extent Thai fears that the need for unanimity would prevent SEATO from taking effective action in the event of Communist aggression against Thailand. The Thai press displayed "pleasure and relief" at the assurance of US aid. Unfortunately, these same press reports tended to imply that, as a result of the communique, SEATO was no longer important to Thailand's security. The Thai public was also heartened by Thanat's meeting with the President (see item 5 March 1962). Press reports underscored a statement by President Kennedy that the meeting had been most fruitful.

Admiral Felt, during his visit to Bangkok, had emphasized to Sarit the importance of SEATO, sought Sarit's help in dealing with Phoumi, and called upon Phoumi to show evidence of his willingness to cooperate with the US. The Admiral had also outlined US policy for SEATO Secretary General Pote.

In evaluating Sarit's reaction, Unger noted that the Prime Minister's customary expressions of distrust regarding Souvanna had been less forceful than usual. Phoumi, Unger continued, had given news of Felt's visit to the press, even though the meeting was to have been kept secret. Subsequent newspaper reports, based on statements by Phoumi, suggested that Phoumi had clarified the situation for Admiral Felt. The SEATO Secretary General had responded to the Admiral's presentation by calling attention to Phoumi's need of assurance that the US would not withdraw so fully from Laos as to be unable to aid him in resisting if the Communists attempted to overrun the country.

In general, Unger believed that Admiral Felt's visit had been helpful because it showed that US officials were "speaking with one voice regarding Laos" and gave further evidence of US concern for the security of Thailand.

(8) Mag, Bangkok to SecState, 1367, 10 Mar 62.

10 Mar 62

British Ambassador Addis met with Souphanouvong and Souvanna at Khang Khay. According to Addis, the mood of this exploratory meeting was "not discouraging."

The discussion opened with a review by Ambassador Addis of US efforts toward a peaceful settlement. The Ambassador then stated that it was not yet possible to give a "definite reply" regarding Souvanna's most recent list (see item 5 March 1962), since consultations among the Allies were continuing.

Turning to the distribution of key posts, Ambassador Addis suggested giving Foreign Affairs and the lesser portfolio of Economy to the Pathet Lao, while retaining for Phoumi's faction the Ministries of Information and Finance. Souphanouvong, however, rejected this proposal. The Prince insisted that, though the lesser posts of Information, Education, Finance, and Economy and Planning might be divided between the
rightists and his own faction, it was essential for the key Ministries of Defense, Interior, and Foreign Affairs to remain in the hands of the center group. Addis replied that the division suggested by Souphanouvong had not been mentioned during the Geneva meeting of the three Princes and that, at any rate, it would be better to balance Foreign Affairs against Information. Addis described Souphanouvong's attitude toward this suggestion as "distinctly cool."

Souvanna then "remarked sharply" that, if no agreement could be reached, he would return to Paris. To hasten agreement, he suggested that Sports and Youth, which had been attached to Information in the hope of attracting Phoumi, should, for the same purpose, be shifted to some other Ministry such as Social Action. Souphanouvong was reported to have shown a "flicker of genuine interest" in this plan.

Ambassador Addis then turned to the second question of substance, the composition of the center group. In response to a suggestion by Addis that a member of the Sananikone family be included in the cabinet, Souphanouvong declared that either Ngon or Phoui would have to be considered rightists rather than members of the neutral center. Addis's recommendation that Nhouay be Minister of Education evoked silence but not hostility. The mention of Leuam Rajasombath and Khamling Souvanlasy brought no response from either Prince.

Souvanna then closed the meeting with the statement that he and his colleagues would need two or three days in which to consider the views expressed by Ambassador Addis. If Souphanouvong and the Western Powers could not agree within ten days, Souvanna intended to return to Paris.

According to Ambassador Addis, Phoumi Vongvichit had claimed during the meeting that the US was not really exerting pressure on Phoumi. Significantly, it was Souvanna who answered the charge by expressing confidence in Harriman and by stressing the need to provide a cabinet slate that the US could use in its efforts to persuade Phoumi.

In commenting upon the meeting, the Western Ambassadors agreed that it appeared possible that the key cabinet posts might be allocated along the following lines: Defense and Interior to Souvanna; Information to Souphanouvong; Social Action, Youth and Sports to Phoumi; Education and Foreign Affairs to the center; Finance to a rightist; and Economy and Planning to a member of the Pathet Lao. The Ambassadors also agreed that the outlook for improving the balance within the center between Vientiane and Xieng Khouang neutrals appeared obscure.

(See item 16 March 1962.)
(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1271, 10 Mar 62.
measures that the RLG was planning to take in order to
counteract the effect of the suspension of US
financial assistance (see item 26 January 1962). These
austerity measures, the Counselor continued, could not,
in themselves, stave off economic and financial chaos
for more than six months.

The basic financial measure was the monthly borrowing
of 300 million kip from the Lao National Bank. Existing
laws limiting the total amount thus borrowed would be
either repealed or ignored. The inflationary impact of
these loans was to be offset by reductions in government
spending, increased taxes, controls on the salaries of
government officials, and compulsory loans from merchants.
The strength of the FAR also would be reduced in an
effort to lessen government expenditures. Finally, the
RLG would begin buying essential foodstuffs in an
attempt to hold down prices, would gradually impose price
controls, and might establish a system of food cooper­
aves for its employees.

(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1269, 10 Mar 62.

11 Mar 62

Both King Savang and Assembly President Somsanith
criticized the US in speeches made at the closing session
of the National Assembly. The King stated that the Lao
people themselves could easily resolve the existing
crisis, if domestic quarrels were not "stirred up by
foreigners under various guises and even by certain of
them who claim to be our friends." Next, the King com­
plained that the US had suspended its aid, even though
the RLG had kept faith concerning the terms of this
assistance. Finally, the King expressed his confidence
in the Boun Oum government and called upon the nation to
unite behind it in its task of resolving the present

crisis.

Somsanith, in his address, characterized the kingdom's
plight as a "quarrel of foreigners in the way of whom
Laotians have placed themselves." He criticized Souvanna
and the NLHX for inviting Sino-Soviet interference and
the US for using financial and economic pressure against
the RLG. The RLG, Somsanith warned, might sever relations
with those "friendly countries" that distrusted the Boun
Oum government and refused to help it eliminate foreign
interference.

(See item 16 March 1962.)

(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1275, 11 Mar 62.

12 Mar 62

In a message that asked for comment or concurrence from
the several Service headquarters in Washington, CINCPAC
outlined a plan for the disposition of the US military
personnel who would be affected by a withdrawal of the
MAAG from Laos. Mobile Training Teams, Special Forces
personnel, and others who were on temporary duty status
would be returned to their parent commands. The per­
manently assigned military personnel of MAAG Laos would
be dealt with under the following scheme: 1) CHMAAG
Laos would obtain from the Service Departments the
individual personnel data required for reassignment
action and would maintain rosters, updated at 15-day intervals until such time as the Lao situation was stabilized. 2) If time permitted, personnel would be reassigned by their own Service to new duty stations; otherwise, they would be attached to JUSMAG Thailand pending reassignment instructions. 3) Upon a decision to withdraw US military personnel from MAAG Laos, representatives of MAAG Laos, CHJUSMAG Thailand, CHMAAG Vietnam, and COMUSMACV would meet in Bangkok at the call of CHMAAG Laos; these representatives, using certain criteria listed by CINCPAC, would recommend some personnel for return to CONUS and others for utilization by JUSMAG Thailand, MAAG Vietnam, or USMACV, as well as some for retention by MAAG Laos or a successor unit with a newly defined mission.

(By 20 March all the Services had concurred in the above plan.)

(S) Msgs, CINCPAC to HQUSAF, et al., 12204ZZ Mar 62; CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, 290935Z Mar 62.

12 Mar 62

In accordance with a request from the Department of State, Ambassador Gavin in Paris approached Foreign Minister Couve de Murville with the suggestion that the French Ambassador in Laos, Falaize, be permitted "considerable latitude" in the current discussions on formation of a Lao cabinet. Specifically, Gavin inquired whether Couve de Murville would be prepared to accept Souphanouvong as Foreign Minister, should Falaize suggest this. The reply was non-committal, but Gavin did feel that US persuasion plus strong recommendations from Falaize might lead the French to accept this proposal. Their opposition, Gavin continued, appeared to be based on the previous Allied appraisal of the Foreign Ministry as a post of prime importance.

(S) Msg, Paris to SecState, 4257, 12 Mar 62; (C) Msg, SecState to Paris, 4856, 11 Mar 62.

12 Mar 62

CHMAAG Laos reported that three MAP T-6 aircraft had been damaged beyond economical repair since 23 February, leaving only five available for close support operations. He requested that three replacement aircraft be provided as soon as possible, advising CINCPAC that Phoumi and the RLG air commander considered this requirement imperative to maintain the combat effectiveness of the FAR against the enemy's increasing armored vehicle capability.

(S) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, 120550Z Mar 62.

13 Mar 62

Thailand's Acting Foreign Minister requested the presence of Counselor Unger and handed him the text of Prime Minister Sarit's reply, dated 12 March, to President Kennedy's letter (see item 5 March 1962). Unger was assured that the reply represented a full endorsement of the recent US-Thai communiqué (see item 6 March 1962).

In his letter to the President, Sarit expressed his own appreciation for the President's message, the kind reception given Thanat, and the issuance of a joint communiqué that showed such concern for Thailand's progress as well as its security. The Prime Minister then conveyed the "heart-felt gratitude" of the Assembly, the
Government, and the Thai people for the assurance that the US would, in accordance with its constitutional processes, fulfill its SEATO obligations toward Thailand without waiting for unanimous agreement among the members of that organization. A similar feeling of gratitude had been aroused by the re-affirmation of US commitments to meet indirect aggression on the basis of the SEATO pact and in accordance with bilateral economic and military assistance agreements. Thailand, the Prime Minister continued, also welcomed the US intention to continue working closely with the Thai Government toward the economic and social advancement of the nation.

The communique, Sarit declared, represented a "significant milestone" in relations between the two nations. He then promised that Thailand would devote its energies to orderly development and progress as well as to the preservation of its heritage of freedom.

Unger and the Acting Foreign Minister discussed whether the exchange of letters should, as the US desired, be withheld from the public pending further developments in Laos. Release of the two messages, Unger pointed out, could be interpreted as a sign that the US had abandoned Laos. For that reason he urged that no public mention be made of the letters. When informed that Sarit had let slip to newsmen that he had cabled a letter to the President and that Sarit might be questioned by the Thai Assembly regarding this message, Unger recommended that the "less said the better." Thai officials assured him that Sarit's mention of the cable had been accidental.

After discussing the handling of the letters, Unger warned that "some progress on the Laos situation" was imperative. He expressed hope that Thanat had disclosed to Sarit the full extent of US concern over Laos. Unger then requested that, if there had been some "gap in communication," Sarit be fully informed before Unger's scheduled interview with the Premier later in the day (see item 13 March 1962).

Counselor Unger, at his own request, called upon Prime Minister Sarit in order to review the Rusk-Thanat communique (see item 6 March 1962), especially that portion in which the US and Thailand had expressed agreement on the necessity for the establishment of a free, independent, and truly neutral Laos. The Prime Minister's reply to President Kennedy (see items 5 and 13 March 1962), Unger observed, had contained no mention of Thai agreement with the US on this basic objective of US policy toward Laos.

As a result of this omission, Unger now asked if he could inform the US Government that Sarit endorsed not only this part of the communique but also the various aspects of US policy that had been explained to Thanat during the latter's visit to Washington (see items 2, 3, and 5 March 1962). The Prime Minister replied in the affirmative and added that he was in "full sympathy" and agreed "in principle" with the US position. Unger
considered this a clear endorsement not only of the statement contained in the communique but also of the US position as outlined more fully to Thanat.

After obtaining this assurance from Sarit (see item 16 March 1962 for a further statement of Thai policy), Unger called the Prime Minister's attention to Thanat's proposal that Harriman come to Bangkok for meetings with Sarit and Phoumi. Unger said that Harriman was willing to make the journey, provided that the visit seemed worth while. The Counselor then asked for Sarit's comments on the American concept of a worth-while meeting. Unger explained that Harriman would first outline the Lao situation for Sarit so that the two could agree on common action to convince Phoumi that he should enter into sincere negotiations. Next, Harriman and Sarit would meet with Phoumi and press him to confer with Souvanna regarding a coalition government. When Unger suggested that Harriman might arrive on 20 March, Sarit promptly agreed.

To avoid any misunderstanding on Sarit's part, Unger emphasized that the Prime Minister would be expected to join Harriman in exerting "real pressure" on Phoumi. Sarit warned that Phoumi might spurn his advice or stand firm against the Prime Minister's urging. Unger's remarks also elicited from Sarit some extended comments on the political situation in Laos, the King-and-councils formula, and the possible membership of a coalition cabinet.

That feature of the political scene upon which Sarit dwelt was the possibility of a split between Souphanouvong and Souvanna. In such circumstances advocated Phoumi's joining forces with Souvanna to eliminate the Pathet Lao. Unger, however, replied that, since the US was supporting the unification of Laos under a coalition in which all three factions were represented, American officials looked upon the possible split as an opportunity for Phoumi and Souvanna to build a political force capable of counter-balancing the Communists. The resumption of hostilities, Unger warned, would lead to a complete disaster for the Free World.

When Sarit turned to the King-and-councils plan, Unger noted the lack of any clear indication that King Savang was willing to take part, despite Phoumi's claim (see item 6 March 1962) that the King advocated this formula. Unger then reminded Sarit that President Kennedy had told Thanat (see item 5 March 1962) that there was not time to construct an alternative to Souvanna. The Thai Prime Minister abandoned the subject.

A discussion of the membership of a coalition cabinet followed, in which Sarit endorsed Phoum Sananikone for a responsible post and emphasized the importance of finding a key position for Phoumi. The Prime Minister sought to "make sure Phoumi was not required to kneel before Souvanna in surrender." Souvanna, Unger replied, had indicated that he would not consider himself as victor and Phoumi as vanquished if a settlement were reached. Unger added that
Harriman was "most impatient," both because of his conviction that a prompt settlement was necessary and as a result of Phoumi's persistent refusal to face the issues.

