else had anti-Communists been asked to collaborate with their enemies. Entry into such an arrangement, the King predicted, would lead to the eventual destruction of Laos.

Another point "confusing to the Lao people and Government" was the insistence that the 14-nation agreement worked out at Geneva could effectively protect the future independence and sovereignty of the kingdom. The Lao people, in assessing the value of such an agreement, could not help but recall that the US had at first advised against participating in an international conference. (Initially, the US had opposed a Soviet proposal for an international conference because of the propaganda debate that would occur in any such forum; see item 20 February 1961. The US, however, soon came to favor a conference; see item 22 March 1961.)

Finally, the King noted that the US, in spite of its avowed desire to protect Lao sovereignty, had suspended aid, thus weakening the RLG in its struggle to preserve the kingdom from Communist domination. Even more damaging to the Lao cause was the cessation of moral support implied by the suspension of cash grants. "Without that support," the King maintained, "the aid would represent mere dollar policy, a policy for profit and the benefit of private interests in no way tied to the high ideal from which it supposedly stems." (For the President's reply, see item 19 April 1962.)

9 Apr 62 Air photo and visual reconnaissance, reported by USARMA Vientiane, provided evidence of extensive road construction in progress from the Yunnan border toward Phong Saly, with "workers swarming like ants." (For announcement of the Chinese Communist agreement to build such a road, see item 15 January 1962.)

11 Apr 62 Sisouk, the RLG's Acting Foreign Minister, made in a published interview what Ambassador Brown termed "probably the most bitter reproach of US policy made to date by a high-ranking Lao official."

According to Sisouk, Souvanna's departure had little effect on the Lao political situation, although a prolonged absence would "reduce to nil his chances of forming a national union government." Sisouk then charged that Souvanna not only was incapable of forming a coalition but also was no longer able to restrain the Pathet Lao, which was now attacking on all fronts. Thus, the RLG was tempted to interpret Souvanna's departure as a "false excuse for inaction, not to say an implicit renunciation of his mission." Souvanna, moreover, was believed waiting for the Americans, "once his enemies and now his allies and accomplices," to prove their sincerity by exerting extreme pressure on the RLG.

Turning to relations between the RLG and the US Government, Sisouk maintained that the US had suspended its aid in order to force the Lao Government to "accept Washington's political views and, as Harriman declared,
to show America's sincerity toward Russia and its respect for its international obligations." In short, the RLG was not only being humiliated, it was also being pressed to capitulate without receiving any guarantees in return. The US, Sisouk proclaimed, was placing greater confidence in the trustworthiness of the Communists than in the determination of the RLG to defend Lao independence. If the US, as Souvanna advocated, should withdraw its military support, it would fulfill the wishes of the Chinese and Viet Minh by giving the enemy through diplomacy what Communist military efforts had failed to win. Instead of trying to take advantage of Sino-Soviet differences, the US, so the RLG believed, was sacrificing Laos for a worthless understanding with the Communists.

Sisouk also claimed that Viet Minh troops, in excess of the 10,000-man estimate credited to US observers, were aiding the Pathet Lao in a determined effort to seize the Tchepone-Saravane-Attopeu corridor before the coming of the rainy season. Western and neutral Governments, Sisouk charged, were deliberately minimizing the role of the Viet Minh "in order not to intervene." (OVO) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1417, 11 Apr 62.

11 Apr 62 Ambassador Young reported to the Secretary of State that Foreign Minister Thanat had reached an understanding with the Malayan Prime Minister for the latter to use his good offices to influence Phoumi to accept the neutralist coalition for Laos when the RLG goodwill mission visited Kuala Lumpur. Thailand had decided to receive the Lao mission and planned to use the occasion to stress to Phoumi the need for flexibility and team work in negotiations for a neutral Laos under a coalition. Answering the Malayan Prime Minister's request for advice, Thanat urged that he too receive the Lao Mission and stress these same ideas. Thanat believed that the RLG would accept the US plan if several other Asian governments all took the same position. He also cautioned the US against taking hasty action or imposing sanctions before diplomatic persuasion could be tried. This could produce "very bad consequences for all concerned."

(On 13 April the Secretary of State instructed Ambassador Young to brief the Malayan Prime Minister on the US position, if possible, when the latter visited Bangkok.) (S) Msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 1583, 11 Apr 62; SecState to Bangkok, 1575, 13 Apr 62.

12 Apr 62 Ambassador Gavin in Paris informed Souvanna of a message of 11 April in which Harriman first reasserted US support for the formation of a coalition government under Souvanna and then stated the US position regarding its military support of Phoumi. Gavin pointed out that while US financial aid to the RLG had been suspended, the question of withdrawing military assistance to the FAR was complicated by Souphanouvong's aggressive talk about line-straightening operations by the Pathet Lao (see item 31 March 1962) and by the continued presence of significant Viet Minh forces in Laos. Moreover, military sanctions would weaken the "Vientiane non-Communists" on whose strength Souvanna would have to rely when he became Prime Minister.
Souvanna then made certain remarks. He was content to postpone returning to Laos until US pressure had brought Phoumi to terms. He felt that major difficulties might arise after a coalition government was formed, since Phoumi would be unlikely to accept the loss of power this entailed and might "ferment dissidence even possibly to the point of a coup d'etat." Regarding Thailand, Souvanna was bitterly suspicious, stating that the Thai would never overcome the fear that a prosperous and unified Laos would attract the population of northern Thailand. In regard to King Savang's message to the President (see item 9 April 1962), Souvanna deplored the fact that Phoumi had involved the King. He was aware of the RLG plan to dispatch goodwill missions abroad in search of aid (see item 2 April 1962), but, according to Ambassador Gavin, "did not appear to take the matter seriously."

(S) Msg, SecState to Paris, 5456, 11 Apr 62; Paris to SecState, 4841, 12 Apr 62.

13 Apr 62 Acting Foreign Minister Sisouk informed Ambassador Brown of Phoumi's theories regarding the formation of a coalition government. Phoumi, determined not to accept Souvanna as Prime Minister, intended to have the King serve in that office (see items 3 and 5, 6 April 1962). Sisouk, however, had recommended that Phoumi suggest that the King preside over a cabinet based on the Geneva formula of eight neutrals, four rightists, and four leftists (see item 19 January 1962). According to Sisouk's proposal, the three Princes would serve as Vice Prime Ministers under the King. The Foreign Minister told the Ambassador that the matter would be discussed with the King on 15 and 16 April (see item 17 April 1962) and that Phoumi would be willing to allow Souvanna to be Minister of Defense and of Interior in such a government.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1422, 13 Apr 62.

