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LETTER FROM INDOCHINA

HON. MICHAEL J. HARRINGTON

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, April 30, 1971

Mr. HARRINGTON. Mr. Speaker, the April 24 edition of the New Yorker contained a most penetrating analysis by Robert Shaplen of our recent foray into Laos and its repercussions throughout Indochina. It is one of the most knowledgeable and objective accounts of our involvement in Vietnam I have yet encountered and I recommend it to my colleagues.

LETTER FROM INDO-CHINA

SAIGON, APRIL 14.

It may be six or eight months before any final assessment can be made of Operation Lam Son 719, the South Vietnamese invasion of Laos, supported by vast American air power, which lasted from February 8th until March 25th and was followed by brief commando forays until early in April. Nevertheless, even though this operation has produced more heated debate than any other Indo-Chinese battle since the French fell into the trap of Dien Bien Phu in the spring of 1954, a few conclusions can be reached now. The invasion failed to achieve anything close to its maximum aims, for, though it caused the death of a great many South and North Vietnamese, it did little—contrary to American and South Vietnamese expectations—to speed the end of the fighting, either by forcing Hanoi to negotiate or by assuring the success of the still inconclusive Vietnamization program. It may, at most, have postponed some major offensives that the Communists had planned in South Vietnam over the next few months. On the other hand, at least one big attack—in Kontum Province, in the Central Highlands—has been pressed during the past fortnight, and there has been a noticeable increase of terrorism throughout the country. Costly as the Laotian invasion was to Hanoi, it apparently hardened the determination of the North Vietnamese to continue fighting throughout Indo-China. Moreover, it led to a reaffirmation of Chinese and Russian pledges of assistance. Finally, the operation was a political setback for President Nguyen Van Thieu, whose reelection in October is now, for the first time, open to question.

The Americans, who are going all out to uphold Thieu and make their South Vietnamese allies feel "six feet tall" as the monthly rate of American troop withdrawals increases, have come up with the customary set of sanguinary statistics, this time claiming a nine-to-one "kill ratio" in favor of the Saigon forces. If that is believable—and even President Nixon, in his television interview of March 22nd, indicated that a five-to-one ratio might be more realistic—it could be due only to the preponderance of American bombers and artillery. There can be no doubt that if it had not been for this support the results would have been disastrous for the twenty-four thousand South Vietnamese who were fighting deep in unknown jungle territory against about thirty-five thousand North Vietnamese—a far more experienced force, which was fully determined to protect its lifeline to the South in the Ho Chi Minh Trail complex. The gruesome game of body counts has long been the bugaboo of correspondents in Vietnam, and in this case the confusion has been compounded by a flood of often contradictory statements and assessments emanating from Washington and Saigon. Indeed, never in the past ten years—not even during the chaotic months before the overthrow of the Ngo Dinh Diem regime, in 1963, or during the Communist Tet offen-

sive at the beginning of 1968 and the May and August offensives that followed—have I witnessed such dissension as has taken place between the news media and the authorities, both American and South Vietnamese, over the invasion of Laos.

According to the latest official American figures, the losses of the South Vietnamese—who for the most part fought bravely and well but lacked a cohesive command—were about fifteen hundred dead, more than six hundred missing, and fifty-five hundred wounded; so far there have been no estimates of how many of the wounded have died or are likely to die. Unofficially, however, according to what South Vietnamese sources have told me, the number of men missing and presumed dead is actually between a thousand and fifteen hundred, and the number of wounded is at least seven thousand. Some of those listed as missing are still straggling back across the border, but the majority, it is said, either died of their wounds in Laos or surrendered or were captured by the North Vietnamese. In their flight from Laos, under extremely heavy North Vietnamese attacks, the South Vietnamese abandoned many of their wounded—something that the government is reluctant to admit—and though American rescue helicopters did remarkable work under the most hazardous conditions, they couldn't bring out all the wounded. (A hundred and five helicopters were lost in the Laotian operation, and five hundred and fifty-six were damaged; a hundred and seventy-six Americans were killed during those weeks, on both sides of the border, and forty-two are missing.) Each Vietnamese unit commander reports on his own losses, so it is difficult to come up with comprehensive figures. The dependents of known dead get full pension awards, while those of the missing get payment for only four years, and the Minister of Veterans' Affairs, Pham Van Dong, said to me, "I won't know for months how much I have to pay to how many."

The North Vietnamese assuredly suffered heavier casualties, but whether these were as high as Allied authorities claimed can never be determined. It is admittedly difficult for troops engaged in bloody fighting or in flight to count the bodies of those killed by bombs, but if the given figure of thirteen thousand five hundred dead is correct, and if one assumes, as Allied military officials do, that twice as many North Vietnamese were wounded as were killed, then the total casualties come to about forty thousand, or more than the number of North Vietnamese that the same military officials say were fighting in the Laotian battle. There would seem to be more realism in the estimate that from a third to a half of the thirty-three North Vietnamese battalions engaged were rendered "combat ineffective," and that it will be no easy task for North Vietnam, which is suffering from a manpower shortage, to replace these losses. About a third of the North Vietnamese losses were specialists—technicians of one sort or another who directed the flow of traffic on the Trail—and those men will be the most difficult to replace.

Nevertheless, the North Vietnamese quickly sent in between four thousand and eight thousand reinforcements to repair the damage done to the Trail, mostly by our B-52 bombers, and within a fortnight after the invasion ended, the movement of trucks south had been resumed at a more or less normal pace. (In comparison to the North Vietnamese battalion losses, at least five—and some say eight—of the twenty-two South Vietnamese battalions involved were hurt to the point of combat ineffectiveness, and it must be stressed that Saigon threw its best forces into Lam Son 719. It will take between six months and a year to build these units back up to strength, and then they will certainly not be as well trained and "elite" as they were before.) The North Vietnamese apparently lost between three and four thousand trucks

along the Trail; again, most of these losses were the result of bombing, and only about three hundred trucks were destroyed in the actual area of the ground invasion. The North Vietnamese also lost more than a hundred tanks. (The number of new Russian-built PT-76, T-54, and T-34 tanks that Hanoi used, sometimes right under the noses of the South Vietnamese, was one of the surprises of the campaign, and the lighter tanks of the South Vietnamese forces, many of which got bogged down, were no match for them.) In addition, Hanoi lost nearly seven thousand weapons, big and small, and nearly five hundred tons of heavy ammunition—artillery and mortar shells, and the like—but Saigon's claim of a total of a hundred and seventy-six thousand tons of North Vietnamese ammunition blown up, mostly by bombing, seems ridiculous, since the average monthly flow south in the past has been only about fourteen thousand tons. Furthermore, no major storage depots were taken—only some medium-sized way stations along the Trail. The French used to say that for every ton of ammunition captured the Communists had three more tons available nearby. No one knows how much the North Vietnamese have currently stashed away around the Elovens Plateau, about a hundred miles below the invasion area and near the border point where Laos, Cambodia, and South Vietnam meet. However, the North Vietnamese and their Pathet Lao accomplices recently extended their control in that region, and they obviously have quite a lot of supplies cached there. Consequently, just how much time Hanoi lost and Saigon gained by the invasion can be determined only next fall, when matériel in the northern part of the Trail complex is due to arrive farther south, some of it destined for Cambodia and the rest for the central and southern parts of South Vietnam.

For anyone attempting to evaluate the Laotian operation, what has perhaps been most significant is the fact that the Communists have struck back quickly and violently in various parts of South Vietnam and in Cambodia, clearly demonstrating that they have enough men and arms to cause a lot of trouble—at least during the present dry season, which will last another month. And most observers believe they will continue their attacks across the now expanded Indo-China fronts throughout the coming rainy season, which will last until the end of October. The attacks in South Vietnam over the past two weeks have ranged from a successful assault on an American base in Quang Nam Province, in the north, in which thirty-three Americans were killed and seventy-six were wounded, to quick strikes at district towns and headquarters and at fortified artillery fire bases that are set up to provide strong points for Allied military operations in all battle zones. By far the most serious of these attacks has been the one in Kontum, in the Central Highlands. Although the Communists have lost about twenty-five hundred men in this province as a result of American bombing, they have been making a concerted effort to capture Fire Base 6 there; if they succeed, they will presumably try to advance southward to Pleiku and Quang Duc Provinces and eastward as far as possible toward Binh Dinh and other coastal areas where there has been a recent flurry of fighting. The Communists also seem determined to pin down South Vietnamese troops and inflict heavy casualties. That being so, it is significant that the equivalent of five South Vietnamese regiments is heavily engaged in Kontum, which in itself would seem to belie Saigon's claims that its casualties have been light. In mid-February, the Communists, having apparently anticipated a move westward into the border region below the Dolorens Plateau and adjacent to the Highlands, repulsed a South Vietnamese assault there and caused heavy casualties to

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our Government, and the ramifications of its violation raise serious problems indeed.

In sum, I contend that the issues arising under the separation of powers doctrine lend themselves particularly to the kind of analysis that political scientists are equipped to make, for the doctrine, when reduced to its basic components, is concerned with the allocation of political power among the three branches of the Government. As long as I am associated with the Subcommittee, I intend to continue to call upon members of your profession to assist us in our efforts to give effect to this basic political concept. I sincerely invite you, individually or as a group, to contact me about any issue you consider to be of sufficient significance to warrant the Subcommittee's study and investigation, and I can assure you that your suggestions will receive our serious consideration.

As one who is in daily contact with the governmental process, I want to urge all of you to become active participants in the business of Government, and not mere contemptuous, albeit able, observers. The Government needs your constructive criticism and the stimulation your creative analysis provides.

If the separation of powers doctrine is to work properly—or even to survive—the informed, aggressive participation of the citizenry must provide the missing link between the governors and the governed, this missing link must exert its influence over the three branches of Government in a manner so pervasive that abuses of political power cannot occur. In the final analysis this element accounts for every instance where our system works or fails to work—the army of citizens whose involvement or apathy, whose assertiveness or acquiescence, is ultimately responsible for every triumph and every failure of this Government.

SHAPLEN ON INDOCHINA

Mr. BAGLETON. Mr. President, during my recent trip to Southeast Asia, I had the good fortune to talk with Robert Shaplen, a journalist who has watched Vietnam and Indochina since 1945.

Whether in conversation with military men, diplomats, or other journalists, when the subject of news coverage came up, so did the name, Robert Shaplen—always in the context of high praise. He knows, perhaps as well as anyone involved in Vietnam, what has happened, what is happening, and what is likely to happen.

He is by no means a "dove." His informed commentary on recent events, including Lam Son 719, the war in Cambodia, the upcoming Vietnamese elections, are well worth reading and reflecting upon, by both "hawks" and "doves."

I ask unanimous consent that his recent "Letter From Saigon," published in the New Yorker magazine of April 24, be printed in the Record.

There being no objection, the letter was ordered to be printed in the Record, as follows:

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The French used to say that for every ton of ammunition captured the Communists had three more tons available nearby. No one knows how much the North Vietnamese have currently stashed away around the Bolovens Plateau, about a hundred miles

EAU CLAIRE, WISC.
LEADER-TELEGRAM

E & S - CIRC. N-A
APR 29 1971

Some U.S. Allies Found Wanting

To the Editor:

There is a law to the effect that anyone aiding another in the act of a crime is equally guilty as an accessory. On this basis Uncle Sam has quite a few points against him. According to an article in the May issue of Ramparts, Marshall Ky, vice president of S. Vietnam is the biggest pusher of dope in that country. We have supported Ky for over six years with billions of dollars and over 40,000 of our boys have died in his cause. While President Nixon is declaring war on narcotics and on crime in the streets he is widening the war in Laos whose chief product is opium.

The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) not only protects the opium in Long Cheng and various other pick up points, but has also given clearance and protection to opium laden air craft laden with dope in flying it out to sea drops.

One holds his breath when contemplating all the brigands, dictators and pirates that Uncle Sam has protected and dealt with. To name a few: Chiang Kai-shek whose lobby in Washington is one of the largest; the former dictator of Cuba, Batista who made a fortune on Cuban peasants and then forced into exile. Syngman Rhee of Korea (ousted by his own people); Franco of Spain whom we have spread the red carpet to for 30 years for allowing us to build fortifications in his country. Trujillo of the Dominican

Republic, murderer of thousands of his people and who built a mansion on a hill top surrounded by high walls upon which were built pill boxes armed with guards and whose private army guarded his many ships at sea — this man was on good terms with the United States and was dined and wined on one of his trips to Washington.

When a country, the richest in the world becomes a mecca for brigands and pirates such as the above we may question the entire picture. Good citizens do not make bosom friends out of robbers and thugs and generally one can get a good idea of one's character by the company he keeps.

V. P. MOCK

Chippewa Falls

Part Two ..

New Opium War

The KMT are tolerated by the Thais for several reasons: they have helped in the counterinsurgency efforts of the Thai and U.S. governments against the hill tribespeople in Thailand; they have aided the training and recruiting of Burmese guerrilla armies for the CIA; and they offer a payoff to the Border Patrol Police (BPP), and through them to the second most powerful man in Thailand, Minister of the Interior Gen. Prapasx Charusasthira. The BPP were trained in the '50's by the CIA and are now financed and advised by AID and are flown from border village to border village by Air America. The BPP act as middlemen in the opium trade between the KMT in the remote regions of Thailand and the Chinese merchants in Bangkok. These relationships, of course, are flexible and changing, with each group wanting to maximize profits and minimize antagonisms and dangers. But the established routes vary, and sometimes doublecrosses are intentional.

In the summer of 1967 Chan Chi-foo set out from Burma through the KMT's territory with 300 men and 200 packhorses carrying nine tons of opium, with no intention of paying the usual fee of \$80,000 protection money. But troops cut off the group near the Laotian village of Ban Houei Sai in an ambush that turned into a pitched battle. Neither group, however, had counted on the involvement of the kingpin of the area's opium trade: the CIA-backed Royal Lao Government Army and Air Force, under the command of General Ouane Rathikoune. Hearing of the skirmish, the general pulled his armed forces out of the Plain of Jars in northeastern Laos where they were supposed to be fighting the Pathet Lao guerrillas, and engaged two companies and his entire air force in a battle of extermination against both sides. The result was nearly 30 KMT and Burmese dead and a half-ton windfall of opium for the Royal Lao Government.

In a moment of revealing frankness shortly after the battle, General Rathikoune, far from denying the role that opium had played, told several reporters that the opium trade was "not bad for Laos." The trade provides cash income for the Meo hill tribes, he argued, who would otherwise be penniless and therefore a threat to Laos' political stability. He also argued that the trade gives the Lao elite (which includes government officials) a chance to accumulate capital to ultimately invest in legitimate enterprises, thus building up Laos' economy. But if these rationalizations seemed weak, far less convincing was the general's assertion that, since he is in total control of the trade now, when the time comes to put an end to it he will simply put an end to it.

Morphine Refineries

It is unlikely that Rathikoune, one of the chief warlords of the opium dynasty, will decide to end the trade soon. Right now, in the hills of the Plain of Jars, hidden in the jungle, are several of his

refineries--called "cookers"--which manufacture crude morphine (which is refined into heroin at a later transport point) under the supervision of professional pharmacists imported from Bangkok. Rathikoune also has "cookers" in the nearby villages of Ban Khwan, Phan Phung, and Ban Khueng (the latter for opium grown by the Yao tribe.) Most of the opium he procures comes from Burma in the caravans such Chan Chi-foo's; the rest comes from Thailand or from the hill tribespeople (Meo and Yao) in the area near Ban Houei Sai. Rathikoune flies the dope from the Ban Houei Sai area to Luang Prabang, the Royalist capital, in helicopters given the United States military aid program.

Others in the Lao elite and government own refineries. There are cookers for heroin in Vientiane, two blocks from the King's residence; near Luang Prabang; on Khong Island in the Mekong River on the Lao-Cambodian border; and one recently built by Kouprasith Abhay (head of the military region around Vientiane, but also from the powerful Abhay family of Khong Island) at Phou Khao Khouai, just north of Vientiane. Other lords of the trade are Prince Boun Oum of Southern Laos, and the Sananikone family, called the "Rockefellers of Laos." Phoui Sananikone, the clan patriarch, headed a U.S.-backed coup in 1959 and is presently President of the National Assembly. Two other Sananikones are deputies in the Assembly, two are generals (one is Chief of Staff for Rathikoune), one is Minister of Public Works, and a host of others are to be found at lower levels of the political, military and civil service structure. And the Sananikones' airline, Vaha Akhat, leases with opium-growing tribespeople. But the opium trade is popular with the rest of the elite, who rest RLG aircraft or create fly-by-night airlines (such as Laos Air Charter to Lao United Airlines) to do their own direct dealing.

CIA Protects Opium Traders

Control of the opium trade has not always been in the hands of the Lao elite, although the U.S. has been at least peripherally involved in who the beneficiaries were since John Foster Dulles's famous 1954 commitment to maintain an anti-communist Laos. The major source of opium in Laos has always been the Meo growers, who were selected by the CIA as its counterinsurgency bulwark against the Pathet Lao guerillas. The Meos' mountain bastion is Long Cheng, a secret base 80 miles northeast of Vientiane, built by the CIA during the 1962 Geneva Accords period. By 1964 Long Cheng's population was nearly 50,000, comprised largely of refugees who had come to escape the war and who were kept busy growing poppies in the hills surrounding the base.

The secrecy surrounding Long Cheng has hidden the trade from reporters. But security has not been complete: Carl Streck reported in the January 20 *Far Eastern Economic Review*, "Over the crews loading

T-28 bombers while armed CIA agents chatted with uniformed Thai soldiers of the CIA. The CIA is now for sale in the market (a kilo for \$52). It's old hat by now, but the U.S. embassy press attache and the director of USAID's training center was denied clearance to visit the mountain redoubt." The CIA not only protects the opium in Long Cheng and various other pick-up points, but also gives clearance and protection to opium-laden aircraft flying out.

For some time, the primary middle-men in the opium traffic had been elements of the Corsican Mafia, identified in a 1966 United Nations report as a pivotal organization in the flow of narcotics. In a part of the world where transportation is a major problem and where air transport is a solution, the Corsicans were able to parlay their vintage World War II airplanes (called the butterfly fleet or according to "Pop" Buell, U.S. citizen-at-large in the area, "Air Opium") into a position of control. But as the Laotian civil war intensified in the period following 1962, it became increasingly difficult for the Corsicans to operate, and the Meos started to have trouble getting their crop out of the hills in safety.

The vacuum that was created was quickly filled by the Royal Lao Air Force, which began to use helicopters and planes donated by the U.S. not only for fighting the Pathet Lao but also for flying opium out from airstrips pockmarking the Laotian hills. This arrangement was politically more advantageous than prior ones, for it consolidated the interests of all the anti-communist parties. The enfranchisement of the Lao elite gave it more of an incentive to carry on the war Dulles had committed the U.S. to back; the safe transport of the Meos' opium by an ideologically sanctioned network increased the incentive of these CIA-equipped and trained tribesmen to fight the Pathet Lao. The U.S. got parties that would cooperate with its foreign policy not only for political reasons, but on more solid economic grounds. Opium was the economic cement binding all the parties together much more closely than anti-communism could.

Agent Collects Opium

As this relationship has matured, Long Cheng has become a major collection point for opium grown in Laos. CIA protege General Vang Pao, former officer for the French colonial army and now head of the Meo counterinsurgents, uses his U.S.-supplied helicopters and STOL (short-take-off-and-landing) aircraft to collect the opium from the surrounding area. It is unloaded and stored in hutches in Long Cheng. Some of it is sold there and flown out in Royal Laotian Government C-47's to Saigon or the Gulf of Siam or the South China Sea, where it is sold to Chinese merchants who then fly it to Saigon or to the ocean drops. One of Vang Pao's main sources of transport, since the RLG Air Force is not under his control, is the CIA-created Xieng Kouang Airline, which is still supervised by an American, though it is scheduled soon to be turned over completely to Vang Pao's men. The airlines tow C-47's (which can carry maximum of 4000 pounds) are used only for transport to Vientiane.

Prior to Nixon's blitzkrieg in Laos, the opium trade was booming. Production had grown rapidly since the early '50's to a level of 175-200 tons a year, with 40% of the 600 tons produced in Burmas, and 50-100 tons of that grown in Thailand, passing through Laotian territory. But if the opium has been an El Dorado for the Corsicans, the Aao elite, the CIA and others, it has been a nemesis for the Meo tribesmen. For in becoming a pawn in the larger strategy of the CIA, the Meos have been virtually wiped out, with the average age of recruits

now 15 years, and their population reduced from service, in other words, has been their destruction as a people.

Madame Nhu and Premier Ky: Pushers

Both the complexity and the finality of the opium web which connects Burma, Thailand, Laos and South Vietnam stretch the imagination. So bizarre is the opium network and so pervasive the traffic that were it to appear in an Ian Fleming plot, we would pass it off as torturing the credibility of thriller fiction. But the trade is real and the net has entangled governments beyond the steaming jungle of Indochina. In 1962, for instance, the opium smuggling scandal stunned the entire Canadian Parliament. It was in March of that year that Prime Minister Diefenbaker confirmed rumors that nine Canadian members of the immaculated United Nations International Control Commission had been caught carrying opium from Vientiane to the international markets in Saigon on UN planes.

The route from Laos to Saigon has long been one of the well-established routes of the heroin-opium trade. In August 1967, a C-47 transport plane carrying two and a half tons of opium and some gold was forced down near Da Lat, South Vietnam, by American gunners when the pilot failed to identify himself. The plane and its precious cargo, reportedly owned by General Rathikoune's wife, were destined for a Chinese opium merchant and piloted by a former KMT pilot, L.G. Chao. Whatever their ownership, the dope-running planes usually land at Tan Son Nhut airbase, where they are met in a remote part of the airport with the protection of airport police.

GI Trade

A considerable part of the opium and heroin remains in Saigon, where it is sold directly to U.S. troops or distributed to U.S. bases throughout the Vietnamese countryside. One GI who returned to the States an addict was August Schultz. He's off the needle now, but how he got on is most revealing. Explaining that he was "completely straight, even a right-winger" before he went into the Army, August told *Ramparts* how he fell into the heroin trap: "It was a regular day last April (1970) and I just walked into this bunker and there were these guys shooting up. I said to them, 'What are you guys doing?' Believe it or not, I really didn't know. They explained it to me and asked me if I wanted to try it. I said sure."

Probably a fifth of the men in his unit have at least tried junk, Schultz says. But the big thing, as his buddy Ronnie McSheffrey adds, was that most of the officers in his company, including the MP's, knew about it. McSheffrey saw MP's in his own division (6th Battalion, 31st Infantry, 9th Division) at Tan An shoot up, just as he says they saw him. He and his buddies even watched the unit's sergeant-major receive payoffs at a nearby warehouse where every kind of drug imaginable was available.