Sarit thereupon asked if the US would support Phoumi if he did join a coalition. Unger replied that, since the US believed Phoumi could play an important role in any coalition, it certainly would support him, provided he did not embark on "separate adventures." Sarit then asked, assuming that Defense and Interior both went to Souvanna, if Phoumi might not serve as supreme commander of the Lao armed forces. In reply, Unger suggested that any such arrangement would have to be worked out between Phoumi and Souvanna as part of an agreement to insure the integrity of the FAR.

In commenting upon the interview, Unger reported that Sarit had ended the discussion by remarking that the sooner Harriman arrived the better. The Prime Minister had refrained from his usual sarcasm, and Unger believed that Sarit understood what he was expected to do during Harriman's visit. The Counselor predicted, however, that Harriman probably would have to review many of the points that had just been explained to the Prime Minister. In addition, Harriman might find it necessary to engage in a more specific discussion of the proposed cabinet.

(See items 22, 24, and 25 March 1962.)

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1391, 13 Mar 62.

15 Mar 62

CHMAAG Laos informed CINCPAC that US AID officials were considering the arrangements necessary in the event that a political settlement was reached under which MAAG Laos was abolished but US military aid to Laos continued. In response to AID Washington's request for an estimate, USOM Laos, with MAAG assistance, had concluded that under such circumstances USOM would require a minimum of 41 qualified civilians to oversee the aid program. In arriving at this figure, USOM had assumed that it would program and control MAP materiel deliveries and defense support funds and audit both MAP and defense support accounts. USOM would not perform any military training activities, except for programming off-shore training courses requested by the FAR.

CHMAAG thought that USOM's planning raised a fundamental issue regarding future US aid to the FAR: would the US continue to provide assistance without being permitted to administer and supervise it properly? Since the Geneva Agreement would preclude the use of US military personnel to perform this control, it appeared to CHMAAG that French or nonmilitary US agencies would be charged with administering a substantial US military aid project. CHMAAG doubted seriously that such an arrangement would be either efficient or effective.

(On 21 March, commenting to OSD(ISA) on CHMAAG's message, CINCPAC recommended that "under no . . . conditions" should French or nonmilitary US agencies be charged with the supervision of US military assistance to Laos. If

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MAAG Laos was to be abolished while military assistance continued, CINCPAC believed "something similar to the former PEO [Programs Evaluation Office] structure" should be established so that US military personnel could continue to administer military aid. See item 27 April 1962.)

(C) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 211528, 15 Mar 62; ADMN0 CINCPAC to OSD/ISA, 210047Z Mar 62.

16 Mar 62

The Thai Ambassador in Washington informed the Department of State that he had been instructed to deliver, along with Sarit's letter to President Kennedy (see item 13 March 1962), an oral assurance that the Thai Government fully agree with the US on the need to achieve a free, independent and truly neutral Laos and also was prepared to cooperate actively in obtaining a peaceful settlement of the Laotian crisis. Sarit, the Ambassador stated, would deliver a similar assurance to Harriman when the latter visited Bangkok.

Acting Secretary of State Ball informed the American Embassy at Bangkok that he would recommend that the President express appreciation for the "warm tone" of Sarit's letter and for the oral assurance given by the Thai Ambassador. He believed, however, that the President should continue to urge that the letters be withheld from publication until the Lao situation became clarified.

Secretary Ball added, for the information of the US Ambassador to Thailand, that this strong oral assurance should satisfy the US and give the Ambassador some leverage with Sarit if the Prime Minister should try to alter his position regarding a Laotian settlement. For the present, the Ambassador no longer need seek a supplemental letter from Sarit. If the Prime Minister, during Harriman's visit, adhered to the spirit of the assurance given to the President, no supplemental letter would be necessary.

(C) Msg, SecState to Bangkok, 1405, 16 Mar 62.

16 Mar 62

Ambassador Gavin informed the Secretary of State of an RLG demarche to the French Foreign Office. A Lao diplomat had inquired regarding French views on King Savang's speech of 11 March (see item) and had requested the French Government to publicly support the King's appeal for all Lao to rally round the Boum Oum government. The French spokesman avoided a direct reply, but he tacitly indicated the French view by expressing his surprise at "this new and unexpected development," which seemed to contradict the many attempts to form a coalition government under the mandate entrusted to Souvanna by the King.

The French felt this demarche to be merely the first of a series of misguided attempts by the Siouk-Khampan Panya group of RLG politicos to gain French, US, and UK support, and therefore suggested an exchange of views regarding possible joint representations by the three Western Ambassadors to King Savang. The Foreign Office spokesman told a US Embassy official that the French had
been "holding their breath" regarding the King's speech, "hoping it would go away if everyone kept quiet."

(C) Msg, Paris to SecState, 4335, 16 Mar 62.

16 Mar 62

Ambassador Addis again journeyed to Khang Khay, where Prince Souvanna informed him that further concessions or adjustments could not be made prior to a meeting of the three Princes. By bargaining now, Souvanna and Souphanouvong would surrender the flexibility of action necessary for successful negotiations with Boun Oum. Thus, Souvanna concluded, it would be useless, pending a meeting of the Princes, to continue discussions with the Western Ambassadors concerning the composition of a coalition government. Souvanna added that he would not invite Phoumi to such a meeting unless he was certain that Phoumi would accept.

In elaborating upon the future bargaining position of the two Princes, Souvanna stressed certain governing principles. After claiming for the center the key portfolios of Defense, Interior, and Foreign Affairs, he stated that the posts of Education, Finance, Information, and Planning should be divided between left and right, with each wing receiving one political and one technical ministry; the remaining positions should be divided equally among the wings.

Souphanouvong, in commenting upon Souvanna's statement of principles, assured Ambassador Addis that he claimed no particular post for himself or for his Pathet Lao adherents. In response to a question by Addis, Souphanouvong also indicated that he was ready to be "generous" regarding the composition of the center and willing to provide an attractive post, such as Youth and Sports combined with Social Action, for Phoumi.

During the discussion, Souvanna observed that the King, at the closing session of the National Assembly on 11 March (see item), had made a speech in which he congratulated the RLG for its efforts to solve the Lao problem but neglected to mention Souvanna's mandate to form a government. It seemed to Souvanna that the King had elected to support the Boun Oum government. Ambassador Addis replied by assuring Souvanna that the Western Ambassadors believed Souvanna's mandate remained valid. The King's speech had, after all, been written by the RLG. The British Ambassador then stated that the Western Ambassadors would question the King and, he was certain, would be informed that Souvanna remained responsible for the formation of a coalition government (see item 19 March 1962).

In commenting upon the meeting, Addis remarked that a "noticeable deterioration" had resulted from the King's failure to mention Souvanna. Indeed, the Prince apparently believed that he could do nothing until his mandate had been reaffirmed. Yet, both Souvanna and Souphanouvong believed they were capable of negotiating an agreement with Phoumi.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1298, 16 Mar 62.
16 Mar 62 The JCS forwarded to CINCPAC, for his comments, a proposed plan for the evacuation, upon their release, of US civilian and military personnel (an estimated 7 to 9 persons) currently held prisoner by rebel forces in Laos. The plan would be implemented by the Department of the Army (ACSI) in order to minimize the risk of compromising the cover plan of those prisoners who were in covert status at the time of their capture, and to prevent embarrassment to the US. It was assumed as most likely that the release of US prisoners would coincide with the culmination of negotiations for a coalition government in Laos. The plan provided for close control and prompt evacuation of all released personnel and gave particular attention to the control of press coverage. (TS) JCS 2344/39, 17 Apr 62; JMF 9155.2/1410 (14 Mar 62).

16 Mar 62 CINCPAC advised the JCS of the urgency of obtaining the Thai Government's assent to the holding of SEATO Tactical Air Exercise AIR COBRA, scheduled to begin on 23 April. Since his planning recognized 23 March as the "go or no go" date for the exercise, CINCPAC requested that the Department of State be urged to press for Thai approval in the near future. CINCPAC recalled that his own discussion of the matter with Sarit had been unproductive (see item 5 March 1962) and that there appeared to be some concern within the State Department about the airdrops close to the Lao border that were part of the exercise. On the latter point he observed that few such drops were scheduled and that these could be omitted without detriment to the exercise.

(On 19 March, a memorandum by General Decker, as Acting Chairman, JCS, brought CINCPAC's request to the attention of the Secretary of Defense, but the Department of State took the desired action on that same day, as a direct result of the CINCPAC message of 16 March. Ambassador Young was instructed to pursue the matter of agreement on conducting AIR COBRA with the Thai Government, if Harriman, when he arrived in Bangkok, approved. The State Department saw a necessity for weighing the training benefits and the desirable emphasis AIR COBRA would give to the military side of SEATO against Thai reluctance to participate and the risk that the exercise might appear provocative if it occurred at a delicate stage in the negotiations on Laos. (See items 22 March and 23-28 April 1962.)

(S) Msgs, CINCPAC to JCS, 162357Z Mar 62; SecState to Bangkok, 1410, 19 Mar 62; (S) JCS 2339/61, 21 Mar 62.

16, 18 Mar 62 On 16 March, another reinforcement of FAR forces at Nam Tha began with the arrival of leading elements of the 55th Parachute Battalion.

Two days later, on 18 March, the enemy resumed shelling the airfield, for the first time since late February, and continued to fire at frequent intervals over a two-hour period. An Air America C-46 was damaged, and the airfield was closed to operations. The
enemy weapon was estimated to be an 85-mm. gun, with a maximum range of almost twice the 8700 yards of the 120-mm. mortars previously employed in shelling the airfield.

(S-NOFORN) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC and JCS, DA IN 212514, 18 Mar 62; DA IN 212550, 19 Mar 62.

The US delegation received word on 16 March that the RLG delegation had been instructed by its government to leave Geneva. Attempts by Swezey, the acting head of the US delegation, to obtain clarification from RLG representatives were answered evasively, with some talk of the necessity to cut expenses.

Confirmation was received from Co-Chairman MacDonald, who reported on a conversation that day with Sopsaisana of the RLG delegation. The latter had stated that King Savang's speech (see item 11 March 1962) opened a new phase of the Lao problem; he had gone on to imply that the RLG therefore "saw no further point" in maintaining a delegation in Geneva. MacDonald disagreed very strongly, asserting that the Conference members expected the RLG "to live up to its commitments under the Zurich, Ban Hin Heup, and Geneva agreements, and would not understand the RLG going back on its word." MacDonald urged that, "at the very least," one member of the RLG delegation remain to maintain contacts.

In a discussion with Swezey on 17 March, Sopsaisana stated that, in the light of MacDonald's comments, he had advised the RLG to continue its representation at Geneva in abbreviated form. He said, however, that the RLG had not yet replied to his suggestion and implied that the departures of various RLG diplomats must therefore continue, although he hoped these could be "sufficiently fuzzed over to avoid the impression of a rupture." Swezey replied strongly that "nobody would be fooled by this for very long," that such a departure would undoubtedly create a highly unfavorable impression on the other delegations, especially since representation would continue for Souvanna and for the Pathet Lao.

Swezey informed the Department of State on 20 March that Sopsaisana's recommendation to the RLG apparently had taken effect, and that a Lao diplomat of lesser rank was therefore remaining in Geneva.

(S) Msgs, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 1136, 17 Mar 62; CONFE 1137, 20 Mar 62.

Phoumi informed the Western press that a major attack on Nam Tha had been in progress since the day before. Four Viet Minh, two Chinese, and two or three Pathet Lao battalions were alleged to be participating in the operation. Phoumi also claimed that Russian voices had been heard giving commands over the enemy radio net. If this attack continued for three or four days, the RLG would, according to Phoumi, consider the action a casus belli. (Ambassador Brown's information, from MAAG sources, was that firing on the airstrip had been resumed but that there was no evidence of a large-scale enemy attack.)
Phoumi did not consider the situation he had described as dangerous, however, since the FAR could "take care of" both the Viet Minh and the Pathet Lao. Phoumi doubted that large-scale Chinese Communist intervention in Laos was likely, since vigorous Chinese participation would be a serious matter for "other governments as well as for the RLG." He then stated that the Chinese Communists, having been denied the right to political participation in the Laotian settlement, were playing a military role. Phoumi did not clarify these apparently contradictory remarks about the Chinese role.

After outlining the military situation, Phoumi announced that the RLG would, on the following day, open diplomatic relations with South Korea. He expressed the hope that he could secure aid from the Philippines, Taiwan, and possibly South Korea, as well as from Thailand, whose Premier, Phoumi claimed, had assured him of future assistance.

Phoumi, moreover, did not believe that the US suspension of aid, which he termed a misunderstanding, was a serious matter, since the American policy had been announced orally and in the press rather than in a formal note from the US Government. The object of this US financial pressure was to gain acceptance of Souvanna as Prime Minister of a coalition government. The RLG, however, had not been convinced of the wisdom of a Souvanna government in spite of "very clever" American arguments.

Souvanna, Phoumi continued, had failed to form a coalition. The cabinet proposed by the Prince was not a good one, since the neutrals were "not only mediocre but Red." Thus, the only solution was the King-and-councils plan (see item 9 February 1962). Furthermore, Phoumi thought it very possible that Souphanouvong would not allow Souvanna to return to Paris (see item 10 March 1962), even though negotiations became stalled.

Phoumi announced to Hasey of the American Embassy that he would not go to Bangkok to confer with Harriman. Instead, he planned to spend two or three days at Savannakhet in order to complete a religious ceremony. The RLG cabinet, Phoumi explained, had decided that he should not make the journey. Since he did not have the permission of his own Government, he could not negotiate with the representative of another state. The King, Phoumi continued, concurred in the cabinet's decision and would so inform Ambassador Brown at the audience scheduled for that afternoon (see item 19 March 1962).

Phoumi then requested that Harriman either come to Vientiane or send an emissary to that city. Hasey warned Phoumi that his refusal was a grave error and urged him to reconsider. When told that it was impossible for Harriman to visit Vientiane and unlikely that he would send an emissary, Phoumi suggested that any message for him from Harriman be transmitted through Ambassador Brown. Although Hasey told Phoumi that this suggestion would be a serious affront, the General merely asked that the US Government be informed of his refusal and said that, if
there were a message for him, he could be reached at Savannakhet.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1307, 19 Mar 62.