13 Apr 62 Phoumi told Hasey that he would meet the King on 15 April and arrange the details for the King's acceptance of the office of Prime Minister in a new government (see item 17 April 1962). There would be no immediate announcement, but, after the National Assembly had convened on 11 May, the Congress would vote full powers to the King. As soon as he had accepted this grant of power, the King would summon the three Princes to confer with him on the composition of the new government. According to Phoumi, Savang had indicated agreement with this course, after Phoumi had advised him that the US was unlikely to change its policy and therefore the King must act.

(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1425, 17 Apr 62.

13 Apr 62 Phoui Sananikone expressed to Ambassador Brown his doubts that the King would agree to become Prime Minister, unless both Souvanna and Souphanouvong agreed to his assuming office. Ambassador Brown then mentioned Phoumi's earlier statement (see item 3 April 1962) that the King would head a new government. Phoui replied that, though the King had at one time been willing to hold office, the firmness shown by Harriman and Sullivan (see items 24 March, 25 March, and 3 April 1962) had "shaken both the King and Phoumi."

Turning to other subjects, Phoumi said that he saw no immediate solution to the current impasse. He believed that the RLG's attempt to muster aid from the various Asian...
nations would serve a useful purpose in that it would indicate just how little aid was available. In addition, Phoui considered it possible that the Thai Government, which he believed could be of scant help in bringing about negotiations, might be telling the US one thing and Phoumi another. Finally, Phoui stated that Phoumi was confident that the US would resume its program of aid to the RLG.

(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1425, 17 Apr 62.

13 Apr 62

Ambassador Gavin reported on a conversation between Souvanna's representative in Paris, La Norindr, and US officials. La offered as his personal opinion the idea that the sole means of stabilizing the "delicate" situation in Laos was by persuading Souvanna to return there. This could best be done, he continued, by the withdrawal of US military aid from the RLG, plus a concerted Western appeal for Souvanna to return to Laos. While La admitted that his recommendation was not easy to reconcile with Souvanna's desire to remain in Paris, US officials felt that La was "in a good position to make judgments on the possible reactions of his boss."

La also stated that Souvanna had instructed Quinim to make every effort to achieve a "more neutral output in the information field." As a related matter, La mentioned that he had been attempting to interest both Reuters and the French Press Agency in establishing news service facilities in Khang Khay, and he hoped for success with the latter. The Embassy officials took this opportunity to do some "missionary work" regarding US press representation in Laos, but La expressed his regrets that he could do nothing on this score.

La concluded with the suggestion that "in view of Souvanna's respect for Harriman," any important news for the Prince be transmitted as a message from Harriman.

(C) Msg, Paris to SecState, 4861, 13 Apr 62.

16 Apr 62

During a royal reception at Luang Prabang, Ambassador Brown talked briefly with King Savang. The King declared that the Lao problem arose from a clash between races, a conflict that could not be resolved by the mere establishment of a coalition government. Brown thereupon asked if this was, in effect, a suggestion that Laos be divided along racial lines, with one part of the kingdom going to North Viet Nam and the other part to Thailand. The King, however, "did not seem disposed to pursue the subject further."

Among other things, the King expressed a lack of confidence in both the Geneva Agreements and the alleged Soviet desire for a neutral Laos. He agreed that the three Princes had never engaged in sincere negotiations. Although admittedly aware of his nation's weaknesses, the King declared that the Lao people would never submit to domination by the Annamites or the Communists. He remained unconvinced by Brown's arguments in favor of a Souvanna government. Finally, the King spoke of his past visits to the US and his friendship for the nation that had saved Laos during the 1954 crisis. "After I have lost my throne," he added, "I will come again to Washington."

(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1425, 17 Apr 62.
17 Apr 62 At a White House meeting, the President asked the opinion of the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, regarding the feasibility of withholding or even terminating military aid to Phoumi. The Chairman replied that such action would be a backward step, and the President seemed inclined to agree. The Chairman also told the President that withdrawal of US advisors, even if only from forward areas, was not a good idea. The President replied that he could see no useful purpose in withdrawing military assistance at present.

(TS) JCS Secy Files, 18 Apr 62.

17 Apr 62 Phoumi told Hasey that the King had definitely agreed to head a coalition government of the type suggested by Sisouk (see item 13 April 1962). This royal decision, however, had not been discussed by the cabinet. The three Princes would serve as Deputy Prime Ministers, and the cabinet would be apportioned according to the Geneva formula of 8-4-4. Phoumi himself might be named Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, although the King seemed to favor his serving as a special adviser with status as Minister without portfolio. Further discussion of this matter with the King was scheduled.

Phoumi also reported that the cabinet had approved goodwill missions (see item 18 March 1962) to Bangkok on 24 April and to Saigon on 4 May. The Chinese Nationalist Government had agreed to receive a mission on a date yet to be arranged, while Korea and Burma had given their tentative approval. Malaya (and possibly the Philippine Commonwealth) had not yet reacted to the Lao diplomatic overtures.

Ambassador Brown commented that the real attitude and intentions of King Savang were still as much a mystery as ever, but the possibility of his taking an active role appeared to be increasing. The Sisouk formula for a King's government, now apparently advocated by Phoumi, was "much more balanced and constructive" than any previous version "and consequently more difficult to oppose."

(C) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1425, 17 Apr 62.

17 Apr 62 CHMAAG Laos reported the results of the first tests in Laos of the CARIBOU aircraft (see item 19 March 1962). Operating into and out of unimproved airfields with as little as 1,000 feet of runway and as high as 5,000 feet elevation, the CARIBOU had proved to be far superior, at least in dry weather, to any other plane yet flown in Laos. CHMAAG recommended two modifications to the aircraft and he requested that it be retained for tests in Laos during the rainy season, until November 1962. (On 27 April, however, the Advanced Research Project Agency (ARPA) detachment in Saigon informed the Department of Defense that the CARIBOU was urgently needed in Saigon for a research and development project. The ARPA unit recommended that, after the completion of this project, the CARIBOU remain in Saigon under ARPA control for use in South Viet Nam, Laos, and Thailand.)