An article by Kansas City newspaperwoman Gloria Emerson inserted into the Congressional Record by Senator Stuart Symington on March 10 said: "In a brigade headquarter at Long Binh, there were reports that heroin use in the unit had risen to 20 percent... 'You can salute an officer with your right hand, and take a "hit" of heroin in your left,' an enlisted man from New York told me... Along the 15-mile Bien Hoa highway running north to Saigon from Long Binh, heroin can purchased at any of a dozen conspicuous places within a few minutes, and was by this reporter for three dollars a vial."

CONCLUSION NEXT WEEK

Letters From The People

'Prove You're Honorable'

What the Central Intelligence Agency is shrouded in basically is the shrug of American shoulders convinced that all the secrecy and covert activity is necessary. To take more on "faith," as Richard Helms asks us to do, is to further turn our backs on an agency that seems to exist outside the reach of the U.S. Government and its controls.

What Americans must assume is that the same President who looks earnestly into the TV cameras and promises to extract us from a monumental blunder initiated by this constitutionally questionable organization is at that very moment instigating other such manipulations in the "national interest" that could lead us right back into another Vietnam or Bay of Pigs or Laos (and what are they doing in the Congo?).

Perhaps the CIA is a necessary part of the system, but Americans are no longer blindly taking on "faith" honorable men devoted to service. We say prove you're honorable.

Geraldine Ferris

Ballwin

26 ~~Mar~~ 1971

Approved For Release 2001/03/04 : CIA-RDP80-016

Globe Man in Indochina

American Presence in Laos

Hidden by Official Secrecy

- o Congressmen Hindered in Search For Report on Refugee Problem
- o Report Calls American Bombing Major Reason for Refugee Plight
- o US Lists 236 'Advisers' in Laos But Silent on Hundreds with CIA

By Matthew V. Storrin
Globe Staff

VIENTIANE, Laos — Last week US Reps. Paul N. (Pete) McCloskey and Jerome Waldie of California had an extended dinner meeting here with the American ambassador and his 11-man staff. McCloskey remarked later:

"I thought I was having dinner with the commander of the First Marine Division and his staff."

McCloskey won a silver star for heroism as a Marine officer in the Korean War so he knew what he was talking about. The embassy here is more like a military operations center than a diplomatic post.

Ambassador McMurtrie Godley works in an office lined with top-secret maps. They presumably show the areas of northern Laos where American planes have bombed suspected Communist positions.

Godley has virtual autonomy over the military operations in northern Laos. This is distinct, of course, from the bombing missions against the Ho Chi Minh trail in southern Laos. Those are part of the Vietnam war and are directed from Washington and Saigon.

The major difference between US operations in Laos and Vietnam — aside from their scope—is the degree of secrecy about what goes on in this country.

It is a difficult problem for President Nixon and other US officials.

Officially the US is illegally involved in Laos. The 1962 Geneva Accords outlaw the presence of any foreign military personnel in the country.

The North Vietnamese Army is clearly in Laos in force. Privately the US justifies its own illegal presence on this basis.

But to admit a US military presence would pose propaganda problems for the Soviet Union and Communist China, US officials claim, thereby prompting them to escalate their support for the Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese Communists.

The latest figures on the number of US military "advisers" in Laos are 109 Army personnel and 127 Air Force, a total of 236. This compares with a figure of 244 given out about a year ago.

The US contends there are no "ground combat forces." It says nothing officially about hundreds of military men under contract to the CIA who are assisting Gen. Vang Pao's clandestine army of Meo tribesmen and Laotians.

The CIA's contract airline, Air America, is also highly visible to anyone visiting Laos. At an airfield in Vientiane last week a reporter could count more than 20 Air America aircraft. They range from cargo planes and C-47 transports to small one-engine propeller-driven, non-military aircraft.

The Communists are estimated to control about one-third the population of Laos, which totals three million.

Each year in the dry season the communist forces advance markedly, only to lose ground in the rainy season that starts in May. Yet American officials concede that if the North Vietnamese decided to overrun Vientiane and the royal capital of Luang Prabang, they could do so with relative impunity.

The government is led by Prince Souvanna Phouma. The Pathet Lao is led by his half-brother Souphanouvong. Many western diplomats and journalists in Vientiane predict negotiations between the neutralist government and the Communists would commence with an end to the American bombing.

The US is also hopeful of negotiations, perhaps this year. The bombing continues, however, and some US officials who are not directly involved in military operations suspect there still are "free fire zones" in northern Laos where anything that moves is likely to be gunned down.

In 1968 and 1969 the bombing of the Plain of Jars reached into hundreds of forties a day but now US officials claim the sorties are considerably less than 100 daily. (A sortie is one mission flown by one plane.)

The clandestine nature of the American operations in Laos unfortunately prompts some un-American tactics to maintain secrecy.

Reps. McCloskey and Waldie found this out first-hand.

McCloskey, a Republican who threatens to challenge President Nixon in the 1972 primaries unless his Southeast Asia policies are changed, knew before he arrived here that a US Information Agency employee had conducted a survey of 216 Laotian refugees showing that most had left their homes primarily because of US bombing.

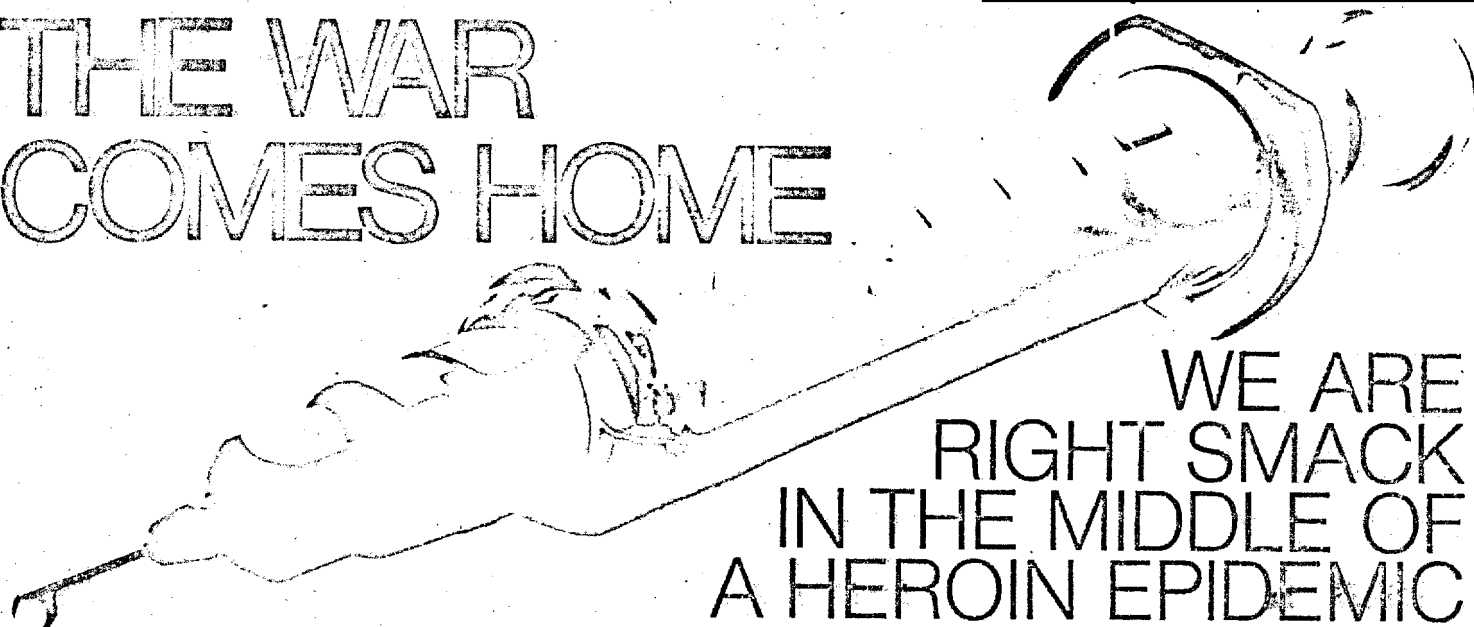
During that dinner party with Ambassador Godley, McCloskey and Waldie both say they asked the ambassador and his staff whether any reports on refugees attitudes exist.

"Their answer was, 'No,'

continued

STATINTL

THE WAR COMES HOME



WE ARE
RIGHT SMACK
IN THE MIDDLE OF
A HEROIN EPIDEMIC

This lethal powder—the “white death”—has spread to all levels of American society, with the syringe becoming as much a part of suburbia as the Saturday afternoon barbecue. There are half a million addicts walking the streets right now. They will spend \$15 million today feeding their habit. They'll get more than half this money from crimes they'll commit in the big cities. One of every four of these addicts is a teenager, and for the 18-35 age group, heroin overdoses have become a major cause of death.

This is terrifying. But it isn't news. Every time you turn on the TV or pick up the newspaper you hear about heroin. Senators rise regularly to read grim statistics into the Congressional Record. President Nixon himself has spoken somberly about the way heroin is stalking our streets with “pandemic virulence.”

But all this talk isn't going to change things. Neither is sending Henry Kissinger to Turkey to see what can be done about the Middle East opium field. And the President probably knows it. The heroin problem is going to get worse, with more young people becoming addicted and dying, until the U.S. gets out of Southeast Asia. Heroin and the War are connected with a horrible symbiosis.

In its May issue, Ramparts magazine tells the shocking story of the New Opium War:

- how clandestine CIA involvement in the parapolitics of Southeast Asia has allowed this area to produce 80% of the world's opium, replacing the Middle East as the major source of heroin.
- how a U.S.-sponsored network of anti-communists—Meo tribesmen in Laos, nationalist Chinese guerrillas and Burmese border police—participate in the opium harvest, in its processing into heroin and transportation to checkpoints throughout Indochina and finally to the U.S.
- how the major figures in South Vietnam's government—from Diem and Madame Nhu in the past to Nguyen Cao Ky today—have profited from the heroin traffic with tacit American support.
- how Saigon has become a major stop along this new heroin route, with up to 20% of some American GI platoons coming home addicts and at least one soldier a day dying from overdoses.

“The New Opium War” is another example of how the war comes home, wrapped in lies and distortions and bringing chaos with it. It is also another page in Ramparts coverage of the ever-deepening U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia. We began in 1966 (before opposition to the war was fashionable) with the expose of the joint efforts of Michigan State University and the CIA to set up the Diem regime. We will continue until the killing is over.

If you want to know more about it, read our May issue, on sale now. Or better yet, take an introductory subscription: 10 issues for \$4.75 (regular price \$7), which we will begin with our current issue containing the opium story. Let us throw in, free, a copy of "2, 3, Many Vietnams", by the editors of Ramparts (Canfield Press, \$3.95). That makes the deal worth about \$12, but it's yours for \$4.75, saving you over 60%.

<h1>Ramparts</h1>	ZAN
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MIAMI HERALD
25 APRIL 1971

Bill Planned to Restrict CIA Operations in Laos

WASHINGTON — (UPI) — Rep. Herman Badillo (D., N.Y.) said Saturday that he plans to introduce legislation this week to prohibit the Central Intelligence Agency from conducting military operations in Laos.

He also called for an end "to the intolerable surveillance of civilians by the FBI and the defense establishment and an end to the Red-baiting it has engendered.

He said, "We must make sure that the Central Intelligence Agency no longer can run clandestine wars as it has been doing for years in Laos."

Badillo criticised President

Nixon for not listening to Vietnam veterans who have been demonstrating in Washington.

"It would be better that he be here today," Badillo said, "listening to you — for you are the children of a new American revolution — a revolution baptized with blood shed in Vietnam and Chicago and Kent State and Jackson — a revolution that will only end when we are out of Vietnam and that must be this year."

"Chicago 7" Veterans Ready Radio Series for Hanoi

"Chicago 7" member Rennie Davis, a leading figure in the upcoming pro-Hanoi demonstrations in the Nation's Capital, is supporting a new anti-American project. The pro-Communist revolutionary has joined with Abbie Hoffman, another "Chicago 7" member, and others to form radio WPAX in New York. The group is preparing a series of programs for use by Radio Hanoi as an "alternative to the programming of the Armed Forces Network."

Davis and his gang have already delivered four-and-a-half hours of taped music and commentary to the North Vietnamese delegation to the Paris peace talks. The programs are scheduled to be broadcast in half-hour segments from Hanoi three times daily.

In a letter to persons considered sympathetic to WPAX, Hoffman said "the Armed Forces Network is the voice of the Pentagon. In addition to censored news, any music with references to peace, black liberation, alternative culture or other 'controversial' material is also banned."

"We have an obligation to fill this void," the letter continued, "and assure that GIs have the opportunity to hear another opinion and have the proper perspective."

WPAX will also have an advisory panel of some 50 persons, including Dwight McDonald, literary critic and staff writer for the *New Yorker*. McDonald, who teaches English at the University of Massachusetts, told the *Washington Evening Star*—which initially published the WPAX story—that he was "definitely" a member of the panel.

According to John Giorno, a leader of WPAX, the North Vietnamese approved the idea of the broadcasts several months ago, after which WPAX was organized to produce the programs. "They totally dug it," Giorno said. "We got together the first programs and Abbie flew over with them. He arrived back March 24 and said we can do anything we want to, as much as we want."

Giorno said in the first program, the "People's Peace Treaty"—a "treaty" that calls for the U.S. to capitulate to Hanoi—was read and that Viet Nam veterans signed it. That show was followed by Allen Ginsberg's poetry. Giorno stressed Ginsberg's poetry consisted of his contention that the CIA sponsored much of the opium traffic out of Laos as a means of controlling certain segments of the American population.

Other programs include such subjects as Women's Liberation, the supposed suppression of servicemen

in the United States, legal advice for GIs, black news and ex-GIs discussing the Army. Giorno maintains that Hanoi will broadcast the programs in both AM and shortwave and will cable the WPAX group when the shows start running.

At WPAX meetings, notes the *Star* reporter, there is discussion of the Federal Treason Act and the Trading With the Enemy Act, but the group feels it can elude these laws since WPAX interprets them to apply only to "declared wars."

"The way we've set up WPAX," Giorno says, "if they go after us for treason, they're going to have to do it on the grounds of free speech. If they go after us it will be a bigger trial than the [Chicago 7] conspiracy trial."

An atmosphere of intrigue at these meetings is created by such legal speculation and by the level of contact with the Communists. The pro-Hanoi revolutionaries say their latest talks have been with Mrs. Nguyen Thi Binh, head of the Viet Cong delegation in Paris, who is their principal contact.

Giorno commented that some unnamed American radio stations have expressed interest in broadcasting the shows and the group hopes that the shows "will eventually be able to reach all of the three million members of the armed forces."

Something akin to treason is, of course, afoot, and one wonders what Robert Mardian, head of the Internal Security division in the Justice Department, plans to do about it—if anything. Mardian, it is recalled, did virtually nothing to prevent revolutionary groups from using HEW facilities when he served as its general counsel.

LETTER FROM INDO-CHINA

SAIGON, APRIL 14

IT may be six or eight months before any final assessment can be made of Operation Lam Son 719, the South Vietnamese invasion of Laos, supported by vast American air power, which lasted from February 8th until March 25th and was followed by brief commando forays until early in April. Nevertheless, even though this operation has produced more heated debate than any other Indo-Chinese battle since the French fell into the trap of Dien Bien Phu in the spring of 1954, a few conclusions can be reached now. The invasion failed to achieve anything close to its maximum aims, for, though it caused the death of a great many South and North Vietnamese, it did little—contrary to American and South Vietnamese expectations—to speed the end of the fighting, either by forcing Hanoi to negotiate or by assuring the success of the still inconclusive Vietnamization program. It may, at most, have postponed some major offensives that the Communists had planned in South Vietnam over the next few months. On the other hand, at least one big attack—in Kontum Province, in the Central Highlands—has been pressed during the past fortnight, and there has been a noticeable increase of terrorism throughout the country. Costly as the Laotian invasion was to Hanoi, it apparently hardened the determination of the North Vietnamese to continue fighting throughout Indo-China. Moreover, it led to a reaffirmation of Chinese and Russian pledges of assistance. Finally, the operation was a political setback for President Nguyen Van Thieu, whose reelection in October is now, for the first time, open to question.

The Americans, who are going all out to uphold Thieu and make their South Vietnamese allies feel "six feet tall" as the monthly rate of American troop withdrawals increases, have come up with the customary set of sanguinary statistics, this time claiming a nine-to-one "kill ratio" in favor of the Saigon forces. If that is believable—and even President Nixon, in his television interview of March 22nd, indicated that a five-to-one ratio might be more realistic—it could be due only to the preponderance of American bombers and artillery. There can be no doubt that if it had not been for this support

the results would have been disastrous for the twenty-four thousand South Vietnamese who were fighting deep in unknown jungle territory against about thirty-five thousand North Vietnamese—a far more experienced force, which was fully determined to protect its lifeline to the South in the Ho Chi Minh Trail complex. The gruesome game of body counts has long been the bugaboo of correspondents in Vietnam, and in this case the confusion has been compounded by a flood of often contradictory statements and assessments emanating from Washington and Saigon. Indeed, never in the past ten years—not even during the chaotic months before the overthrow of the Ngo Dinh Diem regime, in 1963, or during the Communist Tet offensive at the beginning of 1968 and the May and August offensives that followed—have I witnessed such dissension as has taken place between the news media and the authorities, both American and South Vietnamese, over the invasion of Laos.

According to the latest official American figures, the losses of the South Vietnamese—who for the most part fought bravely and well but lacked a cohesive command—were about fifteen hundred dead, more than six hundred missing, and fifty-five hundred wounded; so far there have been no estimates of how many of the wounded have died or are likely to die. Unofficially, however, according to what South Vietnamese sources have told me, the number of men missing and presumed dead is actually between a thousand and fifteen hundred, and the number of wounded is at least seven thousand. Some of those listed as missing are still straggling back across the border, but the majority, it is said, either died of their wounds in Laos or surrendered or were captured by the North Vietnamese. In their flight from Laos, under extremely heavy North Vietnamese attack, they abandoned many of their wounded—something that

the government is reluctant to admit—and though American rescue helicopters did remarkable work under the most hazardous conditions, they couldn't bring out all the wounded. (A hundred and five helicopters were lost in the Laotian operation, and five hundred and fifty-six were damaged; a hundred and seventy-six Americans were killed during those weeks, on both sides of the border, and forty-two are missing.) Each Vietnamese unit commander reports on his own losses, so it is difficult to come up with comprehensive figures. The dependents of known dead get full pension awards, while those of the missing get payments for only four years, and the Minister of Veterans' Affairs, Pham Van Dong, said to me, "I won't know for months how much I have to pay to how many."

The North Vietnamese assuredly suffered heavier casualties, but whether these were as high as Allied authorities claimed can never be determined. It is admittedly difficult for troops engaged in bloody fighting or in flight to count the bodies of those killed by bombs, but if the given figure of thirteen thousand five hundred dead is correct, and if one assumes, as Allied military officials do, that twice as many North Vietnamese were wounded as were killed, then the total casualties come to about forty thousand, or more than the number of North Vietnamese that the same military officials say were fighting in the Laotian battle. There would seem to be more realism in the estimate that from a third to a half of the thirty-three North Vietnamese battalions engaged were rendered "combat ineffective," and that it will be no easy task for North Vietnam, which is suffering from a manpower shortage, to replace these losses. About a third of the North Vietnamese losses were specialists—technicians of one sort or another who directed the flow of traffic on the Trail—and those men will be the most difficult to replace. Nevertheless, the North Vietnamese quickly sent in between four thousand and eight thousand reinforcements to repair the damage done to the Trail, mostly by our B-52 bombers, and within a fortnight after the invasion ended, the movement of trucks south had been resumed at a more or less normal rate. As for the North Vietnamese battalion losses, at

The Non-Selling of the Central Intelligence Agency

Publicity-Shy CIA Shuns

Public Relations

By Bob Woodward
Sentinel Reporter

"We have no public relations department," said the telephone operator at the Central Intelligence Agency after answering a call with the simple statement of the number called, "351-1100."

According to an agency spokesman, the CIA has "no press relations, no public relations. Most of the time we say, 'No comment,' . . . and always on the substance of intelligence, the method and sources."

In contrast to the \$30 million in Pentagon public relations spending reported in the controversial CBS-TV documentary, "The Selling of the Pentagon," the CIA does not appear to be very much in the public relations business.

Richard Helms, CIA director, however, broke a five year precedent last week and gave his first public speech, but public contact with the CIA is generally confined to recruitment of new employes and dealings with "patriotic people" who have traveled abroad, the agency spokesman explained.

The CIA "only receives 10 to 12 calls a day from the press, students, free lance writers and public," a spokesman said. He added, "This is an open democratic society. When I can answer, I do." The spokesman said he and his assistant are the only staff members who handle these few, public inquiries.

New CIA employes are recruited at "200 to 300 universities each year," he said. The chief foreign intelligence agency runs no TV ads, no radio ads and only an occasional printed advertisement, the spokesman said. When objections are filed about campus recruitment, the CIA moves to the nearest federal office building, he explained.

He said he could not disclose how many employes the CIA has or even discuss the CIA budget since it is only to be dealt with confidentially by Presidential representatives

and Congressional committees.

Another informed government official estimated that the CIA has over 10,000 employes in the U.S., several thousand abroad on the payroll, and spends well over \$500 million a year.

"We are characterized as the silent service of the government," the official spokesman said.

Telephone callers to the CIA are quietly greeted by the operator with the number, 351-1100, instead of the agency name because "operators across the country could be heard opening their keys" to listen to conversations years ago when the name was used after a call was answered, the spokesman said.

The name on the CIA headquarters building in McLean, Va. was taken down years ago "during the Kennedy administration because of too many tourists," he remarked.

"Patriotic people" who call after traveling abroad are referred to a downtown Washington, D.C. office to give reports, the spokesman said. He would not give the address of this office.

If a telephone caller insists on giving information over the telephone and not in person, the CIA refuses, the spokesman said. "We assume it's a screwball," he added.

A request for information on the CIA brought the following information in the next mail: a 32-page pamphlet of quotations from U.S. Presidents from George Washington to Richard M. Nixon on the value of intelligence; a recruiting brochure on the "Intelligence Professions"; a small general description of the agency; and two magazine article reprints, one an interview with a former CIA director, Admiral William F. Raborn, and another asserting "Caps and gowns -- not cloaks and daggers -- hang in the guarded halls of 'spy' headquarters, actually a great center of area studies."

Helms is a Democrat but has been kept on as CIA director by President Nixon. An informed government source said it is likely Helms will remain the director, and Nixon has been pleased with his work, though initial intentions were only to keep the Jonson appointee on for one year after Nixon took office.

Last week Helms gave his first public speech in nearly five years as head of the agency. Speaking before the American Society of Newspaper Editors, April 14, Helms said the CIA was not an "invisible government -- a law unto itself, engaged in provocative, covert activities repugnant to a democratic society, and subject to no controls"

The law establishing the agency in 1947, Helms said, "specifically forbids the Central Intelligence Agency from having any police, subpoena, or law-enforcement powers . . . in short, we do not target on American citizens."