19 Mar 62

The Acting Secretary of State informed the US Ambassadors in Vientiane and Bangkok that "Phoumi's refusal to meet with Harriman, his remarks to press, his demarches to French and British, and withdrawal of RLG delegation to Geneva (see items 19, 18, 16, and 16-20 March 1962, respectively) indicate to us that Phoumi has thrown down the gauntlet." The Secretary instructed Ambassador Young to inform Sarit and General Wallop of Phoumi's abrupt change of attitude, seek the Thai Premier's interpretation of Phoumi's moves, and insist that Sarit make every effort to convince Phoumi to reconsider and meet with Harriman at Bangkok. The Ambassador should point out that Phoumi's refusal to confer with Harriman would amount to a break with the US. He might also inquire about Phoumi's intimations at the press conference that he had assurances of substantial Thai assistance.

Ambassador Brown was instructed to approach King Savang along the same lines, if feasible. The Secretary recognized that the lack of acceptable proposals on cabinet composition from Souvanna and Souphanouvong made it riskier for the US to undertake increased pressure against Phoumi. Hence he asked what plans Brown was developing for the formation of a united front with his Western colleagues to deal with Souvanna and Souphanouvong. In this connection, he noted, the British Foreign Office was strongly supporting the idea of a visit to Khang Khay by US officials Sullivan and Forrestal. It was assumed, the Secretary concluded, that the Embassy and MAAG were keeping close watch against military moves by Phoumi and that Ambassador Brown and his Country Team had prepared emergency plans for personnel protection and administrative measures in case Phoumi turned against the US or the US decided to take action against him.

(S) Msg, SecState to Bangkok, 1409, and Vientiane, 822, 19 Mar 62.

19 Mar 62

Ambassador Brown, in the course of an audience granted by King Savang, presented the monarch with a letter in which President Kennedy warned that the only alternative to agreement on a coalition government was the resumption of full-scale hostilities, "which might well result in the destruction of Laos as a nation." The King read the letter without comment. The Department of State had instructed the Ambassador to hold the letter in reserve for use, if necessary, in connection with the negotiations between the Western Ambassadors and Souvanna (see item 6 March 1962).

After presenting the Presidential letter, Ambassador Brown expressed US concern over the lack of progress toward a coalition government and over the RLG's apparent unwillingness to accept a government headed by Souvanna. The Ambassador then asked if the King's failure, in his address to the National Assembly, to mention Souvanna indicated that the Prince's mandate to form a new government had been withdrawn (see item 11 March 1962). The
King, after informing the Ambassador that according to Phoumi negotiations with Souvanna had not been officially terminated, stated that he had not withdrawn Souvanna's mandate. This royal mandate, King Savang continued, could not constitutionally be revoked, although Souvanna might voluntarily surrender it.

Next the Ambassador observed that Phoumi might be under the impression that the US would come to his aid in the event of hostilities. The King, Ambassador Brown continued, should know that the President had sent Admiral Felt to inform Phoumi that such an impression was false. The King, however, stated that Phoumi understood the situation and had no illusions of US military support. The King also agreed with Brown's statement that the RLG had so conducted itself that the world would blame it if the Pathet Lao should resume the offensive.

In spite of Phoumi's statement (see item 19 March 1962) that the King would inform Brown that the Bangkok meeting between Phoumi and Harriman would not be held, no such statement was made. The King did, however, repeat that he would not head a government of councils (see item 17 February 1962).

Ambassador Brown then noted that Phoumi was being told that "right-wing Congressional opinion in the US" might force the Kennedy Administration to reverse its policy toward Laos. Any such advice, the Ambassador warned, was not based on fact. The King replied that he realized that the President "was master of his own policy" and then launched a defense of Phoumi.

According to the King, Phoumi could not be blamed for all that the RLG was doing. Although Phoumi lacked political skill, he did have "much support," since he represented a Lao idea, namely, anti-Communism." Removing Phoumi would cause the disintegration of the FAR and, in general, of the anti-Communist forces within the kingdom. When asked if he considered Phoumi indispensable, the King replied, "Under the circumstances, practically yes."

The King then repeated his complaints about corruption and inefficiency within the RLG and described the antagonism in Laos between the northern and southern provinces. Although he reported a "growing, active hatred of Souvanna," which would make a coalition impossible, the King also indicated that the effort to form a coalition should be continued and that he would support such a government if one was formed. The hatred, to which the King referred, allegedly stemmed from Souvanna's willingness to accept aid from, and to establish diplomatic relations with, Communist China.

The possibility of serious food shortages in Laos by October 1962 also was mentioned by the King. In this regard, he prophesied that friction between the Pathet Lao and the followers of Kong Le, primarily over food and supplies, would deprive Souvanna of his last measure of support.
The King also referred to the surrender to Communism implicit in the acceptance of a Souvanna government. Since he believed that either the acceptance of Souvanna or the resumption of hostilities would result in a Communist victory, the King often repeated sentiments to the effect that there was nothing he could do and that it would be better to die than to capitulate.

The main problem, the King continued, was Viet Minh influence in a neutral Laos. Ambassador Brown replied that the Geneva agreement was designed to diminish such outside influence, but King Savang dismissed the statement as "pure theory." The US Ambassador then pointed out that, although the US, by failing to support Phoumi, would encounter the risks posed by certain undesirable features of the Geneva agreement, to support Phoumi would cause renewed fighting and assure the total failure of the Geneva accords.

In commenting upon the audience, Ambassador Brown pointed out that the King "obviously considered himself a spectator" to events in Laos, events about which he could do nothing. The King, although admitting that Souvanna alone could head a coalition, nevertheless entertained reservations concerning both the ability of the Prince and the very idea of a coalition in which the Pathet Lao would participate. "We can expect no help from the King," Ambassador Brown concluded. "His sympathies are already with Phoumi."

(3) Msgs, SecState to Vientiane, 682, 31 Jan 62; Vientiane to SecState, 1310, 19 Mar 62.

19 Mar 62 Ambassador Addis engaged in a brief conversation with Soviet Ambassador Abramov, who was en route to Khang Khay by way of Vientiane. The Soviet Ambassador accused the US of playing a "double game in Laos, with some Americans advising a peaceful solution and others advising obduracy." He stated that his Government believed that the US could so alter the situation in Laos that a solution would be possible. The time had come, Abramov concluded, for actions by the US rather than words.

The Soviets, Abramov continued, were inclined to "disinterest themselves in Laos." No early solution seemed likely, but perhaps some agreement could be reached after the rainy season. The Soviet diplomat did not threaten the resumption of hostilities.

(5) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1309, 19 Mar 62.

19 Mar 62 The JCS reports of the arrival of one CARIBOU aircraft (an experimental 2-engine STOL aircraft under development for the Department of the Army) in Thailand for field tests in Laos. It was to be tested by landings on varied unmapped heli-strips under various load, fuel, range, and altitude conditions. (See item 17 April 1962.)
20 Mar 62 In Bangkok, Ambassador Young spent nearly an hour dis­

cussing with Sarit, Thanat, and General Wallop the

problem of Phoumi's refusal to confer with Harriman

(see item 19 March 1962). As a result of this conver­
sation, Sarit, who appeared frightened and concerned

over the possible consequences of Phoumi's intransigence,
directed General Wallop to go immediately to Savannakhet

in order to press Phoumi to meet with Harriman at

Bangkok or at some other acceptable site in Thailand.

Both Sarit and Thanat repeatedly pledged to do every­

thing possible to bring about talks between Phoumi and

Harriman, to remove any lingering suspicion that Thailand

was secretly supporting Phoumi, and to aid the US in

arriving at a reasonable basis for compromise between

Phoumi and Souvanna.

Sarit, insisting that he had no secrets from
Ambassador Young regarding Laos, directed Thanat to

reveal the contents of a telegram in which Phoumi
repeated in essence the reasons he had given Hasey for
refusing to confer with Harriman. Sarit then warned
that Phoumi, though he would prove stubborn, should not
be made to lose face, since the Lao General feared that
his agreeing to meet Harriman might cost him the respect
of his colleagues and of the King. Thanat added that
the situation was very dangerous. Sarit, in response to
Ambassador Young's comment that Phoumi was nearing a
break with the US, said that the RLG's spurning of US
support would be a disaster for both the Lao and Thai
people.

Ambassador Young called Sarit's attention to the
belief, shared by "many people" and nurtured by Phoumi,
that Thailand was secretly encouraging the present policies
of the RLG. Sarit thereupon "bellowed a vehement denial,"
stating that he had turned down Phoumi's every request for
supplies and other aid. In reporting this, Young stated
that he was inclined to believe Sarit.

As to the method of influencing Phoumi, the Thai
leaders favored working through Lao cabinet members and
military officers, who might persuade Phoumi that in
reversing his stand he would lose neither the respect of
his peers nor the support of the US.

In a private conversation with the Ambassador, General
Wallop "guessed" that Sarit might go so far as to break
completely with Phoumi if the latter refused to see
Harriman or cooperate with the US at all. Sarit might tell
Phoumi that "he was through with him and would not have
anything more to do with him either officially or other­
wise." General Wallop also confirmed Sarit's statement
that he had refused Phoumi's request "to 'slip down' to
Bangkok this week to see Sarit alone and with Secretary
Harriman." (See item 22 March 1962.)

(3) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1441, 20 Mar 62.

20 Mar 62 Assistant Secretary Harriman, at Hong Kong en route to
his scheduled meeting with Sarit at Bangkok, informed
the Secretary of State that, because of Phoumi's reported
refusal to meet Harriman and Sarit (see item 19 March 1962),
it might be necessary to invoke limited military sanctions "to make him understand he cannot defy the US and expect continuing US support." In requesting authority to impose such sanctions at his own discretion, Harriman assured the Secretary of State that he would resort to military sanctions only in extreme circumstances.

Acting Secretary of State Ball on the same day replied that the President was reluctant to authorize military sanctions because the action could be used by Phoumi to create the impression that he had been "undercut by the US at a time when he could have held his own." Although the President was unwilling to apply sanctions until further efforts had been made to obtain Phoumi's cooperation, he would welcome further recommendations after Harriman had seen Sarit and after it had been determined whether or not Thai pressure had actually brought Phoumi to Bangkok (see item 20 March 1962).

The Secretary then repeated the President's desire that Harriman make it absolutely clear to Sarit and Phoumi that under existing "international circumstances," no matter which side might break the cease-fire, the President would be unable to intervene in support of Phoumi. No matter how the resumption of hostilities might come about, Secretary Ball continued, "the image here" would be that the fighting had resulted from Phoumi's intransigence.

In conclusion, Harriman was advised that the President considered it very important that Harriman talk with Phoumi, even if it were necessary to prolong his stay in Bangkok to do so.

(S) Mag, Hong Kong to SecState, 1010, 20 Mar 62; SecState to Bangkok, 1424, 20 Mar 62.

21 Mar 62 The Acting Secretary of State informed Harriman in Bangkok that, given the apparent impossibility of getting Phoumi to come there, the President did not preclude Harriman's going to Vientiane to see Phoumi if necessary and in fact hoped that this might be arranged in a dignified manner satisfactory to Harriman. Such a visit would provide an opportunity for Harriman to meet the members of the RLG face-to-face. He might then be able to find a face-saving way out for Phoumi, and he could convince the entire RLG officialdom of the US determination to carry through the Souvanna solution. Therefore, if Harriman concurred, the Secretary suggested that both the Vientiane and Bangkok Embassies try to arrange for a formal RLG invitation to Harriman to visit Vientiane.

(S) Mag, SecState to Bangkok, 1428, and Vientiane, 825, 21 Mar 62.

21 Mar 62 The RLG Ambassador in Washington at his own request called upon Deputy Under Secretary of State U. Alexis Johnson. During their conversation, the Deputy Under Secretary reaffirmed "in plain terms" US policy on Laos by informing the Ambassador that, if hostilities were resumed, the US would not come to Phoumi's assistance. In response to a question by the Ambassador, Secretary Johnson also stated that US cash grants would continue to be suspended. Johnson emphasized the importance of Phoumi's negotiating
in good faith and of his yielding to the center group the portfolios of Defense and Interior. The RLG Ambassador dwelt upon the belief of the RLG that US insistence on a Souvanna government would lead to the Communist domination of Laos.

(3) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 834, 23 Mar 62.

21 Mar 62

During a conference in Hawaii, the Secretary of Defense, the Chairman, JCS, the Chief of Staff, Army, CINCPAC, and others discussed the current situation in Laos and possible future courses of action there.

The Secretary of Defense, after being advised by PACOM Intelligence that the FAR capabilities had not increased relative to those of the enemy since the cease-fire (see item 16 February 1962), observed that the US appeared to have three alternative courses available in the future in Laos: 1) withdrawal of "all US personnel" from Laos and cessation of military assistance to the FAR; 2) "sitting tight" by maintaining the MAAG in Laos and continuing to support the FAR; or 3) introducing US combat forces, with or without SEATO participation or sanction.

Before discussion began on these alternatives, the Secretary asked the current capability of enemy forces to capture the major cities of northern and central Laos. The Secretary was unpleasantly surprised when PACOM Intelligence estimated that, with Viet Minh participation, the enemy could overrun these centers within 30 days. The only major problems that PACOM Intelligence saw the enemy encountering were Meo operations in the Plaine des Jarres and friction between Kong Le and Pathe Lao units. To these problems, CINCPAC added two: the weather, and the vulnerability of the enemy logistical complex to air attack. CINCPAC felt that, if US air strikes were authorized against an enemy offensive, that offensive could be "severely blocked" (presumably by an otherwise-unaided FAR).

Turning to the alternatives put forward by the Secretary, CINCPAC opined that the US should "wait it out," letting the Lao work out their own problems in their own way, while leaving the MAAG in place to support the FAR. If hostilities resumed, however, the US would have either to support the RLG or "give up Laos." CINCPAC felt that the US decision in this case should be to continue supporting the RLG by initiating a graduated response to the Communist attack. Questioned on these views by the Secretary, CINCPAC went on to say that the initial objective of any US military response should be support of the FAR in holding key cities. Later, operations could be expanded to include retaking the Plaine des Jarres and securing southern Laos. The US operations should not, however, encompass the recapture of Phong Saly and Sam Neua provinces, the original bailiwicks of the Pathet Lao.

