felt that these negotiations should be "dragged out" so that Souvanna could obtain breathing space in order to reconstitute national unity. (S) Msg. SecState to Vientiane, 400, 11 Oct 60.

14 Oct

Assistant Secretary Parsons reported to the Secretary of State that the suspension of US aid to Laos was having the following unfavorable consequences:

1. The Laotian Government, beset by the Pathet Lao and the Phoumi rebels, might accept an aid offer from the recently arrived Soviet mission.

2. The Laotian Government was resorting to deficit financing to pay its bills, thereby endangering the stability of the currency and the whole economic structure of the country.

3. The Laotian Government might seek to embarrass the US by questioning the legality of US support for the Phoumi rebel group under Mutual Security legislation which specified aid to "nations" but not to "groups."

Parsons had therefore authorized, as a stop-gap measure, release of about $100,000 for various non-controversial economic projects. (S) Msg. Bangkok to SecState, 663, 14 Oct 60.

14 Oct

Ambassador Johnson reported to the Secretary of State that Thai Premier Sarit was encouraged by the US demarche to Souvanna (see item 9 October 60) and by other indications that the US was moving to deal with the Laos situation. While not specifically approving US action, Sarit stated he was prepared to cooperate fully.

At the same time, the Ambassador warned that suspension of US aid to Laos (see item 1 October 60), plus the establishment of diplomatic relations between Laos and the Soviet Union (see item 5 October 60), had given the impression to Thailand that Laos was rapidly passing into the Communist orbit. (S) Msg. Bangkok to SecState, unnumbered, 14 Oct 60.

14 Oct

In a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense the JCS recommended that he approve terms of reference, as a basis for coordination with the Department of State, for the assignment of a US military advisor to General Phoumi. The civilian US Special Advisor to the General, said the JCS, had expressed the view that General Phoumi needed and would welcome a full time US Military Advisor. CINCPAC and the interdepartmental working group on Laos had agreed to such an appointment. The terms of reference proposed by the JCS were as follows:

A. . . . [The selected officer] is designated the personal U.S. military advisor to General Phoumi Nosavan. In this latter capacity he is authorized and directed to report directly to CINCPAC, informing Chief, PEO as appropriate. His designation for this
additional function will be transmitted by separate action through appropriate official channels.

b. He will maintain closest possible continuing liaison with General Phoumi, for the purpose of furnishing information to CINCPAC on General Phoumi's plans, activities, and requirements, and in order to assist General Phoumi.

c. In the execution of this responsibility, his functions will include, but not be limited to, the following:

1. Advise and assist General Phoumi in immediate measures to improve the morale and combat efficiency of forces under General Phoumi's control.

2. Advise and assist General Phoumi in the planning and direction of military operations.

3. Assist and advise General Phoumi in the orderly planning of necessary logistic support; and in the effective utilization of such supplies as are delivered.

CINCPAC was directed by JCS to issue the "terms of reference" stated above as instructions to the officer designated as Phoumi's military advisor.

(3) JCSM-468-60, derived from JCS 1992/855, 14 Oct 60, JCS 9155.2/9105 (12 Aug 60); (S) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, 984377, 14 Oct 60, JCS Secretariat.

16 Oct

Assistant Secretary Parsons, reporting the findings of his visit to Laos to the Secretary of State, described the three factors needed to salvage the situation in Laos: 1) Souvanna must acquiesce in US policy and actions for as long as he remained in office; 2) the anti-Communist elements must regain control of Lao Government policy and defeat a greatly strengthened Pathet Lao; 3) The US must support anti-Communists in Laos and at the same time avoid indictment in the UN, further cleavage in SEATO, and alignment of the French and British against the US.

Parsons warned that Souvanna could place the US in an impossible situation by demanding a halt to US support of Phoumi or demanding the withdrawal of the PEO. Moreover, Phoumi's forces had not performed well in combat, and anti-Communist leaders in Vientiane did "little but wring their hands."

The US should, concluded Parsons: 1) find the basis for resuming budgetary support of the RLG; 2) eliminate Souvanna's power to destroy US policy at any moment by requesting removal of PEO and cessation of aid to Phoumi; 3) extricate itself from the untenable position of supporting a group of rebels, for which support the US could be "hailed defenseless
before the UN;" and 4) accept the fact that only over
the long haul could military forces be built up to
the point where they would have the will and capacity
to restore the status quo ante the Kong Le coup.

(Assistant Secretary of Defense Irwin, in a
report submitted the previous day, had differed with
Parsons regarding aid for Phoumi. While recognizing
the political risks involved, he recommended that the
overriding consideration should be adequate support
of the General; the additional effort needed to make
such support effective should be made since it did not
create a risk but simply increased the risk.)

