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19 May 1971

SUBJECT: Jack Anderson's Washington Merry-Go-Round Column -
Washington Post 5 May 1971 - Titled "Laotians Accused
in Heroin Traffic"

The Anderson column states in part:

"... a congressional investigation has confirmed our earlier allegations that the Central Intelligence Agency is involved in the Laotian heroin operations.

"The investigation was made by Reps. Robert Steele (R., Conn.) and Morgan Murphy (D., Ill.), both members of the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

"Steele is preparing a report that will allege CIA Air American aircraft have been used to transport the drug from northern Laos into the capital city of Vientiane.

"It says, however, there is no evidence that the CIA had any official policy of letting its planes be used to move the drugs. Furthermore, it adds that the agency has now cracked down on the practice."

Looking to what may be considered a prime allegation by Mr. Anderson that CIA Air America aircraft are used to transport opium/heroin, it is just plain not true.

As for Mr. Anderson's allegation that Messrs. Steele and Murphy will report such a finding to the House Foreign Affairs Committee or its Chairman, Representative Morgan, direct contact with Messrs. Steele and Murphy is recommended. However, it is noted that although many releases have been made by Messrs. Steele and Murphy to the press and in other quarters, they have not mentioned Agency involvement or Air America complicity.

The position of United States Government agencies operating in Southeast Asia in regard to drug traffic is probably no more clearly shown than in a propaganda broadcast (1969) by the Pathet Lao that they are going to live as they wish and grow opium whereas the Meo tribesmen under "imperialistic domination" cannot.

The CIA has never been a knowing party to any drug trafficking. Its efforts have been to discourage the growth of opium and in certain areas the efforts have had limited success. The observation of Mr. Roland Paul, a former investigator for the Senate Foreign Relations Committee who made a study of the Indochina area for that Committee last year, is somewhat pointed in this regard. He writes in the April issue of Foreign Affairs, "In passing it may be interesting to note that because of their long association with the American agency (CIA), the hill tribes have shifted their agricultural emphasis from opium to rice."

Air America has been alert to the problem of smuggling of opium and counteractions have been taken by the airline for several years. Tight controls and spotchecks have been exercised over all aircraft and personnel. In those few instances where Air America personnel have attempted narcotic smuggling, prompt action has been taken in close coordination with the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs which has the prime responsibility worldwide within the U.S. Government in such matters.

Mr. Richard Helms, Director of Central Intelligence, in a rare public appearance, touched on this subject of drug traffic in an address to the American Society of Newspaper Editors on 14 April of this year:

"There is the arrant nonsense, for example, that the Central Intelligence Agency is somehow involved in the world drug traffic. We are not. As fathers, we are as concerned about the lives of our children and grandchildren as are all of you. As an Agency, in fact, we are heavily engaged in tracing the foreign roots of the drug traffic for the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs. We hope we are helping with a solution; we know we are not contributing to the problem."