The Chairman, JCS, then commented upon the alternatives presented by the Secretary. According to the Chairman, a showdown was approaching in Laos. The Chairman did not
believe that the US Government was likely to change its policy to allow the introduction of US or SEATO forces into Laos; nor did he believe that a Lao coalition government would be formed. In these circumstances, the Chairman believed that the US should continue to support the FAR. The US should attempt to determine "the best situation we can get with Phoumi holding his ground"; even if Phoumi could only hold southern Laos, the US should support him in this endeavor. The Chairman hoped that the US would not take the irrevocable step of withdrawing the MAAG; he believed this would "hand the country over to the communists and have a devastating psychological effect on Thailand." The Chairman thought that Phoumi should regroup his forces in the South—particularly those forces he was currently massing at Nam Tha—and form a defensive line from just north of Thakhek eastward to just north of Tchepone.

The Secretary of Defense ended this discussion by stating that the basic issue at hand appeared to be whether or not to withdraw MAAG Laos. The Secretary said that he had heard enough to convince him that the MAAG should remain. In this conclusion, all conferees agreed.


22 Mar 62 The Acting Secretary of State suggested to Harriman in Bangkok that during his prospective visit to Vientiane he might, in addition to his main task, pursue the limited objective of bringing about a resumption of negotiations among the three Princes. If resumed, such negotiations might "inch the two sides closer to agreement," or, at least, prevent deterioration by keeping the talking going. To bring this about, Harriman might try to convince Phoumi that he could not effectively fix blame on the other side for being unyielding until he had invited negotiations and carried them far enough to discover what sort of cabinet distribution and arrangements for the military establishment he actually could obtain.

(S) Msg, SecState to Bangkok, 1447, 22 Mar 62.

22 Mar 62 Ambassador Young reported that Thai Foreign Minister Thanat had indicated that Thailand had no objection to proceeding with SEATO Exercise AIR COBRA (see item 16 March and 23-28 April 1962). Harriman had approved the staging of the exercise, provided that no airdrops occurred in Thailand close to the Lao border and that publicity was kept to a minimum, with appropriate mention of the fact that AIR COBRA had been planned and scheduled for a long time.

(On the following day the Acting Secretary of State approved the exercise, subject to the provisions listed by Harriman.)

(S) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 1459, 22 Mar 62; SecState to Bangkok, 1461, 23 Mar 62.

22 Mar 62 Harriman and Ambassador Young, together with William H. Sullivan of Harriman's staff, called upon Premier Sarit and Foreign Minister Thanat to discuss means by which
Phoumi might be induced to cooperate with the US and Thailand in serious negotiations toward the formation of a Lao coalition. This meeting, during which Sarit reiterated his complete acceptance of US objectives, was necessary because of Phoumi's rejection of the earlier Thai attempt to win his cooperation (see item 20 March 1962).

Once again, the overture to Phoumi was entrusted to General Wallop, who initially was to propose that Phoumi come to Nong Khai (on the Thai side of the Mekong River near Vientiane), meet with Sarit and Harriman, and then escort Harriman to Vientiane for an audience with King Savang and subsequent discussions with Phoumi and the entire RLG cabinet. As a fall-back position, Wallop was authorized to propose that Harriman go to Vientiane for the royal audience, return with Phoumi to Nong Kait for a tripartite meeting with Sarit, then go again to Vientiane for conversations with Phoumi and the cabinet. Sarit was given the US view that, whichever proposal might be adopted, it was most important that Sarit and Harriman meet jointly with Phoumi "in order to avoid 'double-faced' tactics which Phoumi has pursued in the past." (See item 23 March 1962.)

(8) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1460, 22 Mar 62.

22 Mar 62

22 Mar 62

The assumed US course of action, the report continued, would have an immediate demoralizing effect upon the RLG and its armed forces; the government could survive at
most only three or four months without US support, and it was unlikely that Phoumi could hold the armed forces together for long. The Communists would probably wait for the RLG to collapse or for Phoumi and Boun Oum to accept Souvanna's terms for a coalition government. In spite of these probabilities, the chances would be "less than even" that Phoumi and Boun Oum would agree to join a coalition under Souvanna. Even if they were to agree to participate in a coalition government, they would probably do so without any serious intent of cooperating with Souvanna, since both considered Souvanna a Communist tool. Rather, they would attempt to undercut Souvanna and his followers as well as the Pathet Lao.

Four other courses of action open to Phoumi and Boun Oum, but found it impossible to estimate with confidence or precision the odds on any course. Their most likely choice would be self-imposed exile; both almost certainly had the means to support such a course, and they were probably at times weary and discouraged with the struggle. If their pride and determination outlawed this course of action, the RLG leaders might seek to bring about a partition of Laos or initiate some desperate military action. In either case there would be a sharp military reaction by the Communist forces, and Phoumi's troops would probably be defeated. It was also possible that Phoumi and Boun Oum would retire into the hills and seek to carry on a guerrilla war against any new Lao Government. This course of action was least likely to be implemented, since neither leader would relish such a life and they could not command the loyalties of many Lao troops for long without assured sources of maintenance and pay.

In a 22 March cable, the Department of State questioned the Laos Country Team on its recommendations for a civic action program among the Kha tribesmen (see Item 23 February 1962). While agreeing with the Country Team that the Kha should be helped economically and socially as well as trained militarily, the Department of State wanted more assurance that the projects could be completed without undue delay or danger of abandonment. Among the questions the Department asked were the following:

1. How long would it take to complete the recommended projects?

2. Assuming that MAAG Laos would be withdrawn and that AID Washington would be unable to provide personnel quickly, were the projects feasible or were they overly ambitious in terms of the number of US personnel that would be available in Laos?

3. What would the long-term AID/Laos personnel requirements be?
4. Would the Kha be capable of maintaining the projects after completion? If not, what would be the continuing costs to the US?

5. Would the locally hired technicians be Lao or third-country nationals? If Lao, could the RLG provide adequate personnel?

6. How would Lao civil authorities be brought into the program and responsible local self-government thus be promoted?

On 29 March, the Country Team replied to the State Department questions as follows:

1. The proposed projects would be completely self-sustaining by July 1964.

2. The projects were feasible, even with MAAG withdrawal and without immediate AID replacement personnel. During the time that MAAG Laos had responsibility for the program, a Civil Affairs Mobile Training Team (CAMTT), as requested by CHMAAG (see item 8 March 1962), would be necessary.

3. AID/Laos would need one project manager, third-country technicians, and replacements for the CAMTT, when and if it was withdrawn and for one AID public works engineer.

4. The Kha had only a limited capability to maintain the proposed projects; they would need technical assistance throughout the 27-month duration of the projects. The total cost, through completion of the projects, would be approximately $186,000.

5. The locally hired technicians would be third-country nationals, probably Thai. The RLG would not provide the required technicians initially.

6. Since the Kha program was not necessarily tied to any particular regime in Laos, AID/Laos would strive over the next year to associate native civil authorities with the programs. Under the existing situation, however, the program must continue to be controlled primarily by the US, although the RLG had "given it full backing" (CHMAAG had justified this US control on the basis of Lao-Kha animosities; see item 8 March 1962).

The Country Team emphasized again (see item 23 February 1962) in its discussion of the program that time was of the essence. The success of MAAG to form additional Kha ADCs depended upon US response to the economic needs of the Kha. Also, the monsoon season would begin in May and interfere with the construction projects upon which the progress in the other projects hinged.

The individual projects had been so designed that they could be terminated after six months with a net gain to the US and benefits to the Kha, the Country Team
continued. They were inseparable parts of the coordinated US program to consolidate anti-Communist forces on the Bolovens Plateau and, eventually, to interdict the "Ho Chi Minh trail." The US program did not have to be large, but it had to be timely. The program had suffered already because the US had not yet given evidence that it planned to initiate aid programs for the Kha who had taken up arms to clear the Pathet Lao from the area. MAAG Laos had detailed one officer as a part-time civic action coordinator to initiate those projects that did not require material assistance. This US officer, assisted to only a limited extent by one MTT, had been well received, but he could make only limited progress without technical and material assistance (see items 8 March, 6 April, and 4 May 1962). (S) Msgs, SecState to Vientiane, 227, 22 Mar 62; Vientiane to SecState, 1359, 29 Mar 62.

23 Mar 62

The Acting Secretary of State informed Harriman in Bangkok that the President had again considered Harriman's views on the imposition of military sanctions and had reaffirmed his conclusion that it would be unwise to cut off military supplies to the HLG at present, since the move would give Phoumi and others an opportunity to exploit false charges that the US had destroyed the freedom of Laos "at a time when, they claimed, Phoumi was still able to hold on" (see item 20 March 1962). The President did authorize Harriman to inform Phoumi that he was going to recommend to the US Government that military aid be suspended, if the talks with Phoumi took a course that convinced Harriman this was desirable.

Further, the President suggested the possibility that the high-level approaches being made to Phoumi by Harriman, Sarit, and others were feeding his ego in a way that was making him even less tractable. The President suggested for Harriman's consideration that the adoption of "an appearance of detachment" with respect to Phoumi might be more productive. What the President had in mind was that "Harriman could again make clear to Phoumi that he can have no basis for any belief that US would militarily intervene on his behalf, pointing out that during the past two weeks consultation with Congressional leadership had demonstrated that the Congress is strongly against any intervention in Laos, and that members of the JCS have recommended against such intervention." Phoumi should therefore be under no illusion whatever that any maneuvering on his part could draw the United States into hostilities in Laos. If Phoumi, realizing this US attitude, chose a policy that would bring ruin to Laos, the full responsibility would be his. The US would no longer "cajole or run after him."

(S) Msg, SecState to Bangkok, 1451, 23 Mar 62.

23 Mar 62

Harriman forwarded to the Secretary of State General Wallop's report of his interview with Phoumi and an account of Hasey's subsequent discussion with Phoumi. Harriman concluded that Phoumi was "completely" defying the United States. Since Souvanna appeared ready to leave for Paris and no "alternative to Phoumi" had been developed, Harriman urgently
requested authority to bring specific pressure—military sanctions—to bear against Phoumi. These sanctions, he believed, might cause Souvanna to remain in Laos and also lead to the emergence of another leader whom the US could support in place of Phoumi.

The basis for Harriman's recommendation was the fact that Phoumi, after accepting Sarit's invitation to meet Harriman at Nong Khai and then escort him to Vientiane for conferences with the King and cabinet (see item 22 March 1962), had told Hasey that it must be understood that he was not yet ready to yield either the Defense or Interior portfolios. Also, Phoumi had falsely told Hasey that the invitation delivered by General Wallop was in Harriman's name rather than coming from Sarit. Although General Wallop had denied mentioning any specific proposals, Phoumi informed Hasey that Harriman was seeking acceptance of a troika, with representatives of the right, left, and center in the Ministries of both Defense and Interior.

Replying the same day, Acting Secretary of State Ball informed Harriman that the President did not feel he could modify the instructions he had just given (see previous item 23 March 1962). The President, however, was anxious to help in any way he could "below the level of military sanctions."

"We have searched here without success," Secretary Ball continued, "for actions we could authorize which would give you leverage to move Phoumi." In dealing with other members of the RLG, however, Harriman was empowered to "commit whatever funds of the type authorized for Phoumi you feel would be helpful under the circumstances."

(S) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 1462, 23 Mar 62; SecState to Vientiane, 829, and Bangkok, 1456, 23 Mar 62.

Secretary of State Rusk, in Geneva for the Disarmament Conference, discussed the Laotian question with Co-Chairman MacDonald. The latter offered his views on the personalities involved, Soviet attitudes, and certain problems that might arise.

MacDonald opened by stating that, although the agreement on Laos prepared by the Conference was virtually completed, Phoumi's stubbornness blocked all action. He described Phoumi as completely unreliable and said there were "serious questions as to his mental capacity to grasp the realities of the present situation in Laos." The problem was compounded, he observed, by the "passive, weathervane qualities of the King." Secretary Rusk added that King Savang was apparently unaware that his throne could be at stake. MacDonald also mentioned the danger that Souvanna's personal pessimism might lead him to give up his mandate in disgust, thus playing into the hands of the RLG.

MacDonald answered a question from Rusk concerning Soviet attitudes by saying that he believed the Soviets "now trusted the President and ... Harriman" regarding US sincerity in seeking a coalition cabinet under Souvanna.
but they had occasional doubts, undoubtedly deriving from an inability to understand why US pressure had not yet brought Phoumi to heel, concerning the sincerity of US policy implementation. MacDonald was convinced that the Soviets wanted an agreement, that their rivalry with the Chinese Communists was an important factor in the Soviet attitude, and that, in general, they did not want to disturb conditions in Southeast Asia, and particularly in Laos. Secretary Rusk tacitly indicated his agreement with this analysis by describing as "significant" the fact that the Soviets had abstained from exploiting the bickering among the three Princes in December 1961. MacDonald cautioned, however, that "time was not necessarily on our side," since pressure from the Communist Chinese and North Vietnamese might eventually force the Soviets to change their policy, while Souvanna might become sufficiently discouraged to withdraw. MacDonald concluded by praising Harriman's "patience and skill," and stated that success would largely depend on his current mission to Bangkok.

(S) Msg, Geneva to SecState, CONFE 1139, 24 Mar 62.

24 Mar 62 Harriman, with Thai Premier Sarit, Foreign Minister Thanat, and General Wallop, and US officials Sullivan, Forrestal, and Ambassador Young, met with Phoumi and General Bounleut at Nong Khaï, Thailand. Harriman reported that "Sarit put the situation so squarely to Phoumi that I was able to support his position." Sarit told Phoumi he had the choice of being responsible for the military take-over of his country by the Pathet Lao or of working to help a Souvanna government maintain its independence, with the support of the United States, Thailand, and other friendly countries. Thanat then suggested that the Defense and Interior problem might be handled by a troika arrangement. Either the three top positions in each Ministry might be divided among the factions, or a three-man committee, one member from each faction, might head each of these key agencies. In addition, Phoumi was urged to have the RLG invite Souvanna to Vientiane, but Harriman emphasized that any such meeting would be useless unless Phoumi was prepared to negotiate in good faith regarding the portfolios of Defense and Interior.

