CHRONOLOGICAL SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT EVENTS CONCERNING THE LAOTIAN CRISIS,
FOURTH INSTALLMENT: 1 JUNE TO 31 DECEMBER 1961

HISTORICAL DIVISION
JOINT SECRETARIAT
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1 Jun 61 The US Ambassador at Saigon warned the Secretary of State that assignment to France of the responsibility for training and supplying the FAL "would not be conducive to good relations between Viet Nam and Laos and would further weaken GVN confidence in Free World resolution and ability to preserve Laos from Communism." No matter who was Prime Minister of the Lao coalition government, the Ambassador continued, the GVN would remain convinced that France intended, eventually to use its role to bring Souvanna to power and that under Souvanna the kingdom would become a Communist state. Ambassador Nolting, who shared the opinions of the GVN regarding the French and Souvanna, recommended that the US, another SEATO member other than France, or a "reasonably firm neutral such as Malaya" be made responsible for the future training of the Lao Army (see item 3 June 1961).

(S) Msg, Saigon to SecState, 1826, 1 Jun 61.

2 Jun 61 In a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense, the JCS expressed their "grave concern" about the "serious deficiencies" in military intelligence in Southeast Asia. The Trapnell Report (see item 31 March 1961) had already emphasized the effect that lack of intelligence had upon the operations of the FAL in Laos. And, the JCS believed, the steady deterioration of the situation in Southeast Asia, the possibility of Chinese Communist intervention and the consequently increased likelihood of US contingency operation made it imperative that the "full national intelligence collection potential in the area be brought to bear."

In an attachment to their memorandum, the JCS listed numerous intelligence requirements on Communist China, North Viet Nam, and Laos. In the case of Laos, the Chiefs listed as "priority" needs the following:

1. Specific
1. Specific information on the strength, location, organization, composition, and equipment of Communist forces in the Plaine des Jarres and central Laos.

2. Similar information on DRV units in Laos and Laos-Viet Nam border areas.

3. Troop deployments and other basic tactical preparations of Communist forces in the Plaine des Jarres and central Laos - information sufficiently detailed to enable the development of assessments of Communist capabilities for conventional, unconventional, and psychological warfare.

4. Information on logistical factors affecting Communist forces in Laos.

5. Tactical and strategic weaknesses and vulnerabilities of these forces.

The military services had already increased their collection operations in Southeast Asia.
Consequently, on 19 June, the Assistant to the Secretary of Defense (Special Operations), General Graves B. Erskine, informed the Chairman, USIB, Mr. Allen Dulles, of the "grave concern" felt in the Department of Defense about these deficiencies. General Erskine stated that the seriousness of the problem clearly required "most careful attention" in USIB, (see items 3 and 15 August 1961).

(TS) JCSM-373-61 to SecDef, 2 June 61, derived from JCS 1992/996, 23 May 61; (TS) 1st N/H of JCS 1992/996, 21 June 61; (TS) 2nd N/H of JCS 1992/996, 27 June 61; all in JMF 9150/2010 (27 Apr 61).

In response to a question from CINCPAC (see item 30-31 May 1961) CHMAAG Laos stated that he had "little or no control" over T-6 missions flown by the Lao Air Force. CHMAAG controlled only the use of bombs; he would, however, continue to urge the FAL at least to consult the MAAG before dispatching missions.

On 7 June, CHMAAG reported further to CINCPAC that he had on several occasions discussed the use of T-6s with Phoumi. CHMAAG had at these times pointed out that such missions gave considerable propaganda advantage to the enemy while returning only minor military advantage to the RLG. However, CHMAAG continued, Phoumi regarded the T-6s an effective weapon and had in fact relaxed his personal control over their operations. CHMAAG had ordered all MAAG elements to report immediately to him any indication that a T-6 strike was imminent. (See item 24 August 1961.)

(S) Mags, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 118377, 2 Jun 61, DA IN 119790, 7 Jun 61.
2 Jun 61 The JCS forwarded to CINCPAC revised terms of reference for his upcoming conversation with UK military officials regarding intervention in Laos (see items 9 and 29 May 1961). The terms had been revised, by agreement between UK Embassy officials and the Department of State, principally as follows:

1. To the circumstances for intervention was added the proviso that the two governments would have agreed that "clear failure to reach an effectively controlled cease-fire" existed or that "a breaking of the cease-fire by the Communists, accompanied by a resumption of offensive action" had occurred.

2. The political objectives of the intervention became to: a) prevent Laos being completely overrun by the Communists and to keep a RLG in being on Laotian soil; b) protect Thailand while building up a position of strength in that country; and c) establish an effectively controlled cease-fire in order to permit "the achievement by negotiation of a unified, independent and neutral Laos." (See items 17 and 22 June 1961.

(TS) Msg, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 996974, 2 Jun 61.

3 Jun 61 Ambassador Brown, reporting from Vientiane, informed the Secretary of State that, although the US was not in a "position of superiority," there nevertheless were "forces" operating in its favor. The Ambassador therefore concluded that there might be no "serious disadvantage" in "waiting it out" at Geneva.

Among the "forces" mentioned by Ambassador Brown were: 1) food shortages among Pathet Lao units; 2) friction between Kong Le and PL contingents; 3) the opposition of the King, who enjoyed a certain popular respect, to undue concessions to the Communists; 4) an increasing firmness on the part of the RLG; 5) the probable inability of the Viet Minh to assist the Pathet Lao if the ICC were sufficiently strengthened; and 6) the renewed
renewed unity of the Western Allies, together with the rallying of world opinion behind the US position.

The Ambassador, however, added that the enemy now enjoyed a "fundamental military advantage" and warned of "formidable difficulties" which the US would face now and in the future.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2159, 3 Jun 61.

3 Jun 61 The US Ambassador at Bangkok, in a message for the Secretary of State, recommended against "seizing on the maintenance and enhancement of the French presence in Laos as a way of salvaging the Western position in Laos." The Thai Government, the Ambassador reported, blamed the French Military Mission for the inability of the FAL to use the equipment provided by the US. Thailand also objected to France's refusal to recognize the Boun Oum government; moreover, the Thai Government suspected that French intelligence agents had supported the Kong Le revolt. The US Ambassador then warned that US support of the continued French military presence in Laos would not improve the Western position in Laos and would be interpreted by the Thai Government as "a very thin veil for the process of US disengagement in Laos."

(See item 8-10 June 1961.)

(C) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 2184, 3 Jun 61.

3 Jun 61 The JCS, acting at the request of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (ISA), provided the Secretary of Defense with their estimate of the feasibility of a "Mekong River Patrol." The JCS supported the concept that such a patrol along the Laos-Thailand border should be considered as an offset to the increased Communist threat to Thailand and South Viet Nam that a divided
divided or leftist oriented or controlled Laos would present. But, they went on to say, even a "significant commitment" of personnel and equipment could not be expected to provide a "completely effective barrier" against Communist infiltration; however, a patrol could limit Communist infiltration and insurgency operations in Thailand.

Thailand already possessed ample resources for counter-infiltration purposes including, the JCS said, the resources necessary for a "routine type of border patrol along the Mekong River which could attain remunerative results without commitment of a disproportionate degree of resources." Small mobile, highly-trained Thai units, placed at strategic locations along the river, provided with helicopters, and light aircraft support, and supplemented by an "austere" sampan/junk river patrol, should be created as part of the routine military activities of the RTA. No "substantial additional resources" would be necessary, except perhaps some US aid in obtaining the proper river craft.

The JCS raised objections to the patrol as a SEATO venture. Action through SEATO would, the JCS considered, give the appearance that the US was making the Mekong the main line of defense in Southeast Asia and was therefore, by implication, willing to give up Laos. Further, SEATO's approval for such an undertaking seemed "remote" in view of its failure to undertake any "positive action" during the present Laotian crisis.

A "Mekong River Patrol," the JCS concluded, should not be considered "in isolation"; rather, it should be viewed as part of, and in conjunction with, "over-all actions in support of Thailand and South Vietnam."