(TS) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 668, 15 Oct 60,
and 673, 16 Oct 60.

17-18 Oct

In accordance with instructions from Assistant
Secretary Parsons, Ambassador Brown urged Souvanna
to agree to distribution by the US of supplies direct to
all Laotian units, including those of Phoumi. The
Premier agreed, provided Phoumi recognized the
Souvanna Government. A decision would be deferred,
however, pending the return of an emissary sent to
Phoumi to seek such recognition.

To encourage a favorable decision, the Ambassador
recommended the following further action to the
Secretary of State: 1) Tell Souvanna that resumption of US aid was dependent upon inclusion of aid for
Phoumi; 2) Pending a reply from Souvanna on (1) above,
load supplies for earliest delivery to Phoumi because
of the Pathet Lao build up in the north; 3) Tell
Phoumi he must make a reasonable response to Souvanna's
feeler.

(TS) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 676, 17 Oct 60;
(TS) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 765, 17 Oct 60; (TS)
Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 420, 17 Oct 60; (TS) Mag,
Vientiane to SecState, 771, 18 Oct 60.

18 Oct

The Secretary of State informed Ambassador Brown that,
for reasons of expediency, the US Government had
accepted "the inevitable of working with Souvanna
Phoumi as the constitutional and legally installed
Prime Minister." The course of action and desired
conditions set forth on 7 October (see item) would
remain as valid and basic goals, but could not be
achieved as soon as desired. In conformity with this
concept, the Secretary of State listed the following
tasks as appropriate: 1) continue to press Souvanna
to extricate himself from the influence of Kong Le;
2) failing this extrication, "take whatever feasible
steps present themselves to encourage his replacement
in favor of another legally appointed Prime Minister;
3) remove as much of the treasury as possible from
Vientiane; 4) continue efforts to control or neutralize
Kong Le; as a minimum remove him from Vientiane;
5) exert maximum pressure to slow down and, if
possible, sabotage Souvanna's negotiations with the
Pathet Lao; 6) urge Phoumi to dissolve his Revolu-
tionary Committee "voluntarily," so that he would
cease to be legally a rebel.

As a result of this new evaluation, the Secretary
of State authorized Ambassador Brown to lift the
"temporary embargo" resulting from suspension of
"certain categories" of aid to Laos.

(TS) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 425, 18 Oct 60.
At a meeting with Assistant Secretary Irwin and Admiral Riley at Ubon, Thailand, General Phoumi stated his intention to gain control of Laos by "retaking" Vientiane. This attack, to be undertaken by troops of the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Military Regions, would require US equipment and supplies.

Irwin informed General Phoumi that aid to his forces would be limited because of the "proper relationships" maintained by the US toward the Vientiane Government which had declared Phoumi and his supporters to be rebels. The general should, therefore, avoid "independent and uncoordinated actions" and follow closely the guidance of his US military and political advisors. Admiral Riley emphasized that the "unique political situation" compelled the US to "exercise restraint offensively" until the anti-Communist element became the legal government. Until such a government was achieved Phoumi should concentrate on the following:

1. Consolidation of strength in the South to achieve an "impregnable defense against the Pathet Lao and Kong Le."

2. Unification of all anti-Communist elements in the country.

3. Preparation of "offensive plans for later implementation after the consolidation stage." These plans should be submitted, via the US military advisor, to CINCPAC for approval.

Phoumi replied that his views coincided with those of the Admiral, but imminent Pathet Lao attacks and the rapid movement of Vientiane to the left, demonstrated by the installation of a Soviet embassy there, might make "quick, effective action" necessary. (To which Irwin and Riley replied that no direct attack to capture Vientiane should be undertaken except with the approval of a new, legal, anti-Communist Government.)

(ES) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 686, 18 Oct 60.

Assistant Secretary Irwin, reporting the findings of his trip to Laos, concluded that no improvement could be expected in the US position there so long as Souvanna remained Premier. The US should therefore bring about Souvanna's resignation or removal through the King's intervention. Until such a resignation took place, the US would be in the politically hazardous position of maintaining relations with the legal Laotian Government while giving covert support to a force in rebellion against it. Although Irwin agreed with Parson's estimate of the dangers involved (see item 16 October 60), he felt that the US should not be deterred from rendering "substantial assistance" to Phoumi in a "careful and cautious manner" so long as Souvanna remained in power. Failure to do so would risk the ultimate loss of Laos to the Communists.