Phoumi rejected the Thai and US arguments on the ground that Souvanna had failed to carry out the royal mandate to form a new government. He did, however, agree to consult his RLG colleagues regarding future negotiations, and he said he would not object to inviting Souvanna to come to Vientiane.

The three-hour discussion was followed by lunch, after which Phoumi escorted Harriman to Vientiane for an audience with the King and, on 25 March (see item), a meeting with the RLG cabinet. In Harriman's opinion, Sarit's staunch support of the US position was the only favorable development during the session.

The audience granted by King Savang, which Harriman dismissed as a "two-hour futile talk ... hardly worth reporting," was even less productive than the meeting.
earlier in the day at Nong Khai. After stressing the world-wide support for US policy regarding Laos, Harriman declared that Phoumi, who dominated the RLG, was the sole obstruction to the attainment of a peaceful, independent, and neutral Laos that was unified under a coalition government headed by Souvanna.

King Savang thereupon came to the defense of Phoumi, who, according to the King, had impressive popular support as a "patriotic national leader fighting both the Communists and the traditional Viet Minh enemy." The King also referred to the possibility that Boun Oum might seek the partition of Laos and stated his own objections to any coalition in which the Pathet Lao were represented.

Regarding the suspension of US aid, the King declared that the US action had made "all Laotians feel that they are no longer independent." Harriman replied that the US, since it too was independent, could not allow a foreign leader such as Phoumi to dictate its policy. Thus, as the King acknowledged, the US was under no obligation to assist a foreign government of whose actions it disapproved.

Harriman then warned that Phoumi's intransigence could result in the loss of US support and, eventually, in the destruction of both the kingdom and the institution of the monarchy. The King, however, seemed resigned not only to the loss of US support but to the possible overthrow of the monarchy. Other dynasties, he observed, had also come to an end.

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1325, 25 Mar 62; 1336, 20 Mar 62; Bangkok to SecState, 1477, 26 Mar 62.

Harriman and members of the US Country Team met at Vientiane with Boun Oum, Phoumi, and key members of the Lao cabinet. Phoumi, in opening the meeting, declared that the US and the RLG agreed on the need for a peaceful solution to the Lao crisis and on the necessity of forming a coalition government. The conflict between the two nations arose from differences of opinion regarding the suitability of Souvanna to serve as Prime Minister of the coalition. The RLG, Phoumi continued, did not think that Souvanna was suited to the task.

Sisouk, during a review of recent political developments, then claimed that the rightist faction had developed its current policies with the advice of the US and that the initial overthrow of Souvanna had been accomplished at the suggestion of the US, UK, and France. The RLG, Sisouk continued, could not understand the change in US policy whereby Souvanna had become acceptable. He asked whether the Soviet Union had given the US assurances of which the RLG was unaware. Ngon Sananikone followed with a brief explanation of the RLG's distrust of the Soviet Union and lack of confidence in Souvanna.

Harriman attempted to reply to the RLG in the spirit of President Kennedy's letter to King Savang (see item 19 March 1962). He noted that all the friends of the RLG,
including Sarit, were urging the acceptance of Souvanna as the alternative to disaster. Since the King had refused to participate actively in a coalition government, there remained, indeed, no alternative except Souvanna. Harriman then touched upon the "flexibility" that remained in negotiations concerning the Ministries of Defense and Interior. He outlined the steps that would follow the formation of a coalition government and pointed out that these steps—the withdrawal of foreign troops, the integration of Lao forces, and the elections—would provide opportunities to judge Communist intentions. The US, moreover, would support the FAR until integration was completed. Economic aid also would be continued, but only within the framework of a coalition government.

Phoumi replied that the RLG could not accept Souvanna, for the Prince had failed to form a new government. Although the King might summon Souvanna to Vientiane to report on his efforts, serious negotiations toward a Souvanna-led coalition were out of the question. If the US should decide to abandon Laos, Phoumi added, this decision "would be most regrettable."

Harriman responded by warning the assembled cabinet members that they were assuming responsibility for the destruction of Laos and by advising them, "as a friend," to reconsider.

Although the meeting ended on this discordant note, Harriman remained hopeful that Sarit could influence the RLG to accept Souvanna and to negotiate in good faith.

(For the initial RLG reaction to Harriman's advice, see item 28 March 1962.)

(8) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1478, 26 Mar 62.

25 Mar 62
Boun Oum transmitted a royal request that Souvanna come to Vientiane on the following day to meet Vincent Auriol, ex-President of France, who was visiting Vientiane to participate in ceremonies being held by the Lao Veterans' Association. Souvanna, on the following morning, declined the invitation because of ill health and stated that he intended to leave "very soon" for France in order to obtain medical treatment.

(C) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1328, 25 Mar 62; 1329, 26 Mar 62.

26 Mar 62
Harriman informed the Secretary of State that, subsequent to his own recent conversation with King Savang (see item 24 March 1962), French ex-President Vincent Auriol had been granted a royal audience. The King, though he covered much the same ground as he had with Harriman, "let the cat out of the bag" by stating that he believed the RLG would obtain greater US support if it faced the Communists directly instead of through a Souvanna coalition.

As Harriman and Auriol had previously agreed, Auriol urged the King to summon the Princes to his palace, keep them there until they had reached an agreement, and then summon the Western, and possibly the Soviet, Ambassadors to obtain from them firm assurance that the agreement
would be honored. The King agreed that these tactics were worth considering.

Harriman later encouraged Auriol to repeat this advice if he should again call upon the King. Auriol might, if he deemed it useful, add that Harriman heartily endorsed the plan.

(3) Msg, Gangkok to SecState, 1477, 26 Mar 62.

26 Mar 62

The Counselor of the US Embassy in Vientiane, after conferring with the Western Ambassadors and with the Indian ICC representative, forwarded to the Secretary of State an estimate of the effects of the Harriman visit (see items 24 and 25 March 1962) and a series of steps that the Western diplomats believed would be useful in bringing about fruitful negotiations regarding the composition of a coalition government.

In assessing the effects of the Harriman visit, the diplomats concluded that the RLG had realized its error in rigidly opposing US policy. The basis for this estimate was the RLG's issuance, after Harriman's meeting with the cabinet, of a press release that was far milder in tone than the remarks of the cabinet members themselves. This statement had stressed that the main problem was control over Defense and Interior rather than the choice of Souvanna as Prime Minister. In addition, it seemed that Phoumi, in an effort to appease Harriman, had been most eager to take advantage of French ex-President Auriol's desire to see Souvanna.

Souvanna, however, had made a tactical error in rejecting the royal invitation to confer with Auriol. The Ambassadors doubted that Souvanna was seriously ill but believed instead that he merely wished to avoid bilateral discussions that might antagonize Souphanouvong and the Chinese Communists. Whatever his reasons, Souvanna's refusal would be interpreted by RLG propagandists as an insult to the King and as evidence of Souvanna's submission to the Communists.

After thus interpreting recent events, the Counselor set forth three steps that the Western diplomats had agreed would be useful in bringing about worthwhile negotiations:

1. A visit by Harriman to Thai Premier Sarit. Either Wallop or Thanat, it was hoped, would afterward continue to exert pressure on Phoumi as Sarit had previously directed (see item 22 March 1962).

2. A meeting between Sullivan and Sisouk, during which Sullivan, by contrasting the statements of the cabinet members with the official press release that had followed Harriman's visit, would seek to discover whether or not there was any possibility of further negotiations. If negotiations appeared possible, Sullivan would enter into discussions with Phoumi.

3. A visit by Addis to Khang Khay (see item 28 March 1962). The British Ambassador would inform
Souvanna that: a) the Thai Government was assisting the US in its efforts to persuade Phoumi to negotiate; b) Harriman had engaged in unsatisfactory talks with the King and cabinet; c) Souvanna had erred in refusing to talk with Auriol at Vientiane; and d) Sullivan was prepared to journey to Khang Khay (see items 27-28 and 31 March 1962).

The Western diplomats, however, did not agree concerning the importance of Souvanna's remaining in Laos. The French Ambassador believed that, since the passing of time would see the weakening of the RLG position as a result of Thai influence and US financial pressure, a brief visit by Souvanna to Paris could do no harm, provided the Prince made it clear he had not surrendered his mandate to form a new government. The British Ambassador, on the other hand, considered Souvanna's departure to be extremely risky and desired that the Allies attempt to persuade the Prince to remain in Laos. (S) Mag, Vientiane to SecState, 1333, 26 Mar 62.

The airlift of the FAR 55th Parachute Battalion to Nam Tha, which had been discontinued after 16 March because of the enemy's interdiction of the airfield, was resumed. Sporadic artillery and mortar fire continued, with one of the FAR 105-mm. howitzers and a 75-mm. howitzer being damaged in the exchange. (S-NOFORN) Mags, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC and JCS, 250840Z Mar 62; DA IN 214858, 26 Mar 62; 281210Z Mar 62.

Sullivan, in a message to the Secretary of State, inquired if the Department had any comments on the instructions given him by Harriman regarding his forthcoming visit to Khang Khay (see item 31 March 1962). According to Harriman, the major purposes of Sullivan's visit were to attempt to dissuade Souvanna from abandoning the effort to form a new government and to do whatever was possible for the Americans being held prisoner by the Pathet Lao.

In addition, Sullivan asked the authority, if Souvanna should insist upon journeying to Paris, to renew the earlier invitation (see items 25 and 30 June 1961) that the Prince visit Washington. The US, UK, French, and Australian diplomatic missions in Vientiane had endorsed this proposal.

On 28 March, the Secretary of State provided Sullivan with instructions to supplement those already given him by Harriman. Sullivan's primary mission in going to Khang Khay was, as Harriman had indicated, "to encourage Souvanna to keep trying." Sullivan, however, was to rely on his own judgment and that of his colleagues in determining whether to urge a meeting of the three factions, or even a conference between Souvanna and Boun Oum or Phoumi. The desirability of any such meeting would depend upon Addis's reception at Khang Khay (see item 28 March 1962) and upon Phoumi's willingness to negotiate.
Turning to the second point in Harriman's instructions, Secretary Rusk directed Sullivan to indicate to Souvanna and Souphanouvong, if such an approach seemed appropriate, that the release of the Americans held by the Pathet Lao "would have a favorable effect in the US" at a time when the Administration was "under attack by some US elements" for exerting pressure on Phoumi. If time permitted, Sullivan was to ask to visit the prisoners--Shore, McMorrow, Ballenger, and Wolfkill--who were believed to be on the Plaine des Jarres. Finally, Secretary Rusk instructed Sullivan to ask for assurances that Major Bailey was still alive, that the Pathet Lao would allow a Red Cross representative to interview him, and that the Pathet Lao would facilitate the exchange of mail with Bailey and with the other prisoners. (For an earlier discussion with Souvanna concerning the prisoners, see item 19 July 1961.)

The Secretary of State also approved the renewal of the earlier invitation to Souvanna for a visit to the United States. The renewed invitation would be issued in the name of the US Government and at Harriman's direction. Although exact details could be worked out later, Souvanna was to be told that he would be received by the President as well as the Secretary of State.

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1340, 27 Mar 62; SecState to Vientiane, 845, 28 Mar 62.

Regarding over-all strategy, General Holtner observed that Southeast Asia must be treated as an entity, whereas current US efforts appeared to emphasize individual country programs. Although the area was fragmented in every respect, the Communist effort, he reported, transcended national boundaries and took advantage of the fragmentation. The United States was beginning to do this also, by training the Meo, Kha and Montagnard tribesmen, but "one strategy for all would improve the situation tremendously," he suggested.

The visit had modified General Holtner's previous assumption that "the terrain, logistics and communications of the area would make significant US military operations extremely hazardous." The terrain appeared difficult but not impossible; logistical facilities and communications were rapidly improving.

He found strategic intelligence, country by country, reasonably good, but no effort to collate it area-wide could be discerned. Tactical intelligence, on the other hand, was practically nonexistent, particularly in South Viet Nam, and until it could be developed and rapidly evaluated, success in operations would depend more on chance than on design.

Turning to Laos, General Holtner observed that the Communists had been more foresighted than the United States
in recognizing that Laos was the strategic key to the entire area. He doubted that any coalition government would be able, even if it had the will, to stop Communist infiltration of other countries through Laos. Instead of exerting pressure on Phoumi to give way on the formation of a coalition government, it would be better as an interim solution to attempt to maintain the status quo, so as to give the United States freedom of action in the future. Meanwhile the FAR could continue to improve its capabilities. If the Communists sincerely desired a "truly neutral" coalition government, it should be their responsibility to exert pressure on Souvanna for compromises leading to a solution. The past history of the area convinced General Holtoner, however, that the Communists were not sincere.

The individual FAR soldier was a better fighter, according to General Holtoner, than State Department reports had made him out to be. General Boyle and his MAAG officers held the same view, but Ambassador Brown did not. The USMC representative on the field trip likewise did not share the opinion that the FAR could be developed into an effective fighting force.

The basic problem was inadequate leadership, General Holtoner continued. Poor leadership had hurt the operations in northwest Laos, particularly at Nam Tha, and as a result the regional commander had relieved three Group Mobile commanders. General Holtoner expressed particular concern about the FAR's defensive attitude and willingness to leave the initiative to the enemy. MAAG, through the White Star teams, was making every effort to instill an offensive spirit in the FAR forces. In the Nam Tha operation, General Holtoner continued, a Pathet Lao 120-mm. mortar, which continually interdicted the airfield, seemed to be the major element in turning the balance in favor of the enemy. The FAR forces could easily eliminate the mortar if they were authorized to conduct air operations.

General Holtoner reported that, contrary to official reports, the FAR "almost always" brought out their individual weapons when they were forced to withdraw. Although "in most instances" they abandoned crew-served weapons, they were being trained to render them inoperable by removing some major component.