Helms went on to outline the specific Congressional and Presidential controls to which the CIA is subject. Emphasizing the restriction on CIA involvement in either politics, foreign policy, or even answering its critics, Helms said:

"The nation must to a degree take it on faith that we too are honorable men devoted to her service."

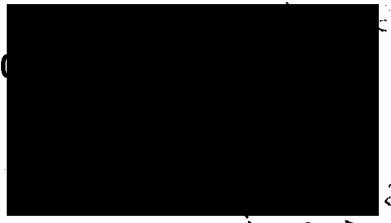
He attacked CIA critics who take "advantage of the traditional silence of those engaged in intelligence (and) say things that are either vicious, or just plain silly." Helms indirectly called a recent Ramparts magazine article alleging CIA involvement in the drug traffic in Laos as such an "example."

Asked about Helms precedent-breaking speech, a CIA spokesman said it reflected "a general concern that built up over the years. People have been misled by the melodrama of spy stories. It was timely and he thought it was in the na-

The spokesman would neither confirm nor deny various newspaper speculations that Helms gave the speech because of recent attacks on surveillance by the FBI which is often linked with the CIA. Also, the CIA has been rather widely charged with extensive involvement in the Vietnam war. In his speech Helms said, "We cannot and must not take sides. The role of intelligence in policy formulation is limited to providing facts -- the agreed facts -- and the whole known range of facts."

STATINTL

STATINTL



CIA Aids Opium Traffic

by Frank Browning and Banning Garrett

(Editor's note: The following article has been made available to subscribers of College Press Service prior to its release nationally because of CPS's involvement in the story's inception.)

Sandwiched between the president's State of the World message, in which he announced an all-out campaign to halt the world's opium traffic, the Laotian invasion, and this spring's growing anti-war protests, the story is an explosive one. Sen. George McGovern and Rep. Ronald Dellums are both pressing for hearings in Congress on the U.S. government's complicity with world opium trade, and details on these and other subsequent developments will follow in other stories.)

"Mr. President, the specter of heroin addiction is haunting nearly every community in this nation." With these urgent words, Senator Vance Hartke spoke up on March 2 in support of a resolution on drug control being considered in the U.S. Senate. Estimating that there are 500,000 heroin addicts in the U.S., he pointed out that nearly 20 per cent of them are teenagers. The concern of Hartke and others is not misplaced. Heroin has become the major killer of young people between 18 and 35, outpacing death from accidents, suicides or cancer. It has also become a major cause of crime: to sustain their habits, addicts in the U.S. spend more than \$15 million a day, half of it coming from the 55 per cent of crime in the cities which they commit and the annual \$2.5 billion worth of goods they steal.

Once, safely isolated as part of the destructive funkiness of the black ghetto, heroin has suddenly spread out into Middle America, becoming as much a part of suburbia as the Saturday barbecue. This has

gained it the attention it otherwise never would have had. President Nixon himself says it is spreading with "pandemic virulence." People are becoming aware that teenagers are shooting up at lunchtime in schools and returning to classrooms to nod the day away. But what they don't know--and what no one is telling them--is that neither the volcanic eruption of addiction in this country nor the crimes it causes would be possible without the age-old international trade in opium (from which heroin is derived), or that heroin addiction--like inflation, unemployment, and most of the other chaotic forces in American society today--is directly related to the U.S. war in Indochina.

The connection between war and opium in Asia is as old as empire itself. But the relationship has never been so symbiotic, so intricate in its networks and so vast in its implications. Never before has the trail of tragedy been so clearly marked as in the present phase of U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia. For the international traffic in opium has expanded in lockstep with the expanding U.S. military presence there, just as heroin has stalked the same young people in U.S. high schools who will also be called on to fight that war. The ironies that have accompanied the war in Vietnam since its onset are more poignant than before. At the very moment that public officials are wringing their hands over the heroin problem, Washington's own Cold War crusade, replete with clandestine activities that would seem far-fetched even in a spy novel, continues to play a major role in a process that has already rerouted the opium traffic from the Middle East to Southeast Asia and is every day opening new channels for its shipment to the U.S. At the same time the government starts

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APR 21 1971

Devastated Laos

The State Department is trying to knock down claims by Representative Paul N. McCloskey (Rep., Calif.) that United States bombing has destroyed "thousands of villages" in Laos and turned 700,000 Laotians into refugees — but it has to admit a considerable part of his charges. The 700,000, the State Department maintains, is the total of all who have been or are refugees, and only 266,862 are refugees now.

As for villages, McCloskey interviewed 16 separate groups of refugees who told him every house in their village had been destroyed by American air power. His "thousands" is simply a guess, from the fact that Laos had 9,400 villages to start with. The Air Force won't show him the photographs it says show that the villages McCloskey said were destroyed still exist.

Senator Edward Kennedy (Dem., Mass.) had his subcommittee staff studying the question some weeks ago. The staff estimated that civilian casualties in Laos were running about 30,000 a year, including 10,000 dead, mostly as a result of American bombing.

The New York Times reported in mid-March on the Meo tribe of the Laotian highlands, the warlike group which the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency organized into a clandestine army to fight the North Vietnamese and Pathet Lao forces in Laos. This tribe is now nearing the end of its mountains and the limits of its strength. The tribe has had to abandon hill settlement after hill settlement and has suffered dreadful casualties to fighting men (who begin at age 12 and 13) and civilians. Most of their tribal homelands are lost or destroyed.

The Meos and the other highland tribes have done most of the fighting on both sides in Laos. The ethnic Laos dislike fighting, and often shoot in the air and advance or retreat (mostly retreat) on the basis of the answering noise. They take seriously the Buddhist law, "Thou shalt not kill."

Yet the Americans and the Vietnamese, North and South, have ruthlessly extended their war to their gentle land, and the Americans with their tremendous fire power have been the most destructive.

The 1949 Geneva Convention on protection of civilians in time of war forbids infliction of suffering, brutality, collective penalties, pillage and reprisals against persons and property. It bans devastation "as an end in itself or as a separate measure of war," as distinct from devastation incidental to a battle between armed forces.

The American way of war in the air all too often breaks these international laws of war. Congress has banned use of American ground forces in Laos. This ban is evaded by the CIA on a small scale.

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WASHINGTON, D.C. 20545
21 APR 1971

U.S. Congressmen Hampered in Laos

STATINTL

STATINTL

in Laos

By TAMMY ARBUCKLE
Special to The Star

VIENTIANE — Reps. Paul N. McCloskey and Jerome Waldie, who came here to learn more about the American role in Laos, found themselves unable to get documents they sought or to visit areas of the country they wished.

McCloskey, the California Republican who has threatened to oppose President Nixon in next year's GOP primaries on the Indochina issue, accused U.S. Ambassador G. McMurtrie Godley of a "deliberate attempt to keep Congress from knowing the facts."

He and Waldie, a Democrat from California, sought copies of an embassy study which blamed last year's movement of refugees from the Plain of Jars on American bombing.

McCloskey, who was here for three days, said U.S. officials in Godley's presence at an embassy dinner denied the document existed.

When McCloskey was able to pinpoint the document, he said, officials undertook "a deliberate, conscious policy to divert us."

He said Monteagle Stearns, the deputy chief of mission at the embassy, failed on three occasions to respond to McCloskey's request for the study.

Substitution Charged

Then, according to McCloskey, Stearns substituted the front page of the document. The original page, the congressman said, showed the origin of the study was a memo from Stearns to Norman Barnes, chief of the United States Information Service here. Stearns and Barnes were two officials who said they had no knowledge of the study McCloskey was asking about.

McCloskey and Waldie also were refused permission to visit Long Chen, the village on the edge of the Plain of Jars which is the headquarters of the CIA-directed guerrilla army of Gen. Vang Pao's Meo tribesmen and which serves as a CIA base.

Andrew P. Guzowski, who is the embassy spokesman in Vientiane, said permission was refused because "the congressmen do not have security clearance."

In Laos, this puts a member of Congress somewhat below the level of a street vendor. When it was pointed out to Guzowski that any Asian, including North Vietnamese agents, can enter Long Chen, the spokesman said, "Well, it's their country."

The Major Reason

The major reason for refusing the congressmen permission to visit Long Chen is they might discover that U.S. officials were not honest in congressional testimony when they said bombing missions in Laos were approved by Laotians or Meos who were flying in forward air control missions.

In fact, both seats in the small air control mission planes often are filled by Americans.

When McCloskey went to interview refugees at Ban Nga Ga, 20 miles north of Vientiane, the embassy provided two priests to act as "unbiased" interpreters.

The priests, Father Rauff and Father Matt Menger, are, however, known locally for their staunch support of U.S. Embassy actions.

Father Rauff, in his role as an interpreter for McCloskey, at one point omitted to translate a villager's remarks about "bombers coming every day."

And Father Menger was overheard to say, while McCloskey was examining a child with a burned leg, "Thank God for the bombing. Without it this would not be a free country."

State Dept. Comments

Despite the obstacles, McCloskey did find that, almost without exception, refugees said they had left their villages because of U.S. bombing attacks, even though enemy troops were not in the villages.

McCloskey said, "The embassy decided to suppress this information to keep them from knowing the truth."

(In Washington, Robert J. McCloskey, a deputy assistant secretary of state for press relations, said Monday that McCloskey had declined opportunities offered by the embassy in Vientiane to examine the refugee situation. The State Department spokesman denied a charge by the congressman that American bombers have destroyed Laotian villages deliberately.)

The difficulties McCloskey and Waldie had here in getting information from the embassy have become typical of the last few years.

False Information

The embassy, for example, refuses to provide any information about Americans killed in Laos. When Waldie asked about three specific recent deaths, Guzowski said the missions in which the Americans were killed originated in Thailand and the embassy here was not accountable for the deaths. "They are not my Americans," Guzowski said in answer to reporters' queries.

The embassy is willing to permit false information to be given the American public when it knows the information is false. The USIS here tapes Laos military briefings and provides them to U.S. Army briefers who relay whatever the Lao briefer says.

When, as a result of other information, questions are raised about Lao official statements passed on by the Americans, the U.S. briefers simply say, "Well, that's what the general said and I'm not going to contradict him."

There also are attempts to cover up the misuse of U.S. funds. The embassy, for example, is buying another 15,000 metric tons of rice from south Laos this year.

In the past, top-ranking south Laotians would sell their surplus rice to the North Vietnamese, then buy cheaper Thai rice and sell it at a higher price to the Americans, saying it was the south Laos rice.

According to Guzowski, Charles Mann, the head of the U.S. Agency for International Development, is not interested in discussing

with the press whatever measures AID is taking to prevent the loss of more U.S. funds on similar rice deals.

Among other subjects the embassy is not anxious to discuss are opium dealing and the sales of U.S. supplies and weapons.

Other samples of omissions and evasions by the embassy here include:

When Long Chen was bombed mistakenly by U.S. aircraft, a spokesman here 36 hours later gave an account of damage by North Vietnamese artillery. He failed to mention the air strike.

When U.S.-led guerrillas were mauled by the North Vietnamese on the Bolovens Plateau in southern Laos in December, an embassy spokesman denied the story. When additional details were produced, the spokesman was forced to backtrack.

"Orientation" Missions

Guzowski has said Americans have been killed on "orientation missions" when, in fact, they have died on bombing missions; airdrops of rice have turned out to be missions transporting Thai troops; the description "light" casualties was used for an engagement in which 64 out of 110 men participating were killed; major actions have been described as a "few clashes took place."

The embassy consistently denies to the press use of American transport facilities to cover the war, particularly in those areas of northeast Laos where Americans are involved.

These air transport facilities — Air America and Continental Air Lines — are ostensibly privately owned and under contract to the U.S. government. They are the sole means of reaching battle areas in northeast Laos.

"I see no reason why we should fly the press around," says Guzowski.

Aircraft are available, however, when the embassy wants to show off its aid programs. to places where the U.S. involvement is not evident can be arranged by reporters. Guzowski says aircraft are

The Honorable Men Of The CIA

Last week Richard Helms in his first public speech since his 1966 appointment as director of the Central Intelligence Agency tried to counter what he characterized as a "persistent and growing body of criticism which questions the need and the propriety for a democratic society to have a Central Intelligence Agency." He attributed the criticism to an "inherent American distaste for peacetime gathering of intelligence," and told his audience that the nation must "take it on faith that we too are honorable men devoted to her service."

If Mr. Helms's analysis of information gathered abroad is as incomplete and misleading as his interpretation of what prompts criticism of his agency here at home, then the country is clearly in trouble. It is not the intelligence gathering aspect of the CIA's operations that has fed the growing body of criticism. What the critics object to are covert paramilitary operations around the globe, and they question whether the secrecy that is admittedly required for some aspects of intelligence gathering should be extended to cover a host of questionable and frequently illegal activities under the pretext of serving an undefined "national interest."

In the years since it has become active in covert operations the CIA has financed the invasions of two countries, Cuba and Guatemala, and otherwise influenced the establishment and overthrow of governments in a number of lands, including Vietnam. It provided planes and mercenary pilots to the Congo (some of the same men it trained to invade Cuba) and for several years it has financed and directed a mercenary army in Laos in violation of our treaty commitments. At the same time it has engaged in activities that have more to do with propaganda than intelligence. It has subsidized magazines and publishing companies and the operation of radio

stations which free advertising in this country portrayed as supported by private donations.

In addition there have been instances in recent years when the agency has apparently been successful in establishing for itself a place above the law. Two examples are the dismissal of a slander suit against an agent on the ground that, even though his statements were not substantiated, he was acting under orders, and the case of the Green Berets accused by the Army of murdering a suspected Vietnamese double agent, but never brought to trial because the CIA refused to supply witnesses.

Even assuming that Mr. Helms is correct in his contention that the agency functions under the tight control of the President, an assumption which many knowledgeable critics dispute, the fact remains that the agency's activities have evaded the checks provided by the Constitution and in doing so it has deceived the American people. The issue, then, is not whether the men in charge of the CIA are devoted, or even honorable, and faith is not the answer to such fundamental criticism. It was faith in the efficacy of covert military and political manipulation, after all, that propelled us into our tragic involvement in Southeast Asia.

What is needed is a check on the presidential fascination with Mr. Helms's "Department of Dirty Tricks," a fascination that has pervaded the past four administrations. Congress is the appropriate body to provide that check, even though at present it is not doing so. The supervision now supplied by a handful of key members of Congress is, in the words of a recent Twentieth Century Fund study, "only sporadic and largely *ex post facto*." Fortunately there are efforts now underway to strengthen congressional oversight of the CIA. These efforts deserve the support of the American people.

APR 20 1971

CIA Running War In Laos, Waldie Charges

On Return

10-Day Vietnam Trip Ends

By PAT KEEBLE
County Bureau

A 10-day trip ferreting out information on the Indochina war — mostly without the cooperation of American leaders — hasn't changed Rep. Jerome Waldie's feeling that the United States should get out of Vietnam now.

The Antioch Democrat, along with San Mateo Republican Paul McCloskey returned to Washington this weekend after a trip through the northern provinces of South Vietnam and into a Laotian refugee camp.

Among their findings, Waldie said, was confirmation that the Central Intelligence Agency is running the war in Laos, through the American Embassy in Saigon, and also operating "preventive detention" camps in the Vietnam provinces.

He said he is formulating recommendations about the actions of the CIA, particu-

larly as regards the "Phoenix" program of preventive detention.

And he and McCloskey are also passing the word around to other congressmen who want to go to Vietnam that "they're going to have to be more aggressive than they have been in the past if they want to find out what's going on," Waldie said.

"I went over there with a preconceived notion that we should have been out of Vietnam long ago, and nothing I saw changed that notion," Waldie said.

"I am more convinced than ever that there is nothing there for us, no reason to continue to have our kids killed and wounded over there," he said.

The Contra Costa congressman said he felt the embassy was helpful as well as "quite frank and outspoken" until the two lawmakers asked for a report they had heard of on American bombing in Laos. After "incredible efforts at suppressing it," eventually it was given to them.

He said he and McCloskey several times changed itineraries and went to a Laotian refugee camp which had not been on the "recommended" list of the embassy.

"By talking to refugees and by discovery of the report initially denied to exist, we ferreted out that in a country of only three million population, almost a quarter of all their

people," Waldie said.

"And the only indication so far of the motivation of refugees was the American bombing," he said.

"It's possible that, from the one report on the impact of bombing practices, coupled with our own survey of the refugee camp we selected, that the sampling is erroneous," Waldie acknowledged. "But the contention of the American officials that all the evidence indicated that bombing was not a factor in refugee motivation simply is not true."

The pair also studied the province interrogation centers and determined after several days that they are run not by the army, as was inferred, but by the CIA.

The centers can hold anybody suspected of being associated with the Viet Cong or even of dissent against the Saigon government for 45 days, before turning them over to Vietnam police and government representatives for sentencing.

"I am going to make a recommendation to the Secretary of State that this is not the

type of structure that we should leave as a model for the South Vietnamese government, designed precisely after the pattern of a communist society," Waldie stated.

"Our objective there was to fight for the right of a nation to be free, but we are establishing an instrument of suppression equal to any found in a communist state," he said.

He said the pair found considerable difference between generals and lower echelon soldiers over what the U.S. should do with the war.

One second lieutenant told them. "When we leave, it will be up to the South Vietnamese army to decide whether they want to win the war or lost it. They may decide it's easier to lose it than to continue fighting and win it."

"He believed we ought to leave and let the South Vietnamese decide what they want to do with their country," Waldie said, adding, "I concur wholeheartedly."

Most of the generals, he added, felt the U.S. should stay "as long as necessary" to keep the North Vietnamese from defeating the South, and would not put a time limit on the war.

NEW YORK TIMES MAGAZINE
18 APRIL 1971

STATINTL

Life of the CIA

By BENJAMIN WELLES

WASHINGTON.

IT CAN tell when he walks in the door what sort of a day it's been," says his wife, Cynthia. "Some days he has on what I call his 'Oriental look'—totally inscrutable. I know better than to ask what's happened. He'll talk when he's ready, not before, but even when he talks he's terribly discreet."

The Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, Richard Helms, apparently brings his problems home from the office like any other husband—at least to hear Cynthia Helms tell it. And these days Helms's job is definitely one of the most problem-ridden in Washington.

Successive budget cuts, balance of payments restrictions, bureaucratic rivalries and press disclosures that have hurt the C.I.A.'s public image have all reduced its operations considerably. President Nixon has recently ordered a fiscal and management investigation into the intelligence "community," a task which may take longer and prove more difficult than even Nixon suspects because of the capacity of the intelligence agencies to hide in the bureaucratic thickets. Both Nixon and his principal foreign affairs adviser,

BENJAMIN WELLES covers national security affairs as a correspondent in the Washington bureau of *The Times*.

Henry Kissinger, are said to regard the community as a mixed blessing: intrinsically important to the United States but far too big and too prone to obscure differences of opinion—or, sometimes, no opinion—behind a screen of words.

Considered a cold-blooded necessity in the Cold War days, the agency now seems to many students, liberal intellectuals and Congressmen, to be undemocratic, conspiratorial, sinister. The revelations in recent years that have made the agency suspect include its activities in Southeast Asia, the Congo, Guatemala, the Bay of Pigs; the U-2 flights; its secret funding through "front" foundations of the National Student Association plus private cultural, women's and lawyers' groups; and, finally, two years ago, the Green Berets affair.

The 53-year-old Helms knows all this, better than most. As the first career intelligence officer to reach the

top since the C.I.A. was created in 1947, his goal has been to professionalize the agency and restore it to respectability. In fact, one of his chief preoccupations has been to erase the image of the Director as a man who moves in Jewish mystery, jetting secretly around the world to make policy with prime ministers, generals and kings, and brushing aside, on the pretext of "security," the public's vague fears and Congress's probing questions. If Helms rules an "invisible empire," as the C.I.A. has sometimes been called, he is a very visible emperor.

While he tries to keep his lunches free for work, for example, he occasionally shows up at a restaurant with a friend for lunch: a light beer, a cold plate, one eye always on the clock. He prefers the Occidental, a tourist-frequented restaurant near the White House where, if he happens to be seen, there is likely to be less gossip than if he were observed entering a private home.

He likes the company of attractive women—young or old—and they find him a charming dinner partner and a good dancer.

"He's interesting—and interested in what you're saying," said Lydia Katzenbach, wife of the former Democratic Attorney General. "He's well-read and he doesn't try to substitute flirting for conversation, that old Princeton '43 routine that some of the columnists around town use."

Some of his critics complain that he is too close to the press—even though most agree that he uses it, with rare finesse, for his own and his agency's ends. Some dislike the frequent mention of Helms and his handsome wife in the gossip columns and society pages of the nation's capital.

Yet, if he gives the appearance of insouciance—he is witty, gregarious, friendly—the reserve is there, like a high-voltage electric barrier, just beneath the surface. Helms is a mass of apparent contradictions: inwardly self-disciplined and outwardly relaxed, absorbed in the essential yet fascinated by the trivial. A former foreign correspondent, he observes much and can recall a dinner with a woman who can husbands, ever note in the first place—what gown each woman wore to a dinner and whose shoulder strap

STATINTL

Continued

17 APR 1971

STATINTL

Top Aides Won't Appear At War Victims Hearing



STATINTL

By MORTON KONDRACKE
Chicago Sun-Times

Top State Department and Defense officials have refused invitations to appear at Senate hearings on the condition of civilian war victims in Indochina.

Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, D-Mass., had invited Defense Secretary Melvin R. Laird, Deputy Defense Secretary David R. Packard, Secretary of State William P. Rogers and U.S. AID administrator John Hannah to give testimony next week, but all refused.

Kennedy's subcommittee on refugees is the only standing congressional panel so far to schedule hearings in the increasingly explosive issue of U.S. responsibility for war victims.

The administration did agree to testimony Wednesday by Ambassador William E. Colby, U.S. Civil operations chief in Vietnam, and assistant AID administrator Robert H. Nooter and, on Thursday, by Monteagle Stearns, No. 2 man in the U.S. Embassy in Laos and Willard H. Meinecke, Nooter's deputy.

Kennedy declined to comment on the absence of top-level officials because, his staff said, the senator was still hoping for an appearance by G. Warren Nutter, assistant Defense secretary for international security affairs.

So far, according to the staff, the Pentagon has been willing to supply one of Nutter's deputies, but the staff said such an arrangement would be "unacceptable" to the senator.

Kennedy staff members said the Pentagon's attitude apparently reflected unwillingness to face questions on the impact of U.S. military doctrine on the civilian populations.

"We want to ask the Pentagon to define 'free fire zone' and 'search and destroy' and learn whether the military ever contemplated the effect these policies would have," a staff member said.

Another focus of the hearings is the continued use of U.S. refugee-aid funds for clandestine military operations in Laos by the Central Intelligence Agency.

