The Department of State's reply to Brown was immediate. The President had decided that the request for B-26 action should be disapproved (see following item).

(TS) JCS Laos Sitrep 112-61, 26 Apr 61;
(TS) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1943, 26 Apr 61;
(TS) Msg, CHMAAG to CINCPAC, DA IN 107700, 26 Apr 61; (TS) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 1172, 26 Apr 61.

26 Apr

The Acting Secretary of State informed Ambassador Brown that, because of Brown's description of the situation in Laos (see item above), and also because of bellicose statements by the Chinese Communists and Kong Le, the situation had been assessed in Washington as "most serious." Accordingly, a meeting had been held with the President, and the following actions had resulted:

1. The President had telephoned Ambassador Bruce in London, asking him to inform Prime Minister Macmillan immediately of these developments and to seek Macmillan's views on what actions were required. Bruce had done this and Macmillan had suggested that Phoumi should immediately make public a call for a meeting on the cease-fire, stipulating time and place. If there were no response, the other side would bear the onus for continued hostilities.

2. The President had also called in the British and French Ambassadors to point out the seriousness of the situation and had dispatched a letter in the same vein to Prime Minister Nehru.

3. The President had decided the following:
   a. CINCPAC would be instructed to "move naval forces into Gulf of Siam [and] South China Sea."
   b. Forces earmarked for air movement into Laos under SEATO Plan 5 would be alerted.
   c. The US Ambassador to the UN was authorized to explore with the UK, French, and Lao representatives the possibility of immediate Security Council action, under conditions previously agreed upon by the US & UK (see item 8 April), to reinforce the Geneva co-Chairmen's call for a cease-fire.

The Acting Secretary laid upon Brown the "difficult" task of impressing upon the RLG the "absolute need" of maintaining as advantageous a military position as possible while at the same time showing itself amenable to compliance with a cease-fire request. Although Phoumi should not, according to the Acting Secretary, acquiesce in the demands of Kong Le and Souvanna for meeting in a place or under conditions of their choosing, he should set a time when he would be willing to meet their representatives on neutral ground to fix a de facto cease-fire.
Further, it was very important that the RLG maintain its posture as the uncompromised legitimate and constitutional government of Laos, so that its credentials would not be "subject to legitimate question" in the event UN action was required. In addition, it was important that the RLG not make hasty concessions to Souvanna. If made, such concessions would undermine the RLG position at the 14-Nation Conference.

(TS) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 1172, 26 Apr 61.

As a result of decisions reached at a White House meeting (see preceding item), the JCS instructed CINCPAC to:

1. Deploy naval carrier forces to support SEATO Plan 5.

2. Move amphibious forces into positions in the Gulf of Siam within 12 hours steaming of Bangkok, but not to land unless further ordered.

3. Be prepared to call off SEATO exercise Pony Express.

4. Be prepared to land at Seno or other areas of Southern Laos in order to hold Southern Laos; and to land forces in South Viet Nam and Thailand, if Vientiane should have fallen before SEATO Plan 5 could be executed (see item 29 April).

5. Be prepared to take measures to stop Red Chinese intervention, including strikes on intermediate bases in North Viet Nam and, if necessary, on bases in Red China which support operations against Laos.

There was a "reluctance," the JCS stated, "to use nuclear weapons initially, and their use [was] still subject to later decision." ("Later decision remains the President's.")

(TS) Msgs, OCJCS to Chief, USELM CENTO Ankara (for CJCS), JCS 994928, 26 Apr 61; JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 994935, 26 Apr 61.

The Secretary of State directed the US Delegate to the UN to consult immediately with his British and French colleagues in preparation for a possible "move" in the UN Security Council on the Laotian situation. This move, if taken, would be intended to (1) apply pressure to the Communists immediately to "establish in fact" a cease-fire in Laos, and (2) improve the US position in world opinion in the event of a SEATO military intervention in that country.

26 Apr

In consultations with his British and French colleagues, the US Delegate was to propose the following:

- 50 -
1. A joint US/British (and possibly French) request for an immediate meeting of the Security Council. At the meeting these two (or three) powers would propose that the Security Council expresses itself "in favor of an immediate cease-fire, verified by the ICC and followed by a conference designed to bring about and maintain a neutral Laos."

2. A resolution which would call for a cease-fire verified by the ICC and the convening of the 14-Nation Conference on 12 May. (By whom and under what circumstances the resolution would be introduced is not clear from available documentation.)

(S) Msg, SecState to USUN, 2120, 26 Apr 61.

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27 Apr

As an aftermath of Ambassador Brown's request for authority to employ B-26s (see item 26 April), CINCPAC noting the disparity between the missions planned for the B-26s by the Ambassador and by CHMAAG, requested that the JCS cause an order to be sent to Brown directing that he "not interfere with the military commander once military action is joined and is being conducted in accordance with agreed objectives." CINCPAC termed it "militarily unrealistic to accept restrictions which stem from the Ambassador's interpretation of guidance received from [Washington]."

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to CJCS, 272037Z Apr 61.

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27 Apr

In response to a directive from the Secretary of State (see item 26 April), the US Delegate to the UN met with his French and British colleagues to discuss an early meeting of the Security Council on Laos. As reported by the US Delegate, both his colleagues were opposed to such a meeting. The British Delegate had stated that his government was strongly opposed to an appeal to the UN on the grounds that such an action would negate the joint efforts of the British and the Soviets to bring about a cease-fire. The French Delegate had opposed a Security Council meeting because it 1) would not alter the military situation, 2) would allow the USSR to postpone a cease-fire by engaging in lengthy debate, 3) would provide an opportunity for agitation against the West; and 4) would provoke unwise debate on the legitimacy of the Laotian Government.

(At subsequent meetings of the three UN delegates on 28 and 29 April, the British and French reiterated their opposition to a Security Council meeting on Laos.)

(S) Mags, USUN to SecState, 3014, 3023, 3031, 27, 28, 29 Apr 61.

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27 Apr

In a message to the Secretary of State, the US Ambassador to France reported a conversation on Laos with President De Gaulle. The Ambassador had expressed the deep concern of the US with regard to Laos, pointing out that, if the Communists continued to attack, all of Laos would be
lost and there would be "nothing to negotiate at the conference table." De Gaulle agreed and said that Foreign Minister de Murville had just informed the Soviet Ambassador that the French Government would like the Soviets to "take what steps they could to have the Communist forces in Laos cease fighting."

(S) Msg, Paris to SecState, 4698, 27 Apr 61.

27 Apr

In a message to the Secretary of State, the US Ambassador to Laos reported that the RLG was broadcasting a press statement by Phoumi, announcing that the Chief of Staff of the FAL was ready to meet the responsible chief of the opposing forces at Luang Prabang at 0800, 28 April to determine the effective date of a cease-fire.

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1946 and 1951, both 27 Apr 61.

28 Apr

The ICC Laos, answering the call of the Geneva co-Chairmen (see item 24 April), reconvened at New Delhi, with Chairman S. Sen of India presiding. Prime Minister Nehru, in a welcoming address, emphasized to the delegates that a cease-fire must exist if the ICC and the Geneva Conference were to be able to function: it would be "impossible to negotiate in [an] ever changing situation." In reply, the Canadian delegate stated categorically that the cease-fire was a pre-condition for the Geneva Conference; the Polish delegate responded that he believed the cease-fire would be operative in "several days." The Pole then blamed the deterioration of Laotian conditions on "those who brought about adjournment of ICC and involvement of Laos in military acts against socialist world."

(000) Msg, New Delhi to SecState, 2526, 28 Apr 61.

28 Apr

British Prime Minister Macmillan, in a letter to President Kennedy, suggested that the US bring pressure to bear on Phoumi to propose a cease-fire meeting in "no man's land." Pointing out that Luang Prabang, the place proposed by Phoumi for a cease-fire meeting (see item 27 April), was within RLG-controlled territory, Macmillan argued that such an offer was "no way to arrange [a] cease-fire between enemies." Unless an RLG offer to meet the PL in territory controlled by neither side was made and refused, it would be difficult to claim that negotiations had broken down. Macmillan informed the President that he was instructing the British Ambassador to Laos to "speak on these lines" (see next item).

In reply, the President pointed out that, in view of a demand by rebel commander Kong Le that Phoumi appear at Xieng Khouang, the RLG leader's proposal for a meeting in Luang Prabang was the logical one. In addition, the rebels had not denied their allegiance to the King, so a meeting in the royal capital might have been possible had the rebels been willing.

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 1185, 29 Apr 61.
In a message to the Secretary of State, the US Ambassador to Laos reported that the British Ambassador had urged Phoumi to take a further initiative in seeking a cease-fire. Acting on instructions from the Foreign Office (see preceding item), the British diplomat had proposed that, since there had been no reply to the proposal for a meeting at Luang Prabang (see item 27 April), the RLQ should make a new proposal for military representatives to meet under a flag of truce at a specified point where opposing forces were in actual contact.

Acting on the British Ambassador's advice, the RLQ broadcast a proposal the same day that such a meeting take place on 29 April at a point two kilometers north of Ban Vang Khi on Route 13.

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1957, 1960, 1968, all 28 Apr 61; and 1988 and 1976, both 29 Apr 61.

28 Apr

The Secretary of State requested the US Ambassadors to Cambodia, India, and Burma to begin discussions with the governments to which they were accredited for the purpose of lining up the general support of these neutral Asian Nations for the US position at the International conference on Laos. The specific purpose of these "preliminary and exploratory discussions should be to 1) acquaint the neutral nations of the importance the US attached to their role at the conference in insuring an independent and neutral Laos, 2) determine their attitudes on Laotian problems and on the conference, and 3) prepare the way for continued discussions and liaison.

In making their presentations the Ambassadors were to stress that, in the opinion of the US, the Conference would be a turning point for uncommitted Asian Nations. If these countries could support realistic measures for a truly neutral and adequately safeguarded Laos, there would be hope for stopping the Communist advance by peaceful means. Failure to establish a neutral and independent Laos at the Conference, on the other hand, would inevitably mean a falling back on primarily military efforts to defend the area.

Effective action by the Asian neutrals to protect their own interests was becoming particularly important because the Communists appeared to be challenging the whole concept of neutrality in the cold war. They had been pushing the theory that the uncommitted nations of Asia and Africa were merely a third bloc that either supported the Communists (in which case it was tolerated) or supported the Free World (in which case it was opposed). In the US view, the conference would offer the Asian neutrals an opportunity to strengthen their position by proving they could play a vital role in an area where their own interests were directly involved.
Finally, the Ambassadors were to state that, while the US recognized the existence of different points of view with regard to the Laotian problem, it believed there was agreement on the fundamental objective of preserving the independence of Laos from Communist control. The US hoped, therefore, for a regular and frank exchange of views with regard to means for achieving the objective. Specifically, the US Government would appreciate an expression of the views of Cambodia, Burma, and India on 1) means for supervising and controlling a neutral status for Laos, 2) means for giving economic assistance to Laos without jeopardizing its neutrality, and 3) means for providing Laos with armed forces necessary for internal security.

(S) Msg, SecState Circular, 1703, 28 Apr 61.

28 Apr

CHMAAG Laos requested, and CINCPAC granted, authorization to utilize C-130s with USAF markings and crews to airlift one FAL battalion from Laos to Koke Kathiem (Thailand). CHMAAG also requested authority to use these C-130s "whenever urgency of the situation dictates," with CINCPAC to be advised of each mission after the fact. CINCPAC granted this request only for flights into Vientiane and Seno and then only after other resources were fully committed and the requirement had been established to CHMAAG's personal satisfaction.

(TS) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 108399, 28 Apr 61; CINCPAC to CHMAAG Laos, 281905Z Apr 61.

28 Apr

The US Charge d'Affaires in Bangkok reported to the Secretary of State that he had proposed at a meeting of the SEATO Council of Representatives, that the Council seek immediate instructions to issue the "Charter Yellow" alert warning of SEATO Plan 5. This action was taken because of the serious deterioration of the military situation in Laos, as reported by the US Ambassador to that country (see item 26 April).

In response to this US proposal all members of the Council agreed to seek instructions from their governments.

(TS) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 1925 and 1936, 27, 28 Apr 61.

29 Apr

According to a message from the US Ambassador to Laos to the Secretary of State, CHMAAG Laos had been informed that the FAL truce representative had attempted but failed to make contact with representatives of the opposing forces (see item 28 April).

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1969, 29 Apr 61.
Secretary Rusk instructed the US Ambassadors in London and Moscow to inform the British Foreign Secretary and the Soviet Foreign Minister, respectively, that US acceptance of the UK/USSR invitation to attend the conference in Geneva was contingent upon an "immediate and effective cease fire" in Laos.

(Ambassador Bruce conveyed this information to the British Foreign Office on 30 April.)

(OUO) Msg, SecState to London, 5104, and to Moscow, 1869, 29 Apr 61; (S) Msg, London to SecState, 4407, 30 Apr 1961.

The National Security Council 1) discussed the Laotian situation, including the considerations involved in "various alternative" courses of action, and 2) agreed to undertake "certain military and diplomatic measures" before the next meeting of the NSC (scheduled for 1 May), including consultations on the progress of the cease-fire negotiations, on the International Control Commission, and on possible action in the UN and SEATO.