(TS) JCSM-372-61 to SecDef, 3 Jun 61, derived from JCS 1992/998, 25 May 61; (TS) Memo, ASD(TSA) to CJCS, 12 May 61, encl to JCS 1992/992, 16 May 61; both in JMF 9155.2/3100 (12 May 61) (1).
3 Jun 61 In a message to the Department of State, Secretary Rusk reported on the highlights of President Kennedy's 2 June Paris conversation with President de Gaulle.

The French President, in reviewing previous discussions on Laos, reiterated his understanding of US commitments in the area, and agreed with President Kennedy that the situation on the ground was "bad." If, said de Gaulle, the honor of the US would force it to intervene in Laos, the French would not oppose this decision but, on the other hand, the French would not intervene. Referring to the Geneva Conference on Laos, de Gaulle expressed the opinion that the "least bad possibility" would be a return to the 1954 agreements.

(S) Msg, Paris to SecState, SECTO 9, 3 Jun 61.

3, 4 Jun 61

Secretary Rusk informed the Department of State that President Kennedy and Premier Khrushchev, during their two-day discussions at Vienna of world problems, had mentioned various aspects of the Laotian crisis, among them the need to define "neutral" and "independent," the role of the ICC, and the strategic importance of Laos.

1. The need to define "neutral" and "independent."

During the first day's conversation, the President noted that the US shared SEATO commitments toward Laos, while Communist North Viet Nam was supplying arms and men to the Pathet Lao. The problem was to find a solution to the crisis that would not involve the prestige of either the US, the organizer of SEATO, or the USSR, the champion of world Communism. To find such a solution, as opposed to a settlement imposed by the foreign-sponsored Pathet Lao on the people of Laos, it would first be necessary to define "neutral" and "independent," the adjectives
adjectives used to describe the future government of Laos.

Premier Khrushchev agreed to the need for such definitions, citing Burma and Cambodia as examples of independent, neutral states. He objected, however, to President Kennedy's implication that the Pathet Lao sought to impose its will on the Laotian people, observing that no guerrilla movement could succeed without popular support. Returning to the need for definitions, the Soviet Head of State charged that the US recognized as neutral only those nations that accepted its leadership.

President Kennedy responded by stating that Burma, India, and Yugoslavia fitted the US definitions of "neutral" and "independent." He added that infringements on independence and neutrality occurred in nations, such as Poland, which were of strategic importance to the USSR.

2. The role of the ICC. Regarding this subject, which was discussed on both days, Premier Khrushchev declared that, though he desired to have the Lao Government establish ICC control over the kingdom, he would not agree to the Commission's becoming a "supra-government." The existing ICC, which could act upon the agreement of two member nations, did not, according to the Soviets, infringe upon Laotian sovereignty.

President Kennedy replied that the ICC would not be a government, but rather an agency to investigate alleged violations of the cease-fire. The President then proposed that the US and Soviet Union should use their influence to induce the Laotian factions to support the ICC and to grant it access to the entire kingdom. Although the Soviet Premier expressed agreement, he indicated that the first task facing the US and USSR was to obtain support from all three factions for a neutral government. This, in Mr. Khrushchev's opinion, was
the basic question, one that should be solved before turning to the problem of the ICC.

3. The strategic importance of Laos. On the second day, the two Heads of State elaborated on their previous statements that Laos was of "no strategic importance." Mr. Khrushchev assured the President that the Soviet Union had no vested interest in this remote kingdom and that the USSR had merely extended its help at the request of Souvanna, who had charged that his government was overthrown by US-supported forces. Neither the US nor Soviet Union, Mr. Khrushchev continued, should "get involved," but the USSR could not accept the US "pretension to special rights" in Laos. Nevertheless, because the prestige of both nations was involved, the US and the Soviet Union would have to exercise restraint.

President Kennedy responded by noting that the existing US commitments to Laos, which he wished to reduce, had been undertaken prior to the current crisis and that the present American effort was directed at stabilizing the situation. No reduction of US commitments could begin, however, until an effective cease-fire was in force and a truly neutral government had subsequently been established. The President then stated that situations "involving reaction and counteractions," such as a competitive build-up of forces, would endanger the peace and should be avoided.

At the close of the meeting, President Kennedy and Premier Khrushchev issued a joint communique which stated that they had "reaffirmed their support of a neutral and independent Laos under a government chosen by the Laotians themselves, and of international agreements for insuring the country's neutrality and independence; in this connection they have recognized the importance of an effective cease-fire."
On 7 June, in a circular message to all diplomatic posts, the Secretary of State commented upon the Vienna communique. He pointed out that, while the statements committed the Soviet Union publicly, the terms of the communique neither guaranteed a change in Soviet policy nor insured that Soviet influence with the Pathet Lao would be used energetically to bring about a genuine cease-fire. The US, he continued, was closely watching Soviet and Pathet Lao actions and would shape its policy and operations in the light of developments in Laos.

(S) Msgs, Vienna to SecState, SECTO 16, 4 Jun 61; Paris to SecState, SECTO 25, 5 Jun 61; (C) Msg, Dept of State Circular 1972, 7 Jun 61; (U) Msg, Paris to SecState, SECTO 22, 5 Jun 61; (U) Dept of State Bulletin, vol. XLIV, 26 Jun 61, p. 999.

5 Jun 61 CINCPAC transmitted to the JCS a CHMAAG Laos report that attributed FAL reverses "almost entirely to lack of training." The French trainers, CHMAAG had said, had been completely ineffective in tactical training and had, in some fields, such as logistics, made no attempt to instruct but had performed the functions themselves. Consequently, when the French had withdrawn their advice, a void had resulted. The US training effort, limited at first to technical training, had not yet had sufficient time to remedy the FAL deficiencies (see item 10 June 1961).

(S) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 051958Z Jun 61.

6 Jun 61
7 Jun 61  After two days of artillery bombardment, Ban Padong, Meo re-
doubt on the southwest rim of the Plaine des Jarres, fell to
the Pathet Lao. The Meo evacuated, "in surprisingly good
order," to a new position seven miles to the southwest.

(On the following day, in response to an urgent request
from Ambassador Harriman, Ambassador Brown forwarded to Geneva
a MAAG estimate of the significance of this setback. The Meo
had attempted a conventional defense of Ban Padong, the MAAG
said, because of the prestige which both the RLG and Vang Pao,
the Meo commander, attached to holding that site, and because
of the need to defend the large Meo refugee camp nearby. If
the refugee camp could be relocated, there would be no reason
why the Meo could not resume their original guerrilla tactics
and, in fact, improve their effectiveness.

The PL would need 7-10 days to prepare an attack upon the
new Meo position, the MAAG estimated; whereas the Meo who,
despite the defeat, were still loyal to Vang Pao and willing to
fight, could be completely redeployed and ready for con-
ventional or unconventional defense in 5-7 days. The MAAG
would
would advise Vang Pao against holding future positions too long - and the MAAG observer at Ban Padong thought the Meo leader would "think twice" before attempting a conventional defense again. Rather, the MAAG would advise harassing tactics; having successfully evacuated Ban Padong, the Meo could in future actions "fall back and evade" without further disintegration.) (See item 22 June 1961.)

7 Jun 61 The Secretary of State instructed the US Ambassador in Moscow to "seek the earliest appointment with Gromyko" and deliver to the Soviet Foreign Minister a message which expressed "a most grave view" of the Ban Padong incident. "The occurrence of such a deliberate, carefully prepared offensive military action," the Secretary of State continued, could not be "reconciled with the understanding reached before the Geneva Conference on Laos was convened that the Conference should not meet until there was a cease-fire," nor with the discussions held in Vienna between Secretary Rusk and Foreign Minister Gromyko. Because of the Ban Padong fighting, the Secretary of State believed it imperative that the Geneva co-chairmen instruct the ICC "to fulfill from this moment its functions of supervising the cease-fire" and at the same time call upon the Laotian factions to cooperate with the Commission. The course followed by the US delegation at Geneva, Secretary Rusk warned, would hinge upon the effectiveness of the cease-fire and the degree of cooperation given the ICC.