(S) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC et al., DA IN 223009, 17 Apr 62; COMUSMACV to OSD, DA IN 225115, 27 Apr 62.
The Civil Affairs Mobile Training Team (CAMTT) requested by CMAAG Laos on 8 March (see item) arrived in Laos. (S) Msg, CMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, OSD (ISA), et al., DA IN 228391, 10 May 62.

The Secretary of State forwarded to Ambassador Brown the text of President Kennedy's reply to King Savang's letter of 9 April (see item). The President expressed his deep regret at the Lao Government's "fundamental misunderstanding" of US policy, reiterated the unchanging friendship of the US for the Lao nation and people, and sought to explain the reasoning behind the current American position.

Because Pathet Lao forces by 1 April 1961 had been gaining the upper hand in their fight against the PAR, the United States, out of friendship for the Lao people, had joined in obtaining a cease-fire designed to preserve the existence of the kingdom and to pave the way for a negotiated settlement which, in turn, would insure the future independence of Laos. Toward this ultimate goal, the US and other friends of Laos had urged both the creation of a neutral coalition led by Prince Souvanna and the implementation of the understandings reached at Geneva, especially of the agreement to withdraw foreign troops from Laos.

Unfortunately, leaders of the RLG had violated the spirit of the various communiques issued by the three Princes (see items 22 June 1961, 6-8 October 1961, and 19 January 1962) and refused to negotiate in good faith toward the establishment of a coalition government. Because of this display of stubbornness, the US Government had lost confidence in the willingness of the RLG to negotiate in good faith and had therefore decided to suspend aid. The US could not provide financial or military support for courses of action contrary to commitments to which the RLG had openly agreed, such as those contained in the various communiques of the Princes. If Phoumi's refusal to negotiate should cause the resumption of hostilities, the President "could hardly justify American military intervention to Congress in the full knowledge that the possibility of a reasonable peaceful settlement had deliberately been forfeited."

President Kennedy then repeated the conviction that a negotiated settlement offered the only possible hope for Laos. A coalition government assisted by the nations of the Free World, protected by the Geneva accords, and supported by all moderate elements within the kingdom could survive the perils of Communism.

American military opinion, the President continued, indicated that the resumption of hostilities would result in the conquest by the Pathet Lao of the entire country. Since the policy of the RLG would, if uncorrected, undoubtedly result in renewed warfare, the interests of the Lao people could best be served by the RLG's abandoning its inflexible position and, while there was still time, entering into sincere negotiations.

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In a separate message, the Secretary of State instructed Ambassador Brown, when presenting the President's letter, to "make orally the following points to the King in the language you consider most effective."

Neither the President nor Congressional leaders, the King was to be told, were "prepared to contemplate" the commitment of US troops in Laos. Although the President did not intend at the present time to make a public statement to this effect, he wanted the King to realize that, in spite of any efforts the RLG might make to alter this policy, a military intervention by US forces was out of the question. If he considered it necessary, the President would publicly announce this decision in order to prevent any misunderstandings of US policy.

Ambassador Brown also was to inform the King that the US intended to make every effort within its power to assure a just and equitable implementation of those measures designed to protect the independence and neutrality of Laos. Among these measures were the withdrawal of foreign troops and the proportional integration of the existing armed forces into a national army. The US, moreover, was prepared to support the FAR until integration had been achieved.

The US, the Secretary of State continued, was willing to assist the coalition government, insofar as possible, to conduct free elections. The US also would provide the new government with economic, military, and social assistance in a manner and amount consistent with the Geneva Agreement and agreeable to the US and Lao Governments.

Finally, the King was to be told that President Kennedy and the US Government considered it important that Phoumi take an active and prominent part in the coalition government. Phoumi's forceful leadership and the anti-Communist ideals he represented would be necessary for the success of the new regime. (For the Ambassador's presentation of the above, see item 23 April 1962.)

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 904, 19 Apr 62; (C) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 905, 19 Apr 62.

19 Apr 62

The State Department issued a decision made at the highest US Government level including instructions for dealing with the current Lao situation. US policy, the decision made clear, continued to be directed toward achieving a "Souvanna solution" and a Geneva settlement for Laos. So far, US efforts had met with some success: the British and French had been reassured and the Communists had refrained from rash military action. The US, therefore, was prepared to mount further prudent pressures on Phoumi. Thai efforts had not worked so far, and Phoumi continued to press for his "King's government" scheme (see items 13 and 17 April 1962) which, if initiated on 11 May, could have the effect of revoking Souvanna's mandate or otherwise driving him from the scene. Therefore, Ambassador Young was instructed to urge the Thai Government to:

1. Persuade the RLG to resume negotiations, renouncing claims to the Defense and Interior posts provided that some acceptable arrangement could be made for troika committees.
in the Souvanna cabinet to regulate these departments and Souphanouvong would give assurances that no military attempts to improve his position would be undertaken during the interim period.

2. Persuade Phoumi not to pursue the "King's government" scheme in any way that would revoke Souvanna's mandate or drive him from Laos. Moreover, the Thai should be informed that the US was prepared to impose unspecified military sanctions on Phoumi by 7 May if Thailand had not succeeded in persuading him by that time to drop his new government scheme planned for implementation on 11 May.

The Department of State would inform the British and French of these highest level decisions, stressing Souphanouvong's refusal to give satisfactory military assurances. The US was also considering the possibility of seeking agreement with the USSR on the levels of military equipment for the respective Lao forces in order to test Soviet intentions and to avoid escalation.

On the same day, Ambassador Young was also instructed to reveal to Sarit the contents of President Kennedy's letter and oral comments to the Lao King (see item 19 April 1962).

(S) Msg, SecState to Bangkok, 1601, 19 Apr 62; SecState to Vientiane, 904, 19 Apr 62; (S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 905, 19 Apr 62.