First exposed last year, the Kennedy staff claims to have documents showing that AID has been unable to divorce itself from CIA ties.

If it develops this is true, staff members said, Kennedy plans to introduce legislation forcing an end to the clandestine relationship.

"We also want to know," a staff member said, "why the U.S. government is increasing its aid for training national police in Vietnam when it is decreasing support for civilian war casualties and refugees."

editorials

CIA footnotes

In his first public address since he became director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) five years ago, Richard Helms defended his organization before a luncheon meeting of newspaper editors Wednesday, and said that the CIA is necessary for the survival of a democratic society. He asked the country "to take it on faith that we, too, are honorable men devoted to her service."

Helms did not attempt to clarify any foundation for that faith, although he did note that CIA intelligence played an important part in determining the American success in the 1962 Cuban missile crisis (thanks to "a number of well-placed and courageous Russians who helped us").

Elsewhere in Washington on the same day, Sen. George McGovern asked Helms to comment on published reports that South Vietnamese Vice-President Nguyen Cao Ky may be involved in the opium trade in Southeast Asia. He cited a recent article in Ramparts magazine implicating the CIA in an international opium business. The Ramparts article contended that opium production and distribution in the Fertile Triangle region of Burma, Northern Thailand, and Laos is conducted with the knowledge of the CIA, and that CIA operations there actually serve to protect opium supplies and facilitate their movement. ✓

Helms did not comment on the allegations; apparently an admonition from the director every five years that Americans must accept the CIA "on faith" should be sufficient.

There might be more to it: that Helms should offer a footnote to American diplomatic history almost ten years after the incident happened suggests a possible precedent. Perhaps, in another five years or so, the CIA director will emerge from his office once more, and renew his request for an extension of public faith in his agency. And then he might add another footnote about how the CIA almost won that Vietnam War all by itself.

ons such as the B-1 bomber and the MBT 70 tank.

OTHER ISSUES

There are other issues as well. Why do we need over 400 major and some 3,000 minor bases scattered in some 31 countries around the world? If we need for these bases, many of them redundant but held since World War II, should be reviewed.

Why, a quarter of a century after World War II, should the United States be providing over 300,000 troops and \$14 billion a year to the NATO alliance? Our European allies have a larger population than we do. They are now as wealthy as we are. They are shouldering none of the costs of the Asian war. Yet we continue with this tremendous outlay of military expenditures for the defense of Europe.

We should cut our forces in NATO in half. We should continue to provide the nuclear umbrella for the defense of Europe. But the Europeans should provide most of the manpower. It is time to Europeanize NATO as it is time to Vietnamize the Asian War. If the Europeans are unwilling to defend themselves against a Russian attack in the center of Europe, then there is no reason why we should bear the major share of that burden.

How does it weaken us to review our bases and to question why NATO should not be Europeanized when their economic strength is as great as ours?

CONCLUSION

By reforming procurement, by reviewing our commitments, by taking a realistic view of the Russian and Chinese threat, by doing away with unneeded and overlapping weapons, and by limiting the expansion of our nuclear strategic terror, we could make great savings in the defense budget without endangering our security.

And as real security is based on a balance between military and domestic needs, and between the strength of our weapons and the strength of our economy, in my view we would in fact enhance our overall security.

If we persist in the present military excesses we will weaken this country rather than strengthen it.

We should reduce our military expenditures rather than to increase them as our military needs in Asia decrease.

The charge of "neo-isolationism" hurled at those who advocate reform is badly misplaced. In fact, if the military fails to reform, it may so endanger its own credibility as to bring about the very neo-isolationism it claims to oppose.

Instead of hurling epithets at those who would reform the system, those who really want us to remain strong and free should urge the Pentagon to provide this country with a leaner, stronger, and far less costly, more efficient military force.

DRUG TRAFFIC IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

Mr. McGOVERN. Mr. President, I am increasingly concerned about reports that members of U.S. Armed Forces serving in Indochina are being afflicted with hard drug addiction on an alarming scale, and that Southeast Asian growers and smugglers not only supply these drugs but a lion's share of the illicit world supply as well.

In light of the grave implications for our own society, I have written to Secretary of State William Rogers and Central Intelligence Agency Director Richard Helms, asking for a thorough investigation of this matter. In addition, I have asked for a report on diplomatic

initiatives which have been undertaken to end the vast production of opium in the Fertile Triangle region encompassing parts of Burma, northern Thailand, and Laos.

I ask unanimous consent that the letter to which I have referred; a recent report by Gloria Emerson in the New York Times on the availability of heroin in Vietnam; and a report in the current issue of Ramparts magazine on the Southeast Asian opium market be printed in the Record.

There being no objection, the items were ordered to be printed in the Record, as follows:

U.S. SENATE, COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY, Washington, D.C., April 13, 1971.

Hon. WILLIAM ROGERS, Secretary of State, U.S. Department of State, Washington, D.C.

Dean Mr. Secretary: The traffic in hard narcotics, the opium derivatives, is among the most insidious and deadly threats to our domestic safety and well-being.

These drugs destroy hundreds of thousands of lives each year, and the number is growing rapidly. Beyond that, hard drug addiction authors a vast proportion of all other crime—as much as 90 percent in New York City, for example—which is committed by users seeking funds to sustain their habits. A recent study in the District of Columbia found that 45 percent of a sampling of the D.C. jail population was addicted to heroin.

This general grave concern is now coupled with the more recent problem of hard drug addiction acquired by United States servicemen returning from Indochina. The Commissioner of New York's Addiction Services Agency has written to me that,

"Most recent reports on drug addiction and drug abuse do indicate that there is an increase in these phenomena among American servicemen and there is very little doubt that a significantly greater part of New York servicemen returning to civilian life have been or are addicted, or have developed a propensity to addiction."

Dr. Robert DuPont, director of Washington, D.C.'s Narcotics Treatment Administration, reports that his agency has undertaken a systematic study of the relationship between military service and heroin use. He told me recently that,

"Our earlier investigations showed that about 25 percent of the heroin addict patients in treatment with the Narcotics Treatment Administration, and about 25 percent of the heroin addicts admitted to the D.C. jail, are veterans."

Last year the Veterans Administration established the treatment of drug dependence as a special medical program, including plans for 30 specialized units for the rehabilitation of drug dependent veterans. V.A. Administrator Donald Johnson has advised me that his agency is not in a position to assess the true magnitude of this problem.

In his State of the World Message, President Nixon quite properly singled out plans to deal with the international sources of supply of heroin as an essential, central element in any serious effort to control this vicious drug. He indicated that the Administration has worked closely with a number of governments, particularly Turkey, France, and Mexico, to seek an end to illicit production and smuggling of narcotics.

On the basis of this background, I am deeply disturbed by reports, including those contained in the current issue of Ramparts Magazine, that the vast majority of all heroin production comes not from Turkey, not from France or Mexico, but from Southeast Asia,

and that U.S. policy and personnel, instead of discouraging this traffic, have actually assisted its growth.

I would very much appreciate your comments on the following points raised in the enclosed article:

(1) The report that, according to the United Nations Commission on Drugs and Narcotics, at least 80 percent of the world's 100 tons of illicit opium comes from Southeast Asia. According to an Iranian report to a United Nations seminar on the subject, some 83 percent of the world's illegal supply originates in the Fertile Triangle region which includes parts of Burma, northern Thailand and Laos.

(2) The report that Nationalist Chinese or Kromintang forces operating in that region control and profit from the opium trade, that these forces supplement their income by performing missions for the United States, and that the Burmese government has protested this activity both to the United States and the United Nations.

(3) The report that opium is the basic source of income for Miao tribesmen in Laos, and that General Vang Pao, commander of Laotian counterinsurgency forces made up of Miao tribesmen and supported by the United States, uses aircraft supplied by this country to transport opium from the surrounding area to the base of Long Cheng.

(4) The report that General Ouane Rathkone of the Royal Laotian Army exercises broad control over the opium traffic in Laos, including ownership of several "cookers" for refining it, and that he and other interested parties transport raw opium in equipment supplied by the United States military assistance program.

(5) The implication that opium production and collection in Laos is conducted with the knowledge of Central Intelligence Agency officials, particularly in the area surrounding Long Cheng, and that CIA operations there actually serve to protect these supplies and facilitate their movement.

(6) The report that high Vietnamese officials, including Vice President Ky, have been and may currently be involved in the transport of opium from the Fertile Triangle region to Saigon and in its distribution there.

Certainly these reports, along with others in the article, warrant a thorough investigation. Indeed, considering our determination to end the menace of heroin addiction in this country, I will be surprised if such an investigation has not already been completed and if we are not currently involved in vigorous diplomatic efforts to close off this source. Considering the number of independent sources which have reported knowledge of vast opium production in the Fertile Triangle region, it seems to me that it would be impossible for it to escape the attention of U.S. agencies operating there.

Along with your comments on the points listed above I would, therefore, very much appreciate a report on initiatives the United States has undertaken to cut off this major source of opium supply, including any restrictions on military assistance aimed at preventing the use of American equipment in collecting and transporting this treacherous commodity.

Sincerely,

GEORGE McGOVERN.

[From the New York Times, Feb. 25, 1971]

GI'S IN VIETNAM GET HEROIN EASILY

(By Gloria Emerson)

SAIGON, SOUTH VIETNAM, February 24.—It is so easy to buy heroin from peddlers in Vietnam wherever there are American troops or convoys that a tiny plastic vial can be purchased for \$3 outside the headquarters of an American general.

On the 15-mile Bien Hoa highway, which

STATINTL

*Congressmen Criticize
Embassy in Vientiane*

VIENTIANE, Laos, April 14 (AP)—Two U.S. Congressmen accused the U.S. Embassy today of hampering their movements in Laos and trying to conceal unclassified information about the impact of American bombing on Laotian civilians.

"It is clear it is the Nixon administration and not the press that is distorting news from Laos," said Rep. Paul N. McCloskey (R-Calif.), an opponent of the war who has said he may challenge President Nixon for the Republican presidential nomination in 1972 if the President does not change his war policies.

McCloskey and Rep. Jerome Waldie (D-Calif.) said U.S. Ambassador G. McMurtrie Godley refused to let them visit the big base for Laotian tribal fighters which the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency operates at Long Cheng, near the Plain of Jars.



-United Press International

CIA Director Richard Helms (left) talks with Newbold Noyes Jr., president of the American

Society of Newspaper Editors and editor of The Star, during the editors' conference yesterday.

CIA Has Agents in Kremlin

Spies Are 'Well-Placed,' Helms Tells Newsmen

By THOMAS B. ROSS
Chicago Sun-Times Service

British, CIA Agent

The head of the Central Intelligence Agency says the CIA has penetrated the Soviet government with a "number of well-placed" Russian spies.

Richard M. Helms, in his first public speech in five years as director of the CIA, yesterday cited the spies' key role in the 1962 Cuban missile crisis and implied that some of them still are operating in the Soviet Union.

By making the claim at this time, Helms apparently sought to serve notice to the Kremlin that the United States has secret ways of checking on its good faith in current negotiations on strategic weapons, the Middle East and other critical issues.

Helms said the CIA was able to detect Russian missiles in Cuba in 1962 "thanks to U-2 photography of the Soviet Union and to a number of well-placed, courageous Russians" who provided crucial details on Soviet missile systems.

Helms was asked later if he was referring to Col. Oleg V. Penkovsky, the Soviet military intelligence official who served as an agent for both the CIA and British intelligence. Helms replied that his remarks covered Penkovsky and "others."

Penkovsky was arrested Oct. 22, 1962, at the height of the Cuban Missile crisis, and executed May 16, 1963. But the Soviet government has made no public mention of additional spies in the case.

Helms' speech thus left the implication that "other" CIA agents remain in place inside the Soviet Union.

Helms obtained clearance from President Nixon before accepting the invitation to speak before the annual convention of the American Society of Newspaper Editors.

Helms' speech created a considerable stir in the current clamor over charges of Army and FBI "spying" on civilians. He went to great lengths

to insist that the CIA has no domestic security role.

Helms acknowledged that the CIA collects "foreign intelligence in this country" by tapping university experts and interviewing persons who travel to Communist countries.

Semantic Troubles

"The trouble," he lamented, "is that to those who insist on seeing us as a pernicious and pervasive secret government, our words 'interview' and 'hire' translate into suborn, subvert and seduce or something worse."

He denied as "vicious" a charge that the CIA is involved in world drug traffic. Sen. George McGovern, D-S.D., demanded yesterday that the CIA and the State Department investigate allegations by Ramparts magazine that the CIA facilitates the movement of opium out of Southeast Asia.

Helms conceded, on the other hand: "Our mission, in the eyes of many thoughtful Americans, may appear to be in conflict with some of the traditions and

ideals of a free society... Assertions are made that the Central Intelligence Agency is an 'invisible government' — a law unto itself, engaged in provocative covert activities repugnant to a democratic society and subject to no controls...

It is difficult for me to agree with this view, but I respect it."

STATINTL

Meo Culpa

Tragedy for the Meo tribes in Laos came unexpectedly in the bright promise of the New Frontier: "Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and the success of liberty." Whether, in January 1961, John F. Kennedy had in mind supporting an obscure former sergeant in the French army, a Meo named Vang Pao, to hold back the Communists in the hills north and east of the Mekong valley, preferably all the way to the China border, is not known. But Laos was much in the news at the time of Kennedy's inauguration. In December 1960 Gen. Phoumi Nosavan and Prince Boun Oum, in a bloody coup, had deposed the left-wing cabinet of Quinim Polsena and chased away Capt. Kong Le and his neutralists. The coup polarized factions and reopened the civil war. The Soviet Union and the US accused each other of supporting contending factions, and Eisenhower reportedly remarked to Kennedy that Laos was then a most crucial problem in foreign affairs. Now, a decade later, the Meo tribe has been decimated; an entire primitive people is facing genocide. How did it happen?

In the first year of the Kennedy era, foreign service officials from every department and agency, spurred on by the attorney general, Robert F. Kennedy, were dragooned into counterinsurgency courses at the Foreign Service Institute. The Pentagon's contribution was the doctrine of "flexible response." The President adopted the Green Berets. The Meos with CIA arms and radio training quickly became the secret toast of the town.

But by 1962 there was concern that as the number of Meo under arms reached the thousands there might be a sharp Communist reaction, and the US might then have the task of caring for and feeding the whole Meo population in Laos—all 400,000 of them. Averell Harriman, then assistant secretary of state for the Far East, was apprehensive, but not enough to try to stop the counterinsurgency delirium. His successor, Roger Hilsman, made it his business to approve the introduction of each rifle and round of ammunition into the Meo areas, determining which side of a given rock the Meos were to choose on a mountain trail, demonstrating his West Point training, World War II guerrilla experience and Department of State control over the operation.

CIA enjoyed its paramilitary role: for once it was safe from Pentagon "help" (read take-over). Overt, acknowledged intervention in Laos by the Pentagon would have violated the 1954 Geneva Accords. Clandestine help, on the other hand, violated only the spirit of the agreement, and both sides were playing that game. To this day the CIA has been able to maintain operational control of the Meo operations for Com-

munist pressures on the Meo increased and casualties rose, so did the size of US support that flowed through CIA. Well over 10,000 of "our" Meos were under arms.

William P. Bundy (now editor-designate of *Foreign Affairs*) succeeded Hilsman in 1964, and although he catnapped through the briefings, he was still the resident Laotian guerrilla expert in the Capital. McGeorge Bundy, in his fortress in the White House situation room, scheduled briefings on the situation from returning CIA officers, just in case President Johnson wanted an encouraging word. Secretaries Rusk and McNamara huddled over detail maps of Laos and on occasion planned tactical operations of regular Lao army units and Meo guerrilla bands.

The effort to build a buffer against China through the Meos pitted a primitive, tough people against the more sophisticated North Vietnamese and their local supporters, and we are now witnessing the consequences. Since 1960 "at least 40-50 percent of the men have been killed and 25 percent of the women have fallen as casualties of the war," says Senator Edward Kennedy's 1970 report on refugees. Near the CIA-supported base of Long Cheng, north and east of Vientiane, almost 200,000 Meos depend on air drops of rice (the main task of the US AID mission) for survival. They cannot return to their homes in the hills; the Communists are there. And they cannot survive on the plains because of climate and the competition from the more advanced lowland people. The whole Meo tribe is one vast refugee group.

What has this using of one Asian group to fight another for US ends taught us? Very little. Indeed, "let's you and him fight" has become formal US doctrine. ". . . We shall look to the nation directly threatened," the President said last November 3, "to assume the primary responsibility of providing the manpower for its defense." (i.e., the Meo nation.) And the US, said Mr. Nixon, will furnish "military and economic assistance when requested." (i.e., the CIA, the Department of State's chosen instrument for the Meo operation.) The locals supply the bodies.

Sooner or later, the peoples in the Indochina peninsula will have to bind their wounds. In the meantime, the Meo troops and their families fighting the North Vietnamese are being pushed over the mountain wall into the Mekong valley, refugees of a torn, dying culture. The question now is, as *The New York Times* recently put it, "whether the time has come to move the Meos out of the war while there are still enough men left to assure the nation's survival." It's a grim end to the first clear test of the logic of the Nixon Doctrine.

ENVOY GODLEY

War Full-Time
Job for Our
Man in LaosBY ARTHUR J. DOMMEN
Times Staff Writer

VIENTIANE—The U.S. ambassador to Laos is George McMurtrie Godley, genial New Yorker, Yale '30, member of the Brook Club, perhaps Manhattan's most exclusive. He personally directs one of the most private wars being fought on the globe today.

It takes so much of his time and energy that his fellow diplomats in the Laotian capital complain they rarely see him. The president of the Laotian National Assembly, Phoui Sanaikone, complains that Godley never once has invited him to his house for dinner in the 18 months he has been here. His diplomatic relations are almost exclusively with neutralist Premier Prince Souvanna Phouma, a frequent tennis partner.

Godley's war effort is directed from his air-conditioned, windowless first-floor office in the embassy here against as many as two North Vietnamese divisions in the north. The real enemy is Hanoi—what the Pathet Lao do or say counts for nothing — and his motivation is bluntly stated:

"I don't like to see the United States get beaten."

Impressive Array of Power

To prevent that, Godley has a most impressive array of physical power and personal discretion, so much so that Sen. Stuart Symington (D-Mo.) once remarked he was acting as chief of staff and "perhaps it would be better to call him Proconsul Godley."

Aside from the usual appendages of American missions overseas, such as the U.S. Information Service, the Agency for International Development and the Central Intelligence Agency, Godley inherited a staff of 234 military attaches, the nerve center of the American military effort in Laos, both on the ground and in the air.

The AID mission serves as cover for some CIA operations, and also for another branch of the American establishment known as the Requirements Office, which supplies the royal Laotian army and air force with all its fuel, bombs and ammunition as well as spare parts for its fleet of 45-odd T-28 prop-driven fighter-bombers.

Approval of Bombings

But the major part of the American effort consists of bombing by American planes, mostly from Thailand but also from South Vietnam and the 7th Fleet in the Gulf of Tonkin. Godley found himself with the function of approving all bombing strikes on Laos. He did this himself or else delegated the approval to a subordinate who became known as the Bombing Officer. It could be anyone in the embassy; most recently it was a consular officer. The point is that the ambassador has the right to overrule—and reportedly sometimes does—the generals and admirals.

So absorbed is Godley, 53, in running the war—there is a huge map of Laos on his office wall, along with a photo of the home in Cooperstown, N.Y., to which he intends to retire—that diplomatic colleagues complain he has little time for other activity.

Godley periodically visits bases like that of the CIA at Long Cheng, and to remote dirt airstrips where he confers at first hand with his attaches on the ground, and AID personnel keeping track of refugee movements and requesting supplies to be flown in by the U.S.-chartered airline, Air America.

And during last year's unsuccessful Communist siege of Long Cheng, the ambassador was reported to have aimed an artillery piece himself.

A major duty of the large staff of attaches—which numbered only one in the 1950s—is to keep track of where friendly forces are operating, and this, plus intelligence gathered largely by American reconnaissance planes, determines the bombing targets.

All this machinery was developed by Godley's predecessor, Ambassador

William H. Sullivan, who by all accounts established the pattern of what the functions of the U.S. envoy to Laos would be.

Sullivan came to Laos at the end of 1964 and remained until 1969, four and one-half years of critical importance to the United States during which the Vietnam war was escalating rapidly and already spilling over into Laos.

Deeply Committed

By the end of 1964, the U.S. was already deeply committed to the support of Souvanna Phouma's government and was providing him substantial aid, including financing a back-up fund to maintain the value of Laotian currency. Souvanna Phouma had already signified his agreement to air strikes by American planes against North Vietnamese positions in Laos, a verbal understanding that was to remain the sole basis for such strikes up to the present.

The relationship between the prime minister and the American ambassador grew out of this situation of Laos' involuntary involvement in the Vietnam war. The ambassador was given virtually a free hand insofar as the application of military force was concerned, but this had to be applied within a framework of official American support for the neutrality of Laos, without forcing cancellation of the neutralization agreement that had been worked out at Geneva in 1962. The American ambassador thus became the man, more than the prime minister, who decided in effect how much strain the neutrality of Laos could stand.

Godley, arriving in Vientiane to take up his post as ambassador in July, 1969, was ideally suited to replace Sullivan.

His Navy service in 1939-41 had given him a grasp of what the needs of military staffs are, and his subsequent service at the

American Embassy in Bern during the World War II years had familiarized him with undercover operations.

Later Service

More importantly, Godley's later service in the Congo, where he was deputy chief of mission and eventually ambassador, had shown him what small numbers of men using old but well-adapted weapons could do in an underdeveloped country.

A friend who knew Godley in the Congo in the years 1964-67 says he had at his disposal a fleet of U.S. Air Force C-130 transports. These were used to carry a tiny force of mercenary troops onto the airfield at Stanleyville on Nov. 24, 1964, to crush the leftist revolts flaring in the eastern Congo. Cuban T-28 pilots hired by the CIA also played a vital role at a time when American policy had swung around from earlier opposition to mercenaries in Katanga to regard them as the most effective means of holding the country together when the Congolese national army proved ineffective. Godley was running that show on the spot, too, an experience that helped mold his expressed opinions about Laos.

Godley, fairly tall and husky of build, usually wears slacks and a loose-fitting jacket, left open, and puffs on a cigar while on his aerial inspection excursions. He also is occasionally seen on Vientiane outings sporting a hug jacket from the African days with portraits of Moise Tshombe and Joseph Mobutu on the front and back, respectively.

While born in New York City, Godley's family is rooted in Otsego County in upstate New York. Godley is divorced from his first wife and while in the Congo in 1966 married Stearns'

APRIL 1971

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STATINTLLAOS: ANATOMY OF AN
AMERICAN INVOLVEMENT*By Roland A. Paul*

WHEN President Kennedy came to office in 1961, he was startled to learn that almost 700 American soldiers, more than half of whom were members of the Special Forces, were in Laos, while about 500 Soviet troops were there providing logistics support to the local communist forces, the Pathet Lao and their North Vietnamese allies.