(TS) NSC Action No. 2415, 29 Apr 61 (approved by President 15 May 61).

The JCS, in an implementation of the White House decisions of 26 April (see item), requested that CINCPAC prepare plans to move brigade-size forces of approximately 5,000 men each into Udorn (Thailand) and Tourane (South Viet Nam). The planned forces were to include all appropriate military elements and consist of US forces only (see item 1 May).

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 995131, 29 Apr 61.

The JCS requested the recommendations of CINCPAC concerning possible augmentation of the MAAG Laos prior to any agreement by an international conference on new control machinery. The request assumed 1) agreement on a cease-fire would be reached, and 2) the mission of the ICC would be limited to verification of the cease-fire. The purpose of augmenting the MAAG, the JCS said, would be to intensify FAL training, stiffen and maintain the morale of the FAL and RLG, demonstrate continued US support, and, if the conference following a cease-fire should fail, place the US in as favorable a position as possible for continuing its advisory effort.

(S) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 995134, 29 Apr 61.
CINCPAC cabled to the JCS his assessment of Soviet intentions in Laos, and a list of proposed measures designed to thwart Soviet plans.

CINCPAC believed that the Soviet bloc, by stalling diplomatic negotiations, had demonstrated already an intent to "squeeze [the] last drop" from the military advantage enjoyed by the PL/Kong Le/Viet Minh group. CINCPAC could "see no adequate force which can be applied through RLG which will cause Sovbloc to switch to cease-fire without demand for unacceptable conditions." Further, CINCPAC believed that the Soviet bloc would continue to apply pressure in the expectation of the disintegration of the RLG and FAL prior to any cease-fire.
To prevent such a disintegration, CINCPAC concluded, military counter pressure must be applied; "further futile political demarches" would not suffice. CINCPAC therefore proposed the following series of actions by the US:

1. An announcement to other SEATO members that the US was moving immediately under SEATO Plan 5 and expected the other members to join in this action.

2. The immediate movement of two US BLTs and one Thai battalion to Vientiane.

3. The placing within 24 hours of one Thai battalion at Thakhek.

4. The movement of one US BLT into Seno within 3-4 days.

5. The deployment of air forces to Thailand.

6. The presentation of a statement to the USSR that the US would not allow Laos to be overrun, but that the US was still prepared to accept a cease-fire and the neutralization of the country.

7. Preparation to have SEATO forces remain in Laos "until the situation is restored."

8. Preparation to counter any subsequent moves by Communist China, the USSR, or North Viet Nam.

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 290125Z Apr 61.

The US Ambassador in Paris reported to the Secretary of State the views of the French Foreign Office on Laos as expressed by the Director of Asian Affairs. The military situation, according to the Director, was bad but not catastrophic. No action in the UN or SEATO, which might prove irreversible once started, should be taken for a couple of days. Meanwhile, the French government was exerting all possible pressure on the Soviets, the Burmese, Sihanouk, and, "if they can locate him, Souvanna." (The previous day the French Ambassador in Washington had told the Secretary of State that the French Ambassador to Laos had been instructed to urge Souvanna to use his influence with the Pathet Lao to bring about a cease-fire.)

(S) Msg, Paris to SecState, 4734, 29 Apr 61; (C) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 1185, 28 Apr 61.

29 Apr

Ambassador Brown informed the Secretary of State that, during a conversation with the Burmese Minister to Laos on the previous evening, the Burmese diplomat had 1) reiterated his government's concern over the possibility of a Communist Laos, and 2) requested US opinions on the Conference and a possible coalition government in Laos. The US Ambassador had replied that until the US had "tested" the opposition's objectives at the Conference, and discovered what safeguards and assurances the Communists were willing to accept to provide for a truly neutral Laos, the US was opposed to any efforts to find a "compromise" government.

Ambassador Brown also reported that the Burmese Minister has expressed his government's desire to persuade
friendly Asians, for example, India, Burma, Cambodia, to "work on Souvanna elements to keep them on track."

29 Apr

According to the Bangkok World, on 28 April the Thai Foreign Ministry had issued a statement concerning the participation of Thailand in the conference on Laos. The official communique declared that Thailand's acceptance of the UK/USSR invitation to participate in the 14-nation meeting depended upon the following conditions:

1. First, there must be an absolute cessation of supply by Communist countries of war material and technicians to pro-Communist rebels.

2. After the first step had been accomplished, there must be verified cease-fire. The cease-fire must be "lasting," and one that could definitely be checked.

If these conditions were fulfilled, the statement pointed out, then Thailand would make a decision concerning participation in the conference.

It was clear, the communique declared, that the main objective of the Communists was to expand their area of occupation in Laos with a view to gaining a "political advantage and tightening their political stand at the conference."

The Secretary of State dispatched the following message to Ambassador Brown: "Authority granted to release bombs to Phoumi for use on his T-5 aircraft until effective cease-fire is realized" (see item 30 April).

29 Apr

The Secretary of State called in the British Charge d'Affaires and the French Ambassador for consultations regarding the failure of the Pathet Lao to begin negotiations for a cease-fire. The Secretary pointed out that, not only had the Communists not contacted the RLG representative in "no-man's land," but Souvanna had announced that negotiations would be impossible unless the RLG emissary came to Xieng Khouang. In these circumstances, said the Secretary, the US was seriously considering placing the matter before the UN Security Council. A further step might be to move a SEATO composite force to Thailand.

Both the British and French diplomats urged patience in waiting for a cease-fire they believed to be imminent. Both were skeptical of the value of an appeal to the UN Security Council, and both were uneasy about moving a SEATO force to Thailand.

In a message to the Secretary of State, the US Charge d'Affaires in Bangkok reported on a meeting of the SEATO Council of Representatives that had considered the situation in Laos.
All the Council Members except the British and French had supported the US proposal, made at the meeting on 28 April (see item), to invoke the Charter Yellow warning of SEATO Plan 5. The British representative had reported that his government had not instructed him as to its position, while the French representative had expressed opposition to Charter Yellow as "premature" and "dangerous."

The US representative then had expressed the concern with which his government viewed the deteriorating situation in Laos and had described the courses of action being considered at the "highest levels" of his government, including SEATO action under Plan 5, UN action, and the stationing of a SEATO standing force in Thailand (see items 26, 29 April). With regard to the last of these courses of action, the Australian representative had pointed out that movement of forces to Thailand should be part of a Plan 5 deployment and not a separate movement, which could not be completed in time to meet the present needs. Other representatives concurred in the Australian view, and the US representative then agreed to refer their views to Washington with the recommendation that Plan 5 be suitably modified to provide for the stationing in Thailand of forces committed under the plan.

(TS) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1951 and 1952, 30 Apr 61.

The Secretary of State informed US diplomatic missions that, in response to the Department's request for British views on four subjects concerning Laos, Lord Hood (acting on instructions from the Lord Privy Seal) had made the following comments:

1. Cease-fire. The British thought that the apparent inability of the RLG forces and the PL to get together for cease-fire talks might well be the result of "confusion of communication." (The British hoped that there would be continued efforts to negotiate on a site for the cease-fire talks.)

2. ICC. The British were disturbed over the fact that the Polish delegation was unwilling to proceed to Laos until a cease-fire had become effective. The British were trying to persuade the Indians to convince the Poles that the ICC should go to Laos before the cease-fire.

3. UN Actions. The British said that their attitude on procedures in the UN would depend on circumstances. If SEATO action was to be taken, and the UN to be notified of the action, the British would want the resolution to be a joint US-UK-French resolution. If additional international intervention under UN sponsorship was envisaged, the British would like to have the resolution sponsored by the USSR, India, and the UK.

4. SEATO. The British confirmed the US opinion that, if other measures failed, SEATO action must be invoked. However, the British would have to obtain cabinet approval for SEATO action, and any movement of SEATO forces from Thailand to Laos would require an additional political decision.

(TS) Msg, SecState Circular 1710, 30 Apr 61.
The Secretary of State in response to a strongly worded message from Ambassadors Brown and Harriman modified the authority granted on 29 April (see item) to release bombs to Phoumi. The new instructions stipulated that "bombs should not . . . be used in T-6s or released to Phoumi unless specifically authorized by Ambassador Brown."

Brown, upon learning of the authority granted on 29 April, had directed that no action be taken by CHMAAG under this authority. Brown and Harriman had then cabled the Secretary that the use of bombs would be seized upon by the Communists as an excuse for further military action and delay in agreeing to a cease-fire. Furthermore, doubts would again be raised in the minds of the neutrals and Allies as to the sincerity of the US in seeking a cease-fire.

The Ambassadors asserted that they would support "some really significant action such as stationing SEATO forces in Thailand," thus applying "real pressure" upon the Communists to desist from military action. In their judgment, Brown and Harriman continued, the use of bombs in T-6s would be "provocation without achieving results needed."

CHMAAG, reporting these ambassadorial actions to CINCPAC, depicted himself as "again . . . in the middle," since he had alerted the FAL to imminent strikes before Ambassador Brown had issued the holding order.

(TS) Msgs. CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 109099, 30 Apr 61; SecState to Vientiane, 1195, 30 Apr 61.
According to a 30 April Pathet Lao radio broadcast monitored by FBIS, Kong Le proposed that cease-fire discussions take place at Ban Namone on 1 May.

On the same day Secretary Rusk suggested to Ambassador Brown that he advise Phoumi to accept. The Ambassador, according to his report to the Secretary, had acted on the suggestion on 1 May. Accompanied by the British Ambassador and CHEAAC, Brown had seen Phoumi and urged him to accept the "Kong Le/Souvanna Phouma" offer for cease-fire negotiations at Ban Namone but to ignore any reference to discussions concerning the government or the composition of the Laotian delegation to the Geneva Conference.

Phoumi had been "most reluctant" to accept the Kong Le offer and had refused to do more than "consider" the recommendations of the US and British Ambassadors that he do so. In addition to expressing his doubts concerning the sincerity of the rebel regime's offer, the Laotian leader had pointed out that Ban Namone was 15 kilometers inside enemy lines and, therefore, could not be considered a neutral spot, normal for truce meetings. Phoumi had said he was considering a counter offer to meet on Route 13 at some midpoint between the opposing lines.

(TS) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 194, 30 Apr 61;
(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1983, 1 May 61.

The National Security Council discussed the situation in Laos and agreed that "no final decisions as to U.S. courses of action with respect to that situation should be taken at this meeting, pending further developments in the cease-fire negotiations." The Council noted that the President would be prepared "under certain conditions" to deploy US forces to Thailand. Finally, the Council agreed that the Joint Chiefs of Staff should prepare, for presentation to the Council the next day, an appreciation of the military implications of "various" measures that might be taken in Laos, Thailand, and other countries of Southeast Asia.

(TS) NSC Action No. 2417, 1 May 61 (approved by President 15 May 61).

The ICC Laos submitted its first report to the Geneva co-Chairmen. After expressing sentiments of concern and hope, the ICC stated its intention to proceed to Laos as soon as the date for an agreed cease-fire had been arranged, in order to be present at about the time the actual cessation of hostilities took place. Upon arrival in Laos, the Commission stated, its "primary and most important responsibility" would be "to establish close and cooperative relations with the parties, particularly with such joint committees as may be set up for effective implementation of the cease-fire." The ICC expressed its willingness to proceed immediately to any place where such committees might be functioning, and its readiness to consider, in cooperation with the parties to the cease-fire, such measures as the establishment of inspection teams.

For this latter purpose, the ICC needed to be authorized to request and receive relevant military information.
The Commission envisioned as its task subsequent to the cease-fire agreement the supervision and control of that agreement.

The ICC requested instructions from the co-Chairmen authorizing the above actions (see item 6 May).

(C) Msg, New Delhi to SecState, 2543, 1 May 61.

1 May

CINCPAC provided to the JCS plans for the deployment of US forces to Thailand and South Viet Nam (see item 29 April). CINCPAC's plan set up two separate 5,000-man forces, to be deployed to their respective locations separately and by separate orders. The units involved and the timetables for their deployment were as follows:

**A. Thailand**

1. **Forces**
   - USMC headquarters
   - 2 USMC BLTs
   - 1 USMC Air Group (-)
   - 1 USA Battle Group
   - 1 USAF F-100 squadron (plus 6 RP-101s)
   - USA 9th Logistical Command Control and Support Elements

2. **Deployment**
   a. Commencing D-Day - airlift of USMC headquarters and the USMC BLT to Udorn, and USAF elements to Takhli.
   b. Commencing D-1 - airlift of 1 USMC BLT to Udorn and air and sealift of 9th Logistical Command Control and Support Elements to Khorat.
   c. Commencing D+2 - airlift of US Army Battle Group to Udorn.
   d. Commencing D+5 - airlift of USMC Air Group (-) to Udorn.