19 Apr 62

In a meeting with Ambassador Young, Prime Minister Sarit admitted that he was having much trouble with Phoumi who was attacking him for his lack of support. Sarit did not look forward to the Lao goodwill mission, and although he would have to receive Boun Gum, he did not know what to say. Ambassador Young urged Sarit to repeat to Boun Gum his "Nong Khai advice" (see item 24 March 1962). Sarit expressed "nebulous negativism" over Phoumi's idea of a King's government for Laos, observing that the King could not make the plan work. Nonetheless, in Young's opinion, Phoumi was coming to Bangkok to sell his plan to the Thai Government. In an attempt to strengthen Sarit's opposition to the scheme, Young pointed out to him that Phoumi's plan would be rejected by Souvanna, who would probably remain in Europe, thus increasing the chances of a military crisis in Laos that would be dangerous to Thailand.

Ambassador Young also reported a conversation he later overheard between Thanat and the Lao Ambassador to Thailand in which Thanat pressed the Lao to advise his government to be realistic and flexible in undertaking real negotiations immediately.

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1633, 20 Apr 62.

19 Apr 62

Ambassador Gavin informed the Secretary of State that, according to the Laos Desk Officer in the French Foreign Office, the current difficulty over the delivery of supplies for French activities at Xieng Khouang would have no immediate effect on the formal aspects of relations between the French and Lao Governments. The conflict had arisen when the P.L.G interfered with flights that delivered supplies to the six-man French Military Mission at Xieng Khouang, the French school, and the Catholic mission there. When
questioned by Ambassador Falaize about the RLG's action, Phoumi denied any knowledge of previous flights, even though the RLG had received cargo manifests and had used the flights to transmit messages to Souvanna.

The desk officer declared that France had no intention of withdrawing the Military Mission, which had been authorized by the Geneva Accords and would continue to forward supplies via Phnom Penh. He then emphasized the importance of the French activities at Xieng Khouang, especially of the Catholic mission and the school which together had charge of 120 Lao children who otherwise would be trained in North Viet Nam.


On 19 April, the White House promulgated National Security Action Memorandum No. 149, authorizing the Secretary of Defense to plan for the withdrawal to the rear echelon in Laos of 7 or 8 White Star Mobile Training Teams (WSMTTs) currently located in forward field positions, but reserving to the Secretary of State the authority to order the actual withdrawal, when he deemed it appropriate but probably not before 7 May. The State Department immediately informed the Vientiane Embassy, and on the following day the JCS informed CINCPAC, CHMAAG Laos, and others of this approved action. The JCS also provided the additional guidance from the State Department that the teams to be withdrawn should be those most exposed and therefore most likely to be overrun or captured by the enemy.

On 23 April, CHMAAG Laos informed CINCPAC, and Ambassador Brown informed the Department of State, that the teams to be withdrawn would be those at Nam Tha and those stationed with forward units north of Pakse and in the Nhommarath-Mahaxay area. Both men noted that withdrawal of these teams would reduce US capabilities in certain respects. In addition, Ambassador Brown told the State Department that the teams chosen were those located where contact with the enemy was currently most active, and those that were currently most in the public eye. Phoumi would be informed of the withdrawal, the Ambassador reported, only when it was actually in progress.

Finally, on 26 April, in response to concern expressed on the previous day by CINCPAC, CHMAAG reported to his commander that the withdrawal as planned would not "denude" any area of US advisory support. All WSMTTs in the Nam Tha area would be withdrawn, but two MAAG senior advisors and supporting personnel would remain there; the teams near Pakse and Mahaxay-Nhommarath would be withdrawn from forward battalions but would be retained at the respective GM headquarters.

(S) NSAM No. 149, 19 Apr 62, att to JCS 2344/40, 24 Apr 62; JMF 9155.2/5191 (17 Aug 61). (S) Msgs, SecState to Vientiane, 903, 19 Apr 62; JCS to CINCPAC, JCS 4150, 20 Apr 62; CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 223817, 23 Apr 62; CINCPAC to CHMAAG Laos, 251834L April 62; CHMAAG Laos to CINCPAC, DA IN 224675, 26 April 62; Vientiane to SecState, 1142, 23 Apr 62.

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After having launched two attacks against the enemy from the position east of Nam Tha reached on 10 April (see item 8-12 April 1962) and having been repulsed each time, the 55th Parachute Battalion was overrun, along with the supporting 1st Parachute Battalion, by an enemy attack of 3 to 5 battalion strength. Pursued by the enemy, the 55th battalion withdrew to Ban Nam Pick, about 10 miles southeast of Nam Tha, where it joined elements of the 13th Volunteer Battalion. The next day, 22 April, the FAR forces, harassed by enemy small arms and mortar fire, withdrew to Nam Tha. FAR casualties were estimated at 40 to 50 men killed; FAR sources estimated those of the enemy at 400.

During an informal chat with an officer of the US Embassy in Vientiane, Acting Foreign Minister Sisouk declared that, as far as the RLG was concerned, Souvanna was definitely "out of the question" as Prime Minister. The Prince, however, would be accepted as one of three Vice Prime Ministers in a government headed by the King (see item 17 April 1962). Sisouk believed that the King, before accepting a grant of full powers from the National Assembly, should summon the Princes to Luang Prabang and announce his intentions, so that the Princes would not be presented with a fait accompli. The voting of full powers to the King, Sisouk maintained, would not necessarily mean that Souvanna's mandate had been revoked.

In commenting upon this conversation, Ambassador Brown called attention to an interview, printed on the previous day, in which Sisouk had told the press that the RLG, aware that the US would not change its mind regarding Souvanna, would look to other Asian nations for technical and economic assistance. Sisouk, the Ambassador concluded, shared with many Lao leaders an attitude of "resignation before the inevitable on the one hand and polite defiance of the US on the other."

At a farewell dinner held in his honor in Vientiane, Soviet Ambassador Abramov told the French and British Ambassadors that Laos was "no longer a problem of first importance internationally but had dropped to third or fourth place." Abramov believed that Laos would remain quiet until Souvanna had returned from France. An early settlement, moreover, depended entirely upon the US; there was nothing that the Soviets or British could do.

If an early settlement was reached, Abramov continued, the Soviet Union would be pleased. If, however, the situation "dragged on for two, three, or even seven years without a solution," the Soviet Union was prepared to wait, even though the delay was accompanied by a steady deterioration in Laos. Even in the case of a long delay, Abramov remarked, the Lao problem was not likely to be solved until the Viet Nam crisis, which he ranked in first place internationally, had been resolved. Both Falaize and Addis
gained the impression that Abramov believed a delay might be of greater advantage to the USSR than would an immediate settlement.