Fearing the possible consequences of such a confrontation and considering American interests in Laos to be small, President Kennedy sought to disengage. Negotiations ensued at Vienna, at Geneva, in Laos and elsewhere. The result was the ambiguous compromise set forth in rather unambiguous language in the Declaration on the Neutrality of Laos and the Protocol to that Declaration, signed by 13 communist and non-communist countries in July 1962, commonly known as the Geneva Accords of 1962.

Under the mantle of this agreement, the Laotians themselves established a tripartite government composed of right-wing royalist elements under General Phoumi Nosavan, neutralist elements under Prince Souvanna Phouma and communist elements whose nominal leader was Prince Souphanouvong (Souvanna Phouma's half brother). The balance of power in the government was given to the neutralists, and their leader Souvanna Phouma became Prime Minister, a post he holds today.

The Geneva Accords themselves required Laos to disassociate herself from all military alliances, including SEATO, prohibited the introduction of foreign military personnel and civilians performing quasi-military functions (except for a small French training mission), precluded the establishment of any foreign military installations in Laos and forbade the use of Laotian territory to interfere with the internal affairs of another country. Pursuant to this agreement the Americans and Soviets withdrew their military personnel. The North Vietnamese, however, failed to withdraw most of their 6,000-man force that remained in Laos.

Nevertheless, a relative peace settled over this somnolent "Land of the Million Elephants" for about one year, to be shattered in 1963 by an exchange of assassinations. The non-communist officer Colonel Ketsana was murdered and shortly thereafter the pro-Chinese Foreign Minister Quinini Pholsena was killed. These sparked a renewal of the fighting in Laos, which has raged ever since.

To understand the nature of the hostilities in Laos, one must bear three points in mind. First is the fact that the Laotians are a very peaceful, in some cases indolent, people. Accordingly, they generally make poor soldiers. This is true whether they march, or walk, under the red flag of communism or the white elephant and parasol emblem of the neutralist government. They are no match for the well-trained soldiers of North Vietnam. Until recently, this was evidenced all too frequently by the flight of government forces upon realizing that they were facing an opposing force composed of North Vietnamese.

There is one exception to this behavior, however. The 250-300,000 Meo tribesmen (no one knows precisely how many there are) and the other smaller Montagnard tribes come from different stock and have been hardened by centuries of nomadic life, slash-and-burn farming, principally opium poppies, and oppression at the hands of their neighbors, historically the Chinese. Sustained and supported by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency,

Maximizing COBRA Utilization

by Jeffrey Record

Bac Lieu is a small out-of-the-way province at the southern end of the Mekong Delta. It rarely makes the 6:30 news. When I was there in 1968-69 with the American advisory team serving as the Assistant Province Advisor for Psychological Operations, there were no North Vietnamese troops in the province. What Viet Cong strength there was consisted largely of part-time village and hamlet guerrillas armed mostly with single-shot vintage German Mausers. They concentrated primarily on blowing up bridges with uncanny accuracy and mining the few passable roads. They were experts at placing booby traps, and the ARVN soldiers obliged them by returning again and again to the same place, tripping the same wires with deadly consistency.

Americans believed there were about 3,000 full-time, hard-core Viet Cong in Bac Lieu, or one per cent of the total population. Arrayed against this scanty enemy presence were over 20,000 well-armed men: elements of the 21st ARVN Division, Regional Force companies, Popular Force companies, and the ubiquitous People's

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Self Defense Force, a kind of local home guard. This vast military structure was supplemented by numerous Revolutionary Development Teams, the Provincial Police, the paramilitary Police Field Force, and the Provincial Reconnaissance Unit—an extortion and assassination team run directly by the CIA and composed mostly of criminals, deserters, and former Viet Cong.

On top of this overwhelming numerical superiority, the Vietnamese government possessed, as it does in every province in South Vietnam, complete control of the air through its American ally.

I arrived in Bac Lieu in August, 1968, and my first impressions were favorable. Both the Province Senior Advisor (the head of the American advisory team) and the Province Chief (the Vietnamese "governor" of the province) seemed acutely aware of the military and political dangers inherent in the indiscriminate use of firepower, particularly in such a heavily populated province like Bac Lieu. The Province Chief had refused to permit B-52 strikes, and the Province Senior Advisor had repeatedly denied U.S. Navy requests to shell the province from offshore. He had also forbidden

the use of .50 caliber machine guns because their range and velocity made them too destructive.

Airpower in Bac Lieu was confined mainly to logistical support: the helicoptering of troops and ammunition to various outposts and the airlifting of critical supplies to those hamlets inaccessible by road or canal. The only aircraft permanently stationed at Bac Lieu's small dirt airstrip were five or six light, single-engine planes used for aerial observation. Airstrikes could be had, but only on request. Within 30 minutes of first contact with the enemy, American helicopter gunships and jet fighter-bombers would fly in from the large airbase at IV Corps military headquarters in Can Tho, several provinces away. They would bomb and strafe whatever targets were given them by the Bac Lieu Tactical Operations Center. Outside of actual support for ground combat operations the only airstrikes ever called in were occasional sorties over the province's three small, and virtually unpopulated, free-fire zones.

This atmosphere of modest restraint soon changed, however. There had always, of course, been considerable resistance within the advisory team to any restrictions on the use of airpower. Although civilians and military men could be found on either side of the airpower debate, most of the opposition to restrictions came from the older officers, many close to retirement, for whom Vietnam provided their first and last chance to see real combat. Some found the idea of restraint incompatible with war. Others appeared troubled by the suggestion that military effectiveness was not commensurate with simply the amount of firepower at one's disposal. All the opponents of restraint seemed oblivious even to friendly argument. The moral argument, that unrestricted use of airpower would result in the unnecessary killing of many innocent civilians, ran into the simple reply that "war is hell." The political argument, that such indiscriminate destruction

BALTIMORE SUN STATINTL

29 MAR 1971

21 U.S. Volunteers Criticize Laos Push

By a Sun Staff Correspondent

Saigon, March 28—Twenty-one American volunteer workers in Laos have written President Nixon criticizing the U.S.-supported South Vietnamese invasion of Laos as expanding the war "once more into populated areas west of the invaded territory land" aggravating already serious fighting elsewhere within Laos.

While the invasion may have been designed to speed American withdrawal from the Indochina war, the workers wrote President Nixon, "the military reality will be further chaos and further suffering among people who have already suffered much because of American military activity."

"Grand Global Design"

"We condemn this policy that uses the Lao people as pieces in a grand global design they neither understand nor care about," the letter said. "Though there would still be fighting without the American involvement, the intensity of the present destruction takes place for reasons that have virtually nothing to do with local political alignments or conditions."

The letter was signed by 21 of the 36 volunteers working in Laos under the auspices of the multinational International Voluntary Services as specialists in education, agriculture and social welfare. All the signers are Americans. The letter was released by the group's affiliate here.

The volunteer workers also condemned as "particularly vi-

olent" the extensive American bombing of both northern Laos and the Ho Chi Minh supply trail in the country's Southern Panhandle.

"Refugees tell of being forced to live in holes and caves, of having to farm at night, of the systematic destruction by U.S. warplanes of the human basis for a society," the volunteers said. "These people were not soldiers nor were there soldiers in their villages."

Also criticized was the organization of Meo tribesmen into a semi-clandestine army directed by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, which the volunteers said exploits the Meos' "traditional toughness and independence in [its] own crusade against communism."

Decimation, Dislocation

"The result has been the decimation and dislocation of the tribal populace . . . Much of their traditional culture has been destroyed . . . Our use of these people has also opened a nearly irreparable breach between them and the North Vietnamese."

The volunteers also condemned "the destruction and killing brought by the North Vietnamese, but we do not believe that their presence in Laos, nor the presence of an indigenous Communist movement, justifies U.S. military activity against an entire society."

"We also condemn," the letter said, "the eagerness to protect American lives by the sacrifice of Asian lives."

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WASHINGTON, D.C.

GAZETTE MAR 2-9 1971

BI-WEEKLY - CIRC.N-A

Hard Times

JAMES RIDGEWAY

What do you do with the

natives?

BY widening the Indochina war Nixon will increase the already vast numbers of civilian war casualties. The people who live in Indochina always have been considered expendable by the U.S., and in this instance, they are simply the price paid for "winding down" the war.

In Laos, which until recently was regarded by U.S. officials as a "manageable" insurgency, as a "relatively modest and low profile conflict," hundreds of thousands of people are refugees. There were 20,000 refugees in 1968 before the bombing began in earnest. Now there are 225,000 refugees, a conservative estimate. In Laos the U.S. pursues a policy of forced population movement, removing thousands of people by plane from the hill villages and resettling them closer to the capital city of Vientiane. Since 1962 about 800,000 people have been turned into refugees. The country's total population is a little over two million.

U.S. Aid supplies help to refugees, but as AID administrator John Hannah freely admitted on television "aid" was a euphemism for supplies provided for the CIA's army of Meo tribesmen in north Laos. The CIA manipulated the Meo tribesmen into a position where they fought the North Vietnamese. As a result the Meo were pretty much obliterated. Ronald J. Rickenbach, a former AID official in Laos, explained to the Kennedy subcommittee on refugees how that took place: "From conception, the Meo 'cause' has simply been an effort on their part to protect their homeland from outside incursion. Their intended purpose: Merely self-preservation. Their concept of freedom is simple. It is one which allows them to pursue their own destiny as dictated by tribal tradition; not one that tied it to any particular contemporary political ideology. To this end the hill people of Laos have historically demonstrated fear and mistrust of all outside influences, especially so of their lowland neighbors, the ethnic Lao and Vietnamese."

As the North Vietnamese moved down through Laos, "their options were limited; accommodate themselves, fight or flee. They could not very well fight without arms and assistance; they could flee, to nowhere as suitable to their way of life than where they were already; or they could accommodate themselves in some peaceful subservient way to the Vietnamese presence, and thereby allow something of a local political

"It is at this critical juncture that the American government's involvement can be traced. In the late 1950's we began to arm, resupply and advise the Meo, and their hill tribe peers, the Lao Theung and the Yao. What resulted was the anti-North Vietnamese guerrilla forces of north Laos. Initially this program was masterminded under the auspices of the U.S. Special Forces 'white star' teams that were attached directly to field units and coordinated guerrilla activities.

"Then after the restrictions placed on overt U.S. military involvement in Laos by the Geneva Accords of 1962, the role of advising the guerrilla forces fell under the operational wing of the CIA. It was also at this time that AID became directly and officially involved with the paramilitary aspects of the program. . . . In the overall sense the Meo have only served the greater interests of U.S. policy. . . . In doing so, the Meo, and the other hill tribe guerrillas became the unwitting pawns of the U.S. government. . . .

"What makes this situation even more distasteful, as I have already mentioned, is that we did so to serve our own interests as much as anything else---to let them fight a war, which was really our war, by proxy. And moreover, to fight and die for the ethnic Lao and Thai who did not feel it was worth doing so for themselves, strange, indeed, since it was their defense that this war was supposedly all about."

There are about 400,000 Meo tribesmen, and half of that total, men, women, children, have been killed in the war. Now that so many of these people have been killed, they aren't much use to us any more. And AID is trying to figure out what to do with them. Here is a memorandum of the U.S. Commission on the Cause: ". . . we must recognize that inasmuch as a great measure of the effectiveness of a military

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STATINTL

Pathet Lao Squeezing Meo Out

By D. E. Ronk

Special to The Washington Post

VIENTIANE, March 24—Pathet Lao forces in northern Laos are apparently moving to squeeze out the 100,000 Meo tribesmen who have long served as a buffer for government forces in the area.

At the same time, the Pathet Lao drive seems designed to prevent the Meo from heading south to Vientiane and out of the combat zone altogether. The Meo are believed to be moving behind Pathet Lao lines.

The area in question—about 90 miles north of Vientiane—contains the CIA-supported base at Long Cheng, headquarters for Meo leader Gen. Vang Pao, and American refugee centers.

The recent Pathet Lao seizures of strings of government bases east and west of Long Cheng has had the effect of driving barriers southward. These are now closing toward the center and blocking the Meo's route to Vientiane.

Within the closing pincer Pathet Lao commando and propaganda units are warning the Meo to flee and making lightning commando raids against the most important bases. Isolated terrorist acts have been reliably reported from the area during recent weeks, including firing upon civilian taxis and buses carrying Meo out.

Observers believe that such acts are part of the over-all tactical plan to keep the Meo moving northward and behind Pathet Lao lines.

Roadblocks by Meo who are pro-government, but anti-Vang Pao, are also reliably reported to have been established on Highway 13, the highway from the north to the capital, to keep Meo from fleeing to Vientiane.

The Pathet Lao-North Vietnamese commando raid against Long Cheng on Feb. 14, when sappers blew up logistics warehouses and the CIA base, is believed now to

have been a demonstration of strength for the Meos' benefit.

During the commando raid, informed military sources indicate, CIA personnel called in American aircraft to destroy the CIA buildings rather than allow the enemy to capture sensitive equipment. During the bombardment more than a score of Meo soldiers were killed.

The attack increased the size of the exodus already going on in the Long Cheng-Sam Thong area. Then, three weeks later, during the night of March 5-6, commandos struck at the Ban Son refugee logistics center, 20 miles southwest of Long Cheng. Little damage was done to the base, according to government spokesmen, but the raid on the highly vulnerable center that had replaced Sam Thong—which had been abandoned under pressure a year ago—sent thousands more fleeing.

Harassment fire and ground probes against scores of pro-government posts within the 50-square-mile area are reported daily. Ban Na, north of Long Cheng and called the "key" to capture of the CIA base, is under virtual siege by artillery and rockets.

Visitors to Ban Son, or "site 272" as U.S. spokesmen call it, say the Americans working there are ready to abandon it "momentarily" and have been issued carbines to carry. They return to Vientiane nightly.

Americans working at Ban Son say that any further attacks would bring total abandonment of the bases.

Refugee officers in the field are not optimistic of their chances to be of further service to the Meo. They note the northward drift of the tribe out of their area and acknowledge that a large section of the mountains south of Luang Prabang is occupied by Meo who have shifted allegiance to the Pathet Lao.

Edwin McKeithen, a U.S. AID refugee worker, says the Meo will eventually have to turn eastward to land they can reach. In order to do so they will have to

reach an accommodation with the Pathet Lao forces and sympathizers in the area, just as those southeast of Luang Prabang have done.

Although American military sources in Vientiane say Long Cheng, Vang Pao's headquarters and the key base in Northern Laos, is defensible "if no one goof badly," the CIA is known to be building a lowland site for its operations. It has already moved much of the sensitive equipment away from Long Cheng.

"As families of Meo soldiers move away from Long Cheng for safety the base is left without its buffer against direct attack—and desertions are climbing as soldiers leave to accompany families," a recent Western visitor to the area reports.

American officials in the area have become frank in admitting that the Meo civilians serve as buffers.

Such use of the Meo is said to be the only real topic of discussion among the minor Meo chiefs at present, as they realize how badly the tribe has been hurt in the past decade and search for alternatives.

Since 1950, when Vang Pao allied a third of the Meo clans with the CIA, "at least 40-50 per cent of the men have been killed and 25 per cent of the women have fallen as casualties of the war," out of an estimated 400,000 Meo, according to last year's Kennedy subcommittee report on refugees.

Blaine W. Jensen, the acting area coordinator for U.S. AID at Ban Son, has said, "I have a bunch of scared people. When civilians start getting killed it has quite an effect on the population."

STATINTL

The Washington Merry-Go-Round

Scant Data Cramps Paris Negotiators

By Jack Anderson

Our negotiators in Paris have been restricted to the most routine intelligence about the war they are supposed to be settling. This has led to some grumping inside the delegation over the difficulty of negotiating in the dark.

The Paris delegation receives only a routine intelligence digest dealing with the Vietnam war. The top-secret stuff—battle plans, position papers, contingency plans and policymaking documents—aren't sent to Paris.

The air strikes at missile sites, antiaircraft emplacements and other tactical targets in North Vietnam in late November, for example, caught Ambassador David K. E. Bruce completely by surprise. He received his first word of the attacks from the North Vietnamese.

This left him poorly prepared to handle the North Vietnamese delegation's protests in Paris. The Communist negotiators let loose a propaganda blast, threatening to stonewall the talks.

Ambassador Bruce asked urgently for more details about

the raids. He needed the background information to help him respond to the Communist charges.

His request was forwarded by his military liaison man, Lt. Gen. Julian Ewell, in a "flash" message to the Pentagon.

Admiral Thomas Moorer, the Joint Chiefs chairman, sent back a detailed account of the raids from the Washington Post. The reply was regarded in Paris as an insulting message to Bruce that he should be satisfied with what he reads in the newspapers.

Poet's New Quest

Beat poet Allen Ginsberg, the unhappy hippie, has embarked upon the new role of investigative reporter in pursuit of evidence that the Central Intelligence Agency is supporting the opium racket in Laos.

Ginsberg, sandalled and balding, his long beard streaked with white hairs, has even managed to interview the exclusive CIA director, Richard Helms, about the CIA's suspected opium smuggling.

Helms vigorously denied his agents are flying opium out of Laos. But Ginsberg has collected a thick packet of con-

trary evidence from ex-CIA men, State Department informants and classified U.N. documents.

The poet's theory is that the CIA has been compelled to help the opium farmers in the mountains of Northern Laos in order to keep them fighting the Communists.

The CIA has raised a 10,000-man army from these Meo tribesmen. Without their opium trade, they might require massive U.S. economic aid.

Informants have told Ginsberg that the renegade Chinese Nationalists in Northern Laos and Thailand also make their living from opium. The CIA would like to keep these Chinese active, too, against the Communists.

Poet's Transformation

We discovered Ginsberg's transformation from poet to muckraker when he came to our office, clad in his hippie garb, seeking proof of his own opium story. To our surprise, his detailed files and probing questions were thoroughly professional.

He asked us for a copy of a letter that has disappeared from the files of Senate Government Operations Subcom-

mittee. The letter, written by a former CIA employee named S. M. Mustard, charges that South Vietnam's Vice President Nguyen Cao Ky once flew opium out of Laos.

The New York Times and Ramparts magazine, which are also working on the opium story, had called us about the letter. But Ginsberg came to our office and pressed in person for the missing evidence.

We dug a photostat of the letter, addressed to former Sen. Ernest Gruening (D-Alaska) out of our files. It told how Ky, during his missions as an Air Force colonel, "took advantage of this situation to fly opium from Laos to Saigon."

My associate, Les Whitten, verified several details in the letter but could come up with no additional evidence that Ky engaged in opium smuggling. The colorful South Vietnamese Vice President also denied the charge.

But the ragged, bearded Ginsberg tucked a copy of the letter into his impressive portfolio and strode off for an interview with Walter Pincus, a former Senate Foreign Relations investigator with inside information on Indochina.

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STATINTL

SACRAMENTO, CAL.

BEE

MAR 21 1971

E - 172,411

S - 200,516

'Master Of Deceit'

Editor of The Bee—Sir: Once more the Nixon administration is proving to be inconsistent in the information they give the American public and newsmen. One of countless examples is the invasion of Laos, where the enemy knew what was coming, but the American public and newsmen did not.

The military machine in Washington and Saigon is so powerful they are able to channel whatever information suits their purpose to the American public and newsmen.

As we now know, the CIA was in Laos years before the Vietnam army invaded Laos.

The administration says there are no American combat forces in either Laos or Cambodia, yet the bomber pilots, fighter pilots, helicopter gunship pilots, plus the intelligence teams, advisers and maintenance crews on the ground are part of American combat forces. To split hairs when it suits their purpose is making the credibility gap worse than ever.

The political analysts say President Johnson was a master of persuasion; they should call President Nixon a master of deceit.

CURTIS WALDROP,

Sacramento.

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Mercenaries crucial to U.S. policy

By Michael Klare

College Press Service (NACLA)

"Vietnamization," the invasion and occupation of large sections of Cambodia and Laos by U.S.-directed Saigon forces, is but the most blatant example of a government tactic which employs foreign mercenaries and the armies of client regimes as a major foreign policy instrument.

In Vietnam, for instance, American funds have been used to pay the expenses of South Korean, Thai and Philippine troops as well as Saigon's million-man army. Washington has paid the regimes of South Korea and Thailand \$1 billion each to use their soldiers in Vietnam. Furthermore, various minority peoples inhabiting the highlands of central Indochina have been mobilized into CIA-commanded "irregular" armies to bear the brunt of the fighting in Laos and northwestern Vietnam. Similar tactics have been employed by the U.S. in Bolivia, the Congo and Cuba (the Bay of Pigs).

Substitution of mercenaries for American troops in counterinsurgency warfare has many advantages for the White House: domestic opposition to foreign operations is reduced because U.S. involvement is less visible and costly; opposition abroad is reduced because people are not confronted with the overt presence of American expeditionary forces; and foreign troops cost the U.S. much less to maintain.

These benefits were summed up by former Defense Secretary Clark Clifford in an unusually candid statement to the Congress Jan. 15, 1969: "Clearly, the overriding goal of our collective defense efforts in Asia must be to assist our allies in building a capability to defend themselves. Besides costing substantially less (an Asian soldier costs about 1/15 as much as his American counterpart) there are compelling political and psychological advantages on both sides of the Pacific for such a policy."

The cost of mercenarization has been staggering: Pentagon figures indicate that between 1950 and 1968 the U.S. provided \$19 billion in weapons, supplies, training and cash to rightist third world armies under the Military Assistance Program (MAP) -- and this amount excludes Vietnam-related military aid.

Commodities delivered through MAP have included F-4E fighter aircraft,

201 patrol boats, 20,639 tanks, 3460 Honest John rockets and 2,088,000 rifles. Through the Foreign Military Sales program (FMS), the Pentagon has also extended credit to selected third world countries for the purchase of additional military hardware. As part of the MAP and FMS, the Defense Department has provided special training for some 297,000 foreign military personnel in the U.S. and abroad.

For the past few years, a budget-conscious Congress has limited the military assistance appropriations to \$350 million annually (this amount excludes payments to "free world" troops in South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, which are budgeted under the Department of Defense appropriation). Of this amount, 72% has been allocated to the four "forward-defense countries"--South Korea, Taiwan, Turkey and Greece--which constitute the mainstays against "Communist aggression." Another 10% goes to Spain, Ethiopia and the Philippines. The remaining 18% is divided, in the fiscal 1971 program, between 41 additional countries.

Arguing that police constitute the "first line of defense" against insurgency and subversion, the U.S. has also established a massive program of foreign police assistance. Between 1961 and 1969, the U.S. spent over \$236 million on this program to provide third world police forces with modern communications equipment, intelligence systems and antiriot gear. As in the case of MAP aid, this assistance has been supplemented by training programs in the U.S. and abroad.