(On 16 June at Geneva, Foreign Minister Gromyko handed Ambassador Harriman a reply to Secretary Rusk's message.)
The cause of the Ban Padong attack, Mr. Gromyko insisted, was RLG incursions, including the dropping of parachutists and supplies, into airspace controlled by forces of Kong Le and the Pathet Lao. Thus, according to the Soviet Foreign Minister, the RLG was responsible for the outbreak of hostilities. Mr. Gromyko then stated that the USSR desired a peaceful settlement to the Laotian crisis.

In commenting upon Foreign Minister Gromyko's reply and the general Soviet attitude at Geneva, Ambassador Harriman informed the Secretary of State that the USSR was trying to interpret the cease-fire in such a way that: 1) the Pathet Lao forces would be able to mop up RLG units isolated behind their lines; 2) efforts of the RLG to supply these units would be considered violations of the truce; 3) the RLG would not be allowed to post troops in areas not physically occupied at the moment the cease-fire went into effect; and 4) the ICC, with no equipment of its own, would not be allowed to visit areas beyond the front lines. Ambassador Harriman recommended a firm reply to the "arrogant attitude reflected in Gromyko's note . . ." and requested guidance for the conduct of the US delegation at Geneva.

(8) Msgs, State to Moscow, NIACT 2138, 7 Jun 61; Geneva to SecState, CONFE 232, 20 Jun 61; Geneva to SecState, CONFE 256, 22 Jun 61.

7 Jun 61 The French, after consultations with the US and UK, presented to the Geneva Conference a draft protocol dealing with ICC control machinery. The French draft sought agreement among the 14 nations on the following 12 articles:

1. The establishment of an ICC responsible for supervising and controlling the Laotian cease-fire as well as the
the kingdom's declaration of neutrality. The Commission was to act "in close cooperation" with the Government of Laos, which would "ensure that the assistance requested by the Commission and its services is provided at all administrative and military levels."

2. The ICC was to have both fixed and mobile inspection teams; a sufficient number of operation centers, particularly at the main points of entry to and exit from the kingdom; and the ability to move its installations according to need.

3. The inspection teams were to have free and unrestricted access to all parts of Laos; access to relevant documents; and full freedom to inspect, at any time, known or suspected military installations, establishments, units, organizations, and activities.

4. The ICC would have unimpeded use of its own logistic resources, "including all means of transport and communications for the effective performance of its duties."

5. The Lao Government was to insure the security of the Commission and its inspection teams.

6. ICC inspections could be carried out at the request of either the Lao Government, any one member of the Commission, or any one member of an inspection team.

7. Decisions of the Commission relating to operations, inspections, or procedural matters were to be made by majority vote.

8. The ICC was to issue a quarterly report to the membership of the Geneva Conference. In case of emergency, however, the Commission might submit special reports along with recommendations for action by the Conference. In the event of disagreement, commission members could submit minority reports.

9. The
9. The ICC would remain in being until the conference nations agreed that it should be terminated, "and in any case until 21 July 1964." Upon its termination, the Commission would render a final report to the Conference.

10. Ambassadors of the conference nations would meet annually.

11. A method was proposed by which the conference nations would pay the costs of the ICC.

12. Articles 26-40 of the 1954 agreement were declared superseded. These obsolete articles prescribed the organization, responsibilities, and method of operation for the existing ICC.

As had been agreed before the draft was introduced, Ambassador Harriman merely reserved the right to offer comment on or amendments to the French draft (see item 20 June 1961), while British co-chairman MacDonald expressed full support of the proposal. To emphasize the more satisfactory nature of the French draft, Mr. MacDonald called attention to the Soviet version (see item 17 May 1961) and noted that the USSR, unlike France, sought to undermine the 1954 agreement. Specifically, the Soviets would: 1) eliminate the French presence authorized in 1954; 2) remove from the ICC those peace-keeping functions assigned it in 1954; 3) force the ICC to seek the consent of the Geneva co-chairmen before undertaking investigations; 4) require unanimous decisions by the ICC on all but procedural matters; and 5) provide only perfunctory treatment of the problem of controlling the introduction of arms into Laos.

(S) Mage, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 116, 4 Jun 61; CONFE 139, 7 Jun 61.
7 Jun 61 According to a press release in Pravda, Mikoyan, speaking at a Kremlin luncheon, had stated in the presence of Souvanna and Souphanouvong that "as far as he knew" Souphanouvong was satisfied with the position the Soviet Government had taken in the Vienna talks (see item 3, 4 June 1961) and that the USSR would support this position in the Geneva talks. However, earlier in his speech Mikoyan had said that the international conference at Geneva could not decide all questions as this would amount to interference in the affairs of the kingdom and would be "a new form of colonial rule over Laos." In response, Souvanna had declared that he was fully convinced of the "disinterested" nature of Soviet support and aid for Laos. Certain countries, the Laotian Prince noted, had "ulterior" motives in the Geneva Conference, but he was confident that with the help of friendly countries, and above all the USSR, it would be possible to extricate the Conference from its impasse. Having received information from Khrushchev on his Vienna meeting with President Kennedy, he and his brother, said Souvanna, would be able to map out a course of action at Geneva. They would, he pointed out, be "patient, stubborn and persistent" in pursuing their goals of "happiness of people, independence of country, and sovereignty kingdom of Laos, full agreement and unity of all layers of population."

On the same day the Soviet press reported that Khrushchev had received the two Laotian Princes. According to the news release, they had discussed a Laotian "peaceful settlement" and "further" developments in Laotian-Soviet relations.

(QUO) Msgs, Moscow to SecState, 3057, 8 Jun 61; 3044, 7 Jun 61.
The US Consul General at Geneva, disturbed by the reaction of America's Southeast Asian Allies to continuation of the French presence in Laos (see items 1 and 3 June 1961), on 8 June informed the Secretary of State that he believed US support at Geneva of the French presence in Laos required a "clear understanding between Washington and Paris" of France's "intentions and will to assume fully significant obligations, particularly with respect to the future training of the PAL." In particular he suggested that the US Government determine the French views on: 1) the prevention of subversion and indirect aggression against a neutral Laos; 2) the size of the future training mission; 3) the type of training envisioned; 4) equipment for the Lao forces; and 5) financing the mission.

While the Government of France was being sounded out on these subjects, the US delegation at Geneva should impress upon the French: 1) the seriousness with which the US regarded the French role in Laos, and 2) the need for US-French cooperation in military planning and in planning for the withdrawal of US advisers.

As for the complaints made by the Southeast Asian nations, the Ambassador suggested that a special effort be made to clarify US motives (see item 27 June 1961) for seeking continuation of the French presence and to emphasize "our firm intention to urge the French to follow through on their obligations with our support."

On 9 June, US Ambassador Gavin at Paris expressed to the Secretary of State his concurrence with the view that the US should initiate discussions with the French "in light of their assuming the primary role in the military field in Laos . . . ." After observing that the points raised in the Geneva message were "doubtless of interest to the US," Ambassador Gavin advised
advised against giving the impression that "our objective is to put the French in the dock and insist they carry out a military program in Laos along the same lines we have followed." To argue "over the nuts and bolts of a military program for Laos" or to attempt to supervise the details of a French program could dissipate the favorable atmosphere existing between the US and France.

The US Ambassador at Vientiane suggested on 10 June that the Secretary of State "add a further point to Geneva's list" of items to be discussed with the French. This point was the French attitude toward the FAL. At present, the Ambassador observed, the French military seemed to consider the Lao "practically untrainable" (see item 20 June 1961).

(S) Msgs, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 146, 7 Jun 61; Paris to SecState, 5449, 9 Jun 61; Vientiane to SecState, 2241, 10 Jun 61.