Emphasizing the importance of training tribal fighters, such as the Meo and Kha, General Holtoner reported that one White Star base in the Bolovens Plateau had trained 100 Kha tribesmen, who were engaging in patrol operations; 200 more were being trained there. He agreed with General Boyle's recommendation that the number be increased to 1200 (see item 25 January 1962), because of the importance of the Bolovens Plateau to US contingency plans. General Boyle, in a briefing reported by the US Army member of the party, had stated that Meo tribesmen would move anywhere in Laos if they were assured that their families would be protected and cared for.
Among other points stressed by General Boyle in his briefing were: 1) Villagers were not interested in "a specific form of government" so long as they were left alone. 2) The FAR should be increased to a strength of 68,000 through recruitment by local commanders. 3) The French should have no military responsibility in Laos; the lack of FAR officers with command and staff competence was the result of French policy not to train the FAR forces. 4) Filipino technicians, of whom more than 400 were employed by MAAG, were extremely valuable. A further point, noted by the Army representative in the course of a briefing by US Special Forces personnel, was the urgent need for a good jungle boot.

While in Thailand, the party was informed that approximately 95 per cent of the 30-day reserve stocks being accumulated for Laos in Thailand (Project SALT SHAKER) was already in storage. Out of a total of 6,857 FAR personnel scheduled to receive training in Thailand, 4,226 had completed their training and 688 were in mid-course. Project EKARAD (a training program for 8 infantry battalions, 6 artillery batteries, and 1000 recruits) accounted for most of the total. In addition, Thailand had assisted by providing for duty in Laos 400 artillery, interpreter and specialist personnel of the Thai armed forces.


28 Mar 62
CINCPAC directed CHMAAG Laos to extend his existing planning for the withdrawal of personnel and equipment from Laos (see item 2 March 1962) by adding a plan for the contingency that the MAAG, following its withdrawal, might be ordered to return and quickly reestablish operations in Laos owing to deteriorating conditions there. When the foreign military forces withdrew from Laos, CINCPAC said, the disparate elements joined in the reconstituted FAR might drift apart, mutinies take place, and coups be attempted. Both the US and the Communists might then decide to re-enter Laos hurriedly and resume the support and control of their respective cohorts. CHMAAG should therefore plan, in coordination with CHJUSMAG Thailand, to establish in Thailand a cadre of MAAG Laos personnel and equipment, prepared to return to Laos and re-establish the MAAG in the shortest possible time. (See item 4 May 1962.)

(TS) Msg, CINCPAC to CHMAAG Laos, 280002Z Mar 62.

28 Mar 62
The US Military Attache at Vientian, during a party held by Phoumi, discussed the Harriman visit (see items 24 and 25 March 1962) with members of the RLG, Thai and Vietnamese diplomats, and general officers of the FAR. The consensus of opinion was that the cabinet officers, as a result of Harriman’s accusation that they were leading the kingdom to its destruction, had suffered such a severe loss of face that they had no choice but to stand fast and unite against their accuser. In the opinion of USARMA, the attitude of RLG officials had changed from disagreement with and resentment of US policies to distrust and anger. There was, however, no
doubt that the US could force the RLG from power. The
question, according to USARMA, was whether the result
would "best serve either the US or the free world in
general."

(§) Msg, USARMA Laos to DA, DA IN 216390, 30 Mar 62.

During a visit to Khang Khay, Ambassador Addis informed
Souvanna of recent developments, including Sullivan's
readiness to come to Khang Khay. Souvanna said that
Sullivan would be welcome, but Souphanouvong, though
willing to see the US diplomat, did not seem enthusiastic
about the proposed visit.

Souvanna then declared that, although his health
had improved, he definitely would leave for Paris on
3 April. Both Souvanna and Souphanouvong agreed that
two or three months would pass before Phoumi began to
feel the effects of US pressures. Thus, there was no
possibility of Phoumi's giving in at this time and,
consequently, no reason for Souvanna to postpone his
journey to France. Souvanna indicated, however, that he
would be prepared to return to Laos "at the appropriate
time." Both Souvanna and Souphanouvong insisted that
their goal was the formation of a coalition government
in which Phoumi would participate.

Addis then pointed out that Souvanna's departure
from Laos could result in the deterioration of the
military and political situation. In the military sphere,
US pressure would cause a gradual weakening of the FAR,
thus creating a situation of which the Pathet Lao might
be tempted to take advantage. In the political sphere,
Souvanna's absence would leave a vacuum that some other
individual might seek to fill. Souvanna, however, gave
"firm assurances" that the Pathet Lao would be restrained
and stated that he would, by means of various public
statements, "put his departure in the proper political
framework." The Prince emphasized that he had no
intention of renouncing his mandate to form a new govern­
ment.

In response to Addis' suggestion that he call a
meeting of the three Princes at Luang Prabang, Souvanna
maintained that there was no point in such a meeting at
this time. He was, moreover, concerned for his personal
safety in Luang Prabang, since he believed that Phoumi,
goaded by US pressure, might have become desperate.
Thus, Souvanna also declined to visit the King, although
he was willing to render a written report of his
progress toward a coalition. Unlike Souvanna,
Souphanouvong seemed interested in a meeting of the
Princes.

Souphanouvong replied to Addis' questions concerning
the military situation by declaring that he had no
intention of attacking. He did, however, accuse Phoumi
of provocations, especially at Nam Tha. According to
Souphanouvong, the FAR had massed 52 companies at Nam Tha
(the MAAG estimate was 28) and had engaged in parachuting
both men and supplies. If Phoumi persisted in such actions, Souphanouvong warned, "we will give him a coup de matraque." After thus threatening to bludgeon Phoumi, Souphanouvong agreed that provocations should be avoided and then declared that the Pathet Lao, whatever Phoumi might do, did not intend to capture such "important places" as Nam Tha, Luang Prabang, Thakhek Vientiane. Addis, however, considered Souphanouvong's remarks on the military situation to be the most unsatisfactory aspect of the visit.

Before leaving Khang Khay, Addis informed Soviet Ambassador Abramov of what the two Princes had said and emphasized the need to take precautions lest the situation, particularly the existing military stalemate, should deteriorate in Souvanna's absence. Addis reported that Abramov's attitude had been "receptive."

29 Mar 62

According to the report of Ambassador Bruce, the British Foreign Office saw it as "abundantly clear" that Phoumi had no intention of agreeing to a government led by Souvanna. Noting that the Soviets seemed disposed to let the situation simmer along, the Foreign Office suggested that the Pathet Lao might be content to consolidate their control in areas currently held rather than initiate new attacks. The British saw real danger in the possibility that Phoumi might try to spark a resumption of hostilities. If he provoked the Pathet Lao, Phoumi might well suffer a swift defeat that would leave three-fourths of Laos under PL control. No possibility was seen of change in the situation through repudiation of Phoumi by his Vientiane followers. The Foreign Office had "toyed with the idea" of de-recognition of the Phoumi-Boun Oum group in favor of some sort of government to be established in Luang Prabang under Souvanna, but discussion had revealed "many absolute obstacles," including the King's opposition to Souvanna.

The Foreign Office expected to maintain the British Co-Chairman, MacDonald, in Geneva in order to preserve the existing machinery and hold open the possibility of reassembly of the Conference or reaffirmation of the cease-fire should the need arise. MacDonald had recently sent a personal letter to Souvanna asking him to remain in Laos. In the British view, however, it was likely that Souvanna would soon depart for Paris and that it might be difficult to get him to return. Commenting that this was the first time in some months that Foreign Office spokesmen had been unable to propose at least a theoretical way out of the Laotian imbroglio, Ambassador Bruce noted that they were anxiously awaiting any hopeful ideas that Harriman might have developed during his visits to Laos and Thailand.

(Instructions sent by the State Department on 31 March advised the Ambassador that the most important aspect of the Harriman visits had been the avowed readiness of the Thai leadership to attempt to induce Phoumi to enter into effective negotiations.)

30 Mar 62

CHMAAG Laos published MAAG Laos OPLAN 63-62, setting forth procedures for the withdrawal of the MAAG.

Consistent with the guidance set forth by the JCS and CINCPAC (see items 14 February and 2 March 1962), OPLAN 63-62 provided for a "phased and orderly withdrawal" of US military and third-country civilian personnel of the MAAG upon the formation of a Lao government of national unity and for the recovery of both US-owned equipment and MAP equipment that was excess to the needs of remaining US agencies and the new Lao Army. The OPLAN anticipated four phases of withdrawal operations: warning, assembly and withdrawal, operations in Thailand, and phase-out. It also planned for such actions as: 1) continuing FAR training programs to the extent possible; 2) evacuation of Thai volunteers in Laos; and 3) evacuation, after approval by the US Embassy, of Lao individuals.

(S) MAAG Laos OPLAN 63-62, 30 Mar 62; OSD(ISA), FER/SEA Br. Files.

30 Mar 62

Sullivan informed the Secretary of State that Ambassador Young, in arranging for Sullivan's passage through Thailand en route to Khang Khay, had requested that he return by way of Bangkok and reported on his visit (see item 31 March 1962). Sullivan had expressed his willingness to honor Young's request and, if desired, to brief officials of the Thai Government.

Secretary Rusk replied with full approval of Sullivan's undertaking to brief the Thai officials. Although the US was willing to await the result of Sarit's efforts to persuade Phoumi (see items 20 and 22 March 1962), the Secretary did not believe that time was "working in our favor at Xiang Khouang." For this reason, Sullivan was to ask "politely" for a schedule of these Thai efforts. General Wallop, Secretary Rusk noted, had indicated that he would not make another approach until he had more information on developments within the RLG. Since the Thai understood the Lao psychology better than did the Americans, Sullivan was not to exert undue pressure, but the Secretary nevertheless believed that the US should know Sarit's plans.

"Highest authority," Secretary Rusk continued, was again proposing that the US temporarily turn a "cold shoulder" to Phoumi (see item 23 March 1962). Such treatment, Rusk said, could include any or all of the following: 1) the recall of Hasey; 2) the relief, without replacement, of General Boyle; and 3) the recall of Ambassador Brown for consultations. Ambassador Young, Sullivan was advised, might find it desirable to obtain the advice of Thai officials on these measures.

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1360, 30 Mar 62; SecState to Bangkok, 1496, 30 Mar 62.

30 Mar 62

CHMAAG Laos informed CINCPAC that Phoumi, in a further reorganization of the FAR (see item 19 January 1962), planned to place the Surface Defense Command (DS) under the National Security Forces Command (FSN), and to move DS headquarters from Savannakhet to Vientiane. According
to Phoumi, his original plan to prepare a bastion in
the South had been overtaken by events (particularly
at Nam Tha, which "must be held at all cost"), and
he was now making Vientiane the "center of major
headquarters and activities." According to CHMAAG Laos,
there were at least two other possible reasons for this
move: 1) CHMAAG had long urged it as an organizational
improvement; and 2) Phoumi might simply wish to obtain
better personal control over his headquarters and
commanders. CHMAAG also observed that Phoumi's professed
abandonment of "moving South" would in no way prevent
his actually performing such a move if he should find it
expedient to do so.

(C) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 216994, 30 Mar
62.

31 Mar 62
Sullivan reported to the Secretary of State concerning
various aspects of his two-day visit to Khang Khay.
The Deputy Chief of the US Delegation to the Geneva
Conference had been unable either to see the Americans
held prisoner by the Pathet Lao or to gain acceptance
by Souvanna of an invitation to visit the US (see item
27, 28 March 1962). He had, however, received
Souphanouvong's promise to look after the prisoners.

The "only encouraging result" reported by Sullivan
was the "considerable consensus" in favor of a troika
arrangement for Defense and Interior. Souvanna, after
first demanding personal control over the Ministries with
a troika at the Secretaries-of-State level, agreed that,
during the period when plans for an integrated army and
for local administration were being formulated, a three­
man council could control both Ministries. This council
would consist of Souvanna, Souphanouvong, and Phoumi.
After completion of the planning phase, responsibility
would revert to Souvanna, who would serve as Minister
of Defense and of Interior, as well as Prime Minister.
Souphanouvong, however, refused to commit himself,
stating instead that certain details would have to be
worked out at a meeting of the Princes.

Sullivan believed that Souvanna might propose
discussions among representatives of the three factions.
These talks could provide Phoumi with a means of agreeing,
without loss of face, to a meeting of the Princes at
which he presumably would yield the Defense and Interior
portfolios to Souvanna in return for a place in the
proposed troika. Souphanouvong, unlike Souvanna, appeared
to have no interest in Phoumi's saving face.

Although the "general attitude of all hands" at
Khang Khay was that the US should exert pressure against
Phoumi by applying military sanctions, Souphanouvong was
the "most violent exponent of this thesis." Whereas
Souvanna merely suggested the withdrawal of MAAG teams
from FAR units and Abramov was willing to leave the
details to the US, Soughanouvong insisted upon the
immediate termination of all US military aid.
Sullivan asked for assurances that the Pathet Lao and the forces of Kong Le would not exploit the situation that would result from the application of military sanctions against Phoumi. Souvanna replied that Kong Le's troops definitely would not attack, and Abramov estimated that the situation would remain quiet for two or three months, but Souphanouvong used the occasion to denounce Phoumi for allegedly augmenting FAR forces in areas to which the Pathet Lao laid claim. Souphanouvong's threat to capture such places as Muong Houn and Ban Hat, which he alleged had been in the hands of the Pathet Lao when the cease-fire went into effect, triggered two "long and rather explosive arguments" with Sullivan. In spite of these differences, Souphanouvong presented the "picture of solicitude and charm" as the visit drew to a close.

When Souvanna, during one of these arguments, suggested that the Pathet Lao would seize these objectives "only if Phoumi used them offensively," Souphanouvong contradicted him, and Souvanna "stalked from the room." Sullivan, unable to obtain assurance that the Pathet Lao would not exploit the future weakness of the FAR, declared that he was unable to assess with any confidence Souphanouvong's intentions.

Souvanna, in a private conversation, told Sullivan that Souphanouvong mistrusted Phoumi, did not understand political affairs, and permitted himself to become overly excited about military matters. The US diplomat, however, assessed Souphanouvong quite differently. "In my own judgment," Sullivan reported, "Souphanouvong understands political affairs very well, but is a cocky little scrapper who smells victory."

Sullivan returned to Vientiane with an unsealed letter in which Souvanna told the French Ambassador that he was about to leave for Paris and that, for the present, all that could be done toward a solution was to induce Phoumi to yield the Defense and Interior portfolios and to accept a tripartite meeting to discuss the formation of a coalition government. In the meantime, the letter continued, Souvanna would await in Paris the results of US pressure on the RLG.

