CHRONOLOGICAL SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT EVENTS CONCERNING THE LAOTIAN CRISIS,
THIRD INSTALLMENT: 1 APRIL TO 31 MAY 1961

HISTORICAL DIVISION
JOINT SECRETARIAT
JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF
2 AUGUST 1961
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The JCS reported to the Secretary of Defense that arms had been delivered for 3,800 of the 4,000 Meo directed to be armed by the 9 March decision (see item).

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 993224, 1 Apr 61.

US Ambassador to the USSR Llewellyn Thompson transmitted to the Secretary of State a copy of the text of an aide-memoire on Laos handed him by Khrushchev. The original of this aide-memoire had been addressed to the British Government in response to their aide-memoire of 23 March (see item).

The Soviets, after expressing satisfaction with the willingness of the British Government to agree to the convening of an international conference on Laos, proposed that such a meeting convene at the beginning of April.

The Soviet Government also agreed with the British proposal that the co-Chairmen of the Geneva Conference appeal for a cease-fire in Laos. In addition, the Soviets agreed to a British proposal that the ICC should be convened for "observation and control in Laos." As soon as possible, therefore, the ICC should meet in New Delhi and prepare a report for the co-Chairmen of the Geneva Conference. Renewed activity by the ICC should not, however, delay holding of the proposed international conference on Laos.

In response to the earlier British reference to the need to solve the "question of [a] neutral government of national unity in Laos," the Soviet Government pointed out that such a regime existed in the "legal government of . . . Souvanna Phouma." The Soviet Government would, "regard with sympathy" negotiations among Laotian political factions "for strengthening [the] national unity of [the] country." If the "necessary agreement" among the political factions could not be reached before the convening of the proposed international conference, "the Soviet Government does not exclude that the Conference would render "help to [the] Laotians in reaching agreement."

(S) Msg, Moscow to SecState, 2358, 1 Apr 61.

The JCS Laos Situation Report reported the fall of Tha Thom, the FAL base of operations on the southern approach to the Plaine des jarres, to a Pathet Lao attack. The FAL withdrawal had been "completely uncontrolled." (However, the enemy did not follow up his advantage, and the Government troops were able to reassemble at Ban Nam Gap, some 10 miles south of Tha Thom. Control over these troops was re-established on 4 April.)

(TS) JCS Laos Sitreps 87-61 to 90-61, 1-4 Apr 61.

CINCPAC cabled to the JCS a lengthy "appreciation" of the recently concluded SEATO Conference (see item 29 March). According to CINCPAC, SEATO had "stood trial," and had come through "with a meeting of minds." The SEATO Council resolution represented the unity thus preserved. Also, it made clear, according to CINCPAC, that consultations would continue, that SEATO harbored no aggressive intention, and that SEATO might take military action if the Communists did not desist from their attempt to capture Laos by force of arms.
All SEATO military advisers had agreed, stated CINCPAC, that SEATO Plan 5 was "a good plan, adequate for the situation as it exists today and flexible enough to be executed in its entirety or in part." Concerning the force commitments in support of the plan, CINCPAC supplied a country-by-country analysis, as follows:

1. CINCPAC had felt at the beginning of the conference that the UK was reluctant to commit its combat forces and desired to limit its role to moral and logistical support. Had this tendency developed into a fixed UK position, Australia and New Zealand would have been "in a box," since the Commonwealth Brigade at Malaya comprised the joint military commitment of the three Commonwealth nations to SEATO Plan 5; the withholding of the UK contingents of the Brigade would have rendered politically difficult the deployment of the Australian and New Zealand contingents to Laos. However, CINCPAC reported, the US, Australian, and New Zealand military advisers had worked in concert and separately upon the UK adviser. The spirit of unanimity prevailing in the Council of Ministers had apparently had its effect also. For CINCPAC could now say "with some assurance" that the UK/Australian/New Zealand contribution to Plan 5 could be counted upon.

2. The French position was not "obstructionist," CINCPAC reported. Their commitment to Plan 5 was conditioned, however, upon their ability to transport troops from France and Africa to Laos; French forces, therefore, were committed to the reserve force of Plan 5.

3. CINCPAC believed that a Pakistani commitment of one battalion could be counted on, if the US would supply the necessary airlift. The remainder of the Pakistani forces, one fighter squadron and one brigade group (-), should be held in reserve.

4. The Philippines could be persuaded to contribute a battalion, CINCPAC stated, but the US would have to supply both airlift and logistical support. The current Philippine commitment, one medical unit and one engineer company, also contingent upon US lift and support, was sufficient.

5. Thai participation was a foregone conclusion and would probably increase "naturally" as events unfolded.

The actual commitment of all these forces remained dependent upon a unanimous political decision by the SEATO nations—a decision had not yet been made. Secretary Rusk had suggested to the Council of Ministers that the Council Representatives "be instructed in such a manner that the political assumptions necessary to implement Plan 5 be taken immediately" (see item 13 April). Further, Prime Minister Menzies of Australia had suggested, CINCPAC reported, that the US Military Adviser to SEATO (CINCPAC) alter Plan 5 as he thought necessary and then call a special military advisers' meeting to obtain approval of the change and to prod the Council of Ministers into "quick consultation" and
a "SEATO decision to act." CINCPAC had already begun to review and alter SEATO Field Force Plan 5; he intended to present his recommended changes directly to the various military advisers, as well as through the normal SEATO Council channels.

CINCPAC stated his conviction that SEATO Field Force Plan 5 was the "best basis for multi-national action." Accordingly, he was planning to put CINCPAC OPplan X-61 (see item 24 and 29 March) "on ice." However, CINCPAC stated, tactical flexibility must be maintained to cope with the fluid situation in Laos; CINCPAC would preposition units only as events unfolded. The SEATO Field Force Command must, moreover, become as well organized as the JTF 116 had been.

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 020330Z Apr 61.

2 Apr

Ambassador Brown reported to the Secretary of State that Admiral Felt, in his talks with Phoumi (see item 29 March), had taken up the question of possible collaboration between the FAL and South Vietnam against Communist units in Southern Laos. Phoumi had replied that he had no objection in principle to such activities. In a subsequent talk with CHPEO Phoumi stated that he had an agreement with South Vietnam under which one South Vietnamese division would enter Laos to assist the RLG in the event such intervention was required.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1803, 2 Apr 61.

3 Apr

The US Ambassador to Laos responded to questions put to him by the Secretary of State concerning reorganization of the Royal Laotian Government (see item 31 March). To be of any value in the existing situation, said the Ambassador, a new Laotian Government "must have a reasonable chance of being acceptable to both sides and eliminating the Souvanna 'government.'" Three types of governments would meet the terms of reference (no Pathet Lao and no early elections) laid down by the Secretary of State: 1) a caretaker government of non-political figures under the King; 2) a government of former prime ministers and established personalities, including Souvanna but not Boum Oum or Phoumi either with or without the King as prime minister; and 3) a government of second-line political figures representing the Souvanna and Phourni groups, either with or without the King as prime minister.

Of the three alternatives, the Ambassador preferred the last on the ground that it would provide a greater level of competence than the existing Government. On the other hand, it would be the most difficult to achieve because of its lack of appeal to the Soviets and Souvanna.

Both the other two alternatives, in the Ambassador's opinion, had serious drawbacks: the first would have little influence and its mandate would probably be to prepare for elections as soon as possible; the second, as a repudiation of Phoumi and Boum Oum would have serious repercussions on the morale and leadership of the FAL.

In response to the specific questions put to him by the Secretary of State, the Ambassador replied as follows:

- 3 -
1. There was a chance that the King might head a government, but heavy US pressure would be required to persuade him to do so.

2. Souvanna might be invited to participate in a royal government by the French, but a responsible US representative should talk to him as well.

3. A federal system would be unworkable because of a lack of trained personnel and would lead to a de facto partition of the country.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1806, 3 Apr 61.

In a message to the Secretary of State, US Ambassador Johnson said that he and Thai Foreign Minister Thanat Khoman had briefly discussed the Soviet reply to the British proposal for a solution of the crisis in Laos (see item 1 April). Thanat had informed the Ambassador of Prime Minister Sarit's concern over the deteriorating military situation in Laos, and of Sarit's concern about going into a conference under these circumstances. Ambassador Johnson replied that the US also was worried about Phoumi's "passive defensive" posture and the seriousness of the Pathet Lao's victories in Laos. He told Thanat that the US had repeatedly called upon Phoumi to undertake, at least, some tactical offensive movements. Furthermore, Ambassador Johnson declared, the 1 April Soviet response to the British appeal had now increased the urgency of some offensive measures. In response to Ambassador Johnson's strong recommendation, Thanat had agreed to recommend to the Prime Minister that he send a message to Phoumi on the subject immediately.

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1784, 3 Apr 61.

The JCS reported to the Secretary of Defense the following progress on the courses of action approved on 9 March (see item):

1. The delivery of arms "sufficient" for 3,800 of the 4,000 Meo tribesmen (see item 1 April) had not made those 3,800 tribesmen effective fighting forces, inasmuch as resupply was included in the armament totals. 3,200 Meo had been armed by these deliveries. A plan had been prepared for the arming of a fifth thousand: (Not included in this 5,000 total were 1,500 Meo previously armed by FEO)

2. Four C-130 aircraft were now at Takhli. Two crews were in place and two more crews were on 36-hour call, an arrangement in accordance, the JCS stated, with the requirements established by the Joint Operational Center (JOC) (approved action 5).

3. The Joint Operational Command had set a 10-plane requirement and a 15-plane requirement for "all-out" operations. 12 planes on hand and, by agreement with the JOC, had three more "on call" (approved action 7). (TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 993269, 3 Apr 61.
3 Apr

In a circular message to US diplomatic Missions, the Secretary of State issued guidance and instructions for action intended to "achieve complete coordination at all stages preparatory to [the] possible convening of [a] 14-nation conference on Laos."

The Secretary noted that the Soviet reply to the British proposal of a solution to the Laos situation (see item 1 April), by agreeing to issuance of a call for a cease-fire by the Geneva co-Chairmen, implied "assent to our essential conditions, namely cessation of hostilities." The Soviet reply, however, called for the reconvening of the ICC, negotiations between the Laotian factions aimed at "strengthening [the] national unity of the country," and the convocation of an international conference, in addition to a cease-fire. The various procedures were proposed, moreover, without reference to timing.

The US position with regard to the Soviet proposals was that an observable and verifiable de facto cease-fire would be a prerequisite to US participation in an international conference. The US should, therefore, be prepared to "carry out stiff measures required [to] redress [the] situation militarily if [a] de facto cease-fire is not effective."

The US hoped that the sequence of events leading to an international conference would be as follows:
1) issuance of a call for a cease-fire by the Geneva co-Chairmen;
2) reactivation of the ICC in New Delhi;
3) entry of the ICC into Laos to observe the cease-fire;
4) negotiations between the FAL and the Pathet Lao on details of a cease-fire once it had been accepted in principle; and
5) resumption of talks between the Laotian Government and Souvanna aimed at creating a "broader" government to represent Laos at the international conference.

Recognizing that the cooperation of the Laotian Government was of "paramount importance," the Secretary recommended to the US Ambassador to Laos that he explain the US position as described above to Phoumi and the King and request their endorsement of it. The Ambassador was also to emphasize to Phoumi the necessity for maintaining a strong military posture so that the RLG would not come to the conference table in a weak position to negotiate.

(S) Msg, SecState Circular, 1510, 3 Apr 61.

4 Apr

In a message to the Secretary of State, the US Ambassador to Laos reported that the British Ambassador had explained to Phoumi in detail the timetable and procedural steps involved in achieving a cease-fire and international conference (see item 3 April).

At a press conference later in the day, reported the US Ambassador, Phoumi had 1) expressed approval of the UK/USSR efforts to achieve a cease-fire, 2) stated that an international conference was desirable "to control [the] cease-fire and guarantee Lao neutrality," and 3) expressed willingness to meet any Lao leader for the purpose of forming a "representative union government within [the] framework of the constitution and present laws."

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1812, 1815, 4 Apr 61.
Ambassador Brown, stating his belief that the next few days might see an acceleration of enemy efforts to secure key terrain in Laos, requested as a matter of "utmost urgency" that a US RT-33 be authorized to perform reconnaissance over Laos. The flights would have to originate from Thailand, said Brown, since no Laotian airfield could accommodate the RT-33. The need was so pressing however, according to Ambassador Brown, that "such niceties as accreditation" to the Bangkok attache were "somewhat irrelevant."

