

Laos file

CONFIDENTIAL

OLC 72-0835

21 July 1972

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Comments of John Lehman, NSC Staff, on Indochina Trip

1. Today I called John Lehman to say that Robert Blum, Senate Foreign Relations Committee staff, was pressing his request for a National Intelligence Estimate on Indochina, claiming that Chairman Fulbright had raised the matter with the White House and been referred back to CIA. Lehman said he would look into it and probably the White House itself would draft a letter for the Director's signature rejecting the Fulbright request which the White House would stand behind.

2. Mr. Lehman then commented he had just gotten back from a visit to Vietnam and Laos and on the basis of his observations he thought it was ridiculous for the Agency to talk about getting out of the Laos operation. He said he talked to a number of Agency people on his trip and it was absurd to think that the military or the State Department could take over the kind of work we were doing. He said the Agency team in Laos was "absolutely outstanding" and he couldn't understand why anybody would permit consideration of turning over the Laos problem to anyone else. I said we weren't trying to run away from a tough job but sometimes it was a little discouraging to get all the flak from Congress and the press about carrying on a "secret war" and subsidizing the "opium merchants and warlords." I cited the recent press stories which had come out during Lehman's absence, and speculated that this sort of thing might become a campaign issue.

3. Mr. Lehman said he didn't think we should worry too much about this and indicated the Administration was prepared to face these charges head-on. I said we might be calling on him.

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4. Mr. Lehman ended up by again complimenting us on the great team we had in Indochina and said we should be proud to have such people who are really on top of their job. I asked him if he had seen [redacted] and he said he missed [redacted] but heard great things about him. He remarked he was particularly impressed with the Agency team in [redacted]

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[redacted]
JOHN M. MAURY
Legislative Counsel

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