Abramov also gave his opinion that Souvanna and Souphanouvong would reject Phoumi's proposal for a new government headed by the King (see item 17 April 1962). The Soviet Ambassador expressed regret that Brown had been unable to attend the dinner and made only friendly references to the US.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1446, 24 Apr 62.

22 Apr 62 CHMAAG Laos informed CHJUSMAG Thailand that Phoumi had "agreed in principle" on 3 April to the extension into Fiscal Year 1963 of the EKARAD program for training FAR units in Thailand. US MAP Funds had already been programmed for the training under EKARAD during FY 63 of 2200 troops (the equivalent of three infantry battalions and four artillery batteries), and CHMAAG now intended to urge the FAR to designate specific units for training at specific times. There were currently two artillery batteries and one NCO class in EKARAD training, and CHMAAG had asked the FAR for 200 more NCO's for a May training class. In March, moreover, he had nominated to the FAR four infantry battalions, any one of which could be spared from the front without serious effect upon the combat posture of the FAR. Phoumi replied, however, that none of them could presently be spared, but that he would release one battalion for EKARAD "as soon as the tactical situation permits." CHMAAG felt that, under these circumstances, the training facilities at Lopburi, Thailand, should be retained for the EKARAD program.

(S) Msg, CHMAAG Laos to CHJUSMAG Thailand, DA IN 224014, 22 Apr 62.

23 Apr 62 Ambassador Young passed on to Sarit and Thanat the US Government's high-level decision concerning Laos and the President's letter and Ambassador Brown's oral comments to the Lao King (see items 19 April 1962). At first Thanat complained that the President's letter and oral statement to the King were vague concerning arrangements for a political settlement of the Lao problem and safeguards against a Communist take-over if the Souvanna government proved ineffective. But Sarit asked that a text or summary of all these documents be given him to use during the anticipated Lao goodwill mission; with these documents, he remarked, he would have more to say to the Laotians than they would to him. He also stated officially for the the US Government that Thailand planned to make no commitments for assistance to the mission. He warned that persuading the RLG to accept the US policy would be a long-term effort and might never succeed. The Lao Government, he commented, seemed to have gone "wild." Moreover, the personal relations between Souvanna and the King formed another formidable obstacle to a solution. He vigorously subscribed to the objective of clearing Laos of all foreign military forces but doubted that the Chinese could be put out, particularly in view of their road and installation building in northeastern Laos (see item 9 April 1962).

The next day, Ambassador Young held a further conversation with the Thai Foreign Minister on the same subject. Thanat promised that he and Sarit would do everything they
could to push the US views during the visit of the Lao goodwill mission. He cautioned, however, against expecting immediate results; of all SEA peoples, the Lao took the longest time to change their minds and understood much less the broader implications and consequences of their problems. Persuading the RLG would be simpler, Thanat believed, if its goodwill mission heard the same arguments from Diem and the South Vietnamese Government as from Thailand and Malaya. He asked if the US had made its position fully known to Diem (see item 28 April 1962). He was somewhat concerned that Diem might take a contradictory line with the RLG.

Thanat also discussed the RLG's attempts to introduce the "King's gambit" as a formula for peaceful settlement. He believed the proposal, while not wholly feasible, at least showed that the RLG was moving out of the corner towards a face-saving compromise. He also felt that neutrals in the Defense and Interior posts would be better than a troika arrangement, but saw either plan a proper subject for discussion and negotiation.

msgs, Bangkok to SecState, 1649, 24 Apr 62; 1642, 23 Apr 62.

23 Apr 62 Ambassador Brown delivered to King Savang the letter in which President Kennedy explained the reasoning behind US policy toward Laos (see item 19 April 1962). After commenting upon the letter, as instructed by the Secretary of State, Brown also expressed the hope that Souvanna's mandate to form a new government would not be revoked.

After listening to the US Ambassador's remarks, the King expressed appreciation for the President's message and stated that he would study the letter carefully. He also promised to inform the Government of President Kennedy's letter and urge that it be carefully considered, so that the RLG might act wisely and in a manner that would lead to the restoration of US aid.

Ambassador Brown believed that the King, who seemed more than usually concerned about the loss of US aid and the possible failure of the Princes to reach agreement, would bring the President's letter to the attention of the RLG later in the day. Because of the King's sympathy for Phoumi's position, the Ambassador could not predict how earnestly Savang would urge acceptance of the President's advice. Brown feared, however, that "Phoumi and his colleagues have dug themselves so far into their position that the chances of their modifying it substantially remain slight."

During the audience the King reiterated his desire to rule as a constitutional monarch. Since leaders on both sides were tainted with dishonesty, the King could not avoid contact with corruption if he entered politics. Brown mentioned that "a considerable body of opinion" believed that a government under the King was the only possible solution and indicated that the National Assembly might appeal to the monarch to form a government (see item 17 April 1962). The King merely replied "We will
see." He later added, however, that for the members of the National Assembly to bestow full powers upon him would be an act of "great cowardice" on their part. Although the Ambassador interpreted these remarks to indicate that the King did not desire to become Prime Minister, Brown nevertheless believed that Savang, if called upon by the National Assembly, might possibly agree to head a new government.

The King also expressed concern lest the rivalry of the Princes result in the partition of the kingdom. The antidote, the King continued, would be a government of national union, probably led by Souvanna. Such a coalition would have to be composed of the nation's elite, but thus far both Boun Oum and Souvanna had simply presented lists of nonentities culled from among their followers. Not even the King himself could make a cabinet composed of "hacks" work successfully. The tragedy of Laos, the King complained, was that it had so few competent men and that these few would not cooperate.

Another point mentioned by the King was his belief that Communist China would never abandon its imperialistic designs and would continue to support wars of "liberation." Hence Laos would always be under attack.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1444, 23 Apr 62.