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1811 and 1814, 4 Apr 61.

CINCPAC supplied to the JCS his comments upon General Trapnell's recommendations (see item 31 March), as follows:

1. CINCPAC concurred in the recommended bombing of the Plaine des Jarres, stating that the strike priorities should be: first, supply dumps, convoys, and transport; and second, heavy weapons, troop concentrations, and command posts.

2. The desirability of converting the PEO to a MAAG was concurred in by CINCPAC.

4. Although CHPEO had US authority and RLG permission to place advisors at the battalion level, it had not been possible to place US advisors at a lower level than the group mobile, because of the reluctance of FAL field commanders to have their shortcomings exposed. When and if this disinclination could be overcome, CINCPAC stated, advisors should be placed down to the company level, where "stiffening" would be most effective.

5. Although CINCPAC did not reject the use of armed helicopters for reconnaissance and air support, he believed that these craft could be more advantageously used as utility aircraft. Moreover, CINCPAC's Army advisers had stated that the development of armed helicopter techniques were still in a "highly experimental stage" and not ready for effective operational use.

6. CHPEO was progressing, CINCPAC reported, in placing PEO advisors on FAL staffs.

7. CHPEO would continue efforts to improve PEO intelligence capability and would, according to CINCPAC, make further recommendations "appropriate to developing situations."

8. CINCPAC reported that, of the nine additional battalions for which General Trapnell had recommended US support, seven were already in being, and CHPEO had recommended to Trapnell that their support be authorized. CINCPAC surmised that Trapnell had added two battalions to increase flexibility in training and rotation. However, CINCPAC continued, there was no
known plan for activating more than seven. The support of these seven had been requested by Phoumi in a letter to CHPEO requesting an increase in the FAL troop ceiling from 62,322 to 70,616, to cover the following requirements:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Type of Troops</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
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<tr>
<td>6 special battalions</td>
<td>2,520</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 paratroop battalion</td>
<td>800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>replacements undergoing training</td>
<td>1,654</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>service troops</td>
<td>3,320</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>8,294</strong></td>
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CINCPAC and CHPEO recommended that the service troops authorization be reduced to 982 and that the modified increase of 5,956 be approved, at an estimated cost for May and June of $652,000.

9. With regard to the establishment of a Joint Unconventional Warfare Task Force (JUWTF) CINCPAC, presuming this to be a long-range measure not directly connected to the immediate problem of retaking the Plaine des Jarres, concurred in Trapnell's recommendation provided that the priority placed upon such a project would not be higher than that assigned to other recommendations.

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 042325Z Apr 61.

4 Apr

The JCS reported to the Secretary of Defense the following progress on the development of the 9 March approved courses of action (see item):

1. In view of the current political situation permission to fly USAF transport aircraft into Laos must in the future receive the prior approval of the President (approved action 8).

2. Action had been completed on the supply of artillery batteries by the delivery to Bangkok of the 75mm pack howitzers to be manned by FAL personnel (approved action 9).

3. The Secretary of Defense had ordered, on the previous day, that the two reconnaissance-configured B-26s (approved action 11, see item 13 March) be moved to Thailand as soon as possible.

5. In addition to the 17 approved courses of action, the Secretary of Defense had ordered that the Department of State be requested to secure the approval of the RTG for the initiation from Thailand of B-26 operations over Laos (action 18, added to the project on this date).

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 993343, 4 Apr 61.
The JCS informed the Secretary of Defense of the progress on the approved military courses of action (see item 9 March):

1. An arming of at least 3,500 Neo tribemen, in addition to the 1,500 previously armed by PEO. The arming of a sixth thousand; the supplies were available for this arming (approved action 1).

2. (IS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 993426, 5 Apr 61.

The British Ambassador to the USSR delivered to the Soviet Deputy Minister Responsible for Southeast Asia the draft texts of 1) an appeal for a cease-fire in Laos, 2) a request to Nehru that he convene the ICC, and 3) an invitation to 12 nations to participate in a conference on Laos. (Fourteen nations would participate, but the UK and USSR, as co-Chairmen, would not have to invite themselves.) The position of the British Government, as expressed in the draft texts and modified orally in accordance with instructions by the Foreign Secretary, was as follows:

1. The Foreign Secretaries of the United Kingdom and the USSR, acting as co-Chairmen of the Geneva Conference, should call for a cease-fire in Laos. As a practical first step, "emissaries appointed by the authorities in Vientiane and Xieng Khouang" should meet at an agreed-upon time and place to formulate orders to be issued to the troops under their respective control.

2. The co-Chairmen should also request the Prime Minister of India to arrange for the reassembly at New Delhi of the International Control Commission. The purpose of the reconvened Commission should be to report to the co-Chairmen when, in the opinion of the Commission, the cease-fire in Laos was fully effective.

3. The co-Chairmen were to issue an invitation to the governments of Burma, Cambodia, Canada, Communist China, France, India, Laos, North Viet Nam, Poland, South Viet Nam, Thailand, and the US to attend a conference "on the permanent settlement of the Laotian question." The British Government announced it would be willing to begin the Conference on 24 April, but, because of the royal funeral in Laos scheduled to start the day before, preferred that the Conference start on 2 May. (See item 1 April for the Soviet recommendation on the opening date of the conference.) As to the Conference site, the British were opposed to Phnom Penh because of the lack of the necessary facilities. They preferred New Delhi but were willing to accept Geneva.

The British stated that, while they were willing to issue these appeals and invitations simultaneously, they would not consent to the holding of a conference until the cease-fire had become effective.

(s) Msgs, SecState, Circulars, 1521, CG-860, and 1533, 5, 6 and 7 Apr 61.
In a message to the Secretary of State, the US Ambassador to Laos proposed specific measures to achieve a new and broadened RLG. These measures were as follows:

1. The King would summon a special session of the National Assembly and call on it to form a government of national unity to represent Laos at the impending 14-Nation Conference.

2. The Assembly, "properly rehearsed," would call on the King to head the government.

3. Boun Oum would then offer the resignation of his government.

4. Next, Souvanna, fully briefed and ready in Phnom Penh, would come to Vientiane as a simple deputy.

5. After a 24 hour recess, the King would reconvene the Assembly and announce the new government, either headed by himself or by a previously agreed upon political figure.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1818, 5 Apr 61.

In reply to a request by the JCS (see item 29 March) CINCPAC supplied to the JCS information on the deployment of US forces to execute SEATO Plan 5. CINCPAC declared that PACOM forces were in a position to begin landing in Laos within 48 hours of the order to execute and this reaction time could be reduced to within 24 hours by the movement of forces to closer stand-by positions. CINCPAC forecast that, to effect this additional pre-positioning, he would require that the full resources of the 315th Air Division be "loaded and cocked" in the Philippines. These actions could be taken "on short notice," CINCPAC stated.

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 050446z Apr 61.

A combined assault wave of FAL paratroop and infantry forces in C-47s and helicopters was airdropped and airlanded north of Muong Kassy, as the FAL launched its offensive to retake that town (located on Route 13 between Vang Vieng and RJ 7-13). All phases of the operation reportedly worked "very efficiently, with skilled American technicians located at key positions during the execution." One paratroop and one infantry battalion were successfully assembled in the drop area, a road block of Route 13 was quickly established, and patrols were probing southward. However, the GM 12 offensive north toward Muong Kassy, to join with the airlifted force, made no progress.

(On 4 April, as the FAL drop force was leaving Vientiane, Ambassador Brown had questioned the use of the C-47s and helicopters, citing the possible effect upon diplomatic negotiations. Although the Ambassador acquiesced in the departure of the force as scheduled, CINCPAC stated that this last minute hesitation was "indicative of indecision and lack of complete support of Phoumi." Avowing that it was "vital" that JCS and CINCPAC have full knowledge through military sources of all "important problems involving military matters," CINCPAC on 5 April requested CHPEO to "parallel promptly
any State message pertaining to urgent or emergency military matters by military channels to (CINCPAC) with info to JCS."

(TS) JCS Laos Sitreps 91-61 - 92-61, 5-6 Apr 61; 
(TS) Msgs, CHPEO Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 101085, 6 Apr 61; 
CINCPAC to CHPEO Laos, 0522412 Apr 61; CINCPAC to JCS, 0420112 Apr 61.

5 Apr 
According to a circular message from the Secretary of State to US diplomatic missions, the British Foreign Secretary was instructing the British Ambassador to France to tell Souvanna that, if he were able to come in a "private capacity," the Secretary of State would be pleased to see him in Washington in the near future.

(S) Msg, SecState Circular, 1523, 5 Apr 61.

5 Apr 
The US Charge d'Affaires in Hong Kong informed the Secretary of State that, in the presence of Premier Chou En-lai, Chinese Communist Deputy Premier Lu Ting-yi, had proclaimed his country's support for the Soviet proposals on Laos (see item 1 April). Speaking at a diplomatic reception in Peiping the previous day, Lu had declared that the early convocation of an enlarged Geneva conference was the "key" to a peaceful settlement of the crisis in Laos. Lu had also asserted that "serious setbacks" of pro-US forces had compelled US imperialism to profess an interest in such a settlement, although this had been belied by US military moves.

(C) Msg, Hong Kong to SecState, 1587, 5 Apr 61.

5 Apr 
In an official communique, the Chinese Nationalist Government Information Office declared that the completion date for evacuating anti-Communist Chinese escapees from the Burma-Laos-Thailand border area to Taiwan had been extended from 7 to 12 April. According to the communique, the original date had been postponed in order to enable the Chinese who were living in more remote areas to take advantage of the opportunity for voluntary evacuation.

(U) Msg, Taipei to SecState, 608, 6 Apr 61.

5 Apr 
CINCPAC informed all SEATO military advisers and the Commander of the SEATO Field Force that, because of the current military situation in Laos and the recent SEATO military advisers conference (see item 2 April), he had reviewed SEATO Field Forces Plan 5 and had concluded that the plan required some "up-dating," particularly with regard to "realigning" the deployment of the SEATO nations' military contingents. CINCPAC proposed the following composition and deployment of forces:

1. Force A (Vientiane)
   - 2 US BLT's
   - 2 Thai battalions
   - 1 Pakistani battalion

2. Force B (Seno-Savannakhet)
   - 1 Australian battalion
   - 1 New Zealand battalion
   - 1 UK battalion
3. Base Area Command
Commonwealth, Thai, Pakistani, Philippine and US support forces

4. Air Component Forces
Commonwealth, Thai and US air components

5. Central Force Reserve
1 Thai RCT (less 2 battalions)
1 Thai paratroop ranger/SAS company
1 US airborne battle group

6. General Reserve
1 Pakistani brigade group (-)
1 French infantry battalion
1 Philippine engineer company

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to Defense Canberra, et al.,
DA IN 100585, 5 Apr 61.

6 Apr
Ambassador Johnson reported to the Secretary of State that Prime Minister Sarit had agreed "in principle" to the conduct of operations in Laos by 3-26 April in Thailand (action 18 of military courses of action, see item 4 April). The only Thai stipulation had been that they be consulted before the execution of such attack.

During the interview in which this approval was secured, Phoumi had entered the discussions, pertaining a "black picture of massive Viet Minh... invasion.

Ambassador Johnson stated that Phoumi had "succeeded in communicating to Sarit his apparent present mood of extreme pessimism" and that Sarit was "genuinely alarmed."

(TS) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 1806 and 1807, 6 Apr, 1809, 7 Apr, CINCPAC to JCS, 070147Z Apr 61.

6 Apr
authorizing, with the approval of the Departments of State and Defense, the integration of the Meo irregulars into the FAL.

the concurrence of Ambassador Brown, CHFEU, and the US Military Attache in Laos, had proposed this integration in the form of an increase in the authorized FAL force levels sufficient to permit the FAL to assume command of all Meos. According the following advantages would accrue from this proposal:

1. The RIG could claim occupation and therefore control of large areas in Xieng Khouang province, areas they could not claim to control if the Meos continued in an irregular status.

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2. Supply of, and overt relations with, the Meo forces would be legalized. These contacts could be maintained covertly only with difficulty.

3. The basis for a larger measure of future RLG control of the Meos would be established; thereby, the apprehensions of the RLG with respect to arming Meos should be dispelled.