8-14 Jun 61

On 8 June, Chairman Sen of the ICC, in a message to the RLG, expressed the Commission's deep concern about the recent hostilities at Ban Padong (see item 7 June 1961). Having obtained from the three factions agreement in principle to inspections, he now proposed that the ICC, on its own initiative, visit those critical areas where large numbers of opposing troops were in close proximity. Chairman Sen therefore requested prompt agreement at the Ban Namone cease-fire talks on those special arrangements, such as transportation, which would enable the ICC to make these inspections. Ambassador Brown considered the ICC proposal a "major victory" for the RLG and believed that Phoumi should cooperate.

On 10 June, as a result of the Commission's offer to conduct investigations, the JCS authorized CINCPAC to approve the
the RLG's use of US-supplied equipment to assist the ICC in conducting inspections.

At Geneva, also on 10 June, Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko, during an "hour's inconclusive argument" with US Ambassador Harriman, rejected a US proposal that the Soviet and British co-chairmen of the Geneva Conference issue instructions to the ICC to investigate the Ban Padong incident. Although Ambassador Harriman produced a copy of Chairman Sen's message to the RLG, the Soviet Foreign Minister remained adamant. Finally, Ambassador Harriman suggested that the co-chairman call upon both the RLG and the Pathet Lao to stop violating the cease-fire. The Soviet diplomat made no direct reply at this time, but the co-chairmen did send a message to the Laotian factions urging their cooperation with the ICC in the supervision of the truce.

At the Ban Namone meeting of 14 June, the Ban Padong incident and the Commission's offer to make inspections were discussed. Although the RLG had lodged with the ICC a protest that opposition forces had violated the truce, the Government's delegation at Ban Namone did not, in Ambassador Brown's opinion, press its case with enough vigor. Thus, the Pathet Lao, in spite of the Commission's offer to investigate and the co-chairmen's request for cooperation, succeeded in preventing an ICC visit to the Ban Padong area.

(S) Msgs, Geneva to SecState, CONF 166, 10 Jun 61. Geneva to SecState, CONF 183, 13 Jun 61; JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 997398, 10 Jun 61; (C) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 2230, 9 Jun 61; 2268, 14 Jun 61.

On 8 June, Ambassador Harriman called upon Souvanna at Geneva to discuss the future neutrality and independence of Laos. During their conversation, Souvanna accepted the Ambassador's assurances
assurances that the US wanted nothing except an independent and truly neutral Laos and explained that the US views, as stated by Mr. Harriman, coincided with his own. Souvanna maintained that, in his opinion, the Soviet Union would support Laotian neutrality and independence. When asked if he could withstand organized Communist pressure, Souvanna replied that he would have to form a single mass party to oppose the NLHX, which he regarded as Socialist rather than Communist. Souvanna also commented on various other aspects of Lao politics and stated that he would be grateful for any help the US might give in the formation of a coalition government.

In reporting this meeting to the Secretary of State, Ambassador Harriman pointed out that Souvanna considered himself "the one man to lead his country, confident he can control the left-wingers and arouse national popular support."

On 15 June, Souvanna returned Ambassador Harriman's call. During this second meeting, Souvanna commented upon a variety of topics, none of which Ambassador Harriman considered either new or particularly significant. In substance, Souvanna suggested that the US urge Boun Oum and Phoumi to be conciliatory during the forthcoming Zurich meeting (see item 22 June 1961) and to have confidence in Souvanna.

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 175, 11 Jun 61; (C) Msgs, CONFE 152, 8 Jun 61; 192, 14 Jun 61; 199, 15 Jun 61.

9 Jun 61

The US delegation to the Geneva Conference reported that "tentative force levels for the FAL contained in current drafts of documents to be tabled at the Geneva Conference as a result of US-UK-French discussion show a FAL of 20,000 plus 3,000 gendarmerie." The problem of integration, the report
report continued, had not yet been discussed in detail, but the US delegation did not consider it feasible to "avoid the problem of force levels until after the problem of integration is worked out." The report further stated that the "thinking at Geneva was that "proportional reduction in forces on both sides would be a gradual process with integration as the final step." It also was noted that the US, UK, and French delegations had agreed that every effort should be made to avoid integration at the battalion level (see items 22 June, 13 September, and 20 October 1961).

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 160, 9 Jun 61.

10 Jun 61 CHMAAG Laos, responding to CINCPAC's 24 May message concerning FAL training (see item), described the various training projects being carried out by the MAAG during the cease-fire:

1. Battalion level training in Thailand.
2. "On-site" training in leadership and tactics "in contact units."
3. English-language training which, if successful, could bring about expansion in CONUS school quotas.
4. Civil affairs and psychological warfare training, and several troop indoctrination programs.
5. Marksmanship.
6. Artillery
6. Artillery training including, for instance, instruction in conversion from French to US fire direction control systems.

7. NCO schools and officer "refresher courses."

8. Instruction by both MAAG and ECCOIL (Filipino) technicians in training aids, river flotilla operations, engineering, ordnance, quartermaster, signal, and transportation skills.

9. A proposed military intelligence course for the new Lao military intelligence service.

Other fields in which the MAAG was particularly active were: inspection to determine the status of units and programs; assistance in rehabilitation of equipment; coordination in the FAL reorganization and updating of TOEs; and reorganization of the Lao Air Force under USAF concepts.

Realization of these programs on the "intensified basis" the JCS had directed (see item 29 April 1961) would, CHMAAG said, depend upon authorization for and receipt of additional US personnel. As presently manned (see item 26 June 1961), the MAAG would have to carry out its programs on a "first things first" basis; it could not conduct them all simultaneously. CHMAAG recommended, therefore, that 10 additional WSMTT teams be authorized on a temporary duty basis (see item 22 August 1961) and that the MAAG be permanently augmented by from 30 to 80 personnel spaces (see item 1 December 1961).
The US Counselor in Bangkok forwarded to the Secretary of State a list of "dissatisfactions and complaints regarding the Geneva Conference" which had led the Thai Government to conclude that its further participation would be of doubtful value and which might cause Thailand to withdraw from the Conference.

The specific complaints and sources of dissatisfaction listed by the US Counselor were: 1) Thailand's "fundamental doubt" that a conference should be relied upon in preference to the "more forceful action" which the Thais had "advocated through SEATO or otherwise"; 2) Thai convictions regarding a "British sell-out" on the seating of the Pathet Lao delegates at Geneva; 3) the apparent Western willingness to continue the Conference in the absence of both an effective cease-fire and satisfactory instructions to the ICC; 4) Thailand's lack of success in presenting its point of view at Geneva; 5) the apparent Western and Communist desire for a Lao coalition government, the type of government which the Thais believed would bring about a Communist take-over of the kingdom; 6) lack of information from the US on the Vienna meeting (see item 3-4 June 1961), even though the future of Laos was one of the subjects discussed; 7) French, and to some extent British, reluctance to consult with Thailand and the other...
other pro-Western Asian states; and 8) the apparent inability of the US to "state what our proposals are for meeting the contingencies of conference failure or large-scale breaking of the cease-fire."

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 2236, 11 Jun 61.

12 Jun 61 According to the JCS Laos weekly situation report, "following sporadic enemy mortar fire extending over a two-day period, troops from two Lao Army outposts near Hat Bo, about 30 miles northeast of Paksane, withdrew about 3 miles south." These outposts, the situation report noted, had been occupied without opposition by the FAL after the 3 May cease-fire declaration.

(TS) JCS Laos Sitrep No. 143-61, 15 Jun 61; (TS) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to JCS, DA IN 122052, 14 Jun 61.

13 Jun 61 During a luncheon for Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko, US Ambassador Harriman asked for Mr. Gromyko's views concerning some form of international economic assistance for Laos, a subject which Ambassador Harriman intended to introduce before the
CINCPAC inactivated the US Element, SEATO Field Forces - a component furnished for SEATO Plan 5, and reactivated CJTF-116 - an element of CINCPAC OPLAN 32-59 (see item 6 April 1961). At the same time, CINCPAC established the following DEFCOMs:

1. DEFCOM 3 for forces earmarked for and in direct support of JTF-116.
2. DEFCOM 3 for forces earmarked for and in direct support of SEATO Plan 5.
3. DEFCOM 4 for the remainder of PACOM forces. Under these DEFCOMs, reaction time of PACOM forces, from receipt of an execution order to the first landing of troops in Vientiane, would be 96 hours.

