

25 May 1962

MEMORANDUM OF MEETING WITH THE PRESIDENT AT THE WHITE HOUSE  
24 May 1962, 4:30 p.m.

Attended by Sec/State, Sec/Defense, Deputy Sec/Defense, Chairman, JCS;  
McCone, Gov. Harriman, McGeorge Bundy and Forrestal

Subject under discussion was the situation in Laos. Sec/State reported political situation indicated probability of a meeting of the three Princes within one week.

Sec/Defense dealt at length with the military situation referring to various alternatives. There was a long discussion of merits, dangers, and risks of U. S. forces occupying the Mekong towns and/or the partitioning of Laos at a point north of the 17th parallel using U. S. forces in conjunction with RLG forces.

Lemnitzer expressed view RLG only effective when at least 50 American combat troops placed with every RLG operating unit (probably battalion) and U. S. forces in substantial numbers occupying Mekong towns.

Harriman discussed from time to time the difficulties of dealing with Phoumi and also commented on the accuracy of CIA reports on Laos situation.

McCone made reference to SNIE 58-5-62, advising the President that the thrust of this study might be summarized by saying in the opinion of the DCI and the U. S. Intelligence Board, build-up of the U. S. effort in Laos, including the placement of U. S. troops in Laos, would cause continuing build-up of North Vietnamese and probably Chicom effort in Laos, and therefore any planned operation contemplating placement of troops must anticipate enemy forces larger than now exist in Laos.

There was no discussion of North Vietnam.

At the conclusion, the President ordered a contingency plan to be prepared looking toward the future partitioning of Laos and occupation of the panhandle by U. S. forces. The plan would set forth the minimum force which might be involved.

JOHN A. McCONE  
Director

JAM/

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APPROVED FOR RELEASE  
DATE: APR 2002

~~SECRET EYES ONLY~~

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NOTE: Following the meeting of Principals on Laos on Thursday afternoon, McCone discussed the Laos Estimate and the problems of the reactions discussed above with Secretary Gilpatric. Gilpatric said that as far as he was concerned (and he gave me the impression that he was talking for McNamara) no American combat troops would be committed in Laos unless a policy decision had been reached with respect to the sanctuary of North Vietnam.

John A. McCone  
Director

JAM/



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