In granting US Government approval to this proposal, the FAL force ceiling in the auto-defense category would be raised to permit the integration of up to 6,000 Meos. (This raise was separated explicitly from the increases recommended by General Trapnell; see item 31 March). The integration should take place at the earliest possible moment, without publicity. The enemy must not be given grounds to charge that this move was simply a ruse to complicate the status of Xieng Khouang province. "entire affair can be handled in a way that will make it look as if these Meos were always part of the FAL auto-defense complex."

CINCPAC directed that CJTF 116 and staff revert to planning status (see items 16-17 December, 7 January, 15 February, 22 March). At the same time, CINCPAC designated the Deputy CINCUSARPAC as the Commander (Designate) of SEATO Field Forces under SEATO Field Forces Plan 5. The Deputy was to assemble and activate his staff at Okinawa.

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to CJTF 116, Deputy CINCUSARPAC, et al., 002302Z Apr 61.

According to the Chinese Communist Press, Marshal Chen Yi, at a news conference in Djakarta on 2 April, had declared that, if SEATO nations sent troops to take part in the civil war in Laos, the Chinese Government, if requested by the 'legal government headed by Prince Phouma,' would not remain idle. (OUO) Msg, Hong Kong to SecState, 1597, 7 Apr 61.

CHPEO reported to CINCPAC that Phoumi had requested the following:

1. One Thai artillery battery.
2. Five replacements for T-6s lost in action.
3. Authority to drop bombs from T-6s.

CHPEO considered that the requested artillery could be used; in fact, two batteries of 105mm howitzers were needed. Since, however, the most that CHPEO could say for the effectiveness of the T-6s was that they were "better than nothing," he recommended that the T-6s be replaced only "if it is decided that it is not advisable to furnish better aircraft and it is desired to get as much material as we can into Laos prior to a possible ceasefire." With regard to the arming of the T-6s with bombs, CHPEO stated his continued indorsement of this course (see item 18 January).
The JCS notified CINCPAC of the US Government approval of RT-33 photo reconnaissance flights over Laos (see item 4 April). The JCS considered, however, that RF-101 aircraft based in Thailand or upon carriers were better suited to the mission. CINCPAC was authorized, therefore, to conduct photo reconnaissance over Laos with either of the two types of aircraft, as he considered appropriate. The JCS placed two restrictions on the flights, as follows:

1. Reconnaissance flights utilizing US aircraft and crews must be conducted in response to an RLG request.

2. Flights would enter and exit Laos from Thailand or South Viet. Nam and would avoid the northern and eastern boundaries of Laos.

The following day, CHPEO reported to CINCPAC that Phoumi had made an official request for reconnaissance flights within Laos by US aircraft with US crews.

CINCPAC commented to the JCS upon Phoumi’s request to CHPEO for artillery, aircraft, and permission to bomb with T-6s (see items 6 April). CINCPAC recommended that negotiations be instituted to acquire two 105mm batteries for the Thaihek and Paksane areas. Also, CINCPAC urged in strong terms that Ambassador Brown be instructed to remove his restriction on bombing by Laotian aircraft, and that Phoumi’s request for permission to use his aircraft for bombing be approved.

CINCPAC recommended that additional T-6 aircraft be provided to the RLG as the Laotians acquired the capability to "absorb and fly them"; CINCPAC also broached the subject of supplying to the Laotians F8F fighters currently in the possession of Thailand, suggesting that as a quid pro quo the US accede to recent Thai requests for improved air defense systems.

CINCPAC-233-61 to SecDef, 7 Apr 61, derived from (TS) JCS.
7 Apr

CHPEO submitted a periodic intelligence report on the enemy situation in Laos for the period 13 March to 3 April. The report contained, inter alia, the following observations and conclusions:

1. At the end of the period, the enemy retained full control of the western approach to the Plaine des Jarres and had, by the capture of Tha Thom (see item 1 April) effectively denied FAL forces access to the southern approach to the plain.

2. By the use of propaganda, subversion, and rumors, the enemy had reduced FAL morale, encouraging defections and unnecessary withdrawals.

3. The enemy had continued to build up his logistical base in the Plaine des Jarres; both airlift and truck convoy had continued with only minor harassment by either the FAL or Meo guerrillas.

4. The enemy numbered approximately 14,100 troops, whose morale and combat efficiency were both rated "good."

5. The enemy could maintain and reinforce his positions in contact with the FAL; after reinforcing at any one location, he could "counterattack from that position at a time of his own choosing."

(3) Msg, CHPEO Laos to CINCPAC, et al., DA Z, 101693, 8 Apr 61.

8 Apr

Ambassador Gavin informed the Secretary of State that British diplomats in Paris had, on the previous day, urged Prince Souvanna to visit Washington and to curtail his trips to "Iron Curtain" capitals. According to a report from the British Embassy, Souvanna had stated that, although he had not rejected the idea of a visit to the US at a later date, "he would have to think about it."

In a later message, Ambassador Gavin reported that the British Parliamentary Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs had expressed the opinion that Souvanna wanted a "definite official" invitation from the US Ambassador in Paris. Furthermore, the Under Secretary and the British Ambassador had strongly urged that Ambassador Gavin extend a definite invitation to the Laotian Prince for 18 April. Both British diplomats believed, Gavin said, that "this would do the trick."

In reply to Ambassador Gavin's message, Secretary Rusk instructed the US Ambassador to follow the British recommendation and extend the invitation directly to Souvanna for a visit to Washington on 18 April.

As further background on the Souvanna Phouma invitation, US diplomats in Paris were advised that, if Souvanna's "deportment" in the immediate future should warrant his seeing the President, the Secretary of State believed that the Laotian Prince would undoubtedly be received at the White House.

(3) Msgs, Paris to SecState, 4279, 4289, 8 Apr 61; (S) Msgs, SecState to Paris, 4218, (no date), 4216, 8 Apr 61.
The Secretary of State directed the US Ambassador to Laos to explore further with the King the Ambassador's proposals for reorganizing the RLG (see item 5, April). The Secretary's instructions were implementations of a decision, based on discussions between the US and the United Kingdom at the highest level, to have a "broader based provisional government in office prior to [the] convening of [an] international conference."

The Ambassador was instructed to stress, in his discussions with the King, the need for a broadly representative provisional government but to point out "the extremely difficult position" of Laos at the conference table should its delegation be headed by a "leftish-inclined" premier such as Souvanna. The Secretary stressed particularly the need to avoid placing too much reliance on Souvanna, as the "key" to the entire situation in Laos.

(S) Msg, SecState Circular, 1547, 8 Apr 61.

Ambassador Brown reported to the Secretary of State that on the previous day Phoumi had "poured out his fears" to a US Embassy officer. According to the report, Phoumi depicted himself as desperately fighting a "last ditch" battle to keep his "tough" policy alive. He still believed that only through military action could peace be brought to Laos, and that, if properly armed and if given "outside help" commensurate with that given the PL by the Viet Minh, the RLG could achieve victory.

Phoumi stated that he did not believe in a political solution; that Sarit did not want it; and that the Pathet Lao would not respect it. (See item 13 April for JCS action stemming from this message.)

(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1837, 8 Apr 61.

The Secretary of State, in compliance with a decision by President Kennedy and Prime Minister Macmillan, directed the US Delegate to the UN to begin contingency planning with the British Delegate for a possible referral of the Laos question to the UN. Planning was to be undertaken on the basis of two major assumptions: 1) a simultaneous appeal by Laos to SEATO and the UN for assistance in protecting the country's independence, territorial integrity and neutrality, resulting in a SEATO military intervention; and 2) referral of the Laos question to the UN in the absence of any SEATO intervention and as the result of an unsatisfactory outcome of current political negotiations.

(TS) Msg, SecState to USUN, 1555, 8 Apr 61.
In response to instructions from the Secretary of State (see item 8 April), the US Ambassador to France invited Souvanna to visit the US. According to the Ambassador's report to the Secretary of State, Souvanna had expressed a desire to accept the invitation and to talk with US officials, if he could make the necessary rearrangements in his schedule of visits to Iron Curtain countries.

Later in the day, reported the Ambassador, Souvanna had called an Embassy officer and had accepted the US invitation for the period 18-20 April.

The following day, in a message to US diplomatic missions, the Secretary of State explained why the US Government had invited Souvanna to visit Washington and the conditions under which the visit would be made. The Secretary emphasized that the Laotian leader was coming in a "private capacity" and that his visit in no way implied US recognition of him as Laotian Prime Minister or endorsed a future for him in Laotian affairs. Nor did it imply any change in the US policy of support for the Boun Oum Government. Nevertheless, Souvanna was an important figure in the Laotian crisis. Although he wielded little effective power at the present and his claims of popular support were questionable, the Secretary noted that Souvanna's consistent advocacy of a neutral Laos had tended to identify him with that policy. Furthermore, as a Royal Prince, Souvanna remained a major figure on the Laotian scene, and his present tour of world capitals had, unfortunately, raised his stature internationally.

By inviting Souvanna to Washington, said the Secretary, the US Government hoped to ascertain the Prince's views on "details" of the Laotian situation. In particular, US officials wanted to evaluate 1) the degree of Souvanna's determination to preserve the integrity of his country, and 2) the extent to which he realized the difficulties of maintaining the independence of Laos in the face of continuing subversion. Furthermore, US officials would be able to emphasize the determination of the US to take action that would prevent the Communists from gaining control of Laos.

The US Government, however, had serious reservations concerning Souvanna, stemming from the Prince's apparent complete lack of understanding of Communist purposes and methods, and his "self-delusion" which made him "naively confident" that he could control Communist subversion in Laos.

(S) Msgs, Paris to SecState, 4290, 4291, 9 Apr 61; (OUO) Msg, SecState Circular, 1554, 10 Apr 61.

(see items 6 and 15 April).
(TS) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1828, 10 Apr 61,
(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to PACAF, 1101132 Apr 61.
CHPEO forwarded to the Joint Chiefs and the Secretary of Defense, for information, a copy of his 9 April recommendation to CINCPAC that two RB-26 aircraft be made available immediately for tactical reconnaissance in Laos. CHPEO had stated that, although RF-105, RT-33, and RF-101 aircraft would augment the present aerial reconnaissance capability, these jets would not provide "adequate and timely tactical ground information." CHPEO felt that, because the enemy was mounting operations less than 75 miles from Vientiane, he required aircraft based in Laos that could act to meet intelligence requirements in a matter of minutes. Moreover, CHPEO desired to use experienced PEO observers, familiar with the ground on which the enemy was operating; these observers required an aircraft that could "get down on the deck" to locate enemy troop movements over jungle trails.

In a message of the same date, Ambassador Brown informed the Secretary of State of his full concurrence with the CHPEO's recommendation.

(TS) Msg, CHPEO Laos to JCS, SecDef, DA IN 102248, 10 April 61; (TS) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1846, 10 April 61.

The JCS followed up their memorandum of 31 March 1961 to the Secretary of Defense (see item) with another, in which they gave their approval, subject to certain comments, to those recommendations made by General Trapnell concerning Laos that had not been previously approved. These recommendations had been referred by the JCS to CINCPAC for his comments and recommendations prior to final decision by the Joint Chiefs. Following receipt of CINCPAC's views (see item 4 April), the JCS commented on the Trapnell recommendations concerned as follows:

1. Provide armed helicopters. The development of armed helicopters in an "armed reconnaissance and suppressive fires role," the JCS conceded, was still in an experimental stage. Therefore armed helicopters should not be indiscriminately used. However, the provision of such helicopters to the FAL would, in the opinion of the JCS, furnish a basis for further evaluation of the entire concept of armed-helicopter employment because of the operational environment involved. Hence, the JCS recommended that the use of up to six US armed helicopters be authorized if requested by CINCPAC, the crews to be furnished in the same manner as B-26 crews. CINCPAC's further views on this subject, the JCS added, would be forwarded to the Secretary (see item 20 April).

2. Provide PEO an organic intelligence-production and counterintelligence capability. The JCS stated that they would submit appropriate and timely recommendations to the Secretary in line with the developing situation.
4. Authorize support for nine additional FAL battalions. The JCS requested the Secretary of Defense to authorize, in addition to the increase in the FAL troop ceiling recently authorized, an increase of 5,956, distributed as follows: six infantry battalions (2,520), one parachute battalion (800), replacements undergoing training (1,654), and service troops (982). The JCS also requested that Defense Support funds in the amount of $652,000 be provided for the pay of these forces for the months of May and June (see item 18 April).

5. Establish JUWTF for unconventional warfare and psychological warfare campaign. Noting that this recommendation had long-range aspects, the JCS stated that they would submit appropriate and timely recommendations on it separately.