23-28 Apr 62

SEATO Exercise AIR COBRA, sponsored by Thailand and the United States with participation of Australia, France, and the United Kingdom, was conducted in Thailand. On 28 April CINCPAC reported the "simulated enemy in full retreat" as the result of successful tactical air operations. The approved publicity guidance for the exercise had stated that its objectives were to develop coordination in the use of SEATO air power through an air operations center, demonstrate the feasibility of rapid aerial resupply of ground forces, exercise SEATO capability to conduct behind-the-lines guerrilla warfare, and standardize operational procedures between participating SEATO forces.

(C) Mags, Bangkok to SecState, 1513, 30 Mar 62; CINCPAC to JCS, 250415Z and 282155Z Apr 62; (U) Mag, CHJUSMAG Thailand to CINCPAC, DA IN 738004, 051955Z May 62.

25 Apr 62

An RLG goodwill mission, intended to gain support for the Boun Oum government from certain Asian nations, left Vientiane for Bangkok. Included in the party were Boun Oum, Phoumi, Acting Foreign Minister Sisouk, and officials of the Ministries of National Economy, Public Works, and Finance. Sisouk, in an informal conversation with reporters, said that Boun Oum and the majority of the group would return to Vientiane after visiting Bangkok. Phoumi and Sisouk, however, were to proceed to Seoul, Saigon, and Kuala Lumpur. The visit to Seoul was tentatively scheduled for 2-4 May and the mission to Malaya for 8-9 May. An exact date for the Saigon visit had not yet been fixed. Sisouk did not indicate whether he and Phoumi would return to Vientiane before journeying to South Korea.

(U) Mag, Vientiane to SecState, 1448, 25 Apr 62.
27 Apr 62 Ambassador Young reported to the Secretary of State that by public statements and long private talks during the Lao goodwill mission’s visit to Thailand, Sarit and Thanat apparently had influenced Phoumi and others "to change in a satisfactory direction." Thanat had informed Young that the matter now looked very hopeful, and although the May deadline set by the US (see item 19 April 1962) had an impact on the Lao officials, the problem of face, both in Vientiane and Bangkok, was real, and ways must be found to adjust "public opinion." Therefore, he hoped the US would not undertake military sanctions on the 7 May date. He understood the US desire for valid and adequate assurances of the Lao change of opinion and was confident that these would be given in early May.

(S) Msg, Bangkok to SecState, 1666, 27 Apr 62.

27 Apr 62 As reinforcement for the defenses at Nam Tha, now pushed back to the immediate vicinity of the town and airfield, the first elements of the 11th Parachute Battalion were brought in from southern Laos. [During the next several days, the FAR continued to parachute elements of the 11th Battalion into the area, raising the total strength to eight battalions with approximately 4,500 men. Enemy forces, estimated at five to six battalions, were believed to number 2,500 infantry and support troops. Sporadic artillery and mortar fire was exchanged almost daily. On 27 April and again on 30 April the FAR garrison repulsed enemy attacks by forces ranging up to company size. Then on 5-6 May the enemy launched a full-scale assault by at least four battalions. Attacking from three sides of the town, the enemy entered Nam Tha on 6 May.]

In central and southern Laos, patrol activity and probing attacks continued to be the pattern of action. A redeployment of FAR units, necessitated by the move of the 11th Parachute Battalion to Nam Tha, took place in the neighborhood of Savannahchet.

(S-NOFORN) Msgs, CHMAAG Laos to AIG 923, JCS. et al., DA IN 225019, 25 Apr 62; DA IN 224774, 26 Apr 62; DA IN 225070, 27 Apr 62; DA IN 225384, 28 Apr 62; DA IN 225842, 21 May 62; (TS-NOFORN) J-3, Southeast Asia SITREP 18-62, 2 May 62.

27 Apr 62 In a message to the JCS, CINCPAC reiterated his belief (see item 15 March 1962) that, if MAAG Laos was withdrawn but US military assistance to Laos continued, an organization similar to the former PEO Laos should be established within the US Country Team. The PEO had come into bad repute during its existence, CINCPAC commented, because it was inadequately and improperly manned; once it had been properly manned with military personnel, it had done a "respectable" job. CINCPAC recommended that military personnel be selected for placement within USOM Laos during the next few months and that a chief of a PEO-type organization, and his immediate staff, be designated so that the US would be prepared to continue supervising military assistance programs when and if MAAG Laos was withdrawn.

(S) Msg, CINCPAC to JCS, 2702242 Apr 62.

28 Apr 62 Referring to the goodwill mission the RLG was sending to various capitals in the Far East in order to gain moral
support for RLG resistance to a negotiated settlement and probably to request financial assistance as well, the Secretary of State told the US Embassies in seven Far Eastern countries there were indications that Phoumi and his group would be strongly influenced by the reception they received on their trip. The Thai Government, which was already cooperating fully with the US, believed that if other friendly Asian governments would support a peaceful settlement for Laos, Phoumi would change to a more realistic policy. On the other hand, if the RLG were to receive encouragement it might continue in its present dangerous course. Secretary Rusk instructed the Far Eastern Embassies to impress upon the governments concerned the importance the US attached to their support of a negotiated settlement of the Laotian problem. If necessary, US diplomats should point out that the US felt it had the right to expect "not passive acceptance but active support" of US policy from its Asian friends and allies. This would be particularly true, Rusk noted, of leaders of those countries that the US was "almost unilaterally keeping alive, e.g., Diem, Chiang, Pak."

The Secretary outlined several general points that might be used in the briefings and spelled out specific instructions for Ambassadors Nolting in Saigon and Stevenson in Manila. The US Ambassador to South Viet Nam was instructed to see President Diem and "insist that he support fully" the US policy in Laos. This policy was shared by other friends of SVN who were also lending assistance to Diem in his own struggle. Diem should understand, said Rusk, that the most effective way of curtailing Viet Cong use of the Lao corridor would be through implementation of the Geneva Agreements, and a coalition government would be necessary to put these into effect. It would be, therefore, to Diem's advantage to urge Phoumi to negotiate for coalition; a continuation of the present course in Laos would only worsen the situation for both the RLG and South Viet Nam.

Ambassador Stevenson in Manila was told to emphasize that a policy of peaceful settlement for Laos was not that of the US alone but was supported by all other Free World friends of Laos, including Thailand. The Secretary of State suggested to Stevenson that it might be useful to stress that the US, far from "writing Laos off," intended to give the non-Communists in a neutral Lao government strong political and economic assistance against the Communists.