**B. South Viet Nam**

1. **Forces**
   - Headquarters and Headquarters Element of Marine Expeditionary Brigade
   - 3 USMC BLTs
   - 1 USMC Air Group (-)
   - USMC Support Elements as directed

2. **Deployment**
   a. Commencing D-Day - air and/or sea lift of headquarters and three BLTs to Tourane.
   b. Commencing D+5 - air and/or sea lift of Marine Air Group (-).
   c. USMC supporting elements as directed.
In addition to the foregoing, two attack carrier task groups would take station off South Viet Nam, prepared for supporting operations as directed by CINCPAC. Later a USA Brigade Task Force, less 1 battle group, would deploy from Hawaii to Udorn, at which time the USMC ground and air units at Udorn would be relieved for further deployment.

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, DA IN 109146, 1 May 61.

1-2 May Subsequent to the 1 May NSC meeting (see item), the JCS met, with the Secretary of Defense present. The CNO outlined a requirement imposed on the JCS for an appreciation of the military implications of possible military actions in Southeast Asia, and the Director, Joint Staff, was assigned the project of preparing such a paper. At the same meeting, the Secretary of Defense tabled a draft outline memorandum for the President on US actions regarding Laos.

On 2 May, the JCS met twice with the Secretary of Defense and the Service Secretaries in preparation for the afternoon's NSC meeting. At the morning session, there was extended discussion of the draft memorandum for the President prepared by the Secretary of Defense; the discussion ended with the Secretary of Defense requesting the Service Chiefs and Service Secretaries to submit any differing views after lunch.

At the afternoon meeting, the Secretary of Defense presented a "clean draft" of his proposed memorandum for the President, incorporating changes agreed to during the morning session. Next, the Service Chiefs and Service Secretaries tabled memoranda embodying their respective views. Finally, the Joint Staff presented its appreciation of the military situation in Southeast Asia (begun on the previous day; see above); and the conferees agreed to several amendments to it.

The Secretary of Defense then decided that he would gather all these papers into a "package" for presentation at the NSC meeting. The package, when constituted, contained the following:

1. The memorandum for the President prepared by the Secretary of Defense.

2. A message from the CJCS, at Saigon, on the subject of Laos and Southeast Asia.

3. Memoranda containing the individual views of:
   a. The Secretary of the Army
   b. The Chief of Staff, Army
   c. The Chief of Naval Operations
   d. The Secretary of the Air Force
   e. The Chief of Staff, Air Force

4. Portions of the Joint Staff "Appreciation of the Military Situation in Southeast Asia."

(See following item.)

(C) Notes to Control, 1 May and 2 May 61; OCJCS Files, 091 Laos (3).
2 May

The National Security Council took the following actions:

1. Noted and discussed a briefing by the Acting Chairman, JCS, on the military implications of "possible" courses of action in Laos.

2. Noted the President's directive that contingency military planning for Southeast Asia should be continued in the light of the rapidly developing situation, and should be discussed with the United Kingdom.

3. Noted that the Secretaries of State and Defense would send to the President "promptly" a joint recommendation on US action regarding Laos (see item 9 May). (TS) NSC Action No. 2418, 2 May 61 (approved by President 16 May 61).

2 May

In a message to Secretary Rusk, the US Ambassador to Laos summarized Ambassador Harriman's meeting with Prince Boun Oum and General Phoumi Nosavan at Luang Prabang on 30 April. Phoumi had requested a promise that 1) the US would not allow key strategic points to be taken, and 2) if these centers should fall to the opposition, the US would provide every assistance in order to retrieve the situation.

Ambassador Harriman, after complimenting the RLG for offering to meet opposition representatives to discuss the cease-fire, had recommended that 1) the cease-fire talks begin immediately, and 2) that such talks be limited to military arrangements to stop the fighting, without any discussion on political questions. Harriman had concluded his presentation by: 1) stressing the US view of the "error" of trying to compromise with Souvanna Phouma on the future of Laos 2) expressing the hope that the morale of government forces would be maintained at a high level, and that the FAL would resist aggression to the maximum possible extent.

In a separate message to the Secretary of State, Ambassador Brown reported that, during a meeting with King Savang Vathana later in the day, Ambassador Harriman had urged that the King not "compromise" the status of the present RLG before the conference had convened.

The King had agreed to retain the present RLG in order not to weaken the position of the West.

(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2009, 2 May 61; (S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1998, 2 May 61.

2 May

The JCS informed CINCPAC that SEATO Plan 5 was under discussion in Washington, within the US Government and with the UK.
The JCS reported that the British considered implicit in Plan 5 the "automatic extension" of military operations to Luang Prabang, Xieng Khouang and the Plaine des Jarres. It was the view of the JCS that this attitude was endangering the British contribution of their force commitments to SEATO Plan 5.

Within the US Government, the JCS continued, concern had been expressed "at high levels" that SEATO Plan 5 envisaged the securing of too many places. The JCS had been advised that only Vientiane, Seno, and possibly Pakse should be secured by the SEATO forces. They requested CINCPAC's confirmation or comments on the JCS view that implementation of the plan would conform to this advice, as well as his comment whether or not SEATO Plan 5 required updating in view of the current situation (see item 3 May).

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 995267, 2 May 61.

Ambassador Brown informed the Secretary of State that, following a conference of FAL general officers and a meeting of Laotian Cabinet members, the RLG had issued a press statement on cease-fire negotiations. After reviewing RLG efforts to effect a cease-fire (see item 25, 28, 29 April), the release stated that the officer representing the royal army had been unable to meet the Pathet Lao representative, on 1 May, since Ban Namone was in enemy territory. However, contact with enemy forces had been made near Vang Khi on 1 May. According to the statement, a temporary cease-fire was now in effect in the Vang Khi-Vang Vieng area.

In a separate message to Secretary Rusk, Ambassador Brown reported that, according to the British Ambassador, RLG Foreign Minister Sophsaisana had said the FAL representative had specifically told the PL officer with whom he had made contact that he was to arrange for talks to work out a nation-wide cease-fire. Furthermore, Sophsaisana had said that the FAL officer had been authorized to make arrangements for a future meeting to discuss political problems.

(U) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2007, 2 May 61; (S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2008, 2 May 61.

Counselor Mendenhall reported from Saigon to the Secretary of State the main points of conversations of the previous day between President Diem, General Lemnitzer, Ambassadors Harriman and Durbrow, and General McDarr (CHMAAG South Viet Nam).

Diem had stated that since the start of the Soviet airlift, the US had been following the UK lead, seeking a cease-fire while the Soviets were building up supplies in both Laos and North Viet Nam. Moreover, the supplies being built-up in the Plaine des Jarres were, according to Diem, not only for use in Laos but for operations against South Viet Nam.

An "all out effort" must be made immediately, Diem continued, to hold at least the Mekong Valley cities, and Saravane, Attopeu, and Tchepone (towns in southern and eastern Laos near the South Vietnamese border).
Diem reported that one of his diplomats had, in conversation with a UK diplomat, opined that the troops required to assure the independence of Laos, estimated by the UK diplomat to be 400,000, could be obtained from Taiwan. Diem indicated to the Americans his agreement with this view. General Lemnitzer commented in reply that the introduction of Chinese Nationalists into Laos would raise more problems than it solved; he suggested that actions should, rather, be taken by SEATO. "Diem laughed," reported Mendenhall. The Vietnamese President stated that the Thais were "fed up" with SEATO and were now consulting on international affairs with Viet Nam for the first time since Diem had taken office.

(Mendenhall reported, parenthetically, that on 1 May, when Durbrow had asked Diem if South Vietnamese and Thai troops might be sent into Laos, Diem had replied that there was no legal basis for the entrance of South Vietnamese troops, but that Thai and US troops should enter under the legal basis provided by SEATO.)

Finally, regarding the 14-Nation Conference, Diem had asked: What would the Conference decide? Would it only confirm Communist advances? If there was to be a cease-fire, the free world must insist, Diem had urged, that the Communists return to the positions held at the time of the Geneva co-Chairmen's call for a cease-fire (see item 24 April).

(S) Msg, Saigon to SecState, 1659, 3 May 61.

2-3 May

CINCPAC requested that the JCS remove, on a one-time basis, the restriction that carrier-based reconnaissance flights over Laos avoid the Laos-North Viet Nam border (see item 6-7 April). CINCPAC wished to obtain photographic coverage of the ground access routes from North Viet Nam into Laos; he considered these routes to be of strategic importance, both to the current situation in Laos and to the assessment of the continuing threat to the whole of Southeast Asia. The imminence of a cease-fire made this requirement more urgent, since the cease-fire agreement might restrict overflights of Laos, thus denying this information to the US for an indefinite time.

On the following day, the JCS granted CINCPAC permission for a carrier-based reconnaissance mission stipulating that the mission must be completed before the cease-fire was "effective and so declared" by the IGC. CINCPAC quickly ordered CINCPACFLT to initiate such a mission as soon as possible.

(TS) Msgs, CINCPAC to JCS, 020335Z May 61; JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 995287, 3 May 61; CINCPAC to CINCPACFLT, 032047Z May 61.

3 May

In response to a request from the Secretary of State, Ambassador Brown provided his estimate of the Laotian situation.

Militarily, Brown began, the PAL was "fast approaching ineffectiveness" and only SEATO or US troops could stop the Pathet Lao if it chose to attack the Laotian population centers. However, "hard evidence" of the imminence of such an attack was lacking, and there seemed a fair chance that a cease-fire would soon take place.
Given the bleak military outlook, Brown continued, the political situation was surprisingly stable. But dissatisfaction with the RLG was increasing in the armed forces and in the politically minded quarters of Vientiane. Although this sentiment was inchoate and unorganized, Brown concluded, there was some risk that the RLG might be deserted by the Laotians.

(S) Msgs, SecState to Vientiane, 1202, 1 May 61; Vientiane to SecState, 2011, 3 May 61.

3 May

The US Charge d'Affaires in Vientiane informed the Secretary of State that the Pathet Lao radio had broadcast at 0630, 3 May, a statement by Kong Le in which he ordered his forces to cease firing as of 0800 on the same day. Kong Le had also requested that both the NLHX forces and the "Phoumi-Boun Oum party" cease firing and immediately end all military movements. These two factions were urged to send fully authorized representatives to Ban Namone, 11 kilometers south of Vang Vieng in order to discuss: a) formation of a coalition government, b) selection of Laotian representatives to attend the conference in Geneva on 12 May, and c) ways and means to solve the "Laotian question and return Laos to its former state."

The Secretary of State, in receipt through other channels of the Kong Le statement, recommended to Ambassador Brown that he advise the RLG to cooperate without raising complicating issues on "picayune details." Phoumi had already accepted, however, as Brown reported a few minutes later. In an official declaration Phoumi stated that the RLG had welcomed the proposal and had given orders to the PAL Commander in Chief to "stop all hostilities and all fighting on all fronts as of this date."

In a cable to Ambassador Brown several hours later, Secretary Rusk noted that the Pathet Lao radio had later broadcast a message from Souvanna Phouma suggesting that the meeting called for by Kong Le take place on 5 May. The purpose given by Souvanna for the meeting was, however, to "negotiate a coalition government to attend ... [the] Geneva Conference. It appeared, the Secretary said, that Souvanna might be attempting to relate political questions to the cease-fire. RLG acceptance of Souvanna's invitation would seem to place the US at a "maximum disadvantage" at the Geneva Conference, Rusk declared. Therefore, Phoumi ought to be supported if he refused Souvanna's invitation to discuss far-reaching political questions under the present conditions. It would be more profitable, Rusk continued, that the cease-fire first be established and the IGC introduced into Laos before any political discussions took place.

On the following day, Ambassador Brown reported that Phoumi, speaking for the RLG in a radio broadcast statement, had declared that a commission headed by General Sing Rathanasamy would meet with representatives of the other forces on 5 May at a point located 2 kilometers north of Hin Heup. (Souvanna's proposal had, according to Phoumi, named Hin Heup as an alternative to Ban Namone.)
Ambassador Brown further reported that Phoumi had told him that the delegation had full powers to discuss the cease-fire, but had no authority to "talk politics."

(S) Msgs, SecState to Vientiane, 1207, 1208, 3 May 61
(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2021, 4 May 61; (U) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 2012, 2014, 3 May 61; (U) NYT, 4 May 61, p. 1; (U) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2020, 4 May 61.

3 May

CINCPAC, replying to the JCS queries concerning SEATO Plan 5 (see item 2 May), stated his view that, under current conditions, the forces entering Laos under the Plan should have as initial objectives the securing of the Vientiane and Seno/Savannakhet areas and adjacent Mekong River crossings. All SEATO military advisers had agreed in these objectives. However, CINCPAC continued, the central objectives of the plan should also include Thakhek, Paksane and other key locations on the Lao-Thai border, in order to maintain the lines of communication from Savannakhet to Vientiane and to assure the Thais that the US did not intend to permit Communist forces becoming a "direct threat" to Thailand. Beyond these border areas, action would not be initiated to seize and hold additional areas "unless so directed."

CINCPAC considered that all forces specified in SEATO Plan 5, as modified (see item 5 April), were required to carry out the above objectives and that no updating of the Plan was required. By way of rebuttal of the British fears (see item 2 May), CINCPAC noted that Plan 5 contained, in his opinion, adequate provisions, through the chain of command from the SEATO Council, to preclude SEATO forces' undertaking any subsequent actions that were unacceptable either politically or militarily.