14 Jun 61 CINCPAC assessed for CHMAAG Laos the likely Communist reaction to the implementation of SEATO Plan 5, or a comparable unilateral US plan, as follows:

1. The USSR would not regard Laos under present conditions as the proper place for a full-scale showdown with the US.

2. The Chinese Communists and DRV might intervene under the "military volunteer technique," hoping in this way to make
make it clear that they did not threaten the continental US or the American people as such, but were simply aiming at the single target of foreign military forces in Laos.

3. If Plan 5 was implemented, the Communists would probably react initially with "propaganda and political measures," followed perhaps by introduction of "volunteers" as follows:

   a. One DRV regiment (wet season) or division (dry season) each to the Plaine des Jarres, the Kam Khat area, and the Tchepone area.

   b. Possibly one Chinese regiment or division to Sam Neua.

   Even if DRV "volunteers" intervened, the military situation did not necessarily go beyond the scope of Plan 5.

4. The execution of Plan 5 would cause additional frictions with the Communists in Laos, but the situation was not likely to escalate seriously.

   If the DRV entered Laos in organized units in reaction to Plan 5, CINCPAC added, SEATO forces should attack them by air. If DRV air units then attacked SEATO forces, their bases in North Viet Nam should be destroyed.

   (On 24 June, CINCPAC furnished an identical report to the JCS, less only his final opinions on air attack. Additionally he told the JCS that, in his opinion, Plan 5 should be implemented.)

(TS) Msgs, CINCPAC to CHMAAG Laos, 140523Z Jun 61; CINCPAC to JCS, 242040Z Jun 61.

14 Jun 61 Princes Souvanna and Souphanouvong appeared before the Geneva Conference. Souvanna, in the course of his speech, stated that: 1) the ICC, although it "possibly could assist in cases where the Lao themselves were not in agreement," should not replace
replace the tripartite [RLG-Souvanna-Pathet Lao] military commission in arranging a cease-fire; 2) in addition to preventing foreign interference, the ICC might later supervise elections; 3) Laos would reconstitute a national army; 4) neither the passage through Laos of foreign troops nor the presence of foreign bases would be allowed; and 5) SEATO protection of the kingdom would have to be cancelled.

Souphanouvong was judged by the US delegation to have "used the occasion more effectively than Souvanna to project his ideas and personality." Among other things, Souphanouvong stated that: 1) his NLHX controlled 80 per cent of Laos and was supported by 90 per cent of the population; 2) he was in agreement with the policies of Souvanna's Xieng Khouang government; 3) the Laotian people themselves could solve the problems of forming a national government, organizing elections, unifying the factional armies, accepting foreign aid, and improving economic conditions; 4) he preferred the Soviet draft protocol to the French version, for in his opinion the latter violated the sovereignty of Laos; and 5) he desired the removal of all foreign troops from the kingdom. These statements were accompanied by "intemperate attacks on the US" and references to "NLHX force and power."

(C) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 195, 15 Jun 61.

15 Jun 61 The JCS answered a series of questions, put by the Deputy Secretary of Defense on 8 May 1961, on the use of nuclear weapons in any direct engagement with the Chinese Communists. Among the questions posed and answered were two particularly pertinent to the Laotian situation, as follows:

1. Against
1. Against available Chinese Communist forces, could US and Allied forces hold a defensive line in mainland Southeast Asia? If so, approximately where?

   a. Without the use of nuclear weapons, the defense of "key areas" in Thailand, including the Mekong River line, and of the Saigon area would be possible, the JCS said, under the following conditions:

      (1) Political stability of pro-Western governments in Thailand, Cambodia, and South Viet Nam.

      (2) Full political and necessary military support by the SEATO nations.

      (3) Immediate employment of required US forces and prompt initiation of partial mobilization by the US.

   b. With nuclear weapons used only in air defense and ASW and tactically against enemy forces, or with unrestricted use of nuclear weapons, the US and its Allies could hold a defensive line running roughly from Tourane through the Kontum-Kleiku plateau in South Viet Nam and the Pakse-Bolovens plateau in Laos, to and thence along the Mekong River. Even if the Chinese responded in kind with Soviet-furnished nuclear weapons, the US and its Allies could hold this line, although rapid reconstruction of support facilities and immediate US and SEATO mobilization would be required.

2. Were there any military actions that the US could take now which would significantly affect the answer(s) to the above question(s)?

"Depending upon the degree of warning received prior to US intervention," the JCS said, "US capabilities would be enhanced
enhanced by the substantial deployment of combat forces to the area of operations." Moreover, there were numerous logistics actions - construction and modernization of air, rail, pipeline, port, road, electronic communication, and storage facilities - that would enhance US capabilities. Increased MAP support of indigenous forces, strengthening of friendly internal security forces, and acceleration and expansion of covert and guerrilla programs would likewise strengthen the US and Allied position in Southeast Asia.

In their memorandum forwarding these answers to the Secretary of Defense, the JCS reasserted their belief that the US did not presently have the capability to conduct a "full-scale nonnuclear war" with the Chinese Communists. For this reason, US intervention in any area where subsequent overt Chinese Communist intervention was possible should be undertaken only after a "firm US governmental decision . . . that the US is thereby prepared and committed to succeed . . . to the extent required by its National objectives, regardless of possible subsequent escalation." And, the JCS concluded, any full-scale nonnuclear operation in Southeast Asia would seriously restrict the capability of the US to conduct similar operations simultaneously elsewhere. Therefore, "a degree of mobilization," expansion of the war production base, augmentation of lift capabilities and waiver of financial limitations would be required in such event.

(See item 3 July 1961.)
The Canadian Minister for External Affairs made a "strong plea" that the Geneva Conference provide the ICC as soon as possible with those "essential technical means" for truce supervision which the Commission had already requested (see item 29 May 1961). Specifically, the Canadian diplomat desired that the ICC be given immediately at least three light aircraft and three helicopters with the personnel necessary for their upkeep and operation.

(This Canadian request preaced a joint US-French offer, made to the co-chairman on 16 June, of equipment for use by the ICC. Included among the items were three US H-34 helicopters. On 17 June, however, Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko refused to agree to the conference's responding to the ICC request for equipment.) (See item 21-22 June 1961.)

(S) Msgs, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 203, 16 Jun 61; CONFE 213, 17 Jun 61; (C) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 202, 16 Jun 61.
16 Jun 61 The Secretary of State informed Ambassador Brown that the US desired to investigate the possibility of creating under the RLG Interior Ministry an independent and unified civil police force prior to the Geneva settlement. The US hoped thereby, the Secretary said, to pre-empt the post-settlement training of the police and thus maintain as much influence as possible over this element of state security. The Department of State believed that the civil police should be entirely separate from both the army and the gendarmerie; that US civilians should perform the training; and that support of the police should therefore be dealt with under the economic provisions of the Geneva settlement.

(On the following day, the US delegation at Geneva advised the Secretary that there was "no possibility, . . . in any protocol coming out of this conference," that US training units would be allowed for Lao police or military forces, under economic or military assistance projects. Nonetheless, US officials in Laos developed a plan for such a separate police force; see item 21 August 1961.)

(S) Msgs, SecState to Vientiane, 1378, 16 Jun 61; Geneva to SecState, CONFE 212, 17 Jun 61.

16-21 Jun 61 In response to a request by the Secretary of State that the US delegation at Geneva review its negotiating tactics, Ambassador Harriman on 16 June expressed to the Secretary of State "some thoughts" concerning the principles upon which the US effort at Geneva was based. In addition to asking guidance from the Department of State, Ambassador Harriman asked that the US Ambassadors at Bangkok, Saigon, and Vientiane.
Vientiane inform him of the views of their host governments on the "thoughts" he was expressing.