The JCS replied to a memorandum from the Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA), dated 29 March 1961. The Secretary had requested recommendations regarding the composition, terms of reference, operating procedures, and forces and logistical requirements for an international commission for supervision and control (ICC) in Laos, should such a body, or a similar one, be established.

From the military point of view, the JCS said, it would be inimical to US interests to re-establish the Geneva-constituted ICC under its old terms of reference. That body had been rendered ineffective because of five basic limitations: 1) The field inspection teams had been required to obtain permission from the two antagonists prior to conducting each inspection. 2) The Commission had been composed of one member nation that was definitely pro-West, another that was definitely pro-Communist, and a third that was reluctant to offend either of the other two; thus the Commission had not been able to act as a unit. 3) Nevertheless, on questions concerning violations or threats of violations possibly leading to a resumption of hostilities, recommendations had required a unanimous vote. 4) The ICC had lacked the authority and means to enforce its decisions. 5) The inspection teams had lacked sufficient personnel and logistical support.

The JCS feared that re-establishment of the ICC under the 1954 terms of reference might occur as a consequence of the political decision to couple a de facto cease-fire with an invitation to Prime Minister Nehru to summon the ICC to reconvene in New Delhi. If this re-establishment under the 1954 terms of reference did occur, two serious disadvantages for the West would result. First, a subsequent agreement on adequate revision of the terms of reference would be more difficult to achieve; and second, ineffective as the Commission might be in inspecting and supervising the importation
of arms, it would still seriously hamper US efforts to stockpile an adequate supply of material for the RLG; at the same time, it would be unable to slow the flow of Communist-bloc assistance to the Pathet Lao.

The JCS recommended, therefore, that US policy should be 1) to require the responsibilities of the ICC (Laos) to be limited, initially, solely to confirming that a de facto cease-fire existed, and 2) to refrain from agreeing to any expansion of the mission of the ICC to embrace over-all supervision, inspection, and reporting on the entry of military personnel and equipment into Laos until its terms of reference had been revised by the international conference. Even under completely new and improved terms of reference the ICC would not be able to compel even grudging compliance with its recommendations or with decisions approved by the conference; moreover, it was doubtful that the Commission could eliminate covert Communist-bloc assistance to the Pathet Lao. Nevertheless, the JCS continued, new terms of reference could enable the Commission to "police" Laos more effectively than had been done previously, by publicizing violations and subjecting violators to adverse world opinion.

The two essential improvements the new terms of reference should incorporate, as compared with the old, therefore, should be elimination of the need for field inspection teams to obtain permission from the two antagonists before conducting inspections, and substitution of a majority vote for unanimity on the part of the Commission in making recommendations concerning violations or threats of violations that might lead to resumption of hostilities.

As for the composition of the Commission, despite their criticism of the 1954 arrangement the JCS did not believe it was realistic to expect that that arrangement could be improved from the point of view of the West. Incorporation of additional neutralist countries like Cambodia and Burma, they thought, would only promote unwieldiness and make agreement more difficult. They therefore recommended that the US favor the continuation of India, Canada, and Poland as the member nations of the Commission. At the same time, however, they recommended that the US represent to Nehru its concern regarding the quality and political leanings of the individuals India might subsequently provide to the ICC, particularly the chairman, emphasizing the importance of the Commission's task as a "test case" in settling disputes between the West and Communist powers.

The questions of operating procedures and force and logistical requirements, the JCS thought, could be left to the Commission itself so far as details were concerned, provided that the terms of reference contained comprehensive language ensuring that the Commission would be provided with sufficient personnel funding and logistical support to accomplish its mission.

As a matter separate from but related to the foregoing, the JCS also recommended that the US urgently prepare plans to provide for the aggressive and continuing exploitation of whatever opportunities might develop for using news media to focus world-wide attention on violations of whatever agreements might be reached by an international conference and on obstructions in the way of the effective operation of whatever control mechanism might be established.
On 24 April 1961 the Assistant Secretary of Defense forwarded the foregoing views and recommendations of the JCS to the Secretary of State, recommending that they form the US position in the matter.

(S) JCSM-222-61 to SecDef, "Activities of International Commission in Laos (C)," 11 Apr 61, derived from (S) JCS 1992/950, 6 Apr 61, as amended by (S) Dec On JCS 1992/950, 11 Apr 61; (S) 1st NIH of JCS 1992/950, 27 Apr 61; (S) JCS 1992/944, 30 Mar 61.

The Thai Ambassador to the US delivered two nearly identical notes from Prime Minister Sarit to the President and the Secretary of State. As reported by the Secretary of State to the US Ambassador to Thailand, these notes made the following major points: 1) Thailand supported the efforts to find a peaceful solution to the Laotian problem; 2) such a political solution should not, however, result in partition or dismemberment of Laos; 3) Thailand would not be able to support any solution permitting Communist elements to assume control of Laos; 4) the optimum solution would be a genuinely neutral regime with wider representation but excluding Communist factions subservient to outside control; 5) if a peaceful solution was not possible, Thailand would cooperate with the US in any appropriate action to "preserve peace, freedom and well-being of our people." (S) Msg, SecState to Bangkok, 12 Apr 61.

In reply to the Secretary of State's request for information that would be pertinent to the Department's discussions with Souvanna upon his arrival in Washington (see item 9 April), the US Ambassador to South Vietnam reported the following:

1. The South Vietnamese Government was convinced that, if Souvanna Phouma resumed his former position as the Laotian Prime Minister, Laos would be lost to the Communists through a political takeover of the country.

2. In that event, South Viet Nam would feel itself seriously endangered. Viet Cong activities in and through Laos would undoubtedly be intensified in order to accelerate the Communist campaign to take over South Viet Nam.

3. Under a Souvanna Premiership, the status of South Viet Nam's diplomatic mission in Vietiane would probably be seriously lowered, and the government of North Viet Nam would be recognized. This would cause South Viet Nam to lose face in Asia at the very time it was losing ground in the diplomatic struggle in Africa to maintain its status as the only legal government in Viet Nam.

4. The Vietnamese Government would probably not object if Souvanna were placed in an important position in the Laotian cabinet, provided that his influence could be effectively restricted by strong non-Communist Laotians. The Government of Viet Nam also would probably hope that the new RLG, in
addition to having the King as Prime Minister, would have Phoumi Sananikone as its "center axis," rather than Souvanna.

(S) Msgs, Saigon to SecState, 1590, 11 Apr 61; SecState Circular, 1548, 8 Apr 61.

In response to a directive from the Secretary of State (see item 8 April), the US Ambassador to Laos obtained an audience with the King in which he inquired as to His Majesty's views on 1) a unified government to represent Laos at the 14-Nation Conference, and 2) the role of Souvanna in such a government. The King expressed the opinion that, if Souvanna would come back as prime minister of a government in which he was counterbalanced by strong anti-Communists, "something useful could be accomplished." The King was, however, firmly opposed to becoming prime minister himself.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1859, 12 Apr 61.

In a message to the Secretary of State, the US Ambassador to France reported the attitude of the French Government on the Laos situation as described by the Political Director of the Foreign Office. According to the Political Director, the "most desirable future status" of Laos would be the "pro-Western framework of [the] Geneva Accords." If this status was not possible, another formula would have to be found to "keep Laos free from foreign domination but permit it to belong to the UN and provide for legitimate defense. A unilateral Laotian declaration, of which the international conference could take note, would be the best way of achieving this status. The French were opposed to "guaranteed neutrality" because it offered too many opportunities for outside interference.

With regard to military aid to Laos, the French believed that the provisions of the Geneva Accords should be maintained. Once a conference was convened, arms deliveries should be suspended until a new Laotian Government chose its own supplier. The US would have to withdraw its military personnel, but a "western military presence" would be maintained. The French preferred that economic aid be furnished by bilateral arrangements, but were "interested" in the British proposal for a multilateral agency.

As for the means of "controlling" the foregoing, the French preferred a new neutral commission composed of Burma, Cambodia, and India to the existing ICC.

Finally, the French were of the opinion that a new Laotian Government of national union under Souvanna should be formed. This government would have to include members of the Pathet Lao, but it was hoped that these members could be denied the more important cabinet posts.

(S) Msg, Paris to SecState, 4369, 12 Apr 61.
12 Apr
Ambassador Drumright informed the Secretary of State of further developments in the KMT evacuation program. According to Foreign Minister Hsu, if definite evidence developed that more irregulars were willing to accept evacuation, Hsu had been authorized to continue evacuating them until 20 April (see item 5 April).
(S) Msg, Taipei to SecState 625, 12 Apr 61.

12 Apr
CHPEO reported to CINCPAC that, in an intensification of the psychological warfare program and in conjunction with the airborne assault on Muong Kassy (see item 5 April), the PAL had dropped 21,000 surrender leaflets over the enemy deployments in the Muong Kassy area.
(S) Msg, CHPEO Laos to CINCPAC, 120250Z Apr 61.

13 Apr
At a top-level meeting in Washington the President authorized action to render PEO and LTAG personnel in Laos comparable in all respects to MAAG personnel. This was to be done by removing all restrictions on their participation in combat operations, use of rank, and wearing of uniforms. The consensus of the meeting was that such action, by enabling US military personnel to provide the leadership and guidance essential to the successful conduct of operations, would bolster the military position of the FAL and improve the morale of the RLG.

On the same day the JCS informed CINCPAC of this decision, and the State Department informed the US Ambassadors at Bangkok, Vientiane, London, and Paris. The State Department indicated further in its message that the British and French Ambassadors in Washington would be informed the next morning, at which time the approval and cooperation of their countries would be requested. In addition, the two Ambassadors were to be advised that if the Communists used this US action, which would be within the scope of actions indulged in by the Communists themselves, as a pretext for retaliation, the US would then consider appropriate SEATO action and would expect British and French support.

Ambassador Brown, the State Department message continued, was to inform the Laotian Prime Minister and Phoumi, and if possible the King, of the US decision; at the same time he was to request the RLG to make an appropriate request to the US in order that the military assistance would be covered by a US-Laotian agreement. Further, he was to urge as vigorous military action as possible upon Phoumi, emphasizing the President's view that Phoumi must give the US something to support (see items 16 and 17 April).

The US Ambassador in Bangkok was instructed to inform Sarit of the US decision immediately.

The Ambassador was also to suggest that Sarit might wish to help spur Phoumi to action by a personal communication (see item 15 April).
The US Ambassadors in London and Paris were to inform the governments at those capitals that the US was fully aware of its projected action regarding the FEO and MAAG personnel would be in technical violation of the Geneva Accords; but this action, they were to point out, would only redress in small measure the imbalance caused by massive violation of those Accords by the Communist Signatories and one of the co-Chairmen over an extended period. The Ambassador in London was to point out further that the US action was in line with the paramilitary steps preceding formal SEATO action already discussed with the principal SEATO allies. (For British reaction, see item 14 April; for French reaction, item 20 April.)

In a subsequent message (date not precisely known but not later than 15 April), the State Department informed Ambassador Brown that the Laotian request should be couched in language requesting establishment of a MAAG, since this would be the "hastest" way of handling the change of status of the FEO personnel under the circumstances. (TS) Msg, SecState to Bangkok (1587), Vientiane (1100), London (4844), and Paris (4316), 13 Apr 61; (TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, 994079, 13 Apr 61; (TS) Msg, SecState to Bangkok (1598) and Vientiane (1113), date not precisely known but not later than 15 Apr 61.

The JCS recommended by memorandum to the Secretary of Defense a list of measures "which would aid in countering the adverse military implications of a political settlement in Laos." They considered these measures necessary because the establishment of a neutral government in Laos could result in even greater military disadvantages from the US point of view than had obtained under the regime of the International Commission for Supervision and Control (following the 1954 Geneva Accords). Under the ICC the precedent had been established that foreign forces and personnel could not legally remain in Laos or be introduced except under very rigid inspection and control. The degree of difficulty for the US under a neutral government would of course depend upon whether that government was oriented toward the free world or dominated by the Communists. If the Pathet Lao threat were not eliminated from such a government, that government's establishment might result in intensified pressures from Laos against the borders of Thailand and South Viet Nam, with growing difficulty on the part of those two countries in securing their frontiers. Insurgency problems would also be intensified in Thailand and South Viet Nam.