(S) Msg, SecState CIRC 1850, 28 Apr 62.

30 Apr 62 Ambassador Brown called upon Acting Foreign Minister Sisouk, who appeared genuinely concerned about the rift between the RLG and the US Government. While Sisouk stressed his nation's need for US support, Brown warned that, unless Phoumi abandoned his plan to have the King form a new government (see item 17 April 1961), the US would take further action against the RLG. Sisouk, however, objected that the application of additional pressure would merely cause Phoumi "to dig in his heels."
Brown opened the conversation by asking Sisouk's views of prospects for the future. The Acting Foreign Minister replied that, although neither the military nor economic situations were good, he was slightly more optimistic. He based this optimism on his belief that the RLG, having realized the need for US aid and friendship, would shape a policy designed to maintain the best possible relations with the US. He did not believe that the RLG would do anything to worsen these relations.

Sisouk then stated that the mission to Bangkok (see items 25 and 27 April 1962) had been well received by the Thai Government. Sarit, however, had urged the RLG to be prudent, to regard carefully its relations with the US, and to give serious consideration to US advice. Most of the discussion had been devoted to military and economic matters. Such questions as the possible establishment of a troika for Defense and Interior had not been investigated.

Brown then declared that he had been discouraged by certain remarks attributed to Sisouk and Phoumi. According to the press, the Acting Foreign Minister had declared after the meeting with Sarit that Souvanna could not be relied upon to form a government. In addition, Phoumi had been quoted as insisting, on this same occasion, that he retain control of the Ministries of Defense and Interior. Sisouk replied that statements such as these were essential, for the delegation could not suddenly change its views without appearing to bow to the dictates of a foreign power. If the RLG did alter its stand, the change would not occur until the delegation had completed its entire tour of Asian nations. In that way, the RLG would maintain its prestige, since no one nation could be singled out as having forced this alteration of policy.

Sisouk then remarked that Souvanna should return to Laos and resume negotiations. Brown answered that the Prince would not return unless the RLG was willing to discuss Defense and Interior. When Sisouk asked what assurances Souvanna would give about, for example, the army, Brown said that, since the RLG was concerned about this subject, it was up to Phoumi and his colleagues to state exactly what guarantees they desired. The RLG, Brown continued, should be discussing the basis upon which it would negotiate concerning Defense and Interior. Once the conditions had been formulated, the RLG should be prepared to enter into sincere discussions regarding these key cabinet posts. The Ambassador, after observing that the US was willing to support the RLG in obtaining reasonable assurances on principal issues, suggested that Sisouk and his fellow cabinet officers concentrate on the suggested troika arrangement in Defense and Interior (see item 31 March 1962). The US had already mentioned this possible solution to Souvanna, who had indicated a willingness to accept it, and to Souphanouvong, who at least had not specifically rejected it.

Sisouk, after listening to Brown's arguments, maintained that the RLG could not, in advance of negotiations, make any public statement of the conditions under which it would yield Defense and Interior. The US Ambassador replied
that no public statement was necessary. All that was required was a reasonable assurance to Souvanna that the RLG would engage in serious negotiations regarding these posts.

Ambassador Brown then asked Sisouk if Phoumi intended to have the National Assembly, when it convened on 11 May, empower the King to form a new government. Sisouk explained that, since Phoumi would return to Vientiane from Malaya on 10 May and depart by the 14th for Taiwan and possibly the Philippines, it did not appear that there would be time for any major action during so brief a stay in the Lao capital. Brown nevertheless warned that the Western powers opposed the scheme as impractical. Not only would Souphanouvong and Souvanna reject such a plan; its unilateral implementation by the RLG would, in effect, revoke Souvanna's mandate, thus eliminating his moderating influence and leaving the right and left in direct confrontation. Sisouk, when asked by Brown, declined to give categorical assurance that, at least during May, no grant of powers would be voted to the King. The Acting Foreign Minister suggested that Brown seek confirmation from Phoumi that the King would not form a new government during the month of May.

In conclusion, Sisouk asked that the US, instead of bludgeoning the RLG into compliance, offer some means by which the Lao Government could save face. Brown replied that the US had for a long time relied on friendly advice and persuasion to convince the RLG to accept a coalition government led by Souvanna. These means, however, had proved useless. If the RLG, at some earlier time, had asked for a way of honorably abandoning its opposition to Souvanna, the US would have cooperated, but the RLG instead had grown increasingly rigid in its stand against the Prince. Since this was the case, the US had naturally grown correspondingly less gentle in its dealings with the Lao Government.

(S) Msg, Vientiane to SecState, 1462, 30 Apr 62.

During an interview with Ambassador Brown, Phoumi suggested a "basket solution" which included: 1) certain international commitments, such as those contained in the Geneva Agreements and, in particular, an undertaking by the US to support vigorously the execution of these agreements; 2) agreement with Souvanna on the formation of a coalition government, along with special arrangements to govern Defense and Interior and assurances regarding the measures by which Souvanna would protect Laos from Communist domination; and 3) a private arrangement with the US "as to what would happen if things went badly under a Souvanna government." This solution, Phoumi believed, would eliminate the misunderstanding between the Lao and US Governments.

In commenting upon the first point in the proposed settlement, Brown assured Phoumi that the US, since it was eager to see the adoption of the Geneva Agreements, would play its full role in making the agreements work as effective as possible. The conversation then turned to the second point, as Phoumi and Brown engaged in a long discussion of how to renew contact with Souvanna, of the assurances that Souvanna and the US could extend to the RLG, and of the possible revocation of the Prince's mandate.
Brown recommended that Souvanna be told that the RLG wished to enter into serious discussions concerning the surrender to the neutral group of the Defense and Interior portfolios. Phoumi, after acknowledging that Souvanna's mandate remained valid in spite of his withdrawal to Paris, declared that the RLG wished to correct the misunderstanding that had alienated Souvanna. Phoumi then asked if the US, because of the insecurity of Lao codes, would transmit a message to the Prince. The message, however, would have to be delivered in a fashion that would not imply "retreat" by Phoumi. Brown agreed to transmit the message in the manner that would cause Phoumi the least embarrassment.