Finally, CINCPAC cautioned that SEATO Plan 5 had not been conceived of as an operation to seize and hold beachheads against an organized opposition, but rather had been predicated upon having an organized FAL that the SEATO forces could support in a counter-insurgency campaign. This assumption obtained at the present time; if, however, the FAL became incapable of conducting organized operations, SEATO Plan 5 would no longer be an appropriate plan for intervention in Laos.

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 031110Z May 61.

3 May

CINCPAC reported to the JCS that a review of the "newest weapons and equipment" had been conducted, as requested by the Chairman, JCS. The conclusion had been drawn that none of these new items were suitable for "profitable use" by the FAL because the Laotians did not have the capability to employ more sophisticated weapons than those already provided to them. Furthermore, CINCPAC continued, if the situation developed so that the FAL training program could be continued, the ingredients of the program should be "basic training of the soldier" and "motivation and leadership of the officer." Without these fundamentals, concluded CINCPAC, weapons and equipment would be useless.

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 032301Z May 61; (S) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 108466, 28 Apr 61.
Philippine Foreign Minister Serrano informed the US Ambassador at Manila that the Philippine Government was "greatly concerned that there was no present indication of US decisive action in Laos situation." Serrano had the personal impression, Ambassador Hickerson reported to the Secretary of State, that the US was seeking a way to allow Laos to "slip" to the Communists without "too great damage."

Hickerson reported that Serrano had not been impressed by the Ambassador's disavowal of such a US intention. The Ambassador urged to the Secretary that Serrano be kept more fully informed of US policies, in order that his skepticism be abated.

(S) Msg, Manila to SecState, 1273, 4 May 61.

The Charge d'Affaires in Bangkok reported that, within the SEATO Council of Representatives, discussions and agreements on the political actions in support of SEATO Plan 5 (see items 13 and 28 April) had proceeded as follows:

1. Regarding Action 5, appointment of a political advisor (POLAD) to the SEATO force, the French believed it necessary that specific terms of reference be drafted for the POLAD. The other representatives argued that the general terms of reference contained in Plan 5 for the SEATO Force Commander would suffice. Discussion was suspended pending arrival of expected instructions for the Australian representative from his government.

2. The French representative agreed, subject to confirmation from Paris, to the proposal that situation assessments and warnings should be issued by the Council of Representatives upon receipt, in each case, of instructions from the respective member governments. Also agreed to by the Council was the proposition that if the Charter Green warning were issued, the respective nations would have the responsibility of calling up their force contributions (Action 6 - see items 13 and 28 April).

3. The French Government was "agreeable" to formal status of forces agreements (Action 8), but insisted that no contact should be made with the RLG regarding these agreements until Plan 5 had been activated. The Thais proposed that, in the event formal agreements were not authorized, there should at least be prepared a list of provisions for the guidance of the Force Commanders in negotiating with the RTO and RLG. All agreed to refer the Thai proposal to their governments for instructions (see item 22 May).

(TS) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1971, 4 May 61.

Counselor Unger reported to the Secretary of State that a US Embassy Officer had informed the SEATO Council Representatives of Thailand, Australia, the Philippines, New Zealand, and Pakistan that the US was prepared to accede to a UK proposal to postpone further discussion of Charter Yellow. The US spokesman had emphasized that the US was not abandoning the Charter Yellow proposal, and the various Representatives, with the exception of the Australian Representative, had appeared to accept the US position "with equanimity."
The Australian delegate, while admitting that the UK proposal was "not too unreasonable" at the present juncture, stated frankly that the US should previously have exerted greater efforts to bring France and the UK into line with the US position that Charter Yellow was urgently required. The Australian blamed the US equally with the UK for the present status of SEATO: "a dead horse." The Australians and the Asian members of SEATO had looked to the US for strong leadership, he continued. Australia, for one, had made it unmistakably clear that she expected the US to use a "strong hand" in imposing upon France and the UK the gravity of the situation in Laos and the necessity for action. But the US had failed to exercise its leadership. The British could have been persuaded to give in, the Australian declared. The French would then have been isolated and required either to prove themselves "worthy members of SEATO" or to admit to "self-centered obstructionism." Even if the latter alternative had resulted, the resulting situation would have been better, in the eyes of the Australian, than the present impasse, which had demonstrated to the Asian members that the SEATO Council resolution (see item 29 March) was "empty words."

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1984, 5 May 61.

Counselor Unger cabled from Bangkok the substance of a conversation between Prime Minister Sarit and Ambassador Harriman. The two statesmen had agreed that, because of the likelihood of a cease-fire, the time for SEATO action had passed. However, Ambassador Harriman had emphasized that both countries must continue quietly and unilaterally to take required alert measures, regardless of British and French opposition to a SEATO declaration of Charter Yellow. Deploping SEATO's inability to take firm action in recent weeks, Harriman also had agreed with the Prime Minister that had SEATO "acted promptly" a cease-fire would probably have since resulted, before many fallen Lao positions had been lost. Consequently, the two men considered, the Western position at the Geneva Conference would have been greatly enhanced.

To Ambassador Harriman's inquiry whether Thailand was prepared to attend the Geneva Conference if there were an effective cease-fire, Sarit replied "if America goes we go too." Sarit made it clear that Thailand would press at the Conference for several points it regarded as "essential." First, the Thais were "absolutely opposed" to acknowledging Souvanna or the PL as representing Laos at the Conference. Second, the Pathet Lao must agree to withdraw from their present positions, either to the "arrangements" of the 1954 Geneva Conference (de facto control by the PL of Sam Neua and Phong Saly provinces) or to the positions occupied before the Kong Le August 1950 coup. (This second alternative was attributed by Counselor Unger to Harriman, who quickly pointed out that he considered it "unrealistic" and that Sarit had in fact proposed it.) If the Communists did not meet these Thai requirements, Sarit continued, Thailand "might well withdraw from the Conference." However, Harriman eventually
obtained Sarit's agreement that the question of Lao representation might be postponed at the "early stages" of the Conference, and that Pathet Lao withdrawal "away from the Mekong" and north of the 17th parallel would be an acceptable minimum.

On the question of a broadened or coalition government in Laos, Sarit emphasized that this should not be hurried. He did not think the King strong enough to head such a government and implied, according to Unger, that there was no man strong enough in his estimation; though not fully satisfied with Phoumi et al., he would not change them.

Sarit did not think that Boun Oum and Phoumi could exist under a government headed by Souvanna Phouma and including Communists; either a divided Laos or self-exile by Boun Oum and Phoumi would result. Sarit did not, however, rule out Souvanna's participation in government in some position other than prime minister.

Asked by Harriman for a message to President Kennedy, Sarit responded with the thought that all parties should be prepared, in the event the Geneva Conference failed, to take whatever action necessary to avoid losing Laos. Sarit also desired that more credence and weight be attached to the views of the Southeast Asian allies.

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1979, 5 May 61; (S) Msg, SecState to Bangkok, Circular 1753, [6 May 61].

5 May

CHMAAG informed CINCPAC that an FAL cease-fire committee had met with a PL cease-fire "sub-committee." The meeting had been inconclusive because the PL committee had lacked "power to talk terms."

A meeting the next day, Ambassador Brown informed the Secretary of State, ended in disagreement as to the site for future meetings. The PL insisted upon Ban Namone; the RLG on Hin Heup. But though the meeting itself was again inconclusive, the Ambassador saw significance in the fact that the Pathet Lao had been represented by qualified officers for the first time.

(S) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 110568, 5 May 61; (C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2029, 6 May 61.

6 May

CHMAAG, in a Situation Report to CINCPAC, reported that "Pathet Lao guerrilla units accompanied by Chinese Communist political advisers are moving into areas of northern Laos which have been abandoned by FAL forces."

(S) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 110914, 6 May 61.

6 May

The Department of State cabled to US Embassies the draft instructions to the ICC Laos agreed to by the Geneva co-Chairmen, the UK and the USSR (see item 1 May).

According to the draft, the co-Chairmen considered that, at present, the basic task of the ICC was the "fixing" of a cease-fire in Laos in accordance with an understanding to be reached by the belligerent parties, and in exercising supervision and control over that cease-fire. The ICC should arrive in Laos immediately.
after the belligerent parties had ceased firing and should proceed to carry out its task.

Regarding functions for the ICC to perform after the completion of this "first stage" of its work, the co-Chairmen stated that the determination of these functions fell within the competence of the Geneva Conference. The co-Chairmen requested that the ICC furnish them with regular reports on its activities, particularly with regard to the manner in which the cease-fire agreement was being observed by the belligerent parties.

(S) Msg, SecState Circular, 1750, 6 May 61.

6 May The US Military Attache in South Viet Nam reported to the Army Chief of Staff that approximately 150 South Vietnamese troops had entered Laos east of Tchepone. The Attache reported that South Vietnamese Special Forces reconnaissance teams had been in the Tchepone area since 1 May and had observed more than three battalions of Communist troops beleaguering various PAL outposts. The Attache commented that if the Communist troops succeeded in gaining control of the highway from Laos through Tchepone to South Viet Nam before the military positions were frozen by a Laotian truce, the opportunities for guerrilla incursions would endanger two northern provinces of South Viet Nam.

(S) Msg, USARMA Saigon to CSA, 060357Z May 61.

5 May The JCS, informing CINCPAC that the stationing of US forces in Thailand was under consideration in Washington (see item 1 May), urgently requested his opinions and recommendations on several questions regarding this course of action, as follows:

a. What kind of U.S. force do we propose to station in Thailand?

b. Should it be part of a SEATO force?

c. Should it be conceived and fashioned as a deterrent to guerrilla infiltration from across Mekong rather than just a U.S. "presence?"

d. Mission or objective of such force?

e. Composition or objective of such force - type and number of personnel?

f. Source of personnel?

g. Time required to form such force?

h. Time required to position in Thailand?

i. Should engineers be included in force - type, number, mission?

j. Should Civic Action teams be included - size and number of teams?

(See following item for CINCPAC's item-by-item response.)

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 995542, 6 May 61.
Within hours, CINCPAC responded to the JCS queries regarding the stationing of US forces in Thailand (see preceding item). CINCPAC's replies, keyed to the JCS questions, were as follows:

(a) The US force stationed in Thailand should be the same as the US elements for SEATO Plan 5 as modified (see item 5 April). Alternatively, the 5,000-man force suggested for Thailand by CINCPAC on 1 May (see item) could be deployed.

(b) The US force should be the US element of the SEATO force designated for SEATO Plan 5.

(c) The force should not be conceived of as a patrol force against infiltration; the Thais had both the responsibility and the capability for patrolling against infiltrations. The US forces designated for SEATO Plan 5 were capable of supporting the Thais in defensive action but were capable of limited offensive action.

(d) The mission of the US force should be to contribute to a visible SEATO effort to stabilize the defenses of Southeast Asia against Communist encroachment and to demonstrate the US intent to honor its commitments to the countries of that area.

(e) The composition of US forces should be that indicated in SEATO Field Forces Plan 5, as modified (see item 5 April).

(f) The sources of personnel would be the PACOM components, augmented from CONUS, as indicated by SEATO Field Forces Plan 5.

(g) The US elements of Plan 5 were already formed and prepositioned in forward areas.

(h) The timing of deployments to Thailand should be substantially that indicated for the positioning of the 5,000-man force suggested on 1 May (see item).

(i) The US elements of SEATO Field Forces Plan 5 contained sufficient engineer units for initial requirements.

(j) Civic Action teams would not be required; the US element of SEATO Field Forces Plan 5 included civil affairs personnel.

CINCPAC strongly recommended that any decision to station US forces in Thailand be "generally in consonance with the concept of operations for the PACOM elements of SEATO Plan 5. He warned, finally, that if the US force were intended only to bolster Thai strength rather than to enter Laos, Sarit might not favor this course of action.

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 070008Z May 61.
7 May

CHMAAG reported to CINCPAC that a "maximum effort has been made to obtain hard evidence of Viet Minh presence in Laos." A considerable amount of information had been accumulated, CHMAAG continued, but "very little that would stand up as firm evidence in any international conference." CHMAAG listed several specific Viet Minh units that had reportedly been identified by the RLG, but stated that this information had not been confirmed by other sources. The general consensus of reliable observers, reported CHMAAG, was similar to the recently expressed views of the Chief of the RLG External Documentation Service, who had said:

I cannot see entire Viet Minh units engaged in combat in Laos, up to now. Their tactics would be different from those we have seen employed by the enemy. Regular Viet Minh units could be expected to follow up and exploit their tactical successes rapidly instead of taking a week or longer for regrouping after a key town has been taken by them.

There are, to be sure, Viet Minh technicians, weapons crews, and advisors with Pathet Lao forward elements. I accept that entire Viet Minh units have been employed in enemy rear areas, such as Sam Neua and Xieng Khouang provinces, to bolster Pathet Lao morale and consolidate control in these areas. But from the analysis of all the information available to us, I cannot find proof that regular Viet Minh Army units are being employed to spearhead enemy attacks.