Between 1961 and 1969, 5547 third world personnel were trained in U.S. facilities at the International Police Academy in Washington, D.C.; the FBI National Academy, Quantico, Va.; the U.S. Post Office Dept. Scientific Investigation Lab, Washington; the International Police Services School, Washington; the U.S. Coast Guard Training Center, Yorktown, Va. and the Coast Guard Academy, New London, Conn.; the Criminal Investigation Lab, Washington; and at Southern Illinois University.

The Military Assistance Program is administered by a resident military assistance advisory group or military mission in each recipient country. These groups are responsible for the selection of troops who will use the equipment furnished by MAP and generally oversee the

process of mercenarization. The same functions are performed in the police assistance programs by the Office of Public Safety of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and by resident Public Safety Advisors in recipient countries.

In order to further reduce direct U.S. military presence, the Nixon administration is trying to modernize and strengthen its mercenary armies abroad. This policy, the so-called "Nixon Doctrine," requires a vast increase in the MAP funding. "Vietnamization" alone will cost another \$6 billion in the next few years, while "Koreanization" will cost an estimated \$1-2 billion.

Accordingly, the administration is expected to ask Congress to approve a supplemental military assistance appropriation which may exceed the original \$350 million MAP outlay.

In describing the administration's defense strategy to Congress, Defense Secretary Melvin Laird stated March 10, 1970 that: "The basic policy of decreasing direct U.S. military involvement cannot be successful unless we provide our friends and allies, whether through grant aid or credit sales, with the material assistance necessary to assure the most effective possible contribution by the manpower they are willing and able to commit to their own and the common defense. Many of them simply do not command the resources or technical capabilities to assume greater responsibility for their own defense without such assistance."

"The challenging aspects of our new policy can, therefore, best be achieved when each partner does its share and contributes what it best can to the common effort. In the majority of cases, this means indigenous manpower organized into properly equipped and well-trained armed forces with the help of material, training, technology and specialized skills furnished by the United States through the Military Assistance Program or as Foreign Military Sales." According to Laird, the MAP is "the essential ingredient" of the Nixon policy "if we are to honor our obligations, support our allies and yet reduce the likelihood of having to commit American ground combat units."

and the dedication to survive even this terrible blow," concluded Mr. Sims.

As condolences pour in from Presidents and heads of states from all parts of the world, the body of Whitney Young is being returned to America in a KC-135 jet transport ordered by President Nixon. The plane is commanded by Brig. Gen. Daniel James, Jr., the highest ranking black man in the Air Force, now Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for public affairs.

Mr. Young, whose residence was in New Rochelle, N.Y., was married to the former Margaret Buckner. He leaves two daughters.

MR. PETERSON'S ASSIGNMENT

HON. LESTER L. WOLFF

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 18, 1971

Mr. WOLFF. Mr. Speaker, like many of my colleagues on the Foreign Affairs Committee, I have been very concerned in recent months by the Nixon administration's lack of a clear and coherent foreign economic policy. I was, therefore, heartened by the decision of the President earlier this year to set up a Council on International Economic Policy, and his appointment of Peter G. Peterson as Executive Director of the Council.

Mr. Peterson's past record speaks for itself—he served ably as chairman of the board of Bell & Howell, and has done much to show that business leaders can contribute usefully to the formulation of public policy. I hope he will be successful in his latest task, which will be to coordinate the Council on International Economic Policy as it establishes guidelines for other Government offices to follow in this area. In particular, I am hopeful that there will be a reassessment of the program to control U.S. direct investment abroad—and we should not, in my judgment, impose mandatory controls on investment and lending.

The March issue of *Fortune* magazine contained an editorial which points cogently to the policy questions, which should be examined, and I include the editorial at this point in the Record for the information of my colleagues:

Mr. Peterson's Assignment

One move President Nixon made as he began the second half of his term has had less trumpeting than it deserved. This was to set up a Council on International Economic Policy, consisting of five Cabinet Officers and five members of the White House staff, with the President himself as chairman. The executive director of the council will be Peter G. Peterson, who will also have the title of Assistant to the President for International Economic Affairs. As chairman of the board of Bell & Howell, Peterson had the reputation of being, in Nixon's words, "one of the ablest chief executive officers of this generation." He has also worked hard at proving that business leaders can make a useful contribution to the shaping of public policy—for example, as chairman of the Commission on Foundations and Private Philanthropy, which has recommended some useful changes in the taxation and regulation of those institutions.

In his new job, Peterson is taking on a mission that still needs to be spelled out. The U.S. has no foreign economic policy, in the sense of a coherent and clearly defined set of principles and goals. There is nothing

fuzzy about the basic objectives of domestic economic policy—to achieve full employment and price stability—though, of course, there is plenty of dispute about the means of getting to those goals. But when it comes to economic matters in the world at large, the U.S. posture seems vague and confused. Indeed, the current, very understandable preoccupation with domestic problems has discouraged public discussion of international economic issues.

Yet the U.S. cannot remain indifferent to these issues. With the world's economic interconnections and interdependence growing ever more important, our domestic prosperity, not to mention the profits and growth prospects of most large corporations, can be profoundly affected by what happens in almost every part of the globe. We have seen vivid evidence of this in recent weeks, when an impasse in the Tehran oil negotiations threatened all the leading industrial nations with an interruption in vital fuel supplies, and the collapse of Rolls-Royce in England reverberated throughout the U.S. aerospace industry.

A sense of such interdependence is hard to find in Washington. The articulation of a consistent national policy is thwarted by a conflict of many interests—some economic, some military, and some diplomatic—each intent on its own advantage, and by the diffusion of official responsibility for establishing the U.S. position on critical questions. More than sixty federal departments and agencies are involved with decision making in the international economic area, from the Interior Department's Bureau of Commercial Fisheries to the Treasury, whose top officials double as diplomats in international monetary affairs. The result is that the U.S. speaks with many voices, often inconsistent, and the world has trouble getting the message. When a special emissary of Japan's Prime Minister Eisaku Sato came over last fall to discuss a new agreement limiting textile exports to the U.S., he had to touch base with Congressmen, the Commerce Department, the State Department, and several offices in the White House to find out what the U.S. negotiating position was. His inability to get a clear answer may help to explain why no textile agreement has yet been reached.

AN AGENDA FOR DECISIONS

No one expects Pete Peterson to supersede all these federal agencies. But the President has explicitly assigned the Council on International Economic Policy the task of laying down guidelines for other government offices to follow. The council will be in a position to study critical policy questions with a thoroughness and detachment that has been lacking up to now. The agenda might start off with these items:

The demand by various industries for protection will be heard again, and more insistently. In this session of Congress, Peterson's staff should grasp the chance to shift the focus of attention from the plight of individual industries to a sort of systems analysis of what all the proposed import quotas would mean for the economic welfare of the U.S. as a whole—very much including the welfare of consumers. And much more light needs to be thrown on the international consequences of U.S. quotas. Will other nations retaliate and thereby constrict U.S. export markets? Might there be such a shrinkage of world trade that economic activity would slow everywhere? A thorough contemplation of all the possibilities might encourage us to seek other ways to help beleaguered U.S. industries, for example, by making much greater use of federal "adjustment assistance" to retrain workers and to help companies increase their efficiency or get into new products.

Perhaps the most difficult questions in international economic policy involve relations with Japan, which persists in coupling an aggressive trade offensive with reluctance

to open its own flourishing economy to foreign goods and foreign investment. The U.S. still lacks a comprehensive economic diplomacy to deal with the Japanese.

The program of controlling U.S. direct investment and limiting lending abroad, in the name of correcting the balance-of-payments deficit, has failed in its aim while subjecting business to irritation and confusion (see "Capital Is Something That Doesn't Love a Wall," *Fortune*, February). It is high time to reconsider the policy.

With no improvement in our payments deficit, dollars have been piling up in record amounts in foreign central banks. The patience of European central bankers is growing thin. Some are already proposing that no more Special Drawing Rights ("paper gold") be created until the U.S. deficit is brought under control. Another "dollar crisis" is by no means out of the question, and Washington ought to be thinking urgently about how to avert it.

The Common Market is in the midst of momentous deliberations that are likely to lead to an expansion of its membership and a closer integration of Western Europe. The U.S. should be more gracious in welcoming this movement toward a stronger, more self-reliant Europe, while at the same time exerting influence to counter any European tendency to raise barriers against outside goods and capital.

There has been a gradual relaxation of restriction on commerce with Communist countries, and American subsidiaries abroad are now permitted to trade even with Red China. But U.S. businessmen are increasingly impatient with the limitations that remain, especially since there seems to be no convincing political reason for their continuance.

These are only a few of the many questions that have lain in the limbo of policy making. When Peterson comes to recommend responses to them, we hope he will be guided by a central high principle: that it is in the best interest of the U.S. that business be encouraged to continue its multinational development and that capital and technology be permitted to move ever more freely throughout the world. In some instances, adherence to this principle will mean overriding narrow domestic politics and local interests. Pete Peterson may be stepping into one of the toughest jobs in Washington.

PARADOX OF WAR

HON. DONALD W. RIEGLE, JR.

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 18, 1971

Mr. RIEGLE. Mr. Speaker, in today's *Wall Street Journal*, there is an excellent news story by Peter B. Kuan pointing out some of the tragic consequences of American policy in Indochina. As the debate continues about our expanded involvement in Laos, I would like to bring this article to the attention of my colleagues because, I believe, it is a startling account of the war's toll on that country and its people. A copy of the article follows:

PARADOX OF WAR: OPTIMISM IN VIETNAM, FEAR IN LAOS POINT UP AMBIGUITIES OF BATTLE

(By Peter B. Kuan)

SARCON.—"Our army is like a racehorse. It has been fed and groomed and trained. But it cannot stay in the stable forever. We have risked the race, and we will win." South Vietnamese president Nguyen Van Thieu told a couple of his cabinet ministers last week.

18 MAR 1971



Paradox of War

Optimism in Vietnam, Fear in Laos Point Up Ambiguities of Battle

What's Good for One Domino Isn't Always Good for All; 'We Are Tired, So Tired'

The Colonel Loses His Way

By PETER R. KANN

Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

SAIGON—"Our army is like a racehorse. It has been fed and groomed and trained. But it cannot stay in the stable forever. We have risked the race, and we will win," South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu told a couple of his cabinet ministers last week.

"Our army is like the water buffalo. If a farmer cannot feed his buffalo, how can it work his fields? Our soldiers have been fighting for 20 years. They are tired. They cannot even afford enough rice to feed their families. How can they defend their outposts?" a Laotian general told two visitors to his Vientiane villa not long ago.

The zoological similes say something about the contrast in mood and attitude that one finds these days in the different dominoes of Indochina.

In South Vietnam there is aggressiveness and optimism. In Laos there is confusion, doubt and fear. Both countries have lived with war for two decades. But in Vietnam risks are being taken and rewards are expected: The word "victory" is entering the official vocabulary. In Laos an optimist is a man who thinks things may not get much worse.

Buying Time

Saigon's optimism — or overoptimism — stems from several factors: continuing pacification gains, relative political tranquility, an increasingly stabilized economy. But mainly it's due to the South Vietnam army (ARVN) incursion on the Ho Chi Minh Trail. The six-week-old campaign into the trail area of eastern Laos is far from really cutting the broad trail complex. But despite the ARVN retreats of recent days, military officials in Vietnam believe they already have seriously disrupted the North Vietnamese army supply line and thus the enemy's future plans.

The ARVN campaign, it's claimed, will buy time for the government of South Vietnam to further strengthen its army and further pacify its countryside without fear of a major enemy offensive. This is particularly important with national elections looming in South Vietnam this fall.

ARVN troops and U.S. firepower are said to have already killed more than 6,000 Communist soldiers in the trail area. But ARVN, too, has taken heavy casualties. More than 700 of its best soldiers have been killed and three times that number have been wounded. And for all of Saigon's optimism, the ARVN push into Laos never could have taken place without massive American air support, from troop-ferrying helicopters to saturation bombing raids. ARVN's

temporary occupation of the Tchepone area, a key hub of the trail complex about 25 miles into Laos, was more impressive as a demonstration of U.S. air mobility and power than in terms of ARVN combat capability. Indeed, ARVN troops withdrew. At various low points in the Laos campaign, ARVN commanders have grumbled about insufficient air support, but it's worth remembering that North Vietnam's forces are completely Vietnamized and have no air support at all.

"Doing Rather Well These Days"

Nevertheless, ARVN units that several years ago lacked the capability and confidence to venture into enemy strongholds not far from Saigon now are occupying positions aside the logistics lifeline of the North Vietnamese army. And even if ARVN forces withdraw back into South Vietnam well before the May monsoon rains begin, they will be able to claim some limited success.

Meanwhile, the mood of optimism in Saigon is reflected in President Thieu's recent threats to invade North Vietnam. The threats are widely viewed as having been made for domestic political effect (and no such invasion could take place without heavy American support).

But it is perhaps significant that only two years ago, during the enemy's Tet offensive, President Thieu had to reassure his people that he could defend Saigon. "The South Vietnamese are doing rather well these days. The North Vietnamese are a bit out of breath," says a European diplomat who is far from an avid Saigon supporter.

If there is a real danger in South Vietnam these days, perhaps it is overoptimism. To Americans, Vietnamization may simply mean an honorable way out of a regrettable war. But to the South Vietnamese leadership, Vietnamization increasingly seems to mean military victory. With or without good reason, the Laos invasion has tended to bolster this attitude. "We are six feet tall now," crowed a South Vietnamese cabinet minister last week.

No Overoptimism in Laos

Overoptimism is no danger in Laos, now in its 25th year of a losing war. There's nothing dramatic about the Laos conflict. For example, only 50 or so Laotian soldiers die each week — not much of a casualty count compared with the fatalities in Vietnam or Cambodia. But then Laos is a country of only about 2.5 million people. On a per capita basis, recent Laotian losses would compare with more than 4,000 American battlefield deaths a week.

It's this undramatic but inexorable death count — and the plight of some 700,000 Laotians who have been turned into war refugees — that makes Laos in many respects the most tragic theater of the Indochina war, even if it often appears to be a theater of the absurd. Two other factors compound the tragedy. One is that the Laotians have so little control over the operation of their own war. The Pathet Lao (Laotian leftists) are almost totally controlled by the North Vietnamese. And the Laotian government is almost totally dependent on America.

The second factor is that neither the North Vietnamese nor the Americans are really interested in Laos at all, except as a buffer and a source of the conflict for higher stakes in South Vietnam and Cambodia.

The South Vietnamese campaign into the Ho

Chi Minh Trail area fits into this pattern. To many in Laos, the incursion is simply an irrelevancy. The trail area of eastern Laos hasn't been under Laotian control for at least four years. Even a North Vietnamese diplomat in Vientiane considers the trail area "internationalized." And to most Laotians, South Vietnam is just the latest in a long list of countries that have violated Laos' paper neutrality: first and foremost North Vietnam, but also the U.S., China, Thailand and even Cambodia. Laotian neutrality has been worn so thin that the official Laotian protest against the South Vietnamese incursion was a collaborative effort by the Laotian prime minister and the U.S. ambassador to Laos.

Some Laotians, however, are also worried over repercussions of the ARVN trail strike. It's a sad paradox of the Indochina war that what's good for one domino isn't always good for another. Thus, some Laotians fear the ARVN strike may push North Vietnamese units deeper into southern Laos (to a safer distance from the South Vietnamese border) or that Hanoi may be prompted to seek a dramatic victory of some sort at the expense of Laos, which is by far the softest target in Indochina. The American-South Vietnamese foray into Cambodia last spring caused North Vietnam to expand its supply and sanctuary system in southern Laos. And last week, in a move that may relate to the ARVN trail campaign, the North Vietnamese overran the last Laotian outpost on the strategic Bolovens plateau in southern Laos.

"We Are Tired, So Tired"

The mood of Laos is reflected at Seno, the last relatively secure Laotian military base on Route 9, the same route North Vietnamese and South Vietnamese troops are battling over 50 miles to the east. Only 100 miles down this road lies Khe Sanh, the sprawling American logistics base for the South Vietnamese campaign, and there the sky is thick with planes and choppers. At Seno, the only thing in the air is an occasional fly.

The senior officer on duty at the largely deserted Seno base, once a French supply depot for the battle of Dienbienphu, is a polite Laotian colonel who has considerable trouble locating his own position on his briefing map. "We are here?" he says, his pointer weaving across the map like a diving rod seeking water. "And here are 10, maybe 20, battalions of South Vietnamese," he adds, indicating a coordinate about 100 miles from the nearest ARVN unit. "The South Vietnamese are killing North Vietnamese, which is good," he explains, "but then more North Vietnamese will come and the war will spread and what will we do?"

A Southern Laotian general, ideologically in sympathy with the South Vietnamese, but concerned over the fate of his Mekong Valley rice-land if the North Vietnamese should push, or be pushed, further west, puts it more succinctly: "The South Vietnamese operation in Laos is good for the South Vietnamese."

The CIA Evacuates

If the North Vietnamese, for military or political reasons, push west toward the populous Mekong River plain, there will be little to stop them but U.S. air power and the Thai army, and that would probably mean the final cannibalization of Laos. "We are like a cow in a tiger's mouth," says a Laotian colonel at Pak Se in southern Laos. "We are tired, so tired."

McCloskey Plans To Travel to Laos

Rep. Paul N. McCloskey Jr., R-Calif., a former Marine lieutenant colonel and Korean War hero, says he will travel to Laos next month to ask some of his old war buddies to tell him what's really going on there.

McCloskey said this week that some of the Marines he fought with in Korea, or otherwise knows of, now are civilian employees of the Central Intelligence Agency or the State Department, and are involved in the Laotian operation.

The Defense Department, the State Department, and the CIA refuse to provide to congressmen straight information about Laos, McCloskey said.

McCloskey, a Republican, has said President Nixon should be challenged constitutionally and politically for what McCloskey calls illegal actions in Southeast Asia.

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MAR 13 1971

Analysts Say Peace Possible If U.S. Will Negotiate

By JUDI SCHULTZ
Mercury Staff Writer

Two analysts of the Indochina war Thursday said peace is possible in Southeast Asia if the United States government will negotiate for it.

Banning Garrett, Southeast Asia editor of Ramparts magazine, during a panel discussion at San Jose State College, said the biggest obstacle to peace is the U.S. government's reluctance to abandon its war strategy.

Joining Garrett in the discussion were Chris Jenkins, a member of the International Volunteer Services in Vietnam from 1965 to 1968, and Karen McConnell of the East Asia Study Center at Stanford University.

Miss McConnell analyzed China's possible responses to the invasions of Cambodia and Laos.

Their appearances were part of the Conference on Economic, Social and Political Survival, a week-long program sponsored by Students for Peace and Freedom.

Garrett said the Nixon war policy encompasses the pursuit of two goals — the urbanization of basically rural South Vietnam and the subsequent control of the populace from urban centers and the severing of the supply routes from North Vietnam.

Garrett claimed the U.S. and South Vietnam were losing badly in battles for strategic positions in both Cambodia and Laos.

"In Cambodia, the U.S. did not count on the peasant revolution and the rapid growth of the National United Front of Cambodia," he said.

The attack on the Phnom Penh airport Jan. 22 by 50 men demonstrated the support of local villagers and airport personnel, he said.

The next logical step for the Nixon administration to take, Garrett contended, was an invasion of Laos.

The editor said that a news blackout on Laos developments leaves some questions, but he claimed there is evidence that the Laos army, trained by the CIA, has been decimated and the CIA base at Long Cheng has been evacuated.

"The crisis has developed for President Nixon," he said. "If he is clearly losing, not to escalate is to de-escalate and that means to lose the war."

He said the situation is the same that President Johnson faced. "You have to escalate just to regain the ground you've already lost," Garrett said.

But he said he thinks the alternatives are fewer for Nixon. Possibilities he sees are that the U.S.-backed troops of the Saigon government invade North Vietnam or that the U.S. sever North and South Vietnam and Laos with a nuclear contamination zone, produced obviously by a nuclear bomb.

Jenkins discussed the growing popularity in South Vietnam of a negotiated peace, based on the demands of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the National Liberation Front.

"In South Vietnam in the American-controlled and protected urban areas, there are many people who are advocating the peace terms of the PRG. These people are the general populace. They are not members of the NLF or of the Communist Party," he said.

Miss McConnell said U.S. sinologists have detected evi-

dence of a new view emerging in Chinese policy in Southeast Asia.

She said the Maoist line on warfare since 1949 for emerging nations has been one of self-reliance. China traditionally has offered encouragement to struggling nations, she said, but has been against massive invasion in support of them.

C.I.A. ROLE IN LAOS: ADVISING AN ARMY

150 U.S. Agents Help Direct
Secret Guerrilla Forces

By HENRY KAMM
Special to The New York Times

VIENTIANE, Laos, March 11

A month after the enemy attack on the American compound at the northern Laotian military headquarters at Long Tieng, the station chief, case officers and other officials of the American Central Intelligence Agency continue to perform their functions there and at other regional headquarters in Laos.

Though it conducts only ordinary intelligence activities elsewhere, the C.I.A. in Laos takes an active part in managing an army at war. This came about because the 1962 Geneva agreement on the neutrality of Laos barring foreign countries from playing a military role led the United States to turn over its assistance to the agency with the greatest experience in undercover activities.

The army functions separate from the Royal Laotian army, which is equally dependent on American logistic support and is equally financed by the United States, but is commanded by the general staff in Vientiane. The clandestine army is composed largely of mountain tribesmen. Its most active element are of the Meo tribe and its dominant figure is Maj. Gen. Vang Pao, who is also the principal leader of the Meo nation and the commander of the Military Region II of the Royal Laotian army.

Between 150 and 175 C.I.A. agents stationed in Laos are believed to be engaged in helping the guerrilla army. They are augmented by agents who commute from Udorn and other bases in neighboring Thailand.

Their work is coordinated by the station chief. He and his local staff occupy the entire second floor of the two-story United States Embassy. The station chief at Udorn is reported to occupy an important but subordinate command function in C.I.A. operations in Laos that is said to lead to occasional duplication and confusion in the chain of command. For operations involving the Ho Chi Minh Trail, the station chief in Saigon is said to have primary responsibility.

Professionals Preferred

For its work with the Laotian clandestine army, which Americans prefer to call by its official designation—the strategic guerrilla units—the intelligence agency has engaged under two-year renewable contracts a number of former professional soldiers—showing a preference for men of the Special Forces, or Green Berets, and marines—in addition to men whose careers have been with the C.I.A. Their average age is around 30.

Their principal operating bases are Long Tieng, Savannakhet in the center of the southern panhandle and Pakse near the southern tip. Long Tieng is the most active station, because General Vang Pao's guerrilla units, which are the largest, are stationed there, although since the Feb. 14 attack most are spending their nights in Vientiane. Long Tieng has its own station chief. He reports to the Vientiane chief, who figures on the diplomatic list as a special assistant to the ambassador.