The first idea set forth by the Ambassador was that the only alternative to the settlement of the Laotian crisis by means of an international conference was the use of force. The US, however, had chosen negotiations in preference to military action and its attendant risk of escalation.

"Having chosen the conference route," he continued, "we must accustom ourselves to accept less than perfect solutions to each of the problems as they arise, unless we are prepared to turn back to the alternative of force."

Ambassador Harriman then suggested that the US, if the Zurich meeting (see item 22 June 1961) did not result in a unified Lao delegation, should encourage the RLG to bring its delegates to the conference table so that the Boun Oum government could present its views.

Turning to the subject of the cease-fire, the Ambassador expressed his belief that the US, by placing the onus for truce violations on the Communists, had gained "world support on this issue" and forced the Communists to restrain the Pathet Lao forces, thus strengthening the bargaining position of the RLG. Extreme emphasis on cease-fire violations, however, might, in Ambassador Harriman's opinion, cause the Conference to collapse. He therefore recommended that the US, while reserving the right to bring future violations to the attention of the Conference, should now turn to such "substantive aspects of the conference agenda" as control machinery, limitations on military forces, declarations of neutrality, and, possibly, economic aid.

Finally, Ambassador Harriman expressed confidence that the US could obtain a satisfactory status for Laos, provided that a "reasonably balanced government of national unity" was established. He stressed, however, that the accomplishment of this
of this goal would require "a lot of cooperation and willingness at times to deviate from rigid concepts which the course of this conference has proven to be impractical."

On 18 June, the US Ambassador at Vientiane stated his agreement with the message from Geneva "about the desirability of the RLG delegation's accepting the facts of life and taking its place at the conference." Since he considered it useless to discuss RLG policy with anyone but Phoumi, Ambassador Brown urged most strongly that Ambassador Harriman make every effort to see Phoumi.

Ambassador Brown also agreed that the Geneva Conference should turn to more substantial issues, even though he doubted that the RLG's bargaining position had been strengthened or that the Pathet Lao had given up the offensive. He believed, however, that the US should continue to seek improvements in the machinery of the ICC and to stress those cease-fire violations in which the Communists were clearly at fault. Referring to the comment in the Geneva message about less than perfect solutions, Ambassador Brown stated his conviction that the US would have to accept Souvanna as Prime Minister if the partition of Laos was to be avoided.

The Secretary of State on 21 June forwarded to Geneva his comments on Ambassador Harriman's assessment of conference tactics. Secretary Rusk agreed in general with the Ambassador's views on the accomplishments of the Conference and stated that these achievements, principally the fixing of blame on the Communists for truce violations, would "stand us in good stead" if negotiations should collapse and "we are forced to turn to other measures."

The attitude of both Thailand and South Viet Nam, the nations most directly concerned with a Lao settlement, troubled
troubled the Secretary of State. Should these nations withdraw from the Conference, the US position would be "considerably embarrassed and weakened."

Finally, Secretary Rusk noted that the time might come when agreement was patently impossible and expressed the hope that, in such event, a number of delegations would join the US in terminating the Conference.

(S) Msgs, State to Geneva, FECON NIAC'T 129, 15 Jun 61; FECON 162, 21 Jun 61; (S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 205, 16 Jun 61; (S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2290, 18 Jun 61

17 Jun 61 The CNO informed the Secretary of Defense that the JCS, mindful of the "over-riding political considerations," accepted the terms of reference for the talks between CINCPAC and UK Admiral Luce (see items 9 and 29 May and 2 June 1961), but on the assumptions that:

1. The terms of reference would not be interpreted to indicate that the ultimate US objective was a Laos divided along the 3 May cease-fire line.

2. The proposed plan for intervention would not be introduced into SEATO, nor would a proposal be made to revise SEATO Plan 5 in accordance with the terms of reference. The objectives of the proposed plan were less than those of SEATO Plan 5, the CNO said; its introduction into SEATO would, therefore, have a very adverse effect upon all SEATO members except the UK and France.

3. Every effort would be made to avoid the appearance of US-UK combined planning, because it too would have a detrimental effect upon other Allies.

On the same day, CNO, acting for CJCS, warned CINCPAC that the British might attempt to use the Pelt-Luce conversations as a beginning for combined planning. CINCPAC was instructed
instructed to "make it very clear" that combined US-UK planning was not acceptable to the US.

CINCPAC was also cautioned to reject any British proposal that agreements reached during the conversations be submitted to SEATO as modifications to Plan 5. Such a "white man's solution" to an Asiatic problem "would not be readily accepted by our Asiatic friends."

(On the following day, CINCPAC expressed his "wholehearted concurrence with CNO that no effort should be made in SEATO to change the objectives of Plan 5.)

(See item 22 June 1961.)

(TS) Memo, CNO to SecDef, 17 Jun 61, encl to JCS 23/4/3, 24 Jul 61; JMF 5412 (17 Jun 61); (TS) Msgs, JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 997726, 17 Jun 61; CINCPAC to JCS, 182350Z Jun 61.

20 Jun 61

Ambassador Harriman placed before the Geneva Conference draft provisions designed to supplement the French draft protocol on ICC machinery (see item 7 June 1961). The US proposals, which consisted of articles 13 through 22 of what came to be known as the French-US draft, called for the following:

13. The ICC would control the movement of "all military personnel and advisers, armaments, munitions, and military equipment" into and out of Laos.

14. As soon as the ICC had established sufficient operation centers to carry out the tasks outlined in article 13 and considered itself ready to begin functioning throughout Laos, it would "so notify the Government of Laos and the members of the Conference." After an agreed interval had elapsed, the Commission would commence its operations.

15. Not later than 30 days after the protocol entered into force, the ICC would take census of the various armed forces throughout the kingdom.

15. All
16. All foreign military personnel and advisers, except the French whose presence was consistent with the 1954 agreement, were to be withdrawn by an agreed date.

17. The ICC was to supervise the disposition of armaments in excess of the needs of a unified Lao Army.

18. No armaments, munitions, or military equipment inconsistent with the role and mission of the Lao Army could be introduced into the kingdom.

19. Prisoners of war and civilian internees were to be released to the custody of the ICC for repatriation to the destinations of their choice.

20. Reprisals against former enemies were forbidden.

21. Articles 10 and 19 of the 1954 agreement were declared superseded. These articles had established the points through which foreign troops might enter Laos and extended to the kingdom the terms of the 1954 cease-fire.

22. Subject to the conditions in article 14, the protocol would enter into force on the day that it was signed.

(On 21 June, the French delegation "welcomed the US draft military provisions" but reserved detailed comment pending further study. Soviet co-chairman Pushkin on the following day charged that the "Franco-American" proposals "proved that the West was hostile toward the independence and neutrality of Laos." The type of ICC called for in the French-US draft, Mr. Pushkin continued, would interfere in the kingdom's domestic affairs. Since the basic aims of the Conference were to deal with Laotian external affairs, he concluded that the Western proposals were contrary to the purpose of the Geneva Conference.

The
The Secretary of State, in response to recommendations that the US discuss with the Government of France the possible future role of a French Military Mission in Laos (see item 8-10 August 1961), approved the initiation of preliminary talks on this subject and provided guidance for presentations by the US Ambassador at Paris and the US delegation at Geneva. A similar presentation, Secretary Rusk added, would be made to the French Embassy at Washington. Although unwilling to suggest it at the time, the Secretary of State expressed the hope that the French would offer to enter into detailed military discussions to work out plans for the replacement by a French mission of the MAAG in Laos.