(S) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 111585, 9 May 61.

8 May

Secretary Rusk (in Oslo for the NATO Council of Foreign Ministers meeting) informed the Department of State that during a meeting between British and French Foreign Office representatives and the US Deputy Assistant Secretary for Far Eastern Affairs, the following points concerning the Geneva Conference on Laos had been discussed:

1. There was complete agreement among the three diplomats that, unless the ICC Chairman sent some form of assurance that the cease-fire was effective, the Conference should not be opened.

2. It was hoped that Sihanouk would arrive to open the Conference. If not, the British and Soviet Foreign Ministers would draw lots for the opening day chairmanship of the meeting. Thereafter they would alternate daily as chairman instead of the chairmanship's rotating through the 14 nations.

3. It was considered advisable to provide Laos a seat at the conference table. The RLG, as the legitimate government, would claim the right to this seat; if this right was challenged it might be necessary, as a concession, to seat the Laotian delegation as observers, speaking in the conference on invitation. Allowance would also have to be made for seating the delegation of a coalition government if one was formed.
4. The suggestion that King Savang, as sovereign of the country to be under discussion at the international meeting, be invited to express his desires and opinions at the Conference was considered to have some merit. However, all three representatives seriously doubted that the King would accept such an invitation.

5. According to the British delegate, the Soviets had agreed that conference deliberations would be restricted to the subject of Laos. Any effort to broaden the field of discussions would be vigorously resisted by the US, UK, and France.

6. It was agreed that the agenda should be kept as simple as possible. The first item should be consideration of the ICC Chairman's message on the effectiveness of the cease-fire. At that point, it was hoped that the agenda would consist of one item entitled "International Recognition of Neutrality of Laos and Measures to Achieve It with the Assistance of International Supervisory and Control Machinery."

7. On the subject of the Geneva Accords, the British were firm in their opinion that the Accords were so out dated that large portions were inapplicable. The British believed that the best approach, therefore, would be to pay "lip service" to the spirit of the Geneva Accords, while at the same time attempting to perfect agreements to meet new needs under new conditions. The French were probably only partially agreed on this approach, as they were most reluctant to give up special privileges that had been given to them by the Accords.

8. It was agreed that, before any conference machinery could begin the task of assisting Laos to achieve the status of a neutral nation, agreement had to be reached on the essential aspects of neutrality. One predominant consideration would be the question of restrictions on the size and character of a future Laotian military force.

9. There was general agreement on the need to involve neutral countries, such as Cambodia and Burma, in the problem of Laos. The Asian neighbors of Laos would then have the opportunity to assume "heavy responsibility" in guarding their own interests and in bringing about the conditions in Laos that would be acceptable to them.

"Considerable sympathy" had been shown for the idea of establishing a Commission (either separate from or in conjunction with the ICC) that, under authority from the 14-Nation Conference, would carry out its mission in Laos for several months and then report to a reconvened Conference. This concept would have the advantage of: 1) keeping the work of the Conference within manageable bounds; 2) allowing the opportunity for the situation in Laos to evolve in the presence of Commission teams; and 3) providing mechanism for an Asian Commission to work out many of the details more properly in its province than in that of a conference session.
10. Finally, there was agreement that any major violation of the cease-fire by the Communists would create an entirely new situation which would require appropriate action by SEATO powers.

(S) Msg, Oslo to SecState, SECTO 16, 8 May 61.

3 May

The Acting Secretary of State informed diplomatic posts of the Harriman/Galbraith meeting with Prime Minister Nehru on 5 May. Ambassador Harriman had reported that Nehru had agreed with him and Ambassador Galbraith on the following points: 1) India and the US had a common objective in attempting to develop a genuinely neutral Laos; 2) rather than follow the 1954 Geneva Agreement on the ICC procedures for guaranteeing the neutrality of Laos, new and special machinery was needed; 3) the function of the ICC should be "only" to verify the cease-fire. The Commission should not become involved in any political negotiations; and 4) it would be desirable for the US and India to confer prior to the opening of the Geneva Conference.

Ambassador Harriman had also said that, in the Prime Minister's opinion, it would be preferable to have the various political factions in Laos form a coalition regime now, so that a Laotian Government could participate in the Conference, rather than to have delegations from two or three groups attending the Geneva meeting as observers. In addition, the Indian leader was opposed to the introduction of any other subjects for consideration at the Conference (e.g., the problem in South Viet Nam).

Nehru had also expressed the opinion that the Pathet Lao would undoubtedly try to use its military advances to enforce the movement's demands for a larger political participation in the government. Nevertheless, the Indian Premier believed that the US should not permit these PL territorial gains to "force" a division of Laos.

(S) Msg, SecState to New Delhi et al., 3172, 8 May 61.

3 May

Another cease-fire meeting was held at Hin Heup (see item 5 May) and again the results were inconclusive, because of disagreement concerning a formal meeting place for negotiations. The RLG representatives had agreed to come to Ban Namone for military discussions if the PL would come to Hin Heup for "political discussions." The PL had insisted that all discussions be held at Ban Namone; the FAL had refused this proposal because Ban Namone was located behind the PL lines.

(S) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA 2N 111561, 9 May 61; (U) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2042, 9 May 61.

8 May

The first elements of the ICC arrived in Vientiane, according to Ambassador Brown. The respective delegation chairmen were: India, Mr. Samarendranath Sen; Canada, Mr. Leon Meyrand; Poland, Mr. Albert Morski.

(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2039, 8 May 61;
(U) NYT, 9 May 61, 1, 4.

- 75 -
Counselor Unger reported to the Secretary of State from Bangkok that, since the US acceptance of a political solution through the ICC and the 14-Nation Conference (see item 23 March), the US had suffered a loss of prestige and that the confidence of the Asian and Pacific allies in US leadership had waned.

Although many of these allies had doubted that a stable, unified, non-Communist, neutral Laos could be achieved through a 14-Nation Conference, they had acquiesced in the new US position, which they understood to be premised upon an early cease-fire and the avoidance of the loss of additional territory to the PL. It was with this understanding, together with the US assurances that SEATO would act if a Communist take-over threatened Laos, that the allies had agreed to the mild SEATO resolution of 29 March (see item).

Since the SEATO Council meeting, the Communists had sought to immobilize the US by holding forth the prospect of a cease-fire while they advanced their military position in Laos. Twice some SEATO response appeared to be gaining the general acceptance of the SEATO members and twice the UK had dissuaded the US from SEATO action. In all this, Unger continued, the role of the British was not appreciated by the Asian allies, who feared that the US was betraying a "dangerous inability" to frustrate an "obvious Communist game."

Perhaps the most serious damage done by the events of the past six weeks, stated Unger, had been the raising of doubts in the minds of the allies concerning the reliability of US assurances of support "when their turn comes."

On 10 May, commenting upon Unger's analysis, Ambassador Brown cabled from Vientiane his view that the US could not afford for one instant to relax its vigilance during a cease-fire. Brown believed that the PL-Viet Minh forces could from their present positions overrun Laos in a matter of days if the FAL were the only opposition. While the US training and resupply of the FAL would continue at top speed, the FAL could not in the "time available" be given the capability to withstand the Communist attack. Therefore, Brown concluded, planning should begin now for the rapid intervention of outside forces at the "first firm sign" that the enemy intended to mount an attack. This planning should be within the SEATO framework if possible. If that should seem as unproductive as in the past, the alternative should be on as wide a multilateral basis as was obtainable.

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1994, 8 May 61; (S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2049, 10 May 61.

CHMAAG cabled to CINCPAC his comments, proposals and recommendations on US actions in Laos during the cease-fire period. The various points included in the cable, some "general in nature" according to CHMAAG, because of the absence of terms of reference for the operation of the ICC, were the following:

8 May
1. A proposal to increase the training in Thailand for the FAL.

2. A proposal to refit and retrain those FAL units remaining in Laos, including: a) inspection and rehabilitation of equipment; (b) training on the site and at schools of officers, NCO's, and specialists; (c) acceleration of English language training in order to prepare more Laotians for training in the US; (d) encouraging of the FAL to intensify its troop information, troop indoctrination, and psychological warfare programs; and (e) organization of technical service contact teams to visit FAL units to assist with the rehabilitation of equipment.

3. The comment that, although the ICC might object to the movement of units or equipment and to the presence of MAAG personnel, the initial ICC concern would be to assure the fact of a cease-fire. The US should, therefore, CHMAAG continued, take every possible step "during this period" to improve the posture of the FAL.

4. A proposal to continue the "essential" US resupply of all FAL units, including air drops to otherwise inaccessible units. It might be necessary, CHMAAG said, that the FAL inform the ICC of this resupply "in certain cases."

5. Anticipating requests from the ICC for assistance in transportation and communications, the statement that CHMAAG could render "limited support," and the request of CINCPAC for guidance concerning US reaction to such requests.

6. CHMAAG's intention to retain and redeploy Thai volunteer personnel as previously planned (see item 29 April).

7. The expectation that the PL would attempt during the cease-fire period to infiltrate and subvert where possible, and the consequent necessity that the FAL be prepared and supported in countervailing these tactics.

8. The proposal that, in view of the overriding necessity to improve the FAL logistics capability, there be approved increases in: (a) technical service advisers assigned to the MAAG, (b) logistic training within the FAL; and (c) the quotas for Laotians to US technical service schools.

(On 9 May, Ambassador Brown commended CHMAAG's message to the Department of State's attention, stating his full support for CHMAAG's proposals.)

(For CINCPAC's comments, see item 10 May; for State's comments, see item 12 May.)

(S) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 111398, 9 May 61; (S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2041, 9 May 61.

- 77 -
CINCPAC stated to the JCS that he "sensed a lack of complete understanding at high places on [sic] Washington" of the concept of SEATO Plan 5, the interrelationship of that plan and the FAL, and the capabilities of the FAL to do their part in Plan 5. "Thus," CINCPAC continued, "the decision makers may have been led to feel that Laos is lost and that, therefore, their attention should be focused on other somewhat less critical problems." CINCPAC offered rebuttal to these misconceptions as follows:

1. Implementation of SEATO Plan 5 did not mean that US troops must retake Laos. If action were taken "while there is still time" SEATO forces would occupy key urban centers without having to "fight their way in," and FAL forces would be freed to fight in the remote areas of Laos.

2. The recent major reverses suffered by the FAL had, CINCPAC felt, led the "decision makers" to conclude that the FAL could not and would not fight. There were "many facets to the recent record of the green and half trained FAL," CINCPAC said, "but they will fight if the circumstances give them any hope of success." Although the FAL had been "taking a licking in the broad sense," because of superior enemy fire power and competent Viet Minh assistance, the FAL had not disintegrated. There still remained "an army and other means to revive the counter-guerrilla campaign" that had been progressing prior to the Kong Le coup and the subsequent Communist intervention.

The US now had its "last opportunity," CINCPAC argued, to save Vientiane, keep the King on his throne, and prevent Communist occupation of impoer's would mainly on the Mekong River. "Explicitly, this means implement SEATO Plan 5, or any politically necessary variant," CINCPAC asserted. If the key cities of Laos were secured, CINCPAC concluded, the FAL would "stiffen" and the RLG would be in an immeasurably better position to "carry the day" for the minimum US objectives in Laos, which were, according to CINCPAC, "in serious jeopardy."

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 080113Z May 61.

8 May

CHMAAG informed CINCPAC that, in view of the arrival of the ICC team in Vientiane, he had directed that all reconnaissance missions be "stood down." CHMAAG recommended to CINCPAC, however, that US reconnaissance aircraft remain available awaiting future developments on the Laotian scene.

On the same day, CINCPAC ordered CINCPACFLT to discontinue carrier-based reconnaissance missions (see item 2-3 May).

(TS) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 111117, 8 May 61; CINCPAC to CINCPACFLT, 080722Z May 61.
9 May

The Acting Secretary of State informed Secretary Rusk (at Oslo for the NATO Foreign Ministers Meeting) that the President had approved the following instructions for the Geneva Conference on Laos.

1. The Secretary of State was to proceed to the Geneva Conference as the head of the US Delegation on the assumption that a cease-fire, verified by the ICC or "other conditions satisfactory" to the US, would prevail by 12 May. In the absence of such conditions, the Secretary was authorized at his discretion to stay away from the opening session, or to attend and request a suspension pending clarification of the situation in Laos.

2. The US would continue to support the present government of Laos and would press for its representation at the Conference. If this proved to be impossible, the US would accept an arrangement whereby representatives of the present government, the Souvanna group, and, if necessary, the PL would participate as observers at the international gathering. If a coalition government with a dangerously large or influential Pathet Lao component should seek admission as the RLG, the US delegation would request new instructions.