The following were the counteractive measures recommended by the JCS. (Comments or suggestions regarding their implementation were included):

1. Improve intelligence collection in Laos and adjacent areas.

2. Establish stay-behind capability for resistance to a Communist coup.
3. Recruit, organize, and train, outside of Laos, cadres for later infiltration into Laos for specific missions.

4. Plan and prepare to infiltrate personnel and supplies required by item 3 above.

5. Continue to review adequacy of US support for counterinsurgency activities in SEA.

6. Plan for continued logistic support of pro-Western military elements within Laos (on a covert basis if necessary).

7. Plan for continued training support of pro-Western Lao military elements by other than US personnel if necessary.

8. Accelerate unconventional- and psychological-warfare activities in North Viet Nam and South China, and ensure a fully co-ordinated effort involving all (concerned) agencies of the US Government.

(On 25 April 1961 the Deputy Secretary of Defense informed the Chairman of the JCS that the foregoing recommendations had been referred to the Inter-departmental Task Group on Laos, operating under direction of the Acting Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs.)

(TS) JCSM-242-61 to SecDef, "Military Implications of a Political Settlement in Laos (C)," 13 Apr 61, derived from (TS) JCS 1992/953, 10 Apr 61, as amended by (TS) Dec On 1992/953, same date; (C) 1st N/H of JCS 1992/953, 1 May 61; (B) 2d N/H of JCS 1992/953, 3 May 61.

In a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense the JCS noted that the military situation in Laos was continuing to deteriorate, that the Communist bloc was delivering supplies and equipment in increasing amounts to the Plaine des Jarres area, and that Communist-bloc technicians were continuing to operate with the Pathet Lao/Kong Le forces. Immediate action was required, the JCS believed, to improve the morale of Lao Minister of Defense Phoumi (see item of 8 April) and generally to improve the military situation so as to give the West a better negotiating position prior to any cease-fire between the opposing forces.

The JCS recommended, therefore, that CINCPAC be authorized to take the following measures immediately:

1. Authorize the operational employment of all available (about 15) B-26 aircraft present in Thailand against appropriate military targets in Laos, using machine guns, rockets, high-explosive munitions, and napalm.
2. Authorize Laos Army T-6 aircraft to employ high-explosive munitions.

3. Authorize the conversion of the PEC to a MAAG.

In addition, the JCS stated that the following previously recommended measures should be implemented as soon as possible:

1. Authorize and provide logistic support and pay for seven additional Laos Army battalions and supporting service troops.

2. (TS) JCSM-244-61 to SecDef, "Situation in Laos (U)," 13 Apr 61, derived from (TS) JCS 1992/955, 11 Apr 61, as amended by (TS) Dec On JCS 1992/955, 13 Apr 61.

13 Apr
The FAL, admitting that the airborne assault on Muong Kassy (see item 5 April) had been only "partially successful," ordered the withdrawal of the airdropped troops to Luang Prabang.

(TS) JCS Laos Sitrep 99-61, 13 Apr 61.

13 Apr
In a message to the Secretary of State, the US Charge d'Affaires in Bangkok 1) described the progress made to date by the SEATO Council of Representatives in completing political actions required for intervention in Laos under SEATO Plan 5, and 2) recommended specific steps for completing these actions. Progress to date was as follows:

1. The Council of Representatives had accepted the UK/Australian definition of Communist insurgency: "armed action against [the] established government of [a] country by organized bands or groups, under conditions which do not permit such action to be identified as overt and direct external aggression, but subject to such degree of foreign control, direction or support as to amount to indirect external aggression."

2. Thailand had agreed to serve as "appointed nation," but contingent, apparently, upon a satisfactory cost sharing agreement.

3. The Council of Representatives had agreed that the SEATO Force Commander and deputy commander would be Thai, the Field Force Commander would be American, and the Deputy Field Force Commander would be Australian or British.

4. The Council had also agreed on the directive to the SEATO Force Commander.

5. The US had suggested an Australian be named political adviser, but no decision had been made as yet.
6. The Council of Representatives had reached an understanding that it would issue, upon specific instructions from the SEATO Council of Ministers, 1) assessments of the situation in Laos describing the existence of a state of insurgency as defined in Plan 5, and 2) the warnings called for by the plan.

7. Little progress had been made on cost-sharing. The US Charge d'Affaires requested guidance from the Department of State on this matter.

8. The Council of Representatives had not acted on a status of forces agreement; the US had opposed such an agreement.

9. On the more general question of contacts with the RTG and RLG, the Military Programs Office had suggested that all direct contacts be carried on by the "appointed nation." This proposal had not been discussed in the Council.

10. The Council of Representatives had not "specifically" considered the "mission and concept" of the SEATO force; the US Charge recommended that understandings on these points between SEATO and the RLG would be necessary upon implementation of Plan 5 and should be reached by the "appointed nation" through the Field Force Commander, with political guidance from the Council of Representatives.

11. The US Charge understood that arrangements for contributions to the SEATO forces were being made by the Military Advisers.

(See item 28 April for action on these political measures.)

The US Charge recommended that, in view of the likelihood of a SEATO intervention, the following actions be taken:

1. The US Representative on the SEATO Council of Representatives should request written confirmation in the Council of Representatives of agreements already reached on the items listed above.

2. The US Representative should submit a written request to the Council of Representatives for appropriate action leading to decisions on all outstanding matters listed above.

3. Unless a cease-fire had been achieved meanwhile, the US Representative should request the issuance of the "Charter Yellow" warning called for in SEATO Plan 5.

(The Secretary of State approved these three recommendations on 15 April.)

(TS) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1846, 13 Apr 61;
(8) Msg, SecState to Bangkok, 1600, 15 Apr 61; (TS) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1892, 26 Jan 60.
CHJUSMAG Thailand, having been informed that the EKARAD training program had been deferred indefinitely, urged CHPEO Laos to cause Phoumi to reconsider this decision. CINCPAC, in a message supporting CHJUSMAG's plea, requested CHPEO to exercise his "full influence" on Phoumi to achieve the continuation of the training program. CINCPAC authorized CHPEO to tell Phoumi that it would be difficult for CINCPAC to continue to support Phoumi in the present manner unless Phoumi made a "reasonable effort to give his soldiers training they must have for surviving in combat."

Referring to the JCS message of 13 April, CINCPAC directed CHPEO Laos to lift the restrictions on his PEO and LTAG personnel in regard to uniforms, rank, and participation in combat. Later the same day, having been informed by the JCS that implementation of their message of 13 April should follow receipt by Ambassador Brown of an appropriate request from the RLG, CINCPAC amended his instructions to CHPEO accordingly.

On 17 April CINCPAC amplified the foregoing by confirming CHPEO's understanding that LTAG personnel would no longer be restricted to the level of battalion headquarters, and by the further statements that, after the change to uniformed status, all former PEO and LTAG personnel would be armed while in the field, that their primary function would be to serve as advisers though they would not be restricted from participation in combat when necessary, and that after the establishment of the MAAG Laos there should be no further distinction between PEO and LTAG. The LTAG personnel, he explained, would become MTTs, part of the MAAG staff (see item 17 April).

(S) Msg, CHJUSMAG Thailand to CHPEO Laos, 131115Z Apr 61; CINCPAC to CHPEO Laos, 140054Z Apr 61; CHPEO Laos to CHJUSMAG Thailand, 140510Z Apr 61; CHPEO Laos to CINCPAC, 141554Z Apr 61.

14 Apr

(S) Msg, CHJUSMAG Thailand to CHPEO Laos, 131115Z Apr 61; CINCPAC to CHPEO Laos, 140054Z Apr 61; CHPEO Laos to CHJUSMAG Thailand, 140510Z Apr 61; CHPEO Laos to CINCPAC, 141554Z Apr 61.

14 Apr

(S) Msg, CHJUSMAG Thailand to CHPEO Laos, 131115Z Apr 61; CINCPAC to CHPEO Laos, 140054Z Apr 61; CHPEO Laos to CHJUSMAG Thailand, 140510Z Apr 61; CHPEO Laos to CINCPAC, 141554Z Apr 61.

14 Apr
Upon learning of the US decision to put the PBO military personnel in Laos into uniform and to permit them to participate in combat operations, the British Government expressed the hope that the implementation of this decision could be delayed "for a few more days." An advance draft of the British message containing this hope was furnished to the US Ambassador in London, who cabled it to the State Department. The British took the line that the Soviets appeared to be relaxing Communist military activity in Laos and that there were other indications that a Soviet reply to the US was imminent. What worried the British was the possibility that the US action, if taken before a Soviet reply had been received, might be seen by world opinion as direct military action and might be considered by such opinion, "however unreasonably," as having torpedoed the chances of a settlement just when they appeared favorable. It was obviously legitimate for the US to take paramilitary action, the British reply continued, but the British Government proposed that the Soviets be given until the middle of the following week to reply. If they had not done so by then, they could be put completely in the wrong by the focusing of public attention on the situation at that time (see item 15 April).

(TS) Msg, London to SecState, 4189, 14 Apr 61.

14 Apr

(auto defense units of 100 men each could be formed from available minority tribes in Laos (in addition to the 6000 Meo whose regularization was authorized on 5 April; see item). The resulting larger number of auto defense units deployed before ICC inspections commenced would reinforce RLG claims and weaken Pathet Lao claims to control or possession of the territories thus organized, according to the US officials. They therefore recommended that the formation of the additional units be authorized; that the personnel recruited be included on the FAL troop lists and paid through normal FAL channels; (see item 18 April).

(TS) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1843, 13 Apr 61;
(TS) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1859, 14 Apr 61;
(TS) Msg, SecState to Bangkok, 1591, 14 Apr 61.
Replying to the British Government's comments concerning the projected change of status of PEO personnel in Laos (see item 14 April), Secretary Rusk pointed out in a letter to Lord Home that the US move was premised on an assessment of the Laotian situation different from that of the British. Whereas the British saw a de facto Soviet cease-fire in the making, and a Soviet reply on a formal cease-fire imminent, the US saw the Western position in Laos deteriorating dangerously while the Soviets procrastinated in their reply.

Militarily, although there were no major battles being fought, the Communist buildup was continuing. There were at least three critical areas where the West could be faced overnight with virtual collapse: 1) in the area five miles northeast of Nhommarath, to the rear of Thakhek; 2) on the Tha Thom-Paksane road, where a breakthrough could sever Laos at the narrow waist; and 3) around Muong Kassy, farther to the north, where the situation might rapidly result in a serious threat to Luang Prabang or even its being overrun.

Politically, the decay of the RLG was still more serious. The leaders lacked the united determination they should have in the face of national danger.

The steps being taken by the US were designed to provide at least some stiffening of the RLG backbone, both militarily and politically. These steps were wholly within the methods of operation on the other side and could not "torpedo" any conference if there was the slightest Soviet interest in a neutral Laos.

(TS) Msg, SecState to London, 4874, 15 Apr 61.
15 Apr

In response to a request from OSD (ISA), CHPEO reported upon the status of all Lao training, other than pilot training, in Laos, as follows:

1. EKARAD had been temporarily suspended because of the tactical requirement for all available troops (see item 13-14 April).

2. The training being given in Laos included:
   
a. English language instruction to 393 FAL personnel.

b. A two-year program, initiated in March 1961, for 170 cadets at the FAL military academy.

c. PEO training for 2,835 troops.

d. In addition to c, above, the deployment of LTAG elements to various FAL units.

e. On-the-job training and formal courses of instruction by the technical services.

(S) Msg, OSD to CHPEO Laos, DEF 993964, 12 Apr 61; (S) Msg, CHPEO Laos to SecDef, DA IN 104384, 16 Apr 61.

15 Apr

CINCPAC informed Commander PACAF that Sarit had revoked the authorization to base RF-101s at Takhli for reconnaissance missions over Laos (see items 6 and 10 April). CINCPAC considered it infeasible to use Korat for RF-101s and therefore cancelled their deployment to Thailand and approved the alternative course calling for the use of RT-33s.

(S) Msg, CINCPAC to PACAF, 151925Z Apr 61.

15 Apr

The US Ambassador to Nationalist China informed the Secretary of State that Nationalist General Lai Ming-Tang, who had just returned from a visit to Thailand, had estimated that there were 600 to 700 KMTs in Laos including those in the Thailand border area. Some of these escapees, the General had added, appeared to have merged into the civilian economy of Laos.

(S) Msg, Taipei to SecState, 628, 15 Apr 61.