Action already taken, such as the assignment of PEO personnel to Phoumi's forces, had been helpful,
but in Irwin's opinion, the US should give serious consideration to further steps such as assignment of US military advisors at battalion level and the employment of "a few" US, Thai, or Vietnamese volunteers.

(TS) Msg, Saigon to SecState, 839, 18 Oct 60.

In a message to CINCPAC, Admiral Riley stated his disagreement with the Laotian policy advocated by Assistant Secretary Parsons (see item 16 October 60). Riley believed that the overriding consideration was to prevent, by all feasible means, the loss of Laos to communism, and that limited aid would fail to sustain the anti-Communist forces.

In view of the failure of Souvanna to comply with the conditions promulgated by the US (see item 7 October 60), Riley urged as an alternative course of action securing Souvanna's removal and staunchly supporting an anti-Communist government established by the King. Pending the establishment of such a government, Riley recommended that the US accept the political risk involved and give adequate support to the anti-Communist forces in Laos.

(TS) Msg, COMUSJAPAN to CINCPAC, 191615Z, 19 Oct 60, JCS Secretariat.

Ambassador Brown reported to the Secretary of State that Souvanna had asked the UN representative in Laos whether the UN could furnish military observers to investigate reports of incursions by the Viet Minh into Laos. The Premier was particularly anxious to forestall a return of the International Control Commission. The UN representative replied that he would transmit the request to the Secretary General, but he was not hopeful that anything would be accomplished by the request.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 785, 19 Oct 60.

Souvanna agreed to a US proposal that supplies be sent direct to military forces and that pay be disbursed through Vientiane. He conditioned his agreement, however, with the proviso that such aid not be used against him and that the US discourage any attempt at revolt by FAL officers of the 1st Region (Luang Prabang). These conditions were accepted by the US.

(TS) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 787, 19 Oct 60;
(TS) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 19 Oct 60.

The Secretary of State, in a letter replying to the letter of the Secretary of Defense which forwarded a memorandum of the JCS on Counter-Insurgency Operations in Laos, stated that, in view of the existing crisis in Laos, he did not believe "our people on the spot" should be pressed to assume a task that could not be implemented (see items 23 September and 5 October 60). The plan was nevertheless being sent to Ambassador Brown for "possible future use." He felt certain, said the Secretary of State, that "if and when" the Laotian situation was stabilized, agreement could be reached between the State and Defense Departments on a joint message along the lines suggested by the JCS.

Ambassador Whitney forwarded to the Secretary of State the UK view that Souvanna and his plan to negotiate settlement with the Pathet Lao was the "only possible and practical course" for Laos. The UK appreciated the US desire to balance pro-Communist pressures on Souvanna, but had little regard for, and even less confidence in, Phoumi. The British had "little faith" in the Laotian King, and feared that Souvanna's failure might result in greater Pathet Lao influence. The UK believed that Kong Le was supporting Souvanna who desired to establish a neutral Laos not under Pathet Lao domination. But Kong Le might not continue this support, the UK warned, if there should be an attempt to reinstate Phoumi, whom Kong Le considered "corrupt and beyond the pale."

(C) Msg, London to SecState, 1920, 21 Oct 60.

The Secretary of State informed Ambassador Brown that the US was opposed to UN consideration of the Laotian situation. Such action could cause the US great embarrassment and would allow the Soviet Bloc to portray the implementation of US policy in Laos as a case of intervention in the internal affairs of Laos and contrary to the spirit and letter of the UN Charter. Accordingly, the Secretary instructed the Ambassador to express US opposition to an appeal by Laos to the UN.

(TS) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 440, 21 Oct 60.

The Secretary of State, recognizing that the Kong Le group might attempt to take over the government by another coup, invited Ambassador Brown's comments upon the following proposed courses of action:

1. Force by the Laotian Government.
   a. Place companies of the 2d Paratroop Battalion under officers loyal to Ouane, Phoumi, or Houmphan and order these units to separate posts well away from Vientiane. Order Kong Le out of the country.
   b. If Kong Le refused to leave, attack him using loyal troops in Vientiane and forces loyal to Ouane, Houmphan, and Phoumi, rapidly concentrated on Vientiane by air from other areas.

2. Persuasion. Seek to persuade Kong Le that his aims could best be achieved by cooperating with the government.

3. Maneuver.
   a. Convince Kong Le's troops that their leader was being used by the Communists.
   b. Attempt to isolate the 2d Paratroop Battalion by seeking evidence of support for a strong anti-Pathet Lao line from other Laotian Army units.
   c. Assign a substantial portion of the 2d Paratroop Battalion away from Vientiane and gradually replace it with loyal troops.
d. Seek a strong and united appeal from respected FAL leaders to the effect that, although the motives of the 2d Paratroop Battalion were understandable, they now injured their country and the FAL.

(TS) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 444, 22 Oct 60, CJCS 091 (Laos).

24 Oct

A US Embassy officer called on General Phoumi at Savannakhet and informed him of Souvanna's approval of: 1) direct supply for Phoumi's forces; and 2) the distribution of pay through the legal government at Vientiane. The Embassy officer suggested that Phoumi dissolve the Revolutionary Committee; the officer explained that the US had decided to build up the FAL in the Luang Prabang region and to discourage any revolutionary movement against the legal government in Vientiane.

General Phoumi's response was "uniformly negative." He felt that dissolution of the Committee would be meaningless because Souvanna could declare that the Committee members were still in rebellion. He complained that his paymasters would be arrested were they to go to Vientiane.

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 735, 25 Oct 60.

25 Oct

The JCS circulated a memorandum from the CNO to the JCS setting forth the "Views of Leaders of the Republic of China on the Situation in the Western Pacific," including the views of President Chiang-Kai-Shek on the problem of Laos. President Chiang's remarks were reported by the Commander, Seventh Fleet, after a visit to Taiwan 14-20 October 1960. According to the Commander, the substance of Chiang's remarks was:

1) The situation in Laos had reached a very dangerous point and unless the US "takes a firm position soon it may get beyond the point of no return. Everyone is waiting for the United States to take a firm position."

2) Chiang strongly supported General Phoumi's position and suggested that the US give Thailand "unlimited backing and let the Thais handle the details." Such an approach, in Chiang's view, would have the additional advantage of keeping the US from "getting embroiled publicly" with the UK and France.


26-27 Oct

On 26 October Premier Souvanna informed Ambassador Brown that, unless Thailand lifted the embargo on petroleum products, the Laotian Government would be forced to request the necessary supplies from the Soviet Union.

The Thai Government, in response to the persuasive efforts of Ambassador Johnson, agreed to remove the embargo the next day. This action, the Thai Foreign Minister pointed out, had nothing to do with Souvanna's threat to seek aid from the Soviet Union.

(See item 25-29 September 60.)

(S) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 732, 25 Oct 60, and 752, 27 Oct 60; (S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 626, 26 Oct 60.
Ambassador Brown was informed by Souvanna that negotiations seeking to restore legal status to General Phoumi had broken down because of Phoumi's intransigence, attributed by Souvanna to US support of the General.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 829, 26 Oct 60.

The Secretary of State informed the Ambassador in Laos of a new US plan of action for Laos to be used as "guidance in [the] period ahead." This plan became necessary because Souvanna: 1) had not lived up to the conditions set by the US for continued support (see item 7 October 60); 2) was rapidly losing the support of "all important non-Communist leadership elements in Laos"; 3) was opposed by the King; and 4) therefore would not be able "to pull Army and non-Communist Lao elements together and provide leadership to [the] country in standing up to [the] PL threat."

The new US plan contained the following elements designed to achieve a new Laotian Government without inviting a "desperate reaction by Souvanna... against the US" or a "general outbreak of military action by PL forces":

1. "Exfiltrate" a quorum of the National Assembly from Vientiane to Luang Prabang.

2. Encourage Phoumi to go to Luang Prabang at the strategic moment.

3. In the event of a vote of no confidence in Souvanna by the Assembly, a declaration against him by Ouane, or a coup against him by the Kong Le group, Souvanna probably would accept an invitation by the King to go to Luang Prabang for consultations.

4. At Luang Prabang, Souvanna "would agree" to step down in favor of Phoumi who would form a new government including Phoumi and Souvanna.

5. Such a solution should be acceptable to all non-Communists in Laos as well as to the British, French, Australians, Thais and Vietnamese.

(TS) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 466, 28 Oct 60, CJCS 091 (Laos).

Ambassador Johnson reported to the Secretary of State that the Government of the Republic of China's Ambassador to Thailand had informed him of a long talk with Phoumi Sananikone, just arrived in Bangkok. According to the Chinese Ambassador, Phoumi was willing to work with Phoumi to establish a new Laotian Government. Phoumi's plan was to bring about an Assembly session at Luang Prabang, where he would debate Souvanna's policy and seek a vote of confidence from the Assembly. With Phoumi's support, Phoumi was confident that such a vote could be won. (See item 29 October 60.)

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 763, 28 Oct 60.

- 38 -