3. As an opening position, the US should propose a constructive package that would assure a neutral, independent, peaceful, sovereign, and socially and economically viable Laos. The program would include the following three points:

   a. A neutral, politically independent Laos with a firm international guarantee against external aggression.

   b. The establishment of Laos as a "peace sanctuary" with internal forces reduced to the level necessary to maintain its national security. This condition would be supervised and maintained by a Peace Preservation Commission of neutrals, preferably under UN auspices. The Commission's goals would be first, to insure the phased withdrawal of foreign military personnel and prevent the entry of new military personnel or equipment except the minimum required to train and equip an internal constabulary and, second, to prevent infiltration and subversion within Laos.

   c. The US would invite the USSR and other interested missions to join it in underwriting the cost of an extensive technical and economic aid program for a neutral and independent Laos. The program would be administered by a commission of neutral nations from the area.

4. Since the Soviets would probably reject these proposals, the US Delegation should consider the following contingencies:

   a. Continue to present US proposals at infrequent sessions for several months, providing an acceptable cease-fire was maintained;
b. Seek to suspend the Conference on the basis of a de facto cease-fire while the principal political factions in Laos turned to the formation of a coalition government.

c. Seek to negotiate a compromise based on a federated or partitioned Laos;

d. Take the matter to the UN either before or after the Conference had adjourned; or

e. Leave the Conference on a clear issue of principle, or seek to have it brought to an end.

These alternative courses of action were not mutually exclusive, but a combination of them would depend upon circumstances. The US position "on the ground in Laos is weak. We cannot enforce what we would like," the instructions stated. Furthermore, the Communists would insist on getting a Communist-dominated coalition government. Therefore, it was recommended that we keep under constant advisement what military and political actions we should take in Laos, Thailand, and Free Viet-Nam to strengthen our hand or anticipate a break-up of the Conference."

5. The recommendation was also made that "we be prepared to have the Conference fail and be adjourned if we cannot reach some satisfactory agreement."

With that possibility in mind, considerations should be given to plans by which, if necessary, "the political and military position of the present government may be consolidated in southern Laos." (See item 12-13 May for contingency plans.) The Communists might possibly accept such a de facto division.

However, if the Communist forces, following the break-up of the Conference, should renew their offensive, the US would be faced with the ultimate decision: "whether or not to introduce US forces into this area through SEATO or with those SEATO members prepared to participate. Our military plans and preparations should be kept in a high state of readiness against this eventuality. To support this eventuality the MAAG in Laos should utilize the existing period of cease-fire to intensify its training and reorganization of the FAL."

6. Early in the Conference the US would be confronted with the "crucial question" of who would head up a new Lao government and what would be the composition of a coalition government.

The US should, in the first instance, have as its objective a government composed of all principal political elements within Laos, except those on the extreme right and the extreme left. Souvanna Phouma would participate as a member of the new government, but not as Prime Minister. If this plan did not prove feasible, the US might be confronted with the acceptance of a government headed by Souvanna and including at
least two Pathet Lao ministers. After appropriate consultations had been held by the US Delegates in the early stages of the Conference, the Delegation would be in a better position to make recommendations on this crucial point and to ask for instructions.

(S) Msg, SecState to Oslo, TOSRC 34, 9 May 61.

9 May

The JCS commented by memorandum to the Secretary of Defense on the draft State-Defense joint plan for possible SEATO intervention in Laos.

This plan, completed on 4 May, was an outgrowth of the NSC meeting of 2 May (see item). The plan considered the circumstances under which SEATO intervention would take place. Clear failure to reach a cease-fire, or the breaking of a cease-fire by the Communists, accompanied by a resumption of offensive action, would be the precipitating cause. UN action to control the situation would be sought, based on a Lao appeal. At this time the SEATO nations could 1) wait for effective UN action without doing anything unless such UN action were forestalled; 2) take visible preparatory SEATO steps while waiting, to speed UN action; or 3) proceed with necessary intervention measures simultaneously with initiation of the appeal for UN action. A plan of action "should" be presented to the US Congress before, or at least simultaneously with, the initial UN steps.

The political objective prompting intervention would be made clear: to hold intact the existing military situation in Laos pending an effective cease-fire and the establishment of satisfactory controls. Assurance would be given that no action to "reconquer Laos" would be taken and that any military action that occurred would be defensive; though defensive, however, it would be adequate to fulfill the political objective.

Combat forces in Laos would number approximately 13,200 on a SEATO-wide basis; without the Commonwealth Brigade, they would number about 12,000. Pakistani forces of about 2,000 men would arrive as soon as airlift could be provided.

Initially, the SEATO forces would occupy key points along the Mekong River still in RLG hands, including Vientiane, Paksane, Thakhek, Seno, and Savannakhet. The defense of Luang Prabang would initially be left to FAL forces. The general guideline for reaction by intervening forces to increased hostile action by the enemy would be a response "adequate to fulfill the mission and to inflict punishment on the attacker." If the Pathet Lao forces (without major additional Viet Minh reinforcements) continued a broad offensive not limited to the areas occupied by SEATO forces, they and their supply lines should be subjected to air attacks, but no such attacks should be made closer than 10 miles from the North Vietnamese or Communist Chinese borders except for Nong Ket, a well-marked supply center five miles from the border.

State and Defense were divided on what should be done if major additional Viet Minh forces moved into Laos. State's alternative would require the SEATO
forces to take no counteraction initially, whereas the Defense alternative would immediately authorize air attacks confined to Laos. If the Viet Minh attacked, under the State alternative the SEATO forces were to seek political authorization for immediate action against North Viet Nam. Under the Defense alternative such political authorization was to be sought if Viet Minh attack seemed imminent.

If the Chinese Communists intervened, political authorization would be sought for prompt counteraction.

The draft plan estimated Pathet Lao capabilities would not extend beyond harassing, guerrilla-type operations, probably directed by DRV (North Vietnamese) cadres and with DRV technical and logistical support and Communist-bloc airlift.

North Viet Nam could introduce up to 14 infantry divisions and one artillery division to counter SEATO forces. These DRV forces could be provided tactical air support by the Chinese Communists. About 270 jet fighters were normally located at South China bases, and these and other aircraft, including light jet bombers, could be readily redeployed for operations in Laos.

The Chinese Communists could have about eight divisions in Laos within 30 days from the date of deciding to intervene. These divisions could be supported by jet fighters and light bombers as indicated above.

The draft plan assessed enemy intentions as follows: Open counterintervention by Communist-bloc forces would be in large part dependent on the manner and circumstances attending the introduction of SEATO forces into Laos. Thus if the declared objective of the SEATO forces were the taking of all Laos up to the borders of Communist China and North Viet Nam, there probably would be a massive Communist-bloc response. But declaration of the limited objective set forth earlier in the State-Defense plan probably would provoke no more than a Communist political and diplomatic campaign to force withdrawal of the SEATO forces. The Communists probably would make such withdrawal a prior condition to the convening of the Geneva Conference.

The draft plan recommended 1) that the President approve the foregoing plan for SEATO military intervention if the existing cease-fire negotiations should break down and the Communist offensive should be renewed, and 2) that the necessary measures for intervention should proceed simultaneously with the initiation of steps in the UN.

In reviewing the foregoing plan, the JCS stated, they had given special attention to the part concerned with the contingency of major additional Viet Minh forces moving into Laos. Any intervention with US forces into Laos either unilaterally or under SEATO auspices should, the JCS considered, be undertaken
"only after firm US governmental decision to the effect that the United States is thereby prepared and committed to succeed in its military intervention regardless of the extent of possible communist escalation." The requirement for such a US governmental decision, the JCS recommended, should be written into the draft as "an unequivocal fundamental to US military action."


The Acting Secretary of State, in a message to Ambassador Brown, discussed the "special relationship" of the US and the Meo tribesmen. Since the beginning of the year, the US had provided the Meo with arms and guidance, urging them to fight the Pathet Lao. The Meo leaders had responded by providing 6,700 tribesmen who had formed auto-defense units and who had fought effectively. As a result, the Meos had deprived themselves of the manpower to plant their food crops and had incurred the enmity of the Communists who would undoubtedly seek to destroy the Meo threat.

The US had, therefore, both a moral obligation and a practical need to preserve the Meos by aiding them materially and politically; however, it was anticipated that supplying those Meo located north of Xieng Khouang would prove increasingly difficult.

In view of the above, the Acting Secretary continued, the following had been decided:

1. The Department of State did not agree to the arming of 900 additional Meo scattered throughout northern Xieng Khouang province. These units would add little to the Meo defensive capability and would, moreover, be particularly vulnerable to Communist countermeasures.

2. Ambassador Brown should attempt to insure that the RLG would defend the proposition that the Meo were part of the FAL, and thus the position that the areas held by the Meo were under RLG authority. Also, the RLG should continue to supply the Meos. Authorized to make a "special effort" prior to effective ICC inspections to supply food and ammunition, but not arms, to the Meos. This authorization envisaged, according to the Acting Secretary, the caching of ammunition and communications supplies to permit the Meo to defend themselves; offensive action should be carefully avoided while the cease-fire was in effect.

3. Ambassador Brown should urge the RLG to inform the ICC that the Xieng Khouang area was a combat front, to which cease-fire verifications must extend.

4. In the event of signs of "doubt or restiveness" on the part of the Meo leaders, the above resupply should serve as an earnest of US intentions.

5. The US would seek to have the Geneva Conference provide for the protection of Laotian minorities, including the Meo.
6. LTAG teams should remain with the Meos as long as feasible. Since these teams would be training regular auto-defense units, they need not be hidden from the ICC.

7.

8.

9. Care should be taken to give the "outward appearance" that the Meos were not receiving preferential treatment over other auto-defense units.

(See item 17 May for Ambassador Brown's point-by-point reply.)

0 May

The JCS informed CINCPAC that they had transmitted to the Secretary of Defense, their answer to the Secretary of State's question: "Does US have present capability, logistic and otherwise, to engage in full-scale non-nuclear campaign in Laos, and possibly North Vietnam and Red China, to include capture Hainan Island?"

The views of the JCS, which they had requested that the Secretary of Defense furnish as such to the Secretary of State, were as follows:

1. The US had the capability to conduct a full-scale, non-nuclear campaign in Laos and North Vietnam provided Communist China did not intervene.

2. The US did not have the present capability to conduct full-scale, non-nuclear war with Communist China. Therefore, the JCS were of the firm opinion that military intervention in Laos should be undertaken only after a "firm US governmental decision" had been made that the US was "thereby prepared and committed to succeed in military intervention regardless of [the] extent of possible subsequent communist intervention."

3. The Chinese Communist threat could, however, be destroyed or neutralized by nuclear sorties in numbers well within the present capabilities of PACOM.

4. Full-scale, non-nuclear operations in Southeast Asia would seriously restrict the capabilities of the US simultaneously to conduct similar operations elsewhere, until appropriate mobilization or other emergency measures had been undertaken.

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 995753, 10 May 61.

3 May

CINCPAC supplied to CHMAAG his comments on CHMAAG's recommendations for US actions in Laos during the cease-fire period (see item 8 May).

CINCPAC generally concurred in CHMAAG's comments, with the following qualifications and exceptions:
1. The proposed acceleration of English language training and subsequent increase in Laotian training in the US (comments 2(c), see item 8 May) should not dilute "irreparably" PNL leadership.

2. CINCPAC was awaiting guidance from the JCS concerning the disposition of Thai volunteers during the cease-fire period (comment 6, see item 8 May, see item 29 April).

3. Guidance for CHMAAG on US reaction to ICC requests for assistance (comment 5, see item 8 May) would be furnished by separate message.

(S) Msg, CINCPAC to CHMAAG Laos, DA IN 112033, 11 May 61.

CHMAAG evaluated for 13th Air Force Headquarters the RT-33 reconnaissance missions over Laos. CHMAAG recounted the "outstanding results" of the first mission flown, the photographs from which had been immediately utilized to save RLG forces south of Vang Vieng from a "serious defeat." Unfortunately, CHMAAG continued, subsequent RT-33 missions had been restricted to altitudes of 20,000 feet or above. The Lao jungle, according to CHMAAG, made high altitude reconnaissance "of little or no value.

(S) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to 13th AF, DA IN 111739, 10 May 61.

Ambassador Brown reported to the Department of State that Indian Prime Minister Nehru had, at the behest of Secretary Rusk and Lord Home, who were striving to get the Geneva Conference underway on 12 May, requested ICC Chairman Sen to certify the existence of a cease-fire as quickly as possible. According to the British Ambassador to Laos, from whom Brown received this information, Nehru's message had urged Sen to make this certification if it was "at all consistent with [the] facts and his conscience."

(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2050, 10 May 61.

In response to the message containing instructions for the Geneva Conference (see item 9 May), Secretary Rusk informed the President and the Acting Secretary of State that he wanted to comment on the "all important paragraph five." The effectiveness and strength of the US position in Geneva, Rusk said, would be "critically determined by whether we are prepared, should negotiations break down, to act in Laos by military means, at least in the south, or whether we are in a position of trying to save what can be saved without SEATO action in Laos itself. . . . We hope . . . to reach a satisfactory result by negotiation which would avoid military action, but we must be clear in our own minds at some stage as to whether we must accept an unsatisfactory result because we have no other acceptable choice."