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1372, 1373, 31 Mar 62; (C) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1375, 1377, 1 Apr 62.

CINCPAC cautioned PACOM commanders that, notwithstanding recent news reports discounting the possibility of renewal of major offensives by either side in Laos, his opinion was that the situation continued to be "explosive." He cited particularly the report of the belligerant attitude displayed by Souphanouvong in a conversation with British Ambassador Addis on 28 March (see item). It was CINCPAC's opinion that Souphanouvong could at any time use any provocation by the RLG as an excuse for a major attack and that Phoumi also could initiate offensive
operations "on his own." CINCPAC reminded the subordinate commanders that he had assured higher authorities that PACOM was maintaining a 96-hour readiness posture for CINCPAC OPLAN 32-59 (Phase II-Laos/Viet Nam) and SEATO Field Forces OPLAN 5-61.

At Nam Tha, the intermittent shelling of the airfield delayed the arrival of final elements of the 55th Parachute Battalion. In other respects the tactical situation remained unchanged.

A FAR task force, composed of the 3d Infantry Battalion and elements of the 15th Volunteer Battalion, was attacked and routed at Muong Houn in the Nam Beng Valley by an unidentified enemy force of battalion size. The FAR troops withdrew, leaving the town to the enemy. (Nearly two weeks later, on 12 April, major elements of the FAR force were still dispersed and some of them unlocated. The flight did not stop until the Mekong River was reached.)

In central Laos the FAR also encountered a setback in the vicinity of Tha Thom. A counterattack met with limited success.

The Counselor of the US Embassy in Vientiane inquired of the French Ambassador concerning any impressions of political significance or any concrete results that might have emerged from ex-President Auriol's stay in Vientiane (see items 25 and 26 March 1962). According to the Ambassador, although Auriol's advice would be seriously considered, his approaches did not cause the King or the RLG to alter their positions.

In his conversation with King Savang, Auriol had advised the monarch that the Lao people should solve their nation's domestic problems and that mediation among the political factions was a royal responsibility. The King's response to this advice was "a succession of contradictory statements," which led Auriol to believe that the Lao monarch, though disturbed by Harriman's warning of the danger to his throne, was most annoyed by the suspension of US aid. When the King repeated his complaint that the suspension of cash grants because of a conflict in policy had made the Lao feel that they were not independent, Auriol observed that, by this standard, the Lao people would not feel independent until all outside aid had been ended.

Auriol did, however, succeed in eliciting a royal invitation calling upon Souvanna to visit Vientiane. According to the French Ambassador, Auriol had expected genuine results from this invitation and had been disappointed by Souvanna's refusal.

Ambassador Gavin relayed a report from the French Foreign Office that Ambassador Falaize had been approached by Sisouk of the RLG concerning the dispatch of a RLG mission to Europe to seek aid as a substitute for that cut off by the United States. Although West
Germany was the principal target, Sisouk clearly was interested in sounding out the French as well. Falaize, however, remained noncommittal. The French considered the entire approach in keeping with their view of Sisouk as "completely unattuned to international realities."

(C) Msg, Paris to SecState, 4652, 2 Apr 62.

3 Apr 62

Souvanna left Khang Khay for Paris. In what the US Embassy termed an "unhelpful departure statement," he expressed regret that his efforts so far had failed to create a coalition government and charged that "the ill will" and constant opposition of the RLG had brought this about. Souvanna then rejected Phoumi's plan for a government of six councils headed by the King (see items 25 January and 17 February 1962). The King, Souvanna explained, was venerated by the people and therefore should not be drawn into politics.

Souvanna called upon the United States to urge the RLG to agree to a tripartite meeting so that a coalition government might rapidly be formed. To demonstrate to the world its sincere desire for a peaceful settlement, the US Government would have to withdraw its military support from Phoumi and Boun Oum. Souvanna's forces, the statement continued, would not "seek to profit from this withdrawal of military aid to attack the Savannakhet troops except when the latter encroach upon the zones controlled by our forces."

Souvanna said he was going to Paris to see his family and to seek medical care. He cautioned his followers to beware, during his absence, of "the enemy that is seeking to sow discord among us . . . and between us and the [NLHX]." "If we are vigilant and strongly united, we shall without the slightest doubt win in the end."

(000) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1385, 2 Apr 62; (S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1394, 4 Apr 62.

Phoumi granted an interview to Sullivan, who had just returned from Khang Khay, and Creel of the US Embassy. Sullivan, although he avoided mention of the invitation to Souvanna to visit the US, provided Phoumi with a "fairly complete rundown" on his recent visit to Khang Khay (see item 31 March 1962). In reply to Phoumi's questions concerning Souvanna's intentions, Sullivan stressed the fact that the Prince, though he definitely was leaving for Paris, had no intention of surrendering his mandate to form a new government.

Following Sullivan's report, Phoumi, during a lengthy conversation which "became heated at points," charged that the US, for reasons he could not understand, was abandoning him and betraying itself by attempting to "impose Souvanna on the Lao people." Although he did not specifically reject the troika concept that had been discussed at Khang Khay, Phoumi spurned every suggestion that he adopt a more flexible negotiating position.
In addition, Phoumi argued that Souvanna, by eight months of unsuccessful efforts, had proved himself incapable of forming a new government. The King might well ask Souvanna, when the two next met, to surrender his mandate. Phoumi then intimated that the RLG, using Souvanna's trip to Paris as justification, might take some public action to indicate that it no longer considered the Prince's mandate to be valid. Creel thereupon warned Phoumi that any such action at this time "would be considered most unwise by the US Government and would create a difficult situation." Phoumi replied that a "difficult situation already existed" but he indicated that the RLG had no immediate plans along this line (see item 11 April 1962).

Another complaint voiced by Phoumi was that, although there should be neither victor nor vanquished in a political settlement, the choice of Souvanna indicated that the Prince was, in fact, the victor. Sullivan, however, argued that Souvanna, an internationally accepted neutral, was the only possible symbol of a compromise in which there was neither victor nor vanquished.

Phoumi also said that the Agence France Presse would, on the following day, file a sensational story from Washington. The story would contain a US announcement regarding the Lao situation. Creel and Sullivan replied that "if Phoumi turned out to be right then his intelligence regarding the US Government's plans must be better than ours." The Americans surmised that either Phoumi had learned of the invitation to Souvanna but not of its rejection or he believed the US was about to announce "recognition" of Souvanna and corresponding 'derecognition' of the RLG.

Finally, Phoumi indicated that the National Assembly was about to grant full powers to the King, who would then form a new government with himself as Prime Minister. Phoumi denied Sullivan's charge that such a maneuver would result in the partition of the kingdom. When Sullivan, recalling Savang's oft-expressed desire to avoid politics, challenged the claim that the King would serve as Prime Minister, Phoumi replied that Westerners did not understand the Royal mentality. Phoumi concluded by stating his intention to observe the military situation in the South. Boun Oum would remain in Vientiane during his absence.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1387, 3 Apr 62.

3 Apr 62

Prime Minister Sarit told the press that he was unable to force Phoumi to accept US policy since even the Lao King reportedly disagreed with it. Thailand did not want to interfere in Lao international affairs. Sarit further commented that suspension of US aid to Laos had some disadvantages since the Pathet Lao was still receiving Communist aid, "but it might be necessary to concede something now to gain more later." Ambassador Young interpreted Sarit's evasive comments as showing his concern for the impact of his actions on
influential sectors of Thai public opinion, which were strongly critical of US policy in Laos, and perhaps by a belief that avoidance of public acknowledgment of Thai efforts to change Phoumi's mind would make it easier for the Lao General to reverse himself.

(On 6 April, the State Department instructed Ambassador Young to raise the matter of the Sarit press conference at his next meeting with Thanat. Young should point out the ill effect Sarit's comments had on Souvanna (see item 5 April 1962) and the fact that the comments contradicted Harriman's public statement that the present course of action in Laos was endorsed by practically all nations concerned, including Thailand. The Department sympathized with Sarit's problem of internal criticism but at the same time believed that he should take into consideration the larger question of public opinion outside Thailand.)

(S) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 1542, 4 Apr 62; SecState to Bangkok, 1535, 6 Apr 62.

4 Apr 62

Stopping over at Rangoon on his way from Laos to France, Souvanna had a short discussion with US Ambassador Everton. He told the Ambassador, as he had told the press upon his arrival, that the US must withdraw all military aid from the RLG in order to persuade that faction to cooperate in forming a coalition government. He also confirmed earlier reports (see item 31 March 1962) that his and Pathet Lao forces had promised not to launch an offensive within the next three months. (This promise appeared, however, in the context of Souvanna's remarks, to depend upon suspension of US military aid to the RLG and the consequent weakening of the RLG.)

During his talk with Ambassador Everton, Souvanna also commented upon the situation in South Viet Nam. To Souvanna, the only reasonable solution would be to remove Diem and replace him with some person who had the popular approval of the South Vietnamese people. The Lao Prince said that he could not understand the US supporting such an unpopular oppressor of the people. (On 7 April, CINCPAC called to the attention of the JCS these remarks about South Viet Nam. To CINCPAC, these remarks were evidence that Souvanna, far from supporting US efforts to assist South Viet Nam against the Communists, would work to overthrow Diem and would probably have "little interest" in curtailing Viet Cong movements through Laos.)

(C) Msgs, Rangoon to SecState, 764, 5 Apr 62; CINCPAC to JCS, 072035Z Apr 62.

4 Apr 62

Secretary of State Rusk informed US Embassies in seven Far Eastern capitals and in Bonn that a RLG diplomatic effort might be launched to seek assistance in meeting the increasing difficulties caused by the withholding of the US monthly cash grant to Laos. Visits to the addressee capitals by special delegations from Laos.
might be expected in addition to efforts by the resident RLG Ambassadors.

Although it would be unlikely, Rusk pointed out, that any offer of "practical" assistance would be forthcoming from the countries approached, it was important that the RLG not receive any encouragement or moral support in its current opposition to a negotiated peaceful settlement.

Rusk instructed US Ambassadors not to make a special approach on this subject, but they should use any available opportunity to point out to their host governments that a coalition government under Souvanna was the only feasible means to a peaceful settlement in Laos and that a peaceful settlement was the desired goal of all concerned. It was hoped that the several governments would respond to the RLG initiatives in this vein.

(C) Msg, SecState CIRC 1688, 4 Apr 62.

4 Apr 62

Ambassadors Young and Brown advised the Secretary of State of their joint assessment of the status of Thai efforts to persuade Phoumi to negotiate seriously for a coalition government and recommended certain courses of action that would constitute a concerted US-Thai attempt to further that undertaking. Ambassador Young asked for authorization to seek Thai agreement to the following as the best solution possible in Laos: a government with Souvanna as Prime Minister, Phoumi and Souphanouvong as Deputy Prime Ministers, and a distribution of the other cabinet posts among the three factions in accordance with an equitable formula; the Defense and Interior Ministries would be "neutralized" by organizing them in troika form as "committees of Defense and Interior" consisting of Souvanna, Phoumi, and Souphanouvong. This arrangement would mean a formal preservation of the status quo in Defense and Interior matters during a fairly lengthy provisional period, the Ambassadors admitted, but that would merely be an "honest recognition" of the political facts of life in Laos.

If the Thai Government agreed to the above, Young wished to engage Thanat in direct discussions with Phoumi, both to persuade Phoumi to accept this solution as a basis for negotiation and to discover what reasonable assurances he would desire concerning the practical functioning of the troika. To speed the pace of these discussions Young intended to warn Thanat that time was running out and that if Phoumi did not soon show a cooperative spirit, the "US would have to take actions in its own right." Young sought authorization to tell Thanat that in addition to the importance of ending quickly the potentially explosive military confrontation in Laos and bringing the Geneva accords into effect, early results were required because
Phoumi seemed set on taking irrevocable action about 11 May in the direction of assigning full powers to the King. If Phoumi thus abrogated Souvanna's mandate and ended any hope of the "Souvanna solution" that the US and its Allies had been working for, it would be considered as "a direct challenge to the President which he could not allow to go without counter action."

The Ambassadors observed that this plan might not be acceptable to the RLG or even to Thailand. It was very likely, therefore, that the US would have to apply further pressure, probably in the form of military sanctions, against the RLG.

In his reply the following day the Secretary of State did not approve the recommendations for a concerted effort. He believed that the Thai leaders should be allowed to retain the initiative for the present in relations with Phoumi. "We are willing to let them work in their own way without specified time limit," the Secretary wrote, and the US would "coordinate closely with them without, however, calling all shots."

The Thai leaders could be "encouraged" to explore further with Phoumi the idea of a troika in Defense and Interior, if this appeared to present possibilities for a settlement that Phoumi could accept. Concerning assurances for Phoumi during the interim period before the integration of Lao forces, the Secretary said that the US could not make specific advance commitments since so much depended on Phoumi's continued good faith, but the US would expect to help him to "hold his own" against the Pathet Lao if he lived up to the integration agreement. The US would also support Phoumi in hard bargaining on the force integration agreement itself, so that the FAR would not be placed at a disadvantage during the process.

(S) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 1543, 4 Apr 62; SecState to Bangkok, 1527, 5 Apr 62.

In a policy directive regarding the future of SEATO (circulated to the JCS on 11 April) the State Department noted that the failure of the organization to bring military action to bear in the Lao situation had badly shaken the confidence of Asiatic members (particularly Thailand) in the protection afforded them by the alliance. Although the Rusk-Thanat communique of 6 March had reassured Thailand on this point (see item), the problem was a broader one, reflected in SEATO's lack of success as a political association.

The State Department proposed a number of measures designed to maintain the military alliance as a deterrent to overt Communist aggression, to de-emphasize the nonmilitary aspects, to support a SEATO counter-subversion effort, to expedite decision-making, and to minimize the impediment of SEATO membership to the development of closer relations among the nations of Southeast Asia.

