

~~SECRET EYES ONLY~~

13

10 May 1962

(b)(3) MEETING WITH THE PRESIDENT; also present Messrs. Ball & Hilsman  
SUBJECT: Laotian Situation and Gov. Harriman & Mr. Mike Forrestal

The essential developments of the meeting were:

- a. It is obvious that Phoumi's failure as a military leader is because of his refusal to take our military advice and his obstinacy politically has prevented the formation of a national union government.
- b. The President recognized we must take actions to indicate our serious intent of insisting on a neutral Laos but the actions must not be taken in such a manner as to be interpreted as support of Phoumi.
- c. On the contrary we must emphasize that Phoumi's actions have precipitated the present situation in Laos - that it is evident that the RLG forces are ineffective - and that the burden of securing Laos will fall on U. S. and Thais with only token aid from Australia and Philippines.
- d. General plan of presenting a deterrent without evidence support of Phoumi very difficult.
- e. President agreed to start naval task force of two carriers and marine battalion and support ships into Gulf of Siam. This action explainable as necessary for defense Thailand.
- f. U. S. battle group to be alerted and possibly moved from present position in Thailand to airfield near Bangkok but not deployed to border pending further developments and the advice of J.C.S.,

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Lemnitzer and McNamara.

g. Any possible steps to undermine Phoumi should be taken and his political influence and prestige weakened and opposition encouraged.

h. Souvanna urged to return to Laos at once - French to be asked to help.

i. Brown and Young to be advised by cable.

j. British to be advised of proposed fleet action and reason therefor.

k. Anxious that the story be told in Southeast Asia that situation that Souvanna now faces was anticipated by U. S. and is a result of Phoumi obstinacy.

JAM/

Orig hand-carried to Mr. Fenimore who working at FE Div. /State.

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