The Secretary reported that he and Lord Home would be having discussions with Gromyko about a Lao settlement that would reflect Khrushchev's agreement to an "Austrian Laos." The US could make real Headway, Rusk said,
if Gromyko believes that we still are as
determined as President and I said we were
when we saw him in Washington. If he concludes
that we have "abandoned Laos" he will chase us
around the barn in negotiations. If we are
serious, beyond a gesture such as leaving the
Conference, I believe there is a real chance
that we can find a US-UK-USSR agreement which
could reassure our SEATO allies and avoid the
atmosphere of defeat in Laos. But we are
approaching the final stages where we cannot
bluff because the bluff might be called.

At SEATO, CENTO and NATO Rusk continued, "I have
been deeply impressed by the extent of the reliance of
the Free World upon the attitude of the United States.
These nations have great respect for the combination
of firmness and peaceful purpose. the President
has shown. . . ."

On Laos, Rusk believed, the US had a "fair chance"
of getting strong neutral support, partly because of
the extraordinary patience the US had shown in trying
to find a peaceful settlement and partly because of
the neutrals' own anxiety about a Communist Laos.
But even neutrals, Rusk warned, might abandon their
own neutrality if they believed that the US would
shrink from confronting Sino-Soviet power when the
"chips are down."

The delegation would not negotiate seriously about
Laos until a cease-fire had been reasonably frozen.
But if such a cease-fire was "blatantly violated" by
the other side, Rusk hoped, he said, that the US would
be "prepared to support UN and SEATO action by an
appropriate military demonstration in Laos." The
Secretary believed that such a demonstration could be
made without escalation into a general war because the
Sino-Soviet bloc would be very reluctant to let Laos
get out of control under conditions that would impose
upon it the maximum responsibility for pressing a
military rather than a peaceful solution. In his
opinion, the Soviets were playing "for larger stakes
throughout the world," and they would accept continued
negotiations on Laos or some sort of UN action before
resorting to major escalation.

The President, replying to Secretary Rusk's
message, stated that he fully understood the force
of Rusk's arguments, and specifically agreed that, if
a cease-fire was blatantly violated by the other side,
the US must face the prospect of UN and SEATO action
and an appropriate military demonstration in Laos.
In view of this possibility, said the President,
continued close understanding with the British was
essential, and he instructed Rusk to hold Lord Home
to the standards agreed upon at Key West and Bangkok.
The US had been going "the last mile" with the British
on the road of negotiation and cease-fire and would
continue to do so as long as there was agreement that
this road offered hope for a genuinely neutral Laos.
But if there should be a serious change on the ground
by military action of the other side, the US should have
clear British support for appropriate action.
The US should also aim at the "closest possible understanding with the French," the President continued, because a three-power solidarity against Soviet pressure might "be vital in even more important phases this year."

The US must maintain, with British support and French understanding, a "readiness to act." This was "the necessary condition for a productive conference," the President declared, but any action must be taken under conditions which would, in fact, impose the maximum responsibility on the other side.

(TS) Msg, Geneva to SecState, SECTO 59, 11 May 61; (TS) Msg, SecState to Geneva, TOSEC 54, 11 May 61.

11 May

Secretary of State Rusk informed the Department of State of the results of a meeting between Lord Home and Gromyko as reported to him by Home.

Gromyko had been adamant on two points: 1) that three "forces" from Laos be represented at the conference table, the Pathet Lao to have equal status with the others, and 2) whatever Laotian delegations were present when the conference officially opened would represent Laos. Because the RLG representatives had not arrived, the Souvanna and Pathet Lao delegations would therefore be the only Laotian representatives.

Secretary Rusk stated the opposition of the US to the Soviet "three forces" approach, pointing out that the US had only accepted an invitation to the conference to meet with 13 nations of which Laos was one. The Pathet Lao did not claim to be a government nor was it recognized as such by any power. To seat the Pathet Lao at the conference table would, in Rusk's opinion, grant it status which could influence the negotiations for a new government in Laos in the direction of Communist domination. In view of the fact that some powers at the conference recognized Souvanna as premier, the US was willing to seat his representatives along with those of the RLG as special observers but not as official delegates. Either of these groups should be allowed to request that any other Laotian present in Geneva be granted permission to sit in the galleries of the conference hall and possibly be given permission to speak.

The British and French agreed with this position as logical and defensible. The British were willing to attempt to gain Gromyko's acceptance of it but were fearful that he would refuse, in which case the three Western allies would have to decide whether or not to break up the conference on the seating issue.

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, SECTO 83, 12 May 61.

11 May

The ICC submitted its initial report from Laos to the Geneva co-Chairmen. A copy furnished the Department of State by the British Embassy was sent to Secretary Rusk at Geneva.

The ICC reported that it had established friendly contact with all the principal parties in Laos and had ascertained that, since the declaration of cease-fire (see item 3 May), there had been a "general and
demonstrable cessation of hostilities." Although there had been complaints of local violations of the cease-fire, the ICC had not received any formal written complaints. On the contrary, it had been given unequivocal assurances by each side of a determination to maintain the cease-fire except when provoked or in self-defense. The belligerent parties had not yet signed a formal agreement of cease-fire, the ICC reported, but military teams from both sides were in regular contact with each other and an agreement "on questions relating to the cease-fire" would, it was hoped, be reached soon. Any breaches of the cease-fire which had occurred were, according to the ICC, the result either of misunderstanding or of peculiar terrain and troop deployment factors.

(C) Msg, SecState to Geneva, TOSBC 59, 11 May 61.

12 May

The Under Secretary of State advised Ambassador Brown that the Department concurred in CHMAAG's recommendation for US actions during the cease-fire period (see item 8 May). The State Department excepted from this concurrence only CHMAAG's comment that the ICC might have to be notified of US resupply of FAL units, noting that the US had consistently sought to limit the ICC terms of reference to verification of a cease-fire. CHMAAG's request for guidance in aiding the ICC was "being considered" with the Department of Defense.

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 1247, 12 May 61.

(S) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 112578, 12 May 61.

12-13 May

In a memorandum to the JCS on 12 May, the Chief of Naval Operations recommended that the JCS urgently prepare and co-ordinate with CINCPAC a plan for holding southern Laos, with the RLG unilaterally or with the RLG supported by some or all of the SEATO allies. The plan should stem, the CNO recommended, from existing contingency plans and should cover the incident problems and operations throughout Southeast Asia, especially Thailand and South Viet Nam. The plan should, the CNO concluded, indicate the recommended demarcation line across Laos.

The Chief of Naval Operations based his recommendations upon the instructions for the Geneva Conference that had been cabled to Secretary of State Rusk on 9 May (see item), and upon additional information from Walt Whitman Rostow, Deputy Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs. Mr. Rostow had told the CNO that the President had reaffirmed to the Secretary of State the firmness of US intent to be prepared for the contingencies to which the foregoing plan was to be addressed. Mr. Rostow had also reported the President's
intent to have this fall-back position of a divided Laos discussed with the UK, and perhaps with other SEATO allies, in order to carry as many as possible of the allies along with the US if the contingency should develop (see item 11 May). The President was also concerned, Mr. Rostow had said, that US military contingency planning should proceed accordingly.

On the following day, the JCS, presumably as a consequence of the foregoing memorandum, requested the comments and recommendations of CINCPAC to assist them in preparing a plan such as the Chief of Naval Operations had recommended. The JCS stated to CINCPAC that they considered the following factors pertinent in drawing up the plan: 1) the maximum geographical area and population of Laos consistent with political and military realities should be held; 2) offensive operations to seize a demarcation line in enemy-held territory would probably not be authorized; 3) the FAL alone would be unable to continue to hold its existing positions if fighting was resumed, and if regrouped in some chosen area of southern Laos, the FAL would have to be reorganized and trained before it could stand alone; 4) SEATO forces should initially occupy and secure key areas in southern Laos; 5) SEATO force strength could be reduced (if the plan were put into effect) as reorganization and training increased the capability of the FAL to assume responsibility; and 6) the choice of a line would be essentially a political decision, tempered by military considerations; hence several possible lines should be examined. The JCS described six possible demarcation lines for CINCPAC's consideration and comment.

Finally, the JCS stated their opinion that the concept of SEATO Plan 5 or CINCPAC's OPlan 32-59 (Phase II, Laos) remained valid as a point of departure for the proposed plan. (For CINCPAC's reply see item 15 May.)


13 May

Secretary Rusk reported that, in discussions with the French and British foreign ministers, the following "tentative program" for getting the Conference under way had been agreed to:

1. On 14 May the co-Chairmen would announce that they had decided to seat, as observers, any Laotian group which any Conference member requested to be seated. In an accompanying announcement, the co-Chairmen would declare that these seating arrangements were without prejudice to efforts being made in Laos to form a government, which was an internal Laotian affair.

2. The opening meeting would be on 15 May and would be confined to brief formal statements by the co-Chairmen. Business meetings would begin on the 16th with general statements by all delegations of
their over-all views on Laotian policy. Following these statements, discussion would probably then turn to "detailed consideration of military aspects of the situation and peace-keeping machinery."

3. The US, British, and French Governments agreed to advise Phoumi urgently that this agreement was without prejudice to his negotiations for a new government, and he should continue to stand firm for a satisfactory coalition arrangement.

4. The US delegation agreed to urge the Thai and Vietnamese delegations to be present for the first business meeting.

The Secretary concluded by requesting Department of State comments on the "observer" plan (see item 14 May).  
(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, SECTO 102, 13 May 61.

13 May  
The advance party of the RLG delegation to the Geneva Conference arrived at the Conference site, Secretary Rusk informed the Department of State. In a meeting of this advance group with Rusk, Ngon Sananikone, senior member and spokesman of the party, stated two prerequisites for RLG attendance at the Conference: 1) a valid cease-fire; and 2) recognition of the RLG as the sole legal government of Laos. The Secretary then informed the Laotian group of the strong US insistence that the RLG was the only legitimate Lao government, of the unacceptable Soviet demand for triple representation on the basis of equality, and of the sentiments of "other friendly nations" that debate over the legality of Lao representations should not be permitted to frustrate the objectives of the Conference. The Secretary suggested that the group cable its government for the latest RLG position, particularly with regard to possible acceptable formulae for Lao representation.

Ngon cabled Vientiane as requested, mentioning the Soviet demand and stating that, unless there was a "last-minute" change in the attitude of the RLG, the delegation was determined to maintain its present position that it was the only delegation authorized to represent the Kingdom of Laos at the Conference table (see item 14 May).  
(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, SECTO 101, 13 May 61;  
(c) Msg, Geneva to SecState, 1372 (to Vientiane, 7), 13 May 61.

13 May  
Secretary Rusk met with Gromyko in an effort to resolve the differences between the US and the USSR regarding the seating of Laotian delegations at the Geneva Conference. As reported by Rusk, Gromyko stated that he saw two possible solutions: 1) the seating of a coalition government if one satisfactory to all sides could be formed prior to the conference; or 2) the seating of representatives of the "three existing forces" in Laos. These were, according to Gromyko, the Souvanna Government, the Pathet Lao, and the "rebels" [the RLG].
Rusk refused to accept the seating of the Pathet Lao on the grounds that it was "merely the military arm of a political party" and not entitled to sit at what the US understood to be a "conference of governments." As a compromise, Rusk then proposed that Laos not be officially represented at the conference but that individual Laotians be invited to express their views as individuals in some manner acceptable to the co-Chairmen.

Gromyko flatly rejected Rusk's proposal and said that the Conference could not begin without Laotian representation, which he reiterated would have to be tripartite. Rusk, in turn, refused to participate in the Conference on Gromyko's terms.

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, SECTO 94, 13 May 61.

13 May

The US Charge d'Affaires in Bangkok, responding to the Secretary of State's inquiry concerning the intentions of the Thai Government with regard to participation in the Geneva Conference, reported that the Thai Government, as represented by its Foreign Minister, had serious doubts concerning Thai participation.

The Charge had conversed at length with Foreign Minister Thanat, who, although aware of the desirability of Thai representation, considered nevertheless that Thai attendance might do a "real disservice" to Thailand and its friends. Thanat had not reached his final decision, the crucial factor in which, the Charge reported, would be the US position and intentions at Geneva. Thanat was convinced that the UK and France were prepared to surrender Laos to the Communists, albeit through the "face saving" interim step of a Souvanna Prime Ministry. Moreover, the UK prestige was bound up in the Conference's achieving some sort of solution, and, as evidenced by the US's acceding to UK desires in SEATO (see item 5 May), the US position, Thanat feared, would ultimately hinge upon the "desire or need" to assuage the British. Implicitly, therefore, the US was also prepared to lose Laos.

Thanat had been most recently disturbed by reports that Lord Home, Mr. Gromyko, and Secretary Rusk had agreed to permit the attendance as observers at the Conference of all three Lao factions. The US Charge, although he had no knowledge of such an agreement, argued that it had been envisaged from the outset that it might be necessary, in order to get the Conference underway, to have the various factions attend as observers; indeed, the Communists would also be yielding a point in such an arrangement. Thanat felt, however, that the position of the RLG was one of the few US assets at the Conference, not to be bargained away before the Conference itself convened.