In brief, the US presentations were to include: 1) an observation that a French Military Mission, such as had been authorized by the 1954 agreement, was contemplated in the US/French draft protocol under consideration at Geneva (see previous item); 2) a statement of the importance of a French Military Mission, with emphasis on the fact that not even a strengthened ICC could effectively safeguard the neutrality of Laos unless the kingdom had, at the least, an army able to "contain illegal armed forces in the country and inhibit the resurgence of Pathet Lao guerrilla activity;" and 3) a series of specific questions to elicit French views on the composition and mission of the Lao armed forces, the type of training to be given, the type and size of the mission, the equipping of Lao forces, the financing of the mission, the "potential capabilities" of Lao soldiers and officers, and the prevention of Communist subversion.
20 Jun 61 As the meeting of the Laotian Princes at Zurich was getting underway, US diplomats held discussions with Prince Sihanouk of Cambodia and with Phoumi separately. Sihanouk expressed belief that the three Princes should concentrate on the framing of an "international statute" for Laos and on the appointment by the King of a unified Lao delegation to the Geneva Conference. Sihanouk also stated that complete agreement would not be reached at Zurich, that the integration of Pathet Lao forces into a unified Lao Army was the most dangerous issue facing Boun Oum's government, and that, since the King probably would not serve as Prime Minister, Souvanna seemed the only other possible candidate for that office.

Phoumi also seemed "gloomy" concerning the prospects for agreement at Zurich. He held out scant hope for agreement on the appointment of a unified delegation or for acceptance by Souvanna and Souphanouvong of the King as Prime Minister. Also, Phoumi refused to allow the RLG delegation to sit at the conference table but seemed willing to have the delegation available at Geneva. He felt that a failure at Zurich could lead to the collapse of the Geneva Conference and the resumption of hostilities. After stating this hypothesis, Phoumi asked for a clear enunciation of US policy in the event that fighting erupted anew. He was told, however, only that the US considered it desirable to continue negotiations and preserve the cease-fire.

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 241, 20 Jun 61;
(C) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 236, 20 Jun 61.
During a discussion on 21 June of the proposed responsibilities and rights of the ICC, the Canadian delegation again (see item 15 June 1961) urged that sufficient equipment be provided the existing ICC to enable it to carry out its functions. Because of the French-US offer of "adequate equipment," there was no need for debate by the Conference. Instead, the co-chairmen needed only to accept the existing offer. The US, France, and the UK supported the Canadian stand.

On the following day, the Soviet co-chairman insisted that the ICC continue to obtain its equipment from the "parties in Laos." The Conference, however, agreed that the three ICC nations represented at Geneva should inquire of the Commission members if sufficient equipment was available from Laoian sources.

(The British co-chairman later agreed to Pushkin's proposal that the ICC be directed to acquire equipment from the parties in Laos. When the UK co-chairman withdrew his consent, his Soviet counterpart on 10 July said that, although no message would be sent, the issue had been settled by an offer of equipment on the part of Souvanna's Xieng Khouang faction. Since Boun Oum's RLG had made no offer, Mr. Pushkin noted that "as far as the Savannakhet group was concerned ... this question 'indeed remains obscure.'")

(See item 11-13 July 1961.)

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 260, 22 Jun 61; (C) Msgs, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 269, 23 Jun 61; CONFE 361, 11 Jul 61.

Ambassador Harriman, noting reports from Zurich which indicated Souvanna was proving perhaps more inflexible than Souphanouvong toward the RLG, informed the Secretary of
of State that "Souvanna seems to need some concerted effort, especially on the part of Western friends to:
a) get him to act like the real neutral he claims to be;
b) give him the facts of life about Russian tactics, particularly for dumping, once Soviet designs are achieved, those who count on their support; and c) tie in with non-Communists as much as possible, such as inducing non-Communist Lao to join him in a move away from complete dependence on the Pathet Lao." On 22 June, Ambassador Harriman reported to the Secretary of State that he had approached French and British diplomats at Geneva on the subject of influencing Souvanna and expressed the hope that further discussions of this subject would be carried on at Paris and London.

In a further effort to influence Souvanna "Westward," Ambassador Harriman on 23 June requested from the Secretary of State authority to extend to Souvanna a renewed invitation to visit Washington (see item 25 June 1961).

(The US Ambassador at Vientiane, commenting upon Ambassador Harriman's efforts to influence Souvanna, on 23 June informed the Secretary of State that he believed the US soon would have to choose between opposing Souvanna, at the risk of renewed hostilities, or trying "positively to influence him." In making such a decision, Ambassador Brown added, the US would need to know more about Souvanna's real intentions. The Prince could provide this knowledge by stating: 1) whether he still believed that the Pathet Lao should be denied key cabinet posts; 2) in what cabinet position he would accept Phoumi; 3) to what extent he would utilize the services of members of the existing RLG and of neutrals not already aligned with him; and 4) whether he woul
accept effective control machinery to protect against Viet Minh interference in Laotian affairs.

The Ambassador then pointed out certain difficulties inherent in supporting Souvanna. The Prince was bitter against the US "because of past experience as he interprets it." A shift of support to Souvanna might so disillusion Phoumi that the latter would renew the fighting. Also, US acceptance of Souvanna as Prime Minister in lieu of Phoumi would raise problems with Thailand and South Viet Nam.

22 Jun 61 The US Ambassador at Vientiane reported that the King had informed the French Ambassador that: 1) fully approved the French drafts submitted to the Geneva Conference (see item 7 June 1961); 2) he would not serve as Prime Minister; and 3) he would accept Souvanna as Prime Minister and Souphanouvong as a member of the cabinet. The King added, however, that any new government would have to be approved by the National Assembly.

22 Jun 61 CINCPAC and UK Admiral Luce met on Okinawa to discuss plans and circumstances for intervention in Laos. The two men agreed, at the start of their conversation, that SEATO Plan 5 should not be "scrapped." CINCPAC termed Plan 5 the "proper vehicle for the contemplated action" and he and Luce agreed that it needed only to be modified to meet the current situation in Laos.

In regard to the terms of reference developed for these conversations (see items 9 and 29 May, 2 and 17 June 1961), Admiral
Admiral Luce emphasized that the UK had not inserted, as a "circumstance of initiation," the agreement of the US and UK on clear failure or Communist violation of cease-fire (see item 2 June 1961) in order to tie the hands of one or the other government, but merely to "strengthen the collective US-UK view." CINCPAC agreed, but emphasized the US fear that SEATO would gain the impression that the US and UK were engaged in the bilateral drafting of a SEATO plan for military action (see item 17 June 1961).

Regarding the military objectives in the terms of reference Admiral Luce stated that the UK considered SEATO would move into only those "key areas" under FAL control. In the UK view, before SEATO could retake "key areas" the FAL had failed to hold, new instructions from the SEATO governments to the SEATO Field Force would be necessary. CINCPAC called this a "disturbing restriction."

As the conversation continued, Admiral Luce indicated that he considered the reaction to the contingency of substantial DRV reinforcement of the Pathet Lao to be the "key" to any SEATO plan of action in Laos. He felt that if DRV forces crossed into Laos but did not come into contact with SEATO forces, Communist China would remain in the background; but if DRV and SEATO forces did clash, the Chinese would "react positively."

CINCPAC thought that the Communists would probably respond initially with "volunteer units" and a world-wide propaganda offensive, or they might initiate a "Plan 5 in reverse" to free the Pathet Lao for combat. The two men agreed that, for any open DRV intervention, the SEATO should grant the DRV no sanctuaries in Laos. Moreover, if the DRV forces were reinforced and threatened SEATO forces or if DRV planes based in North Vietnam (Luce could agree to these two actions only "militarily");
"militarily"; and he was not optimistic about the chances of securing his government's agreement).

Finally Admiral Luce asked how the modifications needed for Plan 5 would be introduced into SEATO. He was, CINCPAC thought, "feeling out" CINCPAC to see if the US would be willing to introduce the necessary modifications. CINCPAC replied only that the "discussions had been productive" and that the US and UK should individually make recommendations through the SEATO Military Programs Office (MPO) for changes to Plan 5.

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 231944Z Jun 1961; OCJCS Files, 091-Laos (3).