The bulk of the agents are case officers, each entrusted with shepherding a combat position or unit of General Vang Pao's troops, whose present strength is estimated at more than 10,000.

Case officers visit "their" units daily, to check on their disposition and their needs. They fly out of Long Tieng in helicopters or STOL—short take-off and landing—planes operated under contract with the intelligence agency by Air America and the Continental Air Services.

They consult with their units officers, ascertain their needs in arms, ammunition, water and food, supplies, tactical air support and helicopter or plane transport for combat operations. They also help with troop morale matters.

Although the agents carry rifles or sidearms and favor camouflage uniforms, their assignment does not include active participation in combat operations.

In the past, there have been frequent violations, but the rarity of casualties indicates that the rule is widely respected.

While counseling Gen. Vang Pao and his officers, the C.I.A. does not command his army at any level, informed sources say. Laotians who know the Meo general well say that his pride and temper rule out anything more than an advisory role in combat operations combined with total dependence on the United States for all mater-

iel, transport and pay. After visiting their units, the case officers return to Long Tieng, where they arrange for the delivery of required supplies, supervise loading of planes or helicopters and submit air support requests to the C.I.A. contractors and the United States Air Force officers also posted at Long Tieng.

Once a week the station chief at Long Tieng submits a report to his superiors in Vientiane and Udorn on the disposition of all troops in the clandestine army.

Case officers also work closely with the Air Force forward air controllers who fly out of Long Tieng and direct fighter-bombers to targets in ground-support missions.

1. 2 MAR 1971

Fighting communists and disease

Meo caught in military pinch

By IREM WILLENSON

VIETNAME, Laos (AP) — A man should not build his house where the frogs croak at night — if he does, his family soon will sicken and die.

It is a saying of the Meo tribesmen who inhabit the mountains in northern Laos — but, it is also sound medical advice.

Down in the valleys where the rains accumulate in rice paddies and stagnant pools and frogs are plentiful, hordes of mosquitos, spread malaria and other diseases.

The trouble is, this year and perhaps for some time to come, the 200,000 Meo face a bitter choice between the whine of mosquitos and the whine of communist bullets.

The Meo are being driven down from the cool, high ranges of the north by a communist offensive that aims at eliminating them once and for all as a military threat.

The Meo have been fighting the communists since the early 1930s when the CIA recruited Gen. Vang Pao, who then was a major in the Laotian army, to form a guerrilla force able to protect a string of secret U.S. bases and harass communist supply lines into the Plain of Jars area.

The Meo are a tribe of hardy, semi-nomadic farmers and hunters who traditionally have lived on precipitous, forested hillsides at altitudes above 4,000 feet since they began migrating to southeast Asia from central China about two centuries ago.

They were ideal fighters to defend the string of helicopter pads, radar stations and radio monitoring points the Americans established on the mountaintops of northern Laos to support the bombing campaign against North Vietnam.

REFUGEES

U.S. officials here who work with them say they are disliked the communists by virtue of previous encounters

with them during the first Indochina war, and because the discipline of the communist system conflicted with their migratory habits and their predilection for growing, smoking and trading opium.

Since the winter-spring campaign of 1969-70, when the Americans started reducing the level of support to Gen.

Vang Pao and his guerrilla army, the communists have pushed the Meo southward in a series of violent assaults on their mountainous outposts.

Now, three years later, the communists are hammering at the doors of their central headquarters of Long Cheng, and they have already driven the bulk of the Meo civilian populations into the last range of mountains north of the Mekong River.

In the past month or so, the communist offensive on Long Cheng and its associated bases has produced one of the great refugee migrations of the entire Indochina war. U.S. officials estimate that at least 100,000 people have been forced to pack their pots and pans, put their pigs on a leash and trek 25 to 50 miles across the wild territory to reach the relative safety of U.S.-financed refugee bases in the southern fringes of the mountains.

Two weeks ago, a column of thousands of women, children and old people came under fire. Hundreds were wounded and hundreds more died from the rigors of the journey.

U.S. officials have no statistics, but they estimate that at least 1 per cent of the refugees die in any migration from fatigue, exposure and general hardship.

Even tho the Meo are essentially a primitive people who live in thatch huts and have so few possessions that it is no problem to move them, life at new refugee sites is not easy.

It is cold in northern Laos at this time of year. Temperatures drop into the 30s at night. Even tho the Americans spend over \$20 million a year to buy rice, roofing materials and other simple artifacts and fly them to the refugees, the Meo still must rebuild their houses after every move, clear land and put in new crops of rice, corn, vegetables and poppy.

But what is more significant to their future is that the Meo now are being forced out of the mountains entirely, and they may eventually have to change their whole cultural pattern to cope with a lowlands way of life. The Americans have already begun trying to teach some of them paddy farming, tho without much success.

LAOTIAN DRIFTER FROM VITAL BASE

Loe Post Used for Actions Against Foe's Supply Trail

By HENRY MARIN

Special to The New York Times

VIENTIANE, Laos, March 10

The Laotian military command announced today the loss of a base that is vital for harassment and surveillance of the Ho Chi Minh Trail network in the southern panhandle.

Laotian troops were driven last night from a post known as Position 22 and from three smaller posts on the eastern edge of the Boloven Plateau after two days of bombardment by rockets, mortars and recoilless rifles and ground attacks.

The plateau is 80 miles south of the Tchepone area, where South Vietnamese troops are operating.

[Reports from Saigon said heavy fog was hampering United States helicopter support of the South Vietnamese attack on the enemy supply-trail complex and also was cutting down on ground fighting.]

Military sources reported that the defenders of the Boloven Plateau positions -- three battalions of so-called strategic guerrilla units -- had retreated in relatively good order, taking about 50 wounded with them. No reports were available on the number of Laotian troops killed because enemy fire destroyed the base communication center before the withdrawal.

Strategic guerrilla units -- which normally have about 300 men to a battalion -- are part of the irregular army sponsored by the United States. In addition, the United States underwrites the budget of the regular military force, the Royal Laotian Army.

The fall of Position 22 leaves the Government without a base on the eastern edge of the strategic plateau. From there, surveillance and raids could be carried out by the guerrilla units against Route 15, the principal western branch of the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

The loss of the base presumably reduces the amount of intelligence on trail traffic that has guided the United States Air Force in its missions against the trail.

Control of Plateau Threatened

Position 22 had been the strongest Laotian base in the area, and its loss is a threat to the Government's hold over the plateau, which is the dominant terrain feature in the southern panhandle.

The base had been under heavy pressure since last December, but a strong ground attack then was beaten off.

American and Laotian planes were reported in action during the last battle.

The deteriorating Government position in the south may be a result of a North Vietnamese reaction to South Vietnam's operation in the Tchepone region. Meanwhile, Government fortunes in northern Laos appeared to be more stable.

Despite heavy enemy pressure in the area of Long Tieng, the principal base of the irregular army of mountain tribesmen commanded by Maj. Gen. Vang Pao, optimism is growing that the North Vietnamese and Pathet Lao forces can be held off there until the monsoon rains starting in May or June halt enemy offensive activities.

Thai Troops in Action

At least four battalions of Thai troops, in addition to three battalions from the northern panhandle, have augmented General Vang Pao's battle-weary forces of Meo and Lao Theng (Mountain Lao) tribesmen.

The Thai troops, whose presence in Laos is officially denied, are occupying strong defensive positions around Long Tieng, notably at Ban Na and Sam Thong to the northeast.

The Thai troops are reliably reported to be under the operational command of General Vang Pao but are led by their own officers, reportedly including two generals.

The soldiers are wearing their normal uniforms but without insignia or other-identifying markings.

The Thai troops are supplied separately from the Laotian units from the Thai Air Force base at Udorn, which is operated by the United States Air Force. Their supplies reach the Thais daily by planes operated

by Air America and Continental Air Services, companies under contract to the Central Intelligence Agency for the transport and supply of the United States-sponsored Laotian irregulars. Thai supplies are distributed from a separate supply facility at Long Tieng.

It is believed that the United States is financing the Thai

STATINTL

participation in the war in Laos as it does in South Vietnam.

Thai artillery units have been reported active in northern Laos for some time. The infantry battalions were said to have been rushed in about a year ago, after heavy enemy pressure brought about the evacuation of the civilian population center of Sam Thong.

Long Tieng appeared to be most heavily menaced last month. The base remains vulnerable to an estimated total of 12 North Vietnamese battalions in the area.

STATINTL

20 MAR 1971 STATINTL

War in Laos Imperils the Survival of Meo Tribes

By HENRY KAMM

Special to The New York Times

VIENTIANE, Laos, March 15

The tough and fierce Meo mountain tribesmen of Laos, retreating before the North Vietnamese invaders, are nearing the end of the mountains, and the limits of their strength. Their survival in their traditional pattern of life has become a matter of concern to them and to their friends.

The Meo, who in their fight against the North Vietnamese are supported and advised by the United States Central Intelligence Agency, have been moving southward from deep within China for centuries—nomads of the highlands, slashing and burning rice fields out of the wooded mountainsides and moving on when the soil is exhausted.

Hostile pressure has sometimes speeded their southward move, but there have always been mountains ahead of them.

Now the advance of the North Vietnamese, coming out of the region of their own Meo minority around Dienbienphu during the last decade, has steadily driven the Meo of Laos to the south and the west until they

find themselves near the edge of the mountains.

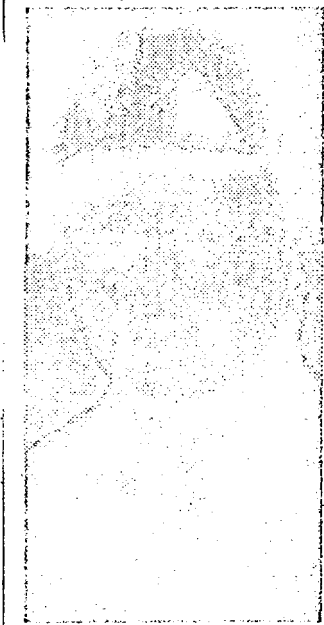
Stretching ahead to the broad Mekong River lies the Vientiane Plain. Beyond that is the flat paddy land of Thailand, and then the sea.

The Meo, a small people of Chinese appearance who are easily distinguished from the brown-skinned Laotians, find the plain oppressively hot because they have always lived at heights up to 5,000 feet. Furthermore, they have no taste for life in the larger communities of the plain.

As the military situation deteriorates, rockets have been falling almost daily on Long Tieng, the mountain redoubt that the Meo consider their last bastion. The missiles have shaken the faith of the Meo because their most powerful leader, Maj. Gen. Vang Pao, has always told them that Long Tieng is invulnerable and that when the war was won they would return northward to the lands from which they have been driven.

Last month the Meo again set out for the south, leaving the settlements around Long

Tieng and trudging in thin columns through the mountains. Americans who have long been close to the hill tribe—the name is pronounced May-oh—estimate that about 100,



United Press International

Maj. Gen. Vang Pao, who told the Meo people Long Tieng was invulnerable, has been losing their confidence because of almost daily attacks:

000 are either on the move or have temporarily stopped wandering until their leaders tell them to stay or until the enemy draws near.

The heart of the area around which they are gathering, the American-run relief center of Ban Xon, was struck last week by enemy guerrilla squads; Meo are nervous.

Americans have been close to the Meo because the military interests of the United States and the Meo leaders coincide, and the United States has been feeding the Meo and arming, supplying and paying their soldiers for years.

No Strong Allegiance

That has been done largely outside the Laotian Government's channels because the Meo feel no strong allegiance to it and because direct dealings have been found more efficient in view of the bureaucracy and corruption in Vientiane. Prince Souvanna Phouma, the Premier, has often said that the military efficiency thus achieved, has offered no objection.

Knowledgeable observers report that the United States and General Vang Pao are the sources of what the ordinary Meo need to live. Permanently on the move as they are, they depend on the United States for almost all the necessities of life.

Wherever the Meo halt, for a day or for months, United States planes land or drop rice, meat, medicines, building materials and clothing. The United States is feeding and supplying 170,000 people—70 or 80 per cent of the Meo—concentrated in a small region of northern Laos south of Long Tieng, north of the Vientiane Plain and east of the Mekong.

Until last March the supply operations were centered in the town of Sam Thong, created as the administrative center of the Meo nation by the United States. Enemy attacks caused it to be evacuated, and the operation moved to the previously prepared site of Ban Xon, about 20 miles to the southwest.

Now that the enemy has struck at Ban Xon, an alternate site is under construction.

The Key Question Now

To many people sympathetic to the Meo the question is no longer where to move them in temporary safety and how to enable them to make a new stand against the North Vietnamese and their Pathet Lao allies but, rather, whether the time has come to move them out of the war while there are still enough men left to assure the nation's survival.

The mountain region that General Vang Pao and Laotian and American friends of the Meo have in mind lies southeast of Long Tieng. It is thinly settled by pro-Pathet Lao Meo, with whom an accommodation could perhaps be reached. General Vang Pao has made such temporary, local arrangements, although they were eventually upset by the North Vietnamese.

The general, who effectively replaced the traditional political Meo chieftains by virtue of the power and patronage conferred by the United States, is known as a moody man who passes mercurially from periods of military optimism to spells of deep depression, in which he has frequently talked of leading the Meo out of the war.

In the last decade, according to knowledgeable sources, 10,000 Meo have been killed in action; the annual rate of battle deaths over the last three years has been 2,000.

for the first time in such a setting of a search for a haven for his people. He drew a gloomy picture of the outlook for the annual Communist dry-season offensive then gathering strength and predicted the loss of Long Tieng.

General Vang Pao is reported to be more optimistic now, buoyed by at least four Thai battalions and by three Laotian battalions from other regions that, under his command, are participating effectively in the defense of Long Tieng.

That has resulted in a halt in the general southward move, but the search for a lasting solution, if such can be found, continues.

Example of the Tibetans

Chao Saykham, who has been Governor of Xiengkhouang Province, a principal center of Meo life, for 26 years, was found at his home the other day reading a book about the fate of the Tibetans. The Governor, whose princely title, Chao, identifies him as a member of the former royal family of Xiengkhouang and not as a Meo, said he was studying the fate of another mountain people defeated and displaced in great numbers by a Communist "war of national liberation."

A responsible American commented that Chao Saykham, widely respected as one of the rare Laotian leaders with a sympathetic interest in the mountain people, had given up the fight. The American added that the Meo had been "bled white" and were exhausted and could not be asked to do much more fighting.

The tribesmen, by all accounts, have been as good a fighting force as the Laotian Government has had, but their losses have been catastrophic. The extent is difficult to determine because even their numbers are subject to varied estimates in this country, whose population is put at two million to three million. Guesses on the number of Meo range from 150,000 to 300,000.

Even a brief visit to a Meo area or group discloses one essential fact: The number of able-bodied young men is disproportionately small compared with the numbers of women, children and aged or invalid men.

In the last decade, according to knowledgeable sources, 10,000 Meo have been killed in action; the annual rate of battle deaths over the last three years has been 2,000.

The Bandit Boss

He is given free hand by his Government to disrupt the world. In turn, he gives his Government free hand to deny knowledge of his activity. Today he is the most hated man in the world. Meet CIA Director, Richard Helms.

By DR. JULIUS MADER

What actually does the world know about CIA-Chief R. M. Helms? Anyone perusing the 12,378 biographies in "Who's Who in American Politics" (New York/London) must resign himself to the fact that no mention is made of Mr. Helms, while the reference book "Who is Who in America" spares no more for him than a paltry 12 lines. The following documentation gives so far the most detailed characterization of Richard M. Helms.

FOR nearly five years Richard McGarrath Helms has been at the helm of the CIA with its 52,359 employees and tens of thousands of agents of various nationalities.

His official title is Director of Central Intelligence — DCI; his office is the CIA Centre in Langley/Virginia, 7th floor, room number 75, 706; his last residence: 3901 Fessenden Street, Washington DC20016.

At Helms' official appointment, the US President maintained CIA-Directors to be just as unscrupulous as invaluable. Helms' official yearly salary is after all 30,000 dollars, though this is no more than a trifle compared with the sums he is larded with by the big bosses' lobby.

Then who is that man whom the representatives of the US-establishment, those tycoons of Wall Street, have picked for one of the most influential functions in the entire imperialist camp?

Needless to say, Helms' origin goes back to the capitalist class. His grandparents on his father's side were German

migrants. His father Herman Helms was a manager of the Aluminium Company of America (Alcoa), the trust which holds a key-position in the North-American military-industrial complex and has many international connexions.

After having spent his youth in South Orange, a fashionable suburb of New York City, he attended high-school in Freiburg (Western Germany) and an exclusive college in Switzerland. At 22 he graduated from the William's College in the USA.

Following that he worked for 2 years as a newspaper reporter in Hitler's Germany, 4 years on the editorial management of the TIMES of Indianapolis and the following 28 years in various US intelligence services.

His pre-war experience as TIMES advertising manager for the entire territory of the USA helped him to expand his private contacts with big business.

Meanwhile, Helms has become a servant of the US monopoly groups, a man who as to unscrupulousness has hardly ever been outdone by anyone else.

This goes a long way to explain why he never fails to make the regular tour d'horizon in person before the Business Council of Top Executives of the group of the country's most influential industrial managers as

was the case only recently in the "Homestead-Hotel" in Hot-springs, Virginia.

Helms Reevitates Nazi Intelligence

Helms was one of Hitler's admirers, as manifested in his reports as United Press Correspondent on the 1936 Berlin Olympic Games and above all in the interview with Hitler in 1937 when Helms was only 24.

In 1942, Helms enlisted in the US-Navy as a lieutenant and left in 1946 as a lieutenant commander. On account of his linguistic prowess he held, during the Second World War, several office jobs, was promoted from time to time and, eventually in 1943, seconded to the then military intelligence unit: Office of Strategic Services (OSS).

In 1945, side by side with the OSS-Resident for Europe, Allen Welsh Dulles, he was busy, reactivating Hitler's military intelligence service, headed by Lieutenant-General Reinhard Goehlen with a view to put new life into the anti-socialist Cold War. His theatre of operation was then West Berlin, Frankfurt/Main and Munich.

Since those days Helms has served five US Presidents in poisoning the international atmosphere. In 1947, he was attached to the organisational staff of CIA and was from the beginning in charge of the "Office of Special Operations" dealing with secret, so-called back operations

and sabotage operations. Helms, furthermore, kept under his thumb the Political Propaganda Section for ideological subversion. In 1948 Helms was one of the initiators of the National Security Council's confidential directive NSC 10/2 which allows the CIA to engage in so-called special operations provided they are "limited" and kept sufficiently from the public so that the US-administration is able to issue a denial at any time.

By 1962, Helms had climbed up the ladder into the 3rd position of CIA-hierarchy and became director of the subversive Planning Section. In 1965, President Johnson appointed him deputy director and in mid-1966 director of CIA. In this function, Helms is also chairman of the US Intelligence - Board into which flow all the nine US civil and military intelligence branches.

No Institution

There is no institution in the USA entitled to exercise any effective control over Helms or his CIA, neither the Senate nor the House of Representatives. The following fact does not lack a good deal of cynicism: When in 1967 another CIA-scandal stank to high heaven, the US-President felt investigation and called in as investigator none other but the immediately incriminated individual.

HAMILTON, MONT.
WESTERN NEWS
MAR 3 1971
WEEKLY - 2,130

WE HAVE A POLICE STATE PAST EMBRYO

With the CIA playing a major role in conducting the war in Laos and Cambodia, along with Department of Defense bombers and gunships flying protective support overhead, it seems that Nixon has found a way to conduct the war while bringing home the infantrymen, at least the draftees.

Using foreign soldiers to fight the war in Asia reminds Americans of the fondness Americans held for the Hessians hired by King George in the American Revolution.

Reports throughout the nation are that the Army has been engaged in a nation-wide spying upon American citizens building up dossiers on the thoughts of American citizens. Husbands and wives had best whisper softly if they converse about anything over the bang, bang, bang on the boob tube. Private views and intimate thoughts might find their way into the Army spy dossier and react badly upon you in the years to come! And if the Army don't get you the FBI is on the job as well.

It is now fairly well established that the CIA inspired at least four or more attempts upon the life of Cuban President Castro. The first try of the CIA was to furnish special poison capsules to slip into Castro's food. The poison was supposed to take three days to work. By the time the Cuban leader died his system would have discarded all traces of the sophisticated poison, so it would be thought he had died of natural or mysterious causes. The CIA failed to get the poison in the food. So they tried bullets the next three times, at least, but failed in these efforts.

There may be people who think poison and lead are too good for Castro. Put the shoe on the other foot. What if the Cubans were making a government-spy-planned effort to kill our president?

Then there is Old Edgar Hoover and the FBI. It is notorious that his men have been working day and night for years building up detailed information about citizens throughout the country in an effort to discredit them when the time comes handy.

At one meeting not long ago it was developed that of a crowd of less than 150 in attendance more than 50 were undercover spies of one type or another.

It is getting so that the undercover spies will have to wear badges to keep from investigating each other.

This is not a funny situation. It will ultimately undermine the country. We thought it horrid for the Soviet, the Nazis and the Fascists to conduct a police state. We are endangered by the same sorry practices?

BRATTLEBORO, VT.
REFORMER
MAR 2 1971
E - 8,014

... And War

It will no doubt come as a great surprise to the Capitol Hill Bomber, but there are others beside himself (or herself) who feel deeply about the Laotian adventure. The latest Gallup poll found that Americans, by more than a 2-1 ratio, think the invasion of Laos will lengthen rather than shorten the war.

Certainly this seems to be the case. One American combat expert was quoted yesterday as saying that the Laotian fighting is the hardest of the entire Indochina war.

What this proves, of course, is that the North Vietnamese were in supposedly "neutral" Laos, and were there in great strength. This should come as no surprise to anyone, particularly the Allied Command, which has known it all along. The reason the Allies have known it is because over the years they've had as many Green Berets, CIA personnel, and South Vietnamese troops in Laos as there have been Communist forces. The one thing America and North Vietnam have had in common in recent years is that both have violated Laotian neutrality.

Given this strange balance of power on the Vietnam border, it is bewildering why the so-called "Allied Command" tried to disturb it. There's nothing basically wrong with a hornet's nest as long as no one pokes a stick into it.

And then the man who does the poking can get stung, and this seems to be what is happening in Laos.

All of this leads up to one final question: Does anyone remember why this country is fighting in Vietnam, much less Laos?

