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MEMORANDUM FOR: Major General William E. DePuy  
Special Assistant for Counterinsurgency  
and Special Activities

SUBJECT: ARDF Support for CIA Operations

1. The purpose of this memorandum is to review the matter of ARDF support for CIA paramilitary operations in Laos. As you may recall, this has been the subject of previous discussions and correspondence over the last two years which have, however, not yet led to a resolution of the problem.

2. Recent operations in Laos have demonstrated the effectiveness of ARDF in providing a significant input to the Vientiane Station's all-source data system of intelligence reporting. In addition to contributing to the identification of hard targets for tactical air strikes against enemy forces in Laos, the ARDF product has been of considerable value as a direct support mechanism for CIA irregular operations which have been subjected to increasing enemy pressures around several forward operating sites in North Laos. As a specific case, the Vientiane Station has pointed out that ARDF coverage was a key factor contributing to the successful defense of Site 36 from March through May of 1968.

3. Unfortunately, the present system of tasking ARDF coverage through out-of-country command channels and the necessity for subordinating Laos priorities to other areas of Southeast Asia has proved both cumbersome and inefficient and has not permitted the kind of continuous target area coverage which is essential to effective utilization of ARDF capabilities.

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For example, following lengthy negotiations, the Chief of Station, Vientiane, was authorized in March 1968 to task ARDF aircraft for missions in Laos although the tasking was to be indirect since requirements had to be levied through COMUSMACTHAI to COMUSMACV. On 29 March 1968 an ARDF aircraft in North Laos received automatic weapons fire and COMUSMACV cancelled all such flights, recommending that coverage be continued in South Laos. Inasmuch as Site 36 in North Laos was then under imminent threat of attack, it was requested that ARDF coverage be reinstated but this request was turned down by CINCPAC. On 27 April 1968 CIA Headquarters met with Mr. Paul Nitze, Deputy Secretary of Defense, to review the ARDF coverage of Laos and as a result of this meeting, ARDF coverage was reinstated through 1 July 1968. In a 23 May 1968 message responding to Vientiane Station's request for assignment of EC-47 aircraft to the Laos ARDF mission on a permanent basis, CINCPAC reiterated MACV's priority for utilizing assigned ARDF assets to support combat operations in South Vietnam and cover the infiltration corridors. Although approving ARDF coverage of Site 36 at that time, CINCPAC's message stated: "While the desirability of comprehensive Laos-wide ARDF coverage is recognized, there are not sufficient assets within CINCPAC to provide coverage to the extent requested by Vientiane Station." The message requested that MACV give full consideration to support of Agency requirements as priorities dictated and within the limitations of available resources.

4. It is our understanding that in addition to the current inventory of 103 ARDF aircraft in South Vietnam, 28 additional ARDF aircraft are being procured by the Department of Defense and are scheduled for delivery to South Vietnam beginning in October 1968. In light of the increase in the number of ARDF aircraft in Southeast Asia, I would like to determine whether current and envisaged priorities will permit the positioning of three EC-47's in Thailand for direct tasking on a continuing basis by the Chief of Station, Vientiane, in coordination with the Ambassador and appropriate attaché elements. I am aware of the priority nature of ARDF targets in Vietnam and appreciate that these may require the

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dedication of all ARDF aircraft available in the area. To insure the maximum exploitation of our paramilitary assets in Laos, however, I want to explore every avenue possible to get the ARDF coverage we need.

5. I would, therefore, appreciate hearing from you as to whether ARDF aircraft can be made available at present or in the immediate future to meet our continuing requirements.

FOR THE DEPUTY DIRECTOR FOR PLANS

/s/ William E. Nelson

William E. Nelson

[Redacted] (15 August 1968)

Distribution:

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