22 Jun 61

In a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense, the JCS, adopting recommendations by CINCPAC and the Laos Country Team, urged that the US avoid recommending force objectives for Laos to the Geneva Conference until such time as the details of any future integration of Lao armed forces had been analyzed. (The JCS, CINCPAC, and Country Team comments had all been occasioned by a 24 May request from the US delegation at Geneva for suggestion:}
on the best organization for a force restricted either to
20,000 or to 10,000 men.) In addition, the JCS thought it
neither feasible nor realistic to determine specific force
levels and composition of forces until the following unknowns
were resolved:

1. Composition of the RLG and its national objectives.
2. Extent of Pathet Lao participation in the government
   at provincial and lower levels.
3. ICC powers.
4. Method by which the Lao forces would receive military
   assistance.

If the US remained in Laos and continued to train the FAL,
the Chiefs said, the forces objectives should be those already
approved for MAP support, FY 63-67: 25,000 regular troops and
16,000 ADC. If, however, the US had to develop a position in
which the US presence could not be assumed, and while the
negotiations at Geneva were still in progress, only the followin
"general guidance," as presented by CINCPAC, should be advanced:

   a. For a neutral Laos, not antagonistic to
      the United States and SEATO interests, and not communis-
      orientated, the future Lao military forces should be
      capable of reinforcing local civilian security forces
      and capable of rapid expansion to prevent a communist
      takeover. A strong military base of operations should
      be located on the strategic terrain of the Plaine des[es]
      Jarres.

   b. If, however, Laos has a government infiltrated
      by communists and the Lao Force includes Kong Le and
      Pathet Lao troops integrated at the battalion level, the
      Lao Force should be a constabulary type of essentially a
      police force with a military organization. Its mission
      should be to maintain order among the various Lao ethnic
      and political groups.

(See item 6 September 1961.)

(TS) JCSM-426-61 to SecDef, 22 Jun 61, derived from JCS
2344, 19 Jun 61. (TS) Msgs, CINCPAC to JCS, 070207Z Jun 61, and
032307Z Jun 61; (S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 2158, 2 Jun 61;
Geneva to SecState, CONFE 49, 24 May 61. All in JMF 9155.2/3100
(6 Jun 61).
At the conclusion of their four-day meeting at Zurich, Princes Boun Oum, Souvanna, and Souphanouvong issued a joint communiqué on "the problem of attaining national harmony by forming a national union government." According to the communiqué, the Princes had agreed on certain aspects of a political program for Laos and upon several "immediate tasks" for the national coalition.

The Princes announced their agreement that a provisional government would be formed by means of direct designation and appointment by the King and that this government would carry out a political program based upon a policy of peace and neutrality. The domestic aspects of the program included implementation of the cease-fire and unification of the factional armies into a single national force. In the realm of foreign affairs, the program forbade participation in, or the acceptance of protection from, any military alliance or coalition. Also prohibited were the use by foreign nations of Laotian soil and the establishment in Laos of foreign military bases, with the understanding that the related aspects of the 1954 Geneva agreements would be "the subject of a special study." Other salient principles for the future conduct of foreign relations were: 1) freedom from foreign interference in Laotian domestic affairs; 2) the withdrawal of all foreign troops and personnel, and a ban against their re-introduction; and 3) acceptance of the "direct, unconditional aid of all countries wishing to help Laos build an independent, autonomous national economy on the basis of respect for the sovereignty of Laos."

The communiqué also stated that the provisional government would carry out immediately the following tasks: 1) appoint a governmental delegation to participate in the Geneva Conference; 2) carry out the cease-fire and restore peace throughout the kingdom;
kingdom; 3) honor obligations undertaken in the name of Laos at the Geneva Conference and implement agreements by the three Laotian political factions; 4) release all political prisoners; 5) organize general elections; and 6) continue during the transitional period those government agencies established during the hostilities.

(U) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 264, 23 Jun 61.

23 Jun 61 In a message to the Secretary of State, Ambassador Brown stated that in some of the US position papers on Laos, partition was suggested as a fall-back position preferable to an unsatisfactory coalition government controlling the entire country. In his opinion, an acceptable fall-back position would be difficult, if not impossible, to achieve simply by negotiation in view of the present power realities on the ground.

Though the PL claimed control of almost the entire country, except for "pockets" of land along the Mekong River, the US, Brown felt, could just as confidently claim firm RLG control of certain areas. The RLG had 7,000 to 9,000 troops in various parts of Xieng Khouang and Sam Neua; sizeable areas in the east and north were under firm RLG control; in the south, the situation was precarious.

The US should not, Brown felt, delude itself into thinking that the RLG had a firmly held southern redoubt into which to withdraw. It was unrealistic for the US to think either that the PL would honestly abide by terms of a proposal to withdraw their forces behind their lines, or that the RLG had any greater capacity to hold any partition line sufficiently extended to protect the whole Lao/Thai border, than it had to hold the present cease-fire line.

In
In the Ambassador's view, suggestions for division of the country were unrealistic, and the US should recognize, therefore, that partition did not offer any "easy or peaceful way out."

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 2316, 23 Jun 61.

23 Jun 61 During a conversation in Zurich with the US Embassy Counsellor at Vientiane, Phoumi stated that he was "quite satisfied" with the results of the meeting of the Princes (see item 22 June 196: He based this feeling of satisfaction on the success of the RLG in participating in the Conference and sounding out the opposition without being forced to accept Souvanna as Prime Minister-designate. In Phoumi's opinion, the conference at Zurich had resulted in the acceptance by Souvanna and Souphanouvong of the King's "authority and decision." Phoumi also believed that the conference had served to consolidate the support of some of his former political enemies.

Although satisfied with these aspects of the Zurich meeting Phoumi admitted that everything hinged upon the formation of a coalition government. The RLG, he added, would never yield to the demands of the other sides that Souvanna be installed as Prime Minister.

(c) US Embassy Counsellor, Vientiane, memo of conversation with Phoumi, 23 Jun 61, OASD (ISA), FER/SEA Branch files.

25 Jun 61 Ambassador Harriman again met with Souvanna, who was pausing in Geneva while en route to Paris after the conclusion of the Zurich meeting. Mr. Harriman suggested that Souvanna make an informal visit to the US, but this suggestion was rejected. In the Ambassador's opinion, Souvanna was confident of becoming Prime Minister in the coalition government and preferred to make a formal visit to the US after assuming office.

Ambassador
Ambassador Harriman also sounded out Souvanna on several other subjects. Among other things, Souvanna expressed a willingness to have Phoumi in the new government, provided that Phoumi would sever his ties with the FAL. Souvanna also stated that the other Princes would have to agree to his candidacy for the office of Prime Minister before he would seek the King's approval, that the King could bypass the National Assembly in appointing a provisional government, and that the problem of a continued French presence would have to be settled bilaterally between Laos and France. Speaking of neighboring countries, Souvanna maintained that the movement of Viet Minh troops through Laos and into South Vietnam could be stopped once a neutral Laos had been established. In response to various statements by the Ambassador, Souvanna expressed a lack of confidence in the effectiveness of the ICC, showed a realization of his kingdom's need for economic aid, and stated that he owed no political debts to the Communists.

(S) Msgs, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 277, 25 Jun 61; 278, 26 Jun 61; 285, 26 Jun 61; 287, 26 Jun 61.

26 Jun 61 The Director of Military Assistance, OASD (ISA), adopting a 22 June recommendation by the JCS, approved, subject only to "possible minor changes," the first Joint Table of Distribution (JTD) for MAAG Laos. The JTD called for 253 US military spaces. This JTD, proposed by CHMAAG Laos on 14 April, had been endorsed by CINCPAC on 17 May with some modifications: the addition of 7 spaces and the conversion of most US civilian spaces to US military spaces. The JTD equalled almost exactly the number of personnel then assigned either PCS or TDY to the MAAG, the CHMAAG had said in proposing it. It did not include personnel spaces for the White Star Mobile Training Teams (WSMTT) present, operating in Laos (see item 22 August 1961).