5 Apr 62 Met during his layover at the London airport by officials of the Foreign Office and American Embassy, Souvanna appeared dejected and even disgusted over the lack of progress toward formation of a coalition government. He said he had no intention of returning to Laos until assured that Phoumi and Boun Oum were ready to negotiate seriously. Stating that the fate of Laos was now completely in the hands of the Americans, Souvanna said the "Lao people cannot understand" a US policy that on one hand voiced support for a neutral government of national union and on the other continued to give military support to Phoumi. He spoke of a need for additional American economic and military pressures but avoided a direct answer when asked whether under current circumstances it would be desirable for US advisors to be withdrawn from FAR units. While admitting that zones of control in Laos were not well-defined, Souvanna asserted that Phoumi had moved troops into areas not held prior to the May cease-fire, greatly reinforcing some positions. Hence he saw some justification for Pathet Lao operations against these FAR concentrations. Souvanna declared, however, that his side had no intention of attacking Phoumi's forces in major towns or in areas under FAR control prior to the cease-fire, unless Phoumi attacked first.

Souvanna's remarks regarding Thailand's government leaders were scathing. He referred to Sarit's press statement of 3 April (see item) as a clear indication that the Thai were not to be trusted.

Souvanna made many of the same statements upon his arrival at Paris later in the day. When asked if he intended to visit the United States, he said he had been invited to Washington but would not go before completing the formation of a Lao government of national unity.

(c) Msg, London to SecState, 3674, 5 Apr 62; (U) Msg, Paris to SecState, 4711, 5 Apr 62.

5 Apr 62 In a memorandum to the JCS, the Chief of Staff, Air Force, expressed his grave concern over the "probability" of additional Communist military victories in Southeast Asia. The Communists were aggressively infiltrating all of Southeast Asia, CSAF said, and would, with further victories, establish the forward operating bases from which they could continue to attempt domination of the entire area. Echoing earlier JCS views (see item 13 January 1962), CSAF believed that if the Communists came to dominate Southeast Asia, pro-Western governments throughout the Far East would probably collapse. The US, in responding to the threat, was conceiving and executing programs on a country-by-country basis. When compared with one another these programs lacked "concentrated military interrelationship and direction." Elimination or denial of military footholds for the Communists would require quick, concerted action, not only locally, but throughout the Southeast Asia area. For this reason, CSAF considered it imperative that the JCS press for a clear US governmental statement of a
basic strategic objective for Southeast Asia, and an accompanying area-wide program for repulsing the Communists. He presented for JCS consideration a draft memorandum for the Secretary of Defense embodying the above beliefs. The memorandum also contained an assessment of Communist objectives in Southeast Asia, an analysis of the situation in each country in the area, and proposed strategic objectives and programs for the US and the Free World in Southeast Asia.

[Referred to J-5, this paper was still under study there on 15 August 1962, with a suspended deadline.]
(TS) JCS 2339/64, 10 Apr 62; JMF 9150/9105 (5 Apr 62).

CHJUSMAG Thailand reported that Sarit had agreed enthusiastically to a program of follow-on training for certain Thai and US units after the completion of SEATO Exercise AIR COBRA (see item 23-28 April 1962).

(Subsequently, US and Thai ground forces conducted two 5-day training exercises in Thailand in the period 30 April-9 May.)
(S) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, DA IN 218968, 6 Apr 62;
(U) Msg, CHJUSMAG Thailand to CINCPAC, DA IN 738004, 5 May 62; (TS-NOFORN) J-3, Southeast Asia Sitrep 19062, 9 May 62.

Ambassador Brown, who was in Bangkok, provided the Secretary of State with a preliminary assessment of the significance and implications of Phoumi's latest plan for a government headed by the King (see item 3 April 1962). The plan, according to Brown, called for the convening of a National Congress, composed of the National Assembly and King's Council, which would confer full powers on the King and also call upon him to head a new government. The King would then appoint himself Prime Minister of a cabinet in which Souvanna would be Minister of Defense, Boun Oum Minister of Interior, and Souphanouvong Minister of Economy and Planning. Also included in the King's government would be Phoui Sananikone as Foreign Minister, Nhouay Abhay as Minister of Education, and Outhong Souvannavong as Minister of Social Affairs. Phoumi, who would hold no portfolio, was to serve as commander-in-chief of the Lao armed forces. The plan was scheduled to be carried out soon after the opening of 11 May of the annual session of the National Assembly.

Brown considered this proposal a variation of the King-and-councils scheme (see item 9 February 1962), which had been rejected by both Souvanna and Souphanouvong, as well as by the King himself. Phoumi, the Ambassador charged, had offered this new proposal in a "transparent attempt to drive Souvanna out of the picture" by, in effect, invalidating the Prince's mandate to form a new government. Brown acknowledged, however, that the plan was supported by many Lao citizens as offering the best means of ending the political impasse while at the same time preventing the spread of Communism.
Turning to the possible reactions to Phoumi's proposal, the Ambassador expressed doubt that it would be any more acceptable to Souvanna and Souphanouvong than the earlier King-and-councils formula had been. If, however, the King actually did accept a grant of full powers, these two Princes might find it embarrassing to oppose the plan. Under such circumstances, it also was possible that Souvanna might abandon completely his efforts to form a government, while Souphanouvong renewed hostilities. Whatever the reaction of the Princes, Brown was convinced that Communist China, North Viet Nam, and even the USSR would refuse to accept the King's new government as a proper one to sign the Geneva Agreements on behalf of Laos.

In spite of Phoumi's apparent confidence, Brown doubted that the King actually would take an active political role. On the other hand, the possibility that Savang might abandon his "Olympian detachment" could not be dismissed. The recent developments in Laos, along with Harriman's vigorous warnings (see item 24 March 1962), might have convinced him that royal action was vital to the survival of the kingdom.

Should the plan be executed, the result, according to Brown, would be the elimination of Souvanna in defiance of the US and its Western Allies. This direct challenge "could not be allowed to pass without some firm action on our part."

In determining the exact course of action, Brown warned, the US should remember that Phoumi's proposal had several apparently sincere and seemingly worthwhile aspects. The procedures, which were consistent with the Lao constitution would entrust power to the King, who would serve even more effectively than Souvanna as a symbol of unity, independence, and tradition. The plan, moreover, would provide representation to the three factions, to their respective leaders, and to the kingdom's leading families -- the Sananikones, Abhays, and Souvannavongs -- and would be balanced between North and South. Adoption of the proposal also would put an end to the much-criticized Boun Oum regime and, "at least ostensibly," reduce Phoumi to a purely military role.

Friendly nations of Southeast Asia probably would endorse such a government. Since Souvanna and Souphanouvong had often proclaimed their loyalty to the throne, they might be reluctant to defy the wishes of the King. Finally, this was the type of proposal that, prior to the Geneva Conference, the "US would probably have been most happy to endorse."

It should be recognized, Brown warned, that, even though the US imposed military sanctions and joined in a Western approach to the King and Phoumi, the two men might resist these pressures and succeed in forming the kind of government outlined by Phoumi. Brown therefore recommended that, if it became clear that US pressures were unlikely to achieve the result of "killing this project in its entirety," the US should shift to a policy of trying to shape the scheme along more acceptable lines. If possible, the King's government must be generally regarded as "a way-station," an interim solution along the route to an ultimate coalition government of the type Souvanna had been trying to construct. One possible course
suggested by Brown was that the King might be induced to give to Phoui Sananikone the mandate to form a government previously held by Souvanna, or perhaps to designate Phoui the Prime Minister of a caretaker government." In either role, Phoui Sananikone could be charged with negotiating with Souvanna and Souphanouvong toward formation of a provisional government of national unity within the framework of the Zurich communique (see item 22 June 1961).

Replying the following day, Acting Secretary of State Ball thanked Brown for his recommendations and suggested that the US Ambassador explore with the Western Ambassadors at Vientiane and with such Lao leaders as feasible the possibility of shaping Phoumi's plan to conform to the objectives of US policy. The idea of having the King as Prime Minister with a troika of Deputies, Ball observed, might be "negotiable as a face-saver for Phoumi." Ball made no comment on the suggested use of Phoui Sananikone in a major role.

(S) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 1548, 5 Apr 62; SecState to Vientiane, 875, 6 Apr 62.

6 Apr 62

Ambassador Brown, with the concurrence of CHMAAG Laos, analyzed for Assistant Secretary Harriman the various forms of military sanction against the RLG available to the US if the Thai efforts to change Phoumi's course of action failed. The Ambassador mentioned the following sanctions:

1. Suspension of all deliveries of military supplies from outside Laos. This would be a clear-cut major action in the military field which would be known in a few days to the entire FAR and have a major effect throughout the FAR and on Phoumi, the King, and Sarrit. Moreover, it would have no adverse effect on the physical capability of the FAR to fight for about 30 days, giving Phoumi time to reverse his present course. After 30 days, however, this sanction would seriously impair the physical capability of the FAR to fight and would be impossible to reverse if Phoumi remained obdurate. Also, it would be difficult to justify this action in view of continued Soviet aid to the Pathet Lao.

2. Withdrawal of White Star teams from field units. This would be a sanction without widespread adverse military effects, since it would not deprive the FAR of the sinews of war. It was just what Souvanna had asked for and British Ambassador Addis had recommended. However, the withdrawal would have an adverse effect on the fighting capability of the individual FAR units thus deprived, and it would as a practical matter, be irreversible. Moreover, it would have the least impact of any sanction on Phoumi; it would introduce the subject of a general withdrawal of all military advisors; it would deprive the US of its only independent source of knowledge of conditions in certain regions and parts of the FAR.

3. Reduction of air support inside Laos. This would have an immediate impact and would be easily and quickly reversible. For units not fighting it would have no adverse effect on physical military capability, but since almost
all FAR units were periodically involved some form of action that used up ammunition and hardware, the US would be forced to reach a final decision very quickly whether to reverse itself of let the FAR collapse. In any event, both CHMAAG and the Ambassador emphasized, this action could not be taken until after the withdrawal of White Star teams from the Lao field units because of risks to US personnel.

The Ambassador commented that the withdrawal of White Star teams was probably the most politically practical sanction: it could be described as merely withdrawing military advisors from a government that refused advice. Also it provided the longest period between the US action and the physical impairment of the FAR, and it was favored by Souvanna and some US Allies. However, although it would have some psychological effect as the first military sanction, it would produce the least pressure on Phoumi, who could more easily make good his boast to go it alone without US advice than without US supplies. The suspension of military imports, on the other hand, would exert the maximum immediate psychological pressure on Phoumi, the King, Sarit, and the entire FAR. Although it involved a greater risk, the Ambassador could see no sanction that did not involve some risk. Reduction of air support, however, was judged the most drastic and should be contemplated only as a final measure.

In a later message the same day, the Ambassador made several further comments: reduction of deliveries of military hardware would take time to become noticeable and would have little or no effect; reduction of POL would be noticed and have an effect dependent on the degree of reduction but would be hard to justify; and failure to replace departing MAAG officers would have no effect whatever on Phoumi's course of action.

(S) Mssg, Bangkok to SecState, 1550, 1553, 6 Apr 62.

6 Apr 62 CHMAAG Laos told CINCPAC that the US Embassy in Vientiane had requested that AID Washington transfer the funds required for a civic action program in the Bolovens Plateau (see items 23 February and 22, 29 March 1962) to the Department of Defense for allotment to MAAG Laos. CHMAAG agreed with this request because: 1) MAAG already had complete operational responsibility for the program, inasmuch as AID Laos personnel could not operate in an insecure area such as the Bolovens Plateau; and therefore 2) allotment of the funds to MAAG would assure clear lines of fiscal accountability for funds expended in the program. (On the following day, CINCPAC informed the JCS that he concurred in the judgments of CHMAAG and the Embassy. (See item 4 May 1962.))

(S) Mssgs, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 219001, 6 Apr 62; CINCPAC to JCS, 070233Z Apr 62.

6 Apr 62 In a conversation with Souphanouvong at Khang Khay, British Ambassador Addis proposed that "second-level" contacts among the three Lao factions be renewed at Ban Namone or some similar location. Souphanouvong replied that such meetings would be useless since the political issues "were now so clearly drawn." He also thought that talks of this
kind would not keep hostilities from flaring up since he expected both sides to keep on mopping up in their own zones. Addis concluded from this reaction that it was useless to press the matter for the present. He replied to Souphanouvong's remark about mopping up with a warning against allowing military action to upset the political situation.

When Addis raised the question of establishing regular visits to Khang Khay by members of the British Embassy staff, Souphanouvong went beyond this by suggesting that the UK set up permanent representation there, either by detaching an officer from the Vientiane Embassy or by establishing a Consulate. Addis made no commitment and later told his Western colleagues in Vientiane that he believed Phoumi would react strongly against any move to establish permanent British representation at Khang Khay, probably by banning all contact by Westerners with the rival "capital." Accordingly he was not disposed to recommend to his government anything beyond the present schedule of informal contacts. (c) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1401, 6 Apr 62; 1404, 7 Apr 62.

8-12 Apr 62

Having previously occupied the high ground east of Nam Tha, the 55th Parachute Battalion advanced about 5 miles against light resistance to a hill approximately 12 miles east of the town by 10 April. A parallel attack launched two days earlier by the 28th and 30th Infantry Battalions had failed to make significant gains, but on 12 April, after the Parachute Battalion had moved forward, the two infantry battalions advanced slightly.

In southern Laos, a probing attack by the enemy on 8 April forced elements of the 43d Volunteer Battalion and 4301st ADC to withdraw from their position, near the Cambodian border, but the position was retaken by counterattack the next day. On the northwestern fringe of the Bolovens Plateau a company-size enemy force attacked FAR positions. (S-NOFOR) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC and JCS, DA IN 219488, 9 Apr 62; 100915Z Apr 62; 120945Z Apr 62.

9 Apr 62

In a letter handed to President Kennedy by the Lao Ambassador in Washington, King Savang, after reviewing the history of close cooperation between the US and Laos, observed that this "same understanding, same closeness, and same line of action on the part of the American and Lao Governments" no longer existed. The King then listed several examples of the deteriorating relations between the two nations.

The Lao people, according to King Savang, had come to wonder whether the US did not actually intend to disengage itself from the fight against Communism in Southeast Asia. This suspicion regarding US intentions had been occasioned by American insistence on the formation of a Lao coalition in which the Pathet Lao was represented. To form such a government, the King continued, would involve an alliance with Communism, for the Pathet Lao was a "politico-military creation of the Viet Minh." No alliance between anti-Communists and Communists could possibly work, and nowhere