16 Apr

Soviet Foreign Secretary Andrei Gromyko handed the British Ambassador to the USSR three draft messages on Laos which constituted the Soviet reply to the British drafts delivered to them on 5 April (see item). The Soviets, in their drafts, agreed to the British views on the time and place for holding an international conference on Laos. The conference was to open in Geneva on 5 May.
The Soviet drafts, while providing that the Geneva co-Chairmen "call on all military authorities, parties and organizations in Laos to cease fire before convening of the international conference," did not make the cease-fire a prerequisite to the convening of the conference. (See item 19 April, for the resolution of this point.)

(C) Msg, SecState Circular, 00-895, 19 Apr 61.

Ambassador Brown reported from Vientiane that Phoumi had shown disappointment upon seeing the text proposed by the Department of State for use by the RLG in requesting the US to establish a MAAG in Laos. This disappointment had contrasted with Phoumi's apparent pleasure on the previous day, when Ambassador Brown and the Chief of the PBO had first conveyed to Phoumi the US Government's decision to lift restrictions on the presence of FEO and LTAG personnel in combat operations and on their wearing uniforms. On the earlier occasion Phoumi had apparently gotten the erroneous impression that the US was going to send troops into Laos. Having been disabused of this notion by the State Department's suggested text, Phoumi had conceded that the presence of US personnel in uniform in combat zones would be helpful tangible evidence of US support; but he had also raised the fundamental question whether LTAG personnel attached to the prospective MAAG were to be field advisers in uniform or were to participate in fighting as combat individuals. Ambassador Brown requested State Department clarification on this point. In addition, Phoumi had expressed a wish to make certain revisions in the text after consulting with the Prime Minister and the King.

Later in the day, the Department of State clarified for Ambassador Brown the role contemplated for LTAG personnel in Laos after establishment of a MAAG there. The LTAG personnel were to have the functions of 1) training FAL personnel, and 2) acting as technical and tactical advisers in the field at all levels and in all types of operations. They were not to be restricted from participating in combat as individuals should the situation require this; but in the combat areas they were to carry out their primary function as advisers, and this responsibility in itself would require that they not seek individual combat roles.

The foregoing, the Department said, should be the understanding of the US with Phoumi, but it should not be spelled out in the request of the RLG for a MAAG or in the reply of the US.

(TS) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1871, 15 Apr 61; (TS) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1873, 16 Apr 61; (TS) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 1118, 16 Apr 61.

In a report to CINCPAC, CHPEO described the situation east of Thakhhek as having deteriorated since the loss of the village of Nhommarath on the previous day. The FAL commander in the area had been unable to "reestablish control of his demoralized troops" who had become, in the opinion of CHPEO, "an ineffective fighting force."
To retrieve the situation, CHPEO planned to advise Phoumi to commit an FAL paratroop battalion to the Thakhek area. CHPEO also requested CHJUSMAG Thailand to expedite the movement of Thai artillery units (see item 15 April) to Thakhek.

(S) Msg, CHPEO Laos, to CINCPAC, DA IN 104395, 16 Apr 61.

17 Apr

CINCPAC cabled to the JCS recommended terms of reference for the MAAG Laos. As set forth in these terms of reference, the primary mission of the MAAG was to assist the RLG armed forces and auto-defense forces in attaining the capability to 1) maintain internal security against Communist-inspired subversion and insurgency, and 2) provide maximum feasible initial resistance to Communist-inspired external aggression.

Having set forth the standard provisions for the organization and operation of a MAAG, CINCPAC included in the recommended terms of reference certain special provisions applying uniquely to the MAAG Laos. These special provisions permitted CHMAAG Laos to authorize personnel either permanently or temporarily attached to his MAAG to "participate in combat operations to provide leadership and guidance" for the FAL, and to "participate fully with FAL combat elements at all levels." It was "axiomatic," this portion of the terms of reference stated, that such personnel would be armed when in the field, and they "should not be restricted from participating in combat operations as individuals should the situation so require," but their primary function was that of advisers.

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 172120Z Apr 61.

17 Apr

The Laotian King appeared "markedly unenthusiastic" and somewhat apprehensive of the consequences when Ambassador Brown informed him of the US decision to establish a MAAG in Laos. He would consider the proposal a good thing, the King said, if he thought it would scare the Soviets, but he was sure it would not. It would certainly lead to charges of intervention, belligerence, and imperialism, he went on, and possibly bring on a heavy counterattack. Nevertheless, since Laos was tied to the US, Laos could only agree to what the US wanted.

Commenting on this interview in his report later the same day, Ambassador Brown observed that the King had been depressed by the unfavorable military situation, the weakness and ineptitude of the FAL and Boun Oum's Government, and the general prospects for the future.

(TS) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1884, 17 Apr 61.

17 Apr

Ambassador Brown and the Chief of the PEO were informed by Phoumi following the latter's consultations with the Prime Minister and the King, that the idea of requesting a MAAG in Laos had been approved in principle but required further consideration. The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Sopsai, who was present, agreed. The two Laotians promised their government's revisions of the State Department's suggested text by noon the next day.
In reporting this information, Ambassador Brown commented that both Phoumi and Sopsaisana had obviously been hedging and seeking to delay the proposed action. When the Ambassador had asked Phoumi point-blank if he had doubts about the proposal, Phoumi had replied in the negative but had said that the situation "might change to our advantage and it might be better to do it later." Both men had insisted that no public action be taken without their agreement. Noting the consistency of this attitude with the King's reaction and Phoumi's previously expressed disappointment, Ambassador Brown conjectured that it reflected the feeling that the establishment of a MAAG would expose Laos to greater risks without adequate guarantees at a time when its ability to resist was at the lowest ebb.

(TS) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1886, 17 Apr 61.

In a message to the Secretary of State, the US Charge in Bangkok reported that he had called a Special Meeting of the SEATO Council of Representatives (see item 18 April) to acquaint them with the Pathet Lao military threat to Thakhek (see item 16 April) and to prepare for an early appeal from the RLG and a call for SEATO action under Article IV, paragraph 2. In addition, the Charge reported that he was coordinating with the Secretary General on a request for issuance of the Charter Yellow warning of Plan 5.

The Secretary of State approved this course of action later on the same day.

(TS) Mssgs, Bangkok to SecState, 1868, and SecState to Bangkok, 1608, both 17 Apr 61.

On behalf of the State Department the JCS requested CINCPAC to examine the desirability of retaining in civilian guise approximately 25 of the PEO military personnel when the MAAG Laos was activated, for the following reasons:

1. If all foreign military personnel should be withdrawn from Laos as a result of negotiations, it would be desirable to have a nucleus of experienced PEO personnel who could be retained as civilians.

2. The cover story for "surfacing" the PEO personnel by ostensibly recalling to active duty those who were reserve military personnel would in this way be more plausible than if the whole PEO organization (less genuine civilians) suddenly donned uniforms.

On 18 April CINCPAC commented that the first of the two reasons seemed a non sequitur in that there would be no purpose in maintaining PEO personnel in Laos, whatever kind of clothing they might wear, if military assistance were discontinued. As for the second reason, CINCPAC saw little merit in trying to create a cover story inasmuch as the true status of the military personnel
serving with the PEO had been known to "everybody" for a long time. Further, if part of the MAAG were civilian and part military, great confusion would result in its dealings with the Lao Ministry of National Security. Therefore, unless better reasons could be given than those already advanced for leaving part of the MAAG in civilian dress, CINCPAC preferred conversion of the entire military complement of the MAAG to uniformed status at the same time.

(On 19 April the JCS directed this latter course.)

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, 994286, 17 Apr 61; (TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 181941Z Apr 61; (TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, 994471, 19 Apr 61.

18 Apr

The Secretary of State called in the representatives of the SEATO powers separately to inform them of the "serious concern" with which the US viewed the Pathet Lao threat to Thakhek (see item 16 April). The fall of this strategic location would cut Laos in half at its narrow waist and bring Communist forces to the Thai border along the Mekong River. The Secretary also informed the SEATO representatives that he had approved the calling of a special meeting of the SEATO Council of Representatives by the US Representative. At the meeting, the US Representative was to propose the declaration of the Charter Yellow warning phase of SEATO Plan 5 (see item 17 April).

On the same day, the US Representative to the SEATO Council reported to the Secretary of State that the British Representative had circulated at the special Council meeting the text of the Soviet reply to the British cease-fire proposal (see item 16 April). In view of the last-minute receipt of this reply and the uncertainty as to Soviet intentions pending study of the text, the US Representative agreed with the Secretary-General of SEATO not to request a declaration of Charter Yellow for the time being.

(S) Msg, SecState Circular, 1617, 18 Apr 61; (S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1878, 18 Apr 61.

18 Apr

The Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA) informed CINCPAC that the "current status of political negotiations and uncertainty as to US ability to provide adequate supervision," had led to the conclusion that the formation of an additional 40 auto-defense companies among Laotian minority groups (see item 14 April) "should be deferred at this time."

(S) Msg, OSD to CINCPAC, DEF 994458, 18 Apr 61.

18 Apr

According to the New York Times, Prince Souvanna Phouma "abruptly" canceled his trip to Washington. The cancellation apparently arose out of a conflict of schedules. Originally, Souvanna had planned to be in Washington on the 18th but, in order to confer with Khrushchev at his villa on the Black Sea, he had postponed his arrival until the evening of the 19th. This one day postponement meant that Souvanna would have been in Washington for consultations only on 20 April.

Although it had been "expected," the Times article continued, that President Kennedy would see Souvanna during his visit, there had been no advance commitment made in the formal invitation, nor in the subsequent...
messages pointing out that Mr. Rusle would be away on a speaking engagement on 20 April. State Department officials said that when the 20 April conflict developed, they had made "discreet" suggestions to Souvanna that he finish his talks in Moscow and then come to Washington. The Prince had replied, in effect, that since Mr. Rusle would be out of town, and since there had been no assurance that President Kennedy would receive him, then it would be "best to cancel the trip entirely.”

(C) Msg, Moscow to SecState, 2555, 18 Apr 61; (U) NYT, 19 Apr 61, 1, 4.

18 Apr
In a joint State-Defense message, the Secretary of State informed Ambassador Brown of US Government approval of an increased ceiling for MAP-supported FAL forces (as recommended by the JCS — see item 11 April). Under the new ceiling, authorized strength of the FAL was 38,478.

(TS) Msg, Secstate to Vientiane, 1134, 18 Apr 61.

18 Apr
Ambassador Brown transmitted to the Secretary of State the text of the RLG request for a MAAG. This text, originally supplied by the State Department (see item 18 April), had been revised by the RLG. The Ambassador had accepted it as satisfactory. Arrangements had been made, the Ambassador continued, for the Laotian Government to make the request public on 19 April. PEO military personnel would go into uniform on 20 April.

(TS) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1891, 18 April 61;
(TS) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1893, 18 April 61.

19 Apr
The British Ambassador to the USSR presented to Soviet Foreign Secretary Gromyko a proposed amendment to the Soviet draft proposals on Laos, an amendment intended to assure that the proposed cease-fire would become effective before the convening of the 14-Nation Conference on Laos and would be certified by the ICC. (See item 16 April for the Soviet proposal on this point.)

Gromyko objected to changes in the Soviet draft proposals, claiming they already clearly stated that a cease-fire should precede the holding of a conference. To the British objection that the Soviet draft did not provide for the ICC to certify the cease-fire, Gromyko replied that, once the Laotian antagonists had agreed to stop fighting, the ICC should be instructed by the Geneva co-Chairmen to go to Laos to supervise the cease-fire. These steps, insisted Gromyko, should be completed before the proposed conference met.

In an instruction to his ambassador to the US, the British Foreign Secretary stated that he felt strongly that the Soviet draft proposals should be accepted. Admittedly, the British position that there could be no negotiations until a cease-fire had become effective would not be safeguarded in writing if the Soviet texts were accepted. The USSR would, however, be committed to an immediate call for a cease-fire.

The alternatives to acceptance of the Soviet drafts, continued the Foreign Secretary, "were very unpleasant to contemplate." Any further negotiation over texts would probably have to be referred to the Chinese and North Vietnamese Communists and would lead to long delays. The Royal Laotian Army was no longer reliable, with the
result that the Soviets could apply great pressure for further concessions by launching a new PL offensive. Such an attack could probably only be contained by a SEATO intervention.

US Secretary of State Rusk, in an "informal statement of understanding" addressed to the British Government, stated that the US would have no objection to the British accepting the Soviet proposals. There were, however, "certain considerations... with respect to our position" that Her Majesty's Government should have clearly in mind. These were as follows:

1. The US would feel free "to act vigorously along present lines" until the cease-fire became effective.

2. To protect its own position, the US would probably want to make its position clear in a public statement following public announcement of the UK/USSR agreement on a cease-fire.