STATINTL



TUIPABT Monthly Reports

On the Underground Press

STATINTL

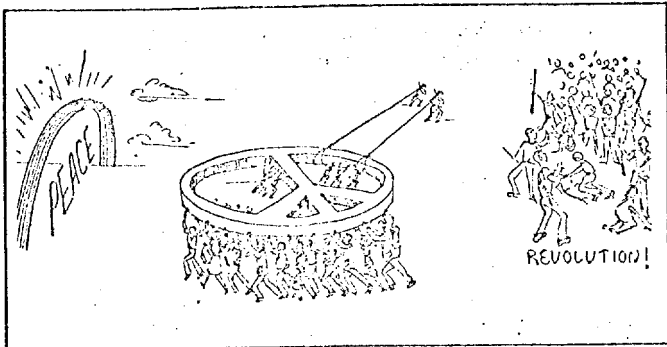


P.O. BOX 3676

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20007

MARCH, 1971

STATIN



THE UNDERGROUND PRESS AND ITS "SPRING OFFENSIVE"

Any serious study of a large number of the underground newspapers published in this country in the past six months must conclude they are not primarily seeking PEACE, but seeking to use the naturally broad public desire for peace as a means for furthering their own basic cause. Our analyses continue to show this to be violent REVOLUTION!

In fact, in the present sample we made a particular effort to identify material which could be considered to be purely peace-oriented. The word "peace" is there—even in such slogans as "Peace in Vietnam or War at Home." The "peace symbol" is liberally present—sometimes drawn with the clenched fist of rebellion at its center. And, the so-called "People's Peace Treaty" is reproduced in underground papers all across the country—written under the tutelage of the people who command the battlefield opponents of U.S. and South Vietnamese forces in Vietnam and taken to Paris for the approval of the people who oppose U.S. and South Vietnamese negotiators there. Otherwise, we were not able to identify enough peace-oriented material in the underground papers to register in an analysis.

A year ago, the underground papers had passed through a period of emphasis on POLLUTION/ECOLOGY and were increasing their attention dramatically on THE MILITARY/DRAFT and THE POLICE.

A year ago there were great rallies on pollution and ecology. A year ago there was a great increase in physical attacks on campus military training and research facilities, actions against the draft, and violent confrontations with police—BEFORE Cambodia or Kent State.

This year the undergrounds have been pointedly building up the SOUTHEAST ASIA issue—and the trend started months ago, between July and October 1970. Prior to that time the topic SOUTHEAST ASIA WAR registered at the 18th or 19th position in our analyses of the underground papers. It has climbed sharply and steadily since then and now ranks 4th among all of the topics to which the undergrounds give attention. During that same July

October period our analyses showed a decline in the amount of attention given to revolutionary tactics and actions—every sample since October 1970 has suggested the July-October period was one of re-evaluation of tactics and re-alignment of strategy. At precisely the same point in time—October 1970—the topics SOUTHEAST ASIA WAR and REVOLUTION! reversed their downward trends, the SOUTHEAST ASIA attention shooting upward in a curve all out of proportion to anything going on in the war—well before the Laos invasion, for example.

Shortly after this trend reversal, in November and December 1970, the underground papers began carrying announcements of changes in tactics by the revolutionists. The keynote of these came from Weatherman member Bernardine Dohrn, speaking from "underground." She said "random bombing" had been a poor tactic, it was "time for the movement to go out into the air, to organize, to risk calling rallies and demonstrations to convince that mass actions against the war and in support of rebellions do make a difference." She even specified Kent State as a place needing encouragement to demonstrate again and cited the "national silence after the bombing of North Vietnam" as needing attention.

Among some of the pamphlets and pulp magazines which intersperse and fringe the underground press one can find the instructions for carrying out Bernardine's dictum. It is a rather common suggestion of this literature for organizing to surround an issue which already has popular support and to try to prevent the establishment from "co-opting" the issue by working into statements and slogans at least one proviso which obviously cannot be met—adding the word "now" to any complex demand, for example.

Win magazine, published with the support of the War Resisters League and favored by some of the religious peace fellowships, describes a more sophisticated strategy of coalition which can be seen at work now. Win contends there are "two large serious movements in the country today." One of these, it says, is the "peace movement, almost entirely white and middle class, and concerned primarily with ending the war in Vietnam." The other movement is mostly non-white and is concerned primarily with organizing against the "very real oppressions" within the society. Neither movement is really committed to

MAJOR TOPICS COVERED INSIDE

ALTERNATE LIVING.....4	THE POLICE.....4
DRUGS.....5-8	REVOLUTION!.....3
MINORITY GROUPS.....4	ROCK MUSIC.....4
ORGANIZATIONS.....4	SOUTHEAST ASIA WAR.....4
PERSONALITIES.....3	WOMEN'S LIBERATION.....4

STATINTL

CLEVELAND, OHIO
PLAIN DEALER

FEB 26 1977
M - 409,414
S - 545,032

Young Blasts Nixon in Talk at Heidelberg

Plain Dealer Special

TIPPIN, O. -- Stephen M. Young, former U.S. senator, threw verbal darts at President Nixon's policies in Southeast Asia in a talk at Heidelberg College here yesterday.

"A coldness has descended on the Potomac since 1968, when Richard Nixon said he had a secret plan to end the war," Young said. "That plan is still a secret, however."

He said the way to peace was not through Cambodia and Laos, and accused the Central Intelligence Agency of overthrowing the governments of those countries.

Young, 81, now is a lawyer in Washington. He spoke to students and faculty here and visited several classes.

ATLANTIC CITY, N. J.

PRESS Approved For Release 2001/03/04 : CIA-RDP80-01601

FEB 23 1973

M - 64,485

S - 58,457

SPEAKS HERE

War Illegal - Hatfield

By SAMUEL M. MARON

Press Staff Writer

MARGATE--Continuing U. S. involvement in Indochina is leading America to a "constitutional crisis," U. S. Sen. Mark Hatfield, R-Ore., said here Saturday night.

"The U. S. involvement in the Laotian civil war is increasing all the time. Many American personnel are engaged in CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) activities with the South Vietnamese there.

"The South Vietnamese are in an infantry role, yet U. S. involvement includes a total of 2,000 aircraft committed to flying 500 missions per day," Hatfield, the sponsor of anti-war legislation last year, told some 500 persons at the Jewish Community Center here.

WAR 'ILLEGAL'

Using history to defend his position, Hatfield charged that only Congress has the power to declare war, and that President Nixon's war policies are stripping the legislators of their authority.

Referring to the Constitution, Hatfield said:

"The greatest political document ever written says it shall be for the Congress to provide for the common defense of the people, and the president is put in command of only those armies raised by Congress."

"It was the clear intent of the Constitution to keep power for war in the hands of Congress, and for not any longer than two years at a time," Hatfield said, noting that this interpretation of the Constitution is borne out in some of the Federalist Papers, authored by statesman Alexander Hamilton.

BILL'S INTENT

Hatfield asserted that when he and his Democratic colleague, U. S. Sen. George McGovern, D-N.D., drafted their resolution (the Hatfield-McGovern amendment) calling for

withdrawal of all U. S. troops from Vietnam by December of last year, their intention "was not to challenge the president."

"I told Sen. McGovern it was high time we stood up and challenged our own, congressional colleagues to do something about the war. I'm sick of hearing about those who talk about the horrors of war," Hatfield said, adding:

"There has been no declaration of war and no equivalent of such a declaration has been granted by the Congress to any authority for the use of our armies in Indochina."

President Nixon's own repeal of the Gulf of Tonkin resolution, which President Johnson had used as his defense against critics who challenged his authority to have called for more troops in Vietnam, stripped away any legality there may have been to his escalation of war activities in Cambodia and Laos, Hatfield asserted.

SEND BOYS HOME

"The only power the President has now is to withdraw troops; not engage them further in Cambodia or Laos," Hatfield said, noting that if the U. S. is sincerely interested in saving its soldiers' lives it should put the men "on a boat and send them home to our bases."

"We must set a certain date for our withdrawal from Vietnam. This would enable us to adhere to our objectives at the peace table," Hatfield said, adding that if U. S. war policy is predicated on the need to keep "the Thieu-Ky government in power, no peace will be attained."

"We need a firm policy, not

one evolving to pacify the American people. We have to restore the integrity of constitutional government. And we have to restore the image of our country before the people of the world. Not before the politicians who shout 'huzzah' for foreign aid, but the simple masses of the people," Hatfield said.

STATINTL

MADISON, WISC.
TIMES

E - 46,029
FEB 22 1971

'Orwellian Double-talk'

THREE OTHER UNITED States Senators have joined Sen. William Proxmire in a bill aimed at barring the use of Food for Peace funds for military purposes.

Proxmire's Joint Economic Committee recently turned up the shocking fact that the so-called Food for Peace program

had been subverted by the Pentagon and the CIA into a pipeline for selling U. S. arms to foreign countries.

We agree with the Wisconsin senator, who said he hopes to rescue the humanitarian Food for Peace program from the "Orwellian double-talk where funds generated for peace are used to purchase weapons, uniforms and accoutrements of war, and where the idealistic and humanitarian urges of mankind are corrupted for military purposes."

GRAND RAPIDS, MICH.
PRESS FEB 21 1971

E - 133,419
S - 138,539

CIA Conceals Millions

Reports that U.S. aircraft mistakenly bombed a Central Intelligence Agency headquarters in northern Laos are likely to revive congressional demands for a more thorough accounting of the CIA's activities and spending.

Theoretically the CIA is an intelligence gathering and coordinating body, but there have been disturbing signs that the super-secret agency determines foreign policy rather than merely assists with its formation.

Recently, Sen. Clifford Case charged that Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty are financed by the CIA, and that they cost taxpayers more than \$30 million annually.

This has been going on for more than 20 years, says Case, without the same authorization and appropriation process with which Congress controls budgets of other federal agencies.

Case says he doesn't want to end operation of the stations or even the government subsidy; he just wants to bring into the open the cost of the operation, and he feels that it is Congress' responsibility to see that taxpayer funds are used and accounted for properly.

Both stations beam their broad-

casts to Communist-controlled countries in Eastern Europe, and they both maintain that they are financed through private contributions.

CIA's possible link to the radio operations is especially pertinent because it follows the 1967 uproar over the agency's role in helping to finance certain programs of the National Student Association, a group supposedly free of government influence.

That particular CIA funding was investigated by a presidential commission which decided that "no federal agency shall provide covert financial assistance or support, direct or indirect, any of the nation's educational or voluntary organizations," and that "no programs currently would justify any exception to this policy."

The question seems to be simple enough: Should the CIA, which properly must conceal hundreds of millions of dollars in its budget, use its privileged position as a sanctuary for administration spending policies which rightfully belong with Congress?

Sen. Case thinks not, and we would tend to agree, for it cripples the system of checks and balances upon which this democracy thrives.

BUFFALO, N.Y.
NEWS

FEB 18 1971

E - 281,982

Cloud of Secrecy Over Laos

We are in the Laotian war up to our waists and may soon be up to our necks, and yet the American public is getting only the sketchiest idea of what is going on there.

News men are not allowed to travel on the thousands of U. S. planes on missions over Laos, being limited to accompanying South Vietnamese forces on planes or on the ground. Reports handed out by South Vietnamese military authorities (the only ones officially on the ground in Laos) are imaginative rather than informative, as in the case of one battle in which 43 of the enemy allegedly were killed with the loss of only one South Vietnamese soldier.

It is not hard to think of reasons why the administration might be less than candid about the Laotian operation. The U. S. Central Intelligence Agency has for many years carried on extensive operations in Laos. While the administration may or may not be technically right in saying there are no U. S. "ground combat troops" in Laos, there are many Americans there who used to fit that category, being former Green Beret troops who now work in a "civilian" capacity for the CIA, training and advising a 10,000-man Laotian army.

All the official shadow-boxing about whether U. S. troops stepped over the border is largely irrelevant anyway. The main point is that once again, as in the Cambodian operation last spring, the U. S. is taking part in one of the major

offensives of the whole Indo-Chinese war. One result of the offensive showed up this week as the U. S. death toll more than doubled.

Everyone desperately hopes that these operations will succeed in their declared goal of hastening the withdrawal of U. S. troops, but doubts stem from the fact that they indicate a change in emphasis in the withdrawal program. In 1969, President Nixon declared that the withdrawals would depend on three criteria: (1) the level of enemy activity, (2) the negotiations in Paris and (3) the Vietnamization program.

Until the Cambodian operation, there was a steady lowering of the level of violence, raising hopes that a tacit cease-fire might result. Now this escalation of the war by the allied side would seem to indicate that Mr. Nixon has abandoned hope of progress in the negotiations and is placing all his hopes on the Saigon military leaders and their progress in taking over the war.

This tends to be confirmed by reports that American officials in Vietnam are working actively for the re-election of President Thieu. As our troops withdraw, we should be loosening our unhealthy relationship with the Saigon generals and encouraging the development of political forces favoring negotiations and compromise. Instead we seem even more committed to the generals and to a military solution of the war.

YAKIMA, WASH.
 HERALD-REPUBLIC
 FEB 9 1971

D - 34,847
 S - 36,153

Our dictatorships

Occasionally — such as Monday after reading the New York Times News Service story on the Central Intelligence Agency's use of Laotian refugee funds to finance paramilitary operations — we get a distinct feeling that we Americans are kidding ourselves. We boast of our fine democratic processes — even while we suspect that we are the victims of a bureaucratic dictatorship.

Protected, perhaps justifiably, by claims of national security, the CIA seems answerable to nobody, including the President of the United States. No one person seems to know where all CIA funds come from, how they are spent, what ventures that cloak-and-dagger operation may be planning next — or especially, how to pull its claws.

Less mysterious, perhaps, but just as independent and often just as arrogant, are many other bureaus in our gigantic federal apparatus. There is an almost general agreement that there simply is too much government, but almost no agreement on how to reduce it.

Two recent comments by congressional figures of both parties are revealing:

Said Senate Democratic Leader

Mike Mansfield in a recent interview, "We are top-heavy in federal bureaus and agencies. We have been slap happy, piling agencies upon one another."

And Sen. Strom Thurmond, South Carolina Republican, said at a news conference, "The federal government has gotten so big and cumbersome that not any President, no matter who he is, can manage it."

The CIA's untouchable attitude is but a symbol, though undeniably a singularly offensive one, of an almost traditional bureaucratic reluctance to allow any other branch of government to control either growth or operations. That was especially evident when the late President Eisenhower attempted to whittle down the massive State Department. He gave it up as a bad job.

Someday, a President will join forces with strident voices in Congress to hammer the supposedly uncontrollable bureaucracies back into their original role of carrying out policies set by the executive and legislative branches. It can't happen too soon. Meanwhile, is there no one in the federal government who can haul in the CIA and set it straight on who is in charge?

Kennedy Says Laos Aid Goes to CIA's Forces

Exclusive to The Times from the Washington Post

WASHINGTON — Sen. Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.) charged Saturday that nearly half of all American aid for war refugees in Laos is being supplied to guerrilla forces directed by the Central Intelligence Agency.

Since 1968 the Agency for International Development has allotted \$54.8 million to Laos for refugee relief. These are funds for medical supplies, hospitals, resettlement and other supplies and services.

"Until recent times,"

Kennedy said, "the U.S. Aid refugee program was simply a euphemism to cover American assistance to persons who agreed to take up arms against the Pathet Lao."

He said that a "very significant measure of this assistance apparently continues."

AID administrator John A. Hannah publicly admitted in June that when he took office that he was unhappy to find that since

1962 CIA agents were using the civilian agency as a cover for their operations. Hannah said "our preference is to get rid of this operation."

Kennedy said some of the financing has been transferred to the Defense Department in the last two or three years. But Kennedy's Senate Judiciary subcommittee on refugees made public censored versions of General

Accounting Office reports with summaries indicating continued assistance to CIA-directed forces.

The subcommittee report said that although "AID officials generally recognize that economic assistance funds should not be used as a cover to finance military activities, AID has apparently continued to furnish substantial amounts of medical supplies to Lao military, et al."

The report estimated that half of the funds going to the AID village health project, which has received \$9.4 million between 1961 and 1970, is being used for this purpose.

An AID spokesman said "AID does not exclude from assistance those who have been or may in future be engaged in fighting against North Vietnamese or Communist Pathet Lao."

U.S. Refugee Aid in Laos Found to Help Guerrillas

By JOHN W. FINNEY

WASHINGTON, Feb. 6—The General Accounting Office has concluded that much of the money allocated for assisting refugees has been used to finance paramilitary operations in Laos directed by the Central Intelligence Agency.

The accounting office, which controls the disbursement of public funds, said that almost half the funds of the Agency for International Development for a village health program were being used to support military activities.

Two censored reports by the watchdog body were made public today by Senator Edward M. Kennedy of Massachusetts in his capacity as chairman of the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Refugees.

The reports were critical of the management of programs for assisting refugees and civilian war casualties in Laos.

The accounting office said official statistics on war victims in Laos were incomplete. From 1967 through 1969, the aid agency reported 12,032 civilian war casualties. The subcommittee said there had been 30,000 casualties since early 1969.

Refugee programs were said to have been poorly managed,

with the aid mission in Vientiane relegating responsibility largely to the field.

The accounting office said medical drugs supplied for refugees disappeared when they were shipped to Laos.

Refugee villages were found to be overcrowded, congested, water supplies and health facilities. The mortality rate in the villages was said to be high, in some cases 250 per cent above standards set by the aid agency.

Funds Used as Cover

In the opinion of the subcommittee staff, the reports for the first time provided official documentation of the extent to which refugee programs had been used as a cover by the C.I.A. for financing its military activities.

At the direction of the White House, the Central Intelligence Agency has been supporting a 30,000-man guerrilla army of Meo and Yao tribesmen against the Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese forces in northern Laos. As part of this program, refugee support has been given to the dependents of the guerrillas.

Responding to the reports,

a spokesman for aid headquarters said the primary responsibility for refugee relief rested with the Laotian Government. He acknowledged that some assistance went to guerrilla forces, but said that a larger percentage was given to dependents.

The sections in the reports dealing with assistance to the guerrillas were censored. But the subcommittee said in a statement that the reports documented its earlier findings that "until relatively recent times the refugee program was simply a euphemism to cover

American assistance to persons who agreed to take up arms against the Pathet Lao."

In the last fiscal year, \$17-million was provided for refugee assistance in Laos. At a news conference Senator Kennedy said about 50 per cent had been used for guerrilla operations in Laos.

As of July, 1970, there were 279 villages with more than 280,000 persons receiving refugee assistance. Of this total, some 45 per cent, or well over 100,000 persons, were estimated by the subcommittee to be in the category of guerrillas and their dependents.

Kennedy: Aid Goes to CIA Forces

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Since 1968 the Agency for International Development has allotted \$54.8 million to Laos for refugee relief. These are funds for medical supplies, hospitals, resettlement and other supplies and services.

"Until recent times," Kennedy said, "the U.S. AID refugee program was simply a euphemism to cover American assistance to persons who agreed to take up arms against the Pathet Lao."

"A very significant measure of this assistance apparently continues," Kennedy said.

AID Administrator John A. Hannah publicly admitted last June that when he took office he was unhappy to find that since 1962 CIA agents were using the civilian agency as a cover for their operations. Hannah said, "Our preference is to get rid of this operation."

Kennedy said some of the financing has been transferred to the Defense Department in the last two or three years. But Kennedy's Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Refugees made public censored versions of General Accounting Office reports with summaries indicating continued assistance to CIA-directed forces.

The subcommittee report said that while "AID officials generally recognize that economic assistance funds should not be used as a cover to finance military activities, AID has apparently continued to furnish substantial amounts of medical supplies to Lao military, et al." The report estimated that half of the funds currently going to the AID Village Health Project, which has received \$9.4 million between 1964 and 1970, is being used for this purpose.

An AID spokesman said that AID does not exclude from assistance those who have been or may in future be engaged in fighting against North Vietnamese or Communist Pathet Lao." The spokesman said, "A relatively small percentage of refugees are irregular or paramilitary forces who, because they have been displaced and are needy, are therefore as much refugees as other Lao who have not been engaged in the fighting. A larger percentage of the total are dependents of such people."

Kennedy Charges CIA Gets Laos Relief Funds

By JAMES DOYLE
Star Staff Writer

About half the money Congress appropriates for refugee programs in Laos is diverted to Central Intelligence Agency-directed paramilitary operations in that neutral country, Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, D-Mass, charged yesterday.

Kennedy said a General Accounting Office report, most of it classified secret, has confirmed findings of an independent study team he sent to Laos to investigate the refugee program.

The report apparently details for the first time how Agency for International Development funds are used to support Meo and Yao tribesmen who roam through northern Laos and sometimes cross the borders into North Vietnam and Laos to conduct clandestine operations.

The arm's existence and some of its activities have been public knowledge for some time, and AID Director John A. Hannah confirmed in June that CIA agents used the Laos AID mission as a cover in order to operate freely in that country.

Laos was declared neutral by a 1952 Geneva Convention in which the United States and the Soviet Union were parties.

But the GAO report marks the first disclosure by a government agency that U.S. foreign aid money is sometimes diverted to CIA operations.

A heavily censored version of the report was made public yesterday by Kennedy, chairman of the Senate subcommittee on refugee relief, which had requested the GAO investigation.

Calls Findings Supported

The GAO is an independent investigative agency responsible to Congress, not the executive branch. The CIA reportedly tried to stop the GAO inquiry.

The censored report gives no details of the joint operation by AID and CIA. But Kennedy, in releasing it, said portions classified "secret" support independent findings of his staff investigators, Dale S. DeHaan and Jerry M. Tinker.

Kennedy estimated that in the past four years more than

\$27.4 million in food, drugs and other aid has been channeled from refugee programs to

"Lao military units and their dependents."

units and their dependents.

Kennedy said that in the last fiscal year AID had provided \$17 million for Laos refugee assistance. He estimated that half had gone for the CIA's "paramilitary" programs.

The AID Village Health Program has received about \$10 million since 1961. Kennedy said half of that was used for medical assistance to military units and their dependents.

Will Seek Action

"AID is aware of it and tolerates it," Kennedy said. "They are not very happy about it, but they continue it." He said he would seek congressional action to stop it.

The Central Intelligence Agency is funded by Congress through a secret process. Senior members of the Armed Services committees and the Defense Appropriations committees hold secret budget hearings with the agency's top men, and then approve funds which are hidden in the appropriations of other programs and other agencies. It is not known whether records of the meetings are kept.

It has always been presumed that CIA money was hidden in the massive defense budget, since that would be the easiest place to mask funds. Books on the CIA have suggested that Congress has always been generous to the agency.

Although the American aid program throughout the world has often been accused by hostile countries of being a CIA cover, AID directors have stoutly denied it and attempted to keep foreign operations above suspicion.

33 Stationed in Laos

The State Department lists 33 AID officials stationed in Laos, an unusually high number for that small country. It has been widely reported that the "rural development section" of the AID mission was almost exclusively a cover operation for intelligence agents there to recruit and train pro-government guerrillas.

AID Director Hannah said last June, "We have had people that have been associated with the CIA and doing things in Laos that were believed to be in the national interest but not routine AID operations."

He said at the time Laos was "a world where that is true."

statements, an AID spokesman said "a relatively small percentage of refugees are irregular or paramilitary forces who, because they have been displaced and are needy, are therefore as much refugees as other Lao who have not engaged in fighting."

He said a