The Thai could see little advantage in attending the conference inasmuch as the present Communist solidarity and Allied disunity seemed to assure Communist gain. The US diplomat replied that a strong Thai representation would itself be an important factor at the Conference, and that neither the US nor Thailand should feel in any way committed
to any unacceptable conclusions of the Conference. To this, Thanat replied that attendance at the Conference would itself be a commitment. Moreover, Thanat felt that the UK would maneuver the US into accepting a damaging agreement. If Thailand left the Conference under these circumstances, the blame for failure would fall upon it.

The Charge concluded his message by urging that "some high level US expression, or unequivocal statement of [the US] position at Geneva" was necessary to dispel these Thai misgivings. Otherwise, the chance was "at least fifty-fifty" that the Thais would not attend the Conference (see items 14, 15, and 16 May).

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 2047, (to Geneva, 16), 13 May 61; (C) Msg, Geneva to SecState, SECTO 84, (to Bangkok, 4), 12 May 61.

13 May

Representatives of the RLG, PL, and Souvanna met at Ban Namone, according to Ambassador Brown, and agreed to inaugurate political and military discussions at that site. The representatives also issued a statement acknowledging that there was an effective cease-fire on all fronts. Additionally, in recognition of the fact that there were still some "trouble spots," each delegation agreed to reissue orders for all units to maintain the cease-fire that had been proclaimed on 3 May (see item).

On the following day, the Ambassador reported, Radio Vientiane broadcast the RLG's reissue of its cease-fire order.

(U) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 2070, 14 May 61.

13 May

In a message to both the Department of State and to Ambassador Brown in Vientiane, Secretary Rusk stated that the US, French, and British delegates at Geneva had unanimously agreed that each would advise Phoumi and King Savang to use the "greatest care" in political negotiations with Souvanna and his half-brother Souphanouvong. Now that the cease-fire had been agreed upon (see preceding item) it would be a mistake, said Rusk, to enter into improvident political agreement under a feeling of pressure because of the Geneva Conference. The Secretary requested that the details and extent of any political commitments either made or being contemplated by the RLG be ascertained as soon as possible.

On the following day, in a message to Secretary Rusk, the US Ambassador in Vientiane reported that Phoumi had stated that political discussions, scheduled to start that day at Ban Namone, were necessary in order to obtain effective cease-fire terms. Phoumi did not anticipate, however, that there would be any concrete results from these talks.

In Phoumi's opinion, the delegations would be discussing "abstractions," while the "real issues"—the neutrality of Laos, elimination of outside interference, and Lao foreign relations—would be
discussed at Geneva. The opposition at Ban Namone would bring up the questions of a unified delegation to Geneva and the establishment of a coalition government, while at the same time, the first question and possibly the second would be under consideration at Geneva. The Laotian General, therefore, had instructed the RLG cease-fire delegation to maintain King Savang's basic thesis that an internal political solution could not be reached until the necessary international framework had been agreed upon at the Geneva Conference. It would be necessary, Phoumi had declared, for political discussions at Ban Namone to continue as long as the Geneva Conference was in session.

Ambassador Brown reported that he had fully agreed with Phoumi on the general strategy of the political talks. (S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, SECTO 104, 13 May 61; (S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2071, 14 May 61.

14 May

The Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs informed Secretary Rusk that the Laotian observer seating plan (see item 13 May) was "clearly within terms of instructions approved by [the] President. This point was specifically discussed with [the] President by Harriman and myself." (S) Msg, SecState to Geneva, TOSEC 95, 14 May 61.

14 May

Secretary Rusk reported that, according to Lord Home, Gromyko had refused to accept the observer formula for seating Laotians at the Geneva Conference (see item 13 May). The Soviet Foreign minister, said Home, continued to insist that the three Laotian groups be seated on the basis of "full participation and equality." Gromyko then agreed to a formula by which the co-Chairmen would seat representatives from Laos proposed by individual governments participating in the conference.

Mr. Rusk also stated that the US delegation was seeking instructions on whether the US delegation should attend the conference if all three Laotian parties were seated. (See item 15 May for these instructions.) (S) Msgs, Geneva to SecState, SECTO 116, 14 May 61, and SECTO 122, 14 May 61. NYT, 16 May 61, 1.

14 May

Phoumi replied to his delegation's request for confirmation of instructions (see item 13 May) by reaffirming that the RLG was the only group entitled to sit at the Geneva Conference and to speak on behalf of the people of Laos. The Pathet Lao and the Souvanna group might be admitted to the conference as observers, Phoumi said; if they insisted on being so represented, however, the RLG would send representatives from all Laotian political parties to be similarly seated.

On the same day, Secretary Rusk was informing Ambassador Brown that the US would likely have to accept full participation of all three Laotian delegations in order to permit the conference to proceed. It would be extremely difficult for the US, the Secretary said, if the RLG should decide not to participate on the basis of equal representation. The Secretary therefore requested Ambassador Brown to emphasize to the RLG the importance which the US attached to the RLG's not objecting to the above formula. Brown should at the same time assure the
RLG that the US would seize every opportunity at the Conference to reiterate its position that the RLG was the only legal government in Laos, and urge the RLG to send instructions to its delegation. "sufficiently broad to enable it to act in concert with the US on the matter of Lao representation. Rusk pointed out that the other representatives of Laos would not acquire legal status from being allowed to participate in the conference.


14 May

The Secretary of State again requested that the US Embassy in Thailand urge the Thai Government to send its delegation to Geneva as soon as possible, in order to lend its support to the US during the "crucial deliberations" of the opening business session of 17 May (see item).

Counselor Unger replied from Bangkok that Thai Foreign Minister Thanat, undoubtedly influenced by reports of US resistance to Pathet Lao representation at Geneva, had stated that the Thai delegation would arrive at Geneva on 16 or 17 May. Thanat himself would necessarily stay in Thailand awaiting Vice President Johnson's visit, and would not decide upon his own attendance at Geneva until this visit had taken place and, presumably, the RTG was satisfied about US intentions (see items 15 and 16 May).

(C) Msgs, Geneva to SecState, SECTO 109 (to Bangkok, 10); Bangkok to SecState, 2053 (to Geneva, 19); both 14 May 61.

15 May

Secretary Rusk, in a letter to Thai Foreign Minister Thanat, urged that the Thai Government send a strong delegation to Geneva. The US was handicapped at Geneva, wrote the Secretary, by the absence from Geneva of "vigorous delegations from states directly affected by events in Laos such as Thailand, Viet Nam and Laos itself."

Rusk described the efforts of the US to exclude the Souvanna and Pathet Lao delegations and attributed the failure of those efforts to the agreement of the RLG to discuss political questions as well as cease-fire matters with Souvanna and the Pathet Lao. These discussions had, according to the Secretary, "effectively undermined" the US position. (See item 15 May for Thanat's reactions)

(C) Msg, Geneva to SecState, SECTO 126 (to Bangkok 15), 15 May 61.

15 May

Secretary Rusk reported that, following receipt of instructions from the Department of State, he had informed Lord Home that the US could accept the formula to seat representatives of Laos proposed by individual governments participating in the Conference (see item 14 May).
According to the New York Times, this decision had been taken, following consultations between Rusk and President Kennedy, in order to "get as quickly as possible to the central purpose of the Conference," which was "an international agreement on the neutrality and independence of Laos and on international machinery to insure that neutrality and independence."

Later in the day the US formally proposed to the co-Chairmen that the delegate of the RLG be seated at the Conference.

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, SECTO 146, and (U) Msg, Geneva to SecState, SECTO 143, both 15 May 1961, NYT, 16 May 61, 1.

15 May

Ambassador Brown reported to Secretary Rusk that in compliance with the Secretary's instructions (see item 14 May), he had "urged Phoumi most strongly" to instruct the RLG delegation to participate in the Geneva Conference. Phoumi had replied that such action would be an admission of the equality of the other side, which would totally undermine the RLG in its political negotiations at Ban Namone. The Ambassador then had pointed out that refusal of the RLG delegation to participate at the Geneva Conference would leave the field clear for the other side. Phoumi, reported Brown, had been unimpressed but had agreed to present the Ambassador's arguments to the King.

After the meeting with the King, reported Brown, Phoumi had stated to the British Ambassador that the RLG had confirmed its earlier decision to withdraw from the Conference if delegates of the other side were seated. The RLG would agree, however, to have no Laotian representation at the opening session but to have "all three groups take part in subsequent working meetings and committee sessions." (The Soviets had already rejected any formula calling for exclusion of all Laotian representation. See item 13 May.)

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2082 (to Geneva 32), 15 May 61.

16 May

British Foreign Secretary Home, in a speech before the Geneva Conference, made the following conclusions:

1. Laos should remain a single united country with one government picked by the Laoists themselves. No independent power or parties should set themselves up as alternatives to the government.
2. Laos, to survive, must be genuinely neutral.

3. The struggle in Laos could never have reached its present intensity without importation of illegal arms. As a neutral, Laos would have no requirements for large quantities of weapons and should only want enough for internal security.

4. The Laotian economy had hardly developed. Assistance from outside, therefore, had a disproportionate influence on political events. This problem should be studied in an effort to find a method for cooperation rather than rivalry.

5. Experience with the ICC had taught some lessons regarding control and supervision, but the machinery should be re-examined in the light of present conditions.

Chen Yi, the delegate of Communist China, followed Home to the rostrum and proceeded to blame the US for all troubles in Laos. According to Chen Yi, the US had created SEATO as a tool for interference in internal Laotian affairs, had sabotaged efforts to create a coalition government in Laos, had supported a "rebel clique" in starting a civil war while still recognizing the Gouvenu government and continuing to provide it military aid, had instigated Chinese Nationalist remnants and certain SEATO members to participate in the civil war, and had established a MAAG to take direct command of "rebel" (RLG) operations.

A peaceful settlement of the Laos question, according to Chen Yi, would have internal and international aspects. Internal matters could only be settled by the Laotians themselves; the international aspect required all conference participants jointly to insure the independence and neutrality of Laos. Neutrality for Laos would mean that Laos could not join any military alliances, no foreign military bases could be established in Laos, no foreign power should be permitted to use force or the threat of force against Laos, no country should be permitted to use aid as a means to violate Laotian neutrality, all US military personnel must be withdrawn, and all Chinese Nationalist remnants should be disarmed and withdrawn.

(C) Msg, Geneva to SecState, SECTO 159, 17 May 61.

16 May

CINCPAC replied to the JCS message of 13 May (see item 12 May) concerning a plan for holding southern Laos in case the conference at Geneva should fail. Observing that the choice of a demarcation line was the key to defining the military objective of such a plan, CINCPAC devoted his dispatch to that subject. In one of his general comments, referring to the JCS statement that the choice of a demarcation line was essentially a political decision tempered by military considerations, CINCPAC questioned
whether in the ultimate event military could be subordinated to political considerations in making this decision. For various political or military reasons, cited individually for each of the possibilities, he viewed all six of the possible demarcation lines suggested by the JCS as unacceptable. He then described a demarcation line—a modification of one of those suggested by the JCS—that would, he said, "neither liquidate current holdings in Laos nor preclude prospects for survival of a free Laos." He identified the line as follows:

From the triple intersection of the Phong Saly, Nam Tha, Luang Prabang provincial borders roughly south-southwest along the Nam Tha-Luang Prabang provincial border to the Muong border between Muong Nam and Muong Muong Say in Luang Prabang Province; thence roughly south-southeast through Luang Prabang Province passing along the eastern Muong borders of Muong Nam Nga, Muong Luang Prabang-and Muong Xieng Ngeum to the provincial border of Xieng Khouang; thence southwards, eastwards and northwards following the border of Xieng Khouang Province to the triple intersection of the Xieng Khouang and Khmuomouane provincial borders with the frontier of North Viet Nam; thence southwards along the frontier of Laos and North Viet Nam to the DNL dividing Viet Nam.

The advantages of this line, CINCPAC said, included its utilization of existing administrative boundaries, thus dispensing with the need for surveying and fixing new lines; the affording of protection to Thailand's frontier from direct contact with Communist areas; the retention of both the traditional capital of Luang Prabang and the administrative capital of Vientiane; and the retention of the minimum military objectives of both SEATO and US unilateral contingency plans. The proposed plan had the disadvantage, he acknowledged, that the Communists were certain to insist on more territory in any partition.

Some additional factors that should be considered in designing a demarcation line were the following, CINCPAC added: 1) Communist influence had been predominant in Phong Saly and Sam Neua provinces for years; 2) Souvanna Phouma and his family had been predominant in the Luang Prabang area; 3) Meo tribesmen had been fighting the Pathet Lao, were organized under their own leaders, and would continue to be a subversive problem to the Pathet Lao if provided with the means to fight; 4) Sananikone influence could be counted on to help the RLG hold north of Vientiane; 5) Boun Oum's south and Phoui's Mekong center could work together; 6) the King in Luang Prabang could continue to be a respected symbol provided Luang Prabang remained free of Pathet Lao control; and 7) the demarcation line should follow definable terrain features or province lines.

CINCPAC recommended that the demarcation line described earlier in his dispatch be considered the line beyond which the US and its SEATO allies would not be pushed.

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 160438Z May 61.