3. If the cease-fire was violated, the US would expect immediate consultations, including an approach to SEATO to take appropriate action.

4. The US wished to "register some concern" with regard to an apparent Soviet suggestion that, if the ICC failed to verify a cease-fire, the co-Chairmen would do so. The US would not agree to this arrangement because it would put the USSR in the position of judging the effectiveness of its own cease-fire.

(S) Msg, SecState Circulars, 1614, n.d.; and 1631, n.d.

19 Apr

In a joint State-Defense message, the Secretary of State requested the US Ambassador to Thailand to discuss with Sarit the preparation of Thai troops for rapid deployment into the Thakhek or Pakse areas of Laos if the threat to Thakhek (see item 16 April) made a SEATO military invasion desirable.

(TS) Msg, SecState to Bangkok, 1621, 19 Apr 61.

19 Apr

The US Department of State officially announced to the press that the Government of Laos had requested the establishment of a MAAG to assist in organizing the defense of Laos more effectively, and that the US was complying with this request. The US had been supplying military materiel to the Royal Lao forces, the announcement continued, and the additional assistance to be supplied through the MAAG "should help to redress the military imbalance in the country which has resulted from the continuing flow of materiel and personnel to the rebel forces over an extended period."

(TS) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1903, 19 Apr 61; (TS) Msg, SecState to USUN New York, 2074, 19 Apr 61.

19 Apr

Ambassador Bruce reported further on the reactions of Lord Home to the conversion of the PEO in Laos to a MAAG, scheduled for that date. Lord Home, Bruce said, was concerned on two grounds.

First, Home felt that the US action was scarcely in accordance with the mutual understanding Home considered
to exist between the US and Britain to consult at every stage in regard to steps taken in Laos. He said that if matters ever reached the point at which implementation of SEATO Plan 5 became necessary, he must be in a position to demonstrate to both the British Cabinet and public that Britain had been consulted at every stage in the escalation of countermeasures in Laos; otherwise he would have trouble with the well-known British reluctance to become involved in military operations in that country. He hoped that paramilitary measures could prevent the need to implement the SEATO plan. In the British view, he said, an allied military venture in Laos had dismal prospects. He regretted the US-British differences in assessing the existing military situation there, stating that though the Pathet Lao had the capability to cut Laos in two, there was no evidence that it intended to do so.

His second ground of concern was what he considered to be the questionable logic of characterizing the conversion of the PEO to a MAAG as a purely paramilitary move. Nevertheless, he would argue strongly, if necessary, that the move was in fact paramilitary, and he hoped the US "could get away with this." (TS) Msg, London to SecState, 4251, 19 Apr 61.

The Deputy Secretary of Defense furnished the Chairman of the JCS a written review of the status of the recommendations on Laos made by the JCS on 7, 11, and 13 April (see items). "As you are aware," the Deputy Secretary wrote, "favorable decisions have been made" on the following recommendations:

1. To provide additional T-6 aircraft in Laos.
2. To augment the Lao Army by seven battalions plus service troops.
3. To convert PEO personnel in Laos to an overt status.
4. To initiate discussions with the Government of Thailand for the establishment of a two-regiment reserve for use if necessary before the arrival of committed SEATO forces.

With regard to the JCS recommendation for the use of armed helicopters (see item 11 April), the Deputy Secretary requested more information. "See next item for a JCS recommendation on the subject which evidently crossed in the mail the memorandum of the Deputy Secretary." (TS) Memo, Dep SecDef to CJCS, "Laos (U)," 20 Apr 61, Encl to (TS) JCS 1992/966, 25 Apr 61.
In a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense the JCS in effect withdrew their recommendation of 11 April for the use of armed helicopters in Laos. They did so in the light of views furnished by CINCPAC. CINCPAC had stated that 1) helicopters could be most profitably used in a utility-airlift capacity; 2) addition of armament would reduce helicopter payload without compensating advantage; 3) augmentation of the helicopter complement at Udorn, whether armed or unarmored, would require personnel in excess of the 300-man ceiling currently imposed by the Government of Thailand upon the service unit at Udorn; and 4) armed air capability could be provided by B-26s better than by armed helicopters (see previous item).

(TS) JCSM-257-61 to SecDef, "Laos (U)," 20 Apr 61, derived from (TS) JCS 1992/964, 18 Apr 61; (TS) Msg., CINCPAC to JCS, 1521072 Apr 61.

Ambassador Gavin reported from Paris that the French Foreign Minister, according to a Foreign Office spokesman, had the strongest reservations concerning the transformation of the PEO in Laos into a MAAG. Statements in the French press had alleged that the move had been co-ordinated with the French Government, and this circumstance, the spokesman had said, had forced France to say it had been informed but not consulted.

In regard to the 14-Nation Conference, the spokesman expressed the hope that the Western Powers would coordinate their views as soon as possible; otherwise, they would be at a serious disadvantage vis-a-vis a unified Soviet-bloc point of view. The latter, the spokesman thought, would probably prove an irresistible magnet to neutrals if the West were in disagreement.

(S) Msg., Paris to SecState, 4519, 20 Apr 61.

The British informed the Department of State that the Soviets had agreed to the issuance of the cease-fire appeal on 24 April, the request to Prime Minister Nehru to reconvene the JCC, and the invitations to an international conference.

At the request of Prince Sihanouk of Cambodia, the opening date of the conference might be 12 May instead of 5 May. (The US agreed to this point.)

(C) Msg., SecState Circular, 1649, 21 Apr 61.

The JCS informed CINCPAC that, pursuant to verbal instructions from the Secretary of Defense, progress reports on the approved military courses of action (see item 9 March) had been discontinued, because of the "substantial completion of the necessary related actions."

On the previous day, the JCS had submitted what proved to be their final progress report on the approved courses of action, detailing this "substantial completion" as follows:

1. (INCREASE MEO STRENGTH FROM 3,000 to 4,000 BY 1 APRIL.) Action completed. At least 5,000 Mocs had been armed (see item 5 April), utility-airlift had authorized the arming of an additional thousand.

2. (DOD SUPPLY 16 H-34 HELICOPTERS FOR CAT USE.) Action completed (see item 29 March).
4. (MAINTENANCE AND BASE SUPPORT PERSONNEL (300) FOR HELICOPTERS.) Action completed (see item 26 March).

5. (DOD MAKE AVAILABLE FOUR C-130s TO CAT.) Action completed (see item 3 April).

6. 

7. 

8. (IN CASE OF URGENT SUPPLY REQUIREMENTS, USAF MAY RESUME DELIVERY DIRECT TO VIENTIANE (C-130). The JCS had on this day renewed their permission for CINCPAC to initiate such flights; the original permission, granted on 14 March (see item) had been suspended on 4 April (see item).

9. Action completed (see item 4 April).

10. (AUGMENT PEQ LAOS AND JUSMAG THAILAND EACH BY APPROXIMATELY 100 PERSONNEL.) Action completed (see item 23 March).

11. (DEFENSE TO MAKE AVAILABLE B-26s PLUS NECESSARY SPARES.) Fifteen B-26s were in Thailan; one was under repair on Okinawa (see Addendum 1 below). Fifteen crews were in PAC, three additional pilots were enroute and fourteen were in training, with completion of training anticipated by 22-23 April (see Addendum 2 below).

12. 

13. 

14. (STATE DRAFT INSTRUCTIONS TO AMB BROWN FOR APPROVAL BY PRESIDENT.) Action completed by a Department of State message of 11 March.

15. (CHIEF PRESS PHOUMI TO LIFT QUALITY OF FAL LEADERSHIP.) Action completed (see item 21 March).

16. 

Actions under these items were automatically and successively completed as the aircraft were delivered (see courses 2, 3, and 7 above).

18. (GET SARIT APPROVAL B-26 OPERATIONS FROM THAI BASES.) Action completed (see items 4 April for the
initiation of this action, 6 April for completion).

Addendum 1. In accordance with the instructions of the Secretary of Defense (see item 13 March), 16 additional B-26s had been "demothballed." Two, configured for photo reconnaissance, had arrived in Thailand, the remainder were being held in the US in flyable condition (see course 11 above).

Addendum 2. In accordance with the instructions of the Secretary of Defense (see item 3 April), sixteen additional B-26 pilots were being "recruited"; the necessary refresher training of these pilots would be completed on 22-23 April (see course 12 above).

(TS) Msgs, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 994593, 21 Apr 61, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 994500, 20 Apr 61.

21 Apr

The Departments of State and Defense, in a joint message, provided the following guidance to the US Charge d'Affaires in Bangkok on the status of political actions required in connection with SEATO Plan 5 (see item 13 April):

1. The SEATO Council of Representatives need not approve the appointment of military commanders. The Military Advisers should concur in the appointments and "reach agreement out of session."

2. The US continued strongly to support the appointment of an Australian as political adviser.

3. The question of cost-sharing was still under consideration in Washington. In the meantime, the US representative should seek action in the Council of Representatives to assure the Thais they would not be expected to sustain the costs of foreign troops stationed in or staging through Thailand.

4. A skeleton status of forces agreement should be in effect at the time Plan 5 was implemented.

5. The Military Advisers had approved force contributions under Plan 5; no further action by the Council of Representatives was required. (On 27 April, CINCPAC concurred in this guidance.)

(TS) Msgs, SecState to Bangkok, 1634, 21 Apr 61; CINCPAC to JCS 270300Z Apr 61.

21 Apr

Ambassador Brown requested the Department of State to pass the following information to the Army Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence. The Army Attaché in Vientiane had been told by the PAL Chief of Staff and two of his commanders that: 1) with the exception of 100-200 Chinese Nationalist irregulars who had fled to more remote areas to avoid evacuation to Taiwan, all irregulars had left Laos; 2) there were no NRT in the PAL; and 3) although there was considerable movement of Chinese Communists along the Laos--Yunnan border, their forces had not entered Laos.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, G-87, 21 Apr 61.

21-22

Apr

The US Ambassador to South Viet Nam submitted to the Secretary of State two sets of recommendations for making control and supervision of a neutral status for Laos
effective. One set of recommendations was a proposed revision of the Geneva Accords prepared by the Canadian ICC delegation for the use of the Canadian Government at the international conference on Laos; the other had been prepared by the US Embassy in Saigon. Both were based on the experience with the ICC in Viet Nam.

The Canadian proposal was intended to put real teeth in the control and supervision powers of the ICC if it were called upon by the conference to supervise a cease-fire in Laos and to ensure that Laos remained completely neutral. The most significant provisions were as follows:

1. ICC given authority to issue instructions to High Commands of both sides who will be directly responsible to ICC.

2. All foreign military advisers and training cadres and all foreign troops, "regular to irregular," to leave Laos.

3. Introduction all armaments, munitions and military equipment of all kinds prohibited and all such items now in Laos, except as required for security forces, to be exported under ICC control. (Those foreign countries who have supplied war material may arrange recovery with ICC.)

4. Movement in or out of Laos of any military personnel, foreign or national, or war materials prohibited except by arrangement with ICC.

5. In order assure absence reprisals against persons for past activities, punishment even under civil law for acts during hostilities subject to approval of and investigation by ICC.

6. All prisoners of war and civilian internees of Lao or other nationality be released under supervision ICC.

7. There be fixed teams and mobile teams, number and location of former to be decided and changed as required by ICC. Mobile teams to be concerned with frontier regions but will have right move freely anywhere without agreement of either party or new government when it is formed.

8. ICC be provided with and have full control over all necessary means of transport and communication including vehicles, fixed wing aircraft, helicopters, river craft and communications equipment.

9. Both parties and new government obligated put at disposal of ICC any forces considered necessary to assure security of ICC and its teams.

10. Control, observation, inspection, investigation and supervision functions, designated insured implementation of agreement by both parties and new government, shall be exercised with regard any allegations or suspicions regarding violations of agreement.
The recommendations of the US Embassy in Saigon contained the following points which were believed to be "essential if effective control mechanism [was] to be established":

1. Control teams should have authority to inspect and control anywhere in Laos with or without permission of both sides. The control teams should also be authorized to operate with only a majority of a given team participating.

2. The Control Commission should have adequate transportation of its own to go anywhere in Laos.

3. All control teams should be mobile and be able to go anywhere in Laos at any time. The teams should be able to investigate alleged violations on the ground as well as to examine documentary evidence.