Regarding the assurances sought by the RLG, Brown asked Phoumi to explain the type of guarantees he desired. The US probably would agree with many of these conditions and consequently would support him in asking Souvanna and Souphanouvong to accept them.

Ambassador Brown then declared that the US objective in Laos was to shift the fight against Communism from the military to the political, psychological, and economic fields. After Phoumi had expressed agreement with this objective, Brown noted that the anti-Communists possessed several advantages in these three areas. Listed as advantages were: 1) Phoumi's energy, knowledge of the situation, and ability, as a member of the coalition, to deal with Souvanna; 2) the basic dislike of most Lao for the Pathet Lao; 3) acceleration of the civil action and rural development programs; and 4) the "economic resources which could be put into the electoral battle."

The election of a government to succeed the coalition, Brown continued, was the key to the future of Laos. Souvanna, after all, had declared that the Pathet Lao had to be defeated in these elections if the kingdom was to be saved from Communism. Because of the importance of the electoral campaign, Phoumi could rest assured that the US would render financial, technical, and material support to the anti-Communist forces.

The US Ambassador then turned to Phoumi's proposal that the King form a new government. The US, France, and Britain were concerned about the plan, since the King's acceptance of office would automatically revoke Souvanna's mandate. This, in turn, would result in a direct confrontation between the RLG and the Pathet Lao. Phoumi, when asked if he intended to implement the plan as scheduled, remarked that he might have been misunderstood. The King, after all, could take advantage of a grant of powers to appoint Souvanna as Prime Minister. At any rate, nothing could be done for the next few weeks, since the proposal had not even been discussed with members of the National Assembly.

Brown then reminded Phoumi of the numerous public and private statements to the effect that a Government headed by the King was the only solution. (For examples of such statements, see items 3 and 13 and 17 April 1962.) The Western Powers had accepted these statements at face value.
and therefore viewed the situation with grave concern. Unless reassured on this point, the US and its allies might be compelled to "take some further action which might aggravate the situation." At Brown's insistence, Phoumi then declared that the RLG, at least during the month of May, would not discuss with the National Assembly either the granting of full powers to the King or the King's forming a new government.

After discussing these various aspects of the formation of a coalition government, the two men turned to the third point, a private arrangement between the US and Phoumi that would take effect if Souvanna failed. Brown merely said that he would be interested to learn the precise arrangement that Phoumi had in mind. Phoumi then expressed a wish to visit the US once again. Instead of explaining the RLG position, however, he would explore the kind of arrangements that could be made with the US to give maximum assurance that, if the RLG did yield Defense and Interior to the neutrals and participate in the coalition, the country would not slip into Communism. Phoumi believed that any private arrangement with the US should be kept secret, but, if the US insisted that any other party in Laos should be informed, he would agree to "let him in on the secret."

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1460, 30 Apr 62; 1461, 30 Apr 62.

30 Apr 62 Acting Foreign Minister Sisouk handed Ambassador Brown a message for delivery to the Lao Embassy in Paris, under the arrangement made by Phoumi with the Ambassador earlier in the day (see item). Sisouk requested that the US also approach Souvanna along the lines set forth in the message. He asked that these parallel approaches be kept completely confidential, that the other members of the RLG cabinet were not aware that overtures to Souvanna were under way. Souvanna, moreover, should not be told that the US Government knew of Sisouk's message to the Lao Embassy in Paris. Brown agreed to deliver the message and recommended to the Secretary of State that Ambassador Gavin be instructed to approach Souvanna.

Sisouk, in the message destined for Paris, directed the Lao Ambassador there to get in touch secretly with Souvanna in order to ascertain: 1) the Prince's personal views regarding the present political impasse; 2) the possibility of a peaceful settlement on the basis of previous communiques issued by the three Princes; 3) the date of Souvanna's return to Laos; and 4) any assurances that Souvanna could offer in return for RLG concessions regarding the portfolios of Defense and Interior. The Lao Ambassador was to stress the extreme importance to the RLG of assurances by Souvanna that he could prevent the Communist domination of the kingdom. Ambassador Brown, however, considered this demand that Souvanna repeat his pledge not to yield to the Communists to be an attempt by the RLG to save face while abandoning its previous opposition to the Prince.

The parallel US approach, as outlined by Ambassador Brown, would begin with a statement that Phoumi had
indicated privately that the RLG was willing to negotiate on all aspects of a coalition government, including the Defense and Interior Ministries. These negotiations would be conducted in the spirit of the various communiques previously issued by the Princes.

The US approach also would indicate the RLG's concern about the possible consequences to the FAR and to the country if Souvanna were given both the Defense and Interior portfolios. For that reason, the RLG desired certain assurances from Souvanna. The Government sought, for example, a guarantee that, prior to agreement on their integration, the existing armed forces would remain intact and in place. It also sought an arrangement whereby the Minister of Defense or Interior could make no decision without the unanimous consent of the three factions. In addition, the RLG desired renewed assurance from Souvanna that he would not permit himself to be dominated by the Communists.

Upon receipt of the above in Washington, the Acting Secretary of State immediately instructed Ambassador Gavin to deliver Sisouk's message to the Lao Embassy in Paris and to make the requested parallel US approach to Souvanna. Gavin should coordinate these actions with the French Foreign Office and keep in mind the primary objective of bringing about a favorable exchange between Phoumi and Souvanna. (See item 2 May 1962.)

(S) Msgs, Vientiane to SecState, 1463, 1464, 30 Apr 62; SecState to Paris, 5787, 30 Apr 62.

30 Apr 62 In instructions to Ambassador Brown, the Acting Secretary of State expressed concern over the deployment of the 11th Parachute Battalion to Nam Tha (see item 27 April 1962). He suspected that this move meant the FAR was preparing for offensive action to expand the perimeter there, since the State Department's information was that "FAR forces already heavily outnumber the enemy at Nam Tha and are adequate to maintain defensive positions." Unless the Ambassador found that the 11th Parachute Battalion was actually being used for replacement rather than reinforcement at Nam Tha, he was to tell Phoumi that the US strongly opposed the redeployment as an unwise utilization of troops badly needed elsewhere and as a "provocation which could possibly result in a FAR military set-back." (See item 1 May 1962.)

(S) Msg, SecState to Vientiane, 926, 30 Apr 62.