4. Terms of reference for the Control Commission should include adequate provisions relating to subversion.

5. As the weight of world opinion was virtually the only sanction available to the control mechanism, the Control Commission should be required to publish its considerations and findings once a month in order to keep world attention focused on Control activities.

(S) Msg, Saigon to SecState, 1630, 22 Apr 61; (C) Msg, Saigon to SecState, 1629, 21 Apr 61.

In a message to Ambassador Brown, the Secretary of State explained US views on a cease-fire in Laos. If a cease-fire became effective, the FAL should not merely return to barracks but should be prepared to react vigorously to any infraction by the Pathet Lao. In addition, the cease-fire should be considered an opportunity to 1) restore confidence and unity among non-Communist factions, 2) undertake an energetic training program for the FAL and, 3) organize "FAL-Information-Aid" teams to infiltrate territory nominally held by the Pathet Lao, "fly flag in as broad areas as possible, and to permit the RLG to claim these areas under its control."

While observance of the cease-fire would mean setting up demarcation lines, continued the Secretary of State, the RLG should avoid recognizing any division of the country and should claim as much territory as possible. Cease-fire talks should, in the opinion of the US, be limited to "just that," and avoid raising any "question of substance" prior to the 14-Nation Conference.

(S) Msg, SecState Circular 1660, 22 Apr 61.

In a circular message to US diplomatic missions, the Secretary of State announced that US policy was now to stand "four-square behind [the] Boun Oum Government." This policy was based on evidence that the King was unwilling to assume leadership (see item 12 April) and on the fear that "further pressures" to form a new government would only undermine the morale of the RLG.
The principal preoccupation of the US, continued the Secretary, was whether a peaceful settlement could be found that would preserve Laos from Communist control, or whether military intervention would be necessary to prevent a Communist takeover. In either event, the US must have a non-Communist government of Laos that would support US positions, at least until the Communists revealed what kind of Laos they would be willing to accept. 

(S) Msg, SecState Circular, 1659, 22 Apr 61.

Embassy Counselor Edward L. Freers reported from Moscow that the press in the Soviet capital had thus far shown only slight interest in the establishment of the MAAG in Laos. Only one minor paper had contained any reference to the MAAG. This paper had printed 1) a London Tass item reporting that the British press doubted the move would help end the Laotian crisis, and 2) a New York Tass item commenting that the forthcoming appearance of uniformed American officers in Laos reflected falling morale among Phoumi's troops.

(OUO) Msg, Moscow to SecState, 2609, 22 Apr 61.

Vang Vieng fell to the Pathet Lao. As a result of this defeat, Phoumi requested of CHPEO, and CHPEO recommended to CINCPAC, the following:

1) permission to use bombs against the enemy troops on Route 13 and the Vang Vieng airfield; and 2) the provision of airlift to move reinforcements to the area south of Vang Vieng.

Commenting to the Secretary of State on the fall of Vang Vieng, Ambassador Brown stated that the Pathet Lao was now in an ideal position with respect to a cease-fire. The PL now threatened Luang Prabang, Thathek, Pakse and Vientiane. However, the PL had refrained from advancing to the banks of the Mekong, where, as the PL must know, it would meet "outside responses."
Since, however, it was not certain that the PL would continue to act cautiously, Ambassador Brown requested that Phoumi be given authority to employ bombs as requested, if the cease-fire call were delayed, or if the US officials in Laos saw "definite evidence" that the enemy proposed to move upon Vientiane or "other major objectives."

The Department of State granted this authority on the same day, stipulating only that the authority would become subject to "Washington instruction" after the RLG had issued its declaration implementing the UK-USSR call for a cease-fire (see item 25 April).

The US Ambassador to Laos submitted to the Secretary of State a summary of a memorandum outlining the procedures the RLG was to follow after receiving the appeal for a cease-fire from the Geneva co-Chairmen. The memorandum, prepared by the British Ambassador to Laos and given by him to General Phoumi, contained the following points:

1. Upon receipt of the appeal, the RLG was to issue a statement accepting it wholeheartedly, announcing that the FAL would comply as soon as agreement could be reached with the other side as to the hour and date when the cease-fire would begin, and proposing a meeting between military representatives of the two sides at a specified time and place.
2. The objectives of this first contact would be to propose a meeting of high-level military representatives to discuss general policy questions concerning a cease-fire, and to propose that, in each sector, military representatives of the two sides meet to arrange detailed application of measures agreed to at the high level in their respective areas.

3. As soon as the RLG had made its statement accepting the cease-fire appeal, it would request the British to transmit the statement to the Soviets.

In reply to the US Ambassador’s message, the Secretary of State endorsed, in general, the mechanics for a cease-fire proposed by the British Ambassador and suggested that Luang Prabang be the place for the initial meeting of military representatives of the two sides.

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1923, 1924, both 23 Apr 61; SecState to Vientiane, 1156, 24 Apr 61.

Britain and the Soviet Union, as co-Chairmen of the Geneva Conference, appealed for a cease-fire in Laos, requested Prime Minister Nehru to reconvene the ICC for the purpose of certifying when the cease-fire was effective, and issued invitations to a 14-Nation Conference to be held in Geneva on 12 May. The texts were essentially those proposed by the Soviets on 16 April (see item).

(C) Msg, SecState Circular 1665, 24 Apr 61; NYT, 25 Apr 61, 1.

In a circular message, the Secretary of State described US preliminary thoughts concerning an international conference on Laos as follows:

1. At the outset there would probably be a sharp disagreement over the seating of rival Laotian delegations, with the result that none would be seated. There might then be agreement to seat the rival factions as observers only. If the Communists then moved for a coalition government, the US would be opposed and would advise the Boun Oum Government of firm US support.

2. In the event that the competence of the ICC to verify compliance with the cease-fire was questioned, the US would propose that, where military forces were in contact, the aggressor force should withdraw at least two kilometers.

3. With regard to arms deliveries, the US believed that the best approach was not to consider any limitation until after the conference had established an effective functioning mechanism for supervision of arms deliveries. The US would, in any event, retain its military advisers and trainers with the PAL until another suitable arrangement for military advice and training could be made.
4. The US was tentatively contemplating offering an "overall package" calling for disarming all but a 20,000-man internal security force, equipped and trained under the guidance of a military affairs commission.

5. The US would propose that economic assistance be planned and supervised by an enlarged UN economic mission for Laos. Another approach might be to establish a Development Assistance Agency composed of such countries of the area as Malaya, India, Thailand, Burma, and Cambodia.

6. The US would insist on an effective international control mechanism, with access to all parts of the country to investigate and report on armed subversion and illegal importation of arms or military personnel.

7. If the conference agreed to effective measures for neutralizing Laos, then the US would be willing to consider a conference recommendation for a provisional Laotian government balanced between left and right--either including both extremes or excluding them both.

8. The US opposed early elections because the Pathet Lao would be able to influence the electorate through subversion and military power. The US position might be to postpone elections until the RLG considered that an adequate degree of order had been restored.

The Secretary of State authorized the US Ambassadors to Laos, Thailand, and South Viet Nam to discuss the above points of "preliminary US thinking" with the respective governments. In making their presentations the Ambassadors were to explain the need for lining up maximum support of India, Burma, and Cambodia--the three Asian neutral participants in the Conference.

(TS) Msg, SecState Circular, 1674, 24 Apr 61.

24 Apr

The US Charge d'Affaires in Hong Kong informed Secretary Rusk that Premier Chou En-Lai, speaking at a banquet for Souvanna the previous day, had declared that the establishment of a MAAG in Laos was a "serious step" in US preparation for "direct participation in civil war."

(OUO) Msg, Hong Kong, to SecState, 1670, 24 Apr 61.

25 Apr

The RLG issued a document entitled "Declaration of RLG After Receipt of Call for Cease-Fire in Laos." In this declaration, the RLG announced that the Chief of General Staff of the National Army was "ready to make contact at any time with [the] responsible chief of opposing forces to come to agreement on the day and hour of an effective cease-fire."

In spite of heavy pressure from the US and British Ambassadors, Phoumi refused to specify a time and place for the initial meeting of military
representatives on the ground that to do so would be to give the appearance of begging for a cease-fire. The most he would do was to request the British to transmit to the Pathet Lao, through the Soviets, a statement that the RLG considered Luang Prabang to be the best place for a meeting of military representatives. The RLG was prepared to meet there at any time.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1934, 25 Apr 61;
(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1933, 25 Apr 61;
(U) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1932, 25 Apr 61.

In a message to the Secretary of State, the US Charge d'Affaires in Bangkok reported the views of the Thai Foreign Minister concerning the proposed international conference on Laos. The Foreign Minister had expressed doubts as to whether Thailand would be represented at the Conference. An effective cease-fire in Laos was a prerequisite to Thai attendance. The Foreign Minister was of the opinion that Thailand could not afford to be unrepresented and that attendance would not bind Thailand to accept the conclusions of the Conference.

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1912, 25 Apr 61.

The Secretary of State, Brown, informed Ambassador Brown that, subject to the Ambassador's comments, the Department of State's views on the disposition of non-Lao personnel in Laos in the event of a cease-fire were as follows:

1. In view of the threat of the PL to the "vital centers" on the Mekong River, nothing should be done to reduce FAL capabilities by withdrawing non-Lao personnel.

2. The ICC should limit itself to verification of a cease-fire; any expansion of this role, such as control of foreign personnel and arms deliveries should be taken up at the 14-Nation Conference.

3. Therefore, all non-Lao personnel should remain with the FAL until an effective control mechanism had been established by the Conference.

4. The MAAG should remain in place until the satisfactory new security system had been established. (See item 29 April for detailed recommendations of US officials in Laos concerning, specifically, Thai personnel.)

(TS) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1908, 24 Apr 61;
(TS) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 1163, 25 Apr 61.

The RLG having announced its acceptance of a cease-fire (see item 25 April), Ambassador Brown requested authorization to continue RB-26 reconnaissance flights as a means of determining enemy intentions until the cease-fire had been effectively established. The Department of State granted this authority on the same day.
Through military channels, CHMAAG requested that both RB-26 and RT-33 flights be continued; CINCPAC authorized CHMAAG to continue missions with both types of aircraft unless otherwise directed. (On 26 April, the JCS, with State and Defense concurrence, granted authority for both RB-26 and RT-33 missions until the cease-fire became effective.)

(TS) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 107700, 26 Apr 61; CINCPAC to CHMAAG Laos, 261835Z Apr 61; JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 995035, 28 Apr 61; (S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1938, 26 Apr 61; SecState to Vientiane, 1169, 26 Apr 61.

CHMAAG reported to CINCPAC that Phoumi was pleading for authorization to use his aircraft for bombing. CHMAAG's estimate of the situation was that the PAL was "on the ropes" and that the PL would be able to capture any of the major population centers held by the PAL. If the enemy should decide to exploit this capability, CHMAAG concluded, the use of B-26s and US or SEATO intervention would be necessary to stop him.

CINCPAC realized that the announcement of acceptance of the cease-fire by the RLG had removed the discretion for use of bombs from Ambassador Brown to Washington (see item 23 April). He requested, therefore, that the JCS provide immediate authorization to release bombs to Phoumi (see items 29 and 30 April).

(TS) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 107585, 26 Apr 61; CINCPAC to JCS, 261847Z Apr 61.

Muong Sai, an FAL outpost in northern Laos, was captured by the Pathet Lao. Ambassador Brown, relaying this intelligence to the Secretary of State, reported in addition that the FAL forces north of Vientiane were of low morale and were likely to "dissolve" if struck hard. Their "dissolution," reported Brown, would leave open the way to Vientiane.

The US could not afford, according to Brown, to allow the enemy to continue his forward movement toward key Laotian centers "beyond a certain point." There was, moreover, no way that Brown could see to stop this advance except by the use of B-26s, "probably followed by US or SEATO troops." The Ambassador requested, therefore, that he be given authority to employ B-26s if 1) the enemy moved south of Nam Lkr (a river between Vang Vieng and Vientiane), or 2) the enemy threatened to occupy the terrain commanding any of the major centers near the Mekong Valley.

On the same day CHMAAG, who had earlier recommended to Ambassador Brown that authority to use B-26s be secured, stated to CINCPAC that he considered the B-26s should be employed not only against enemy troop movements toward the major centers in the Mekong Valley, but against the Plaine des Jarres installations, in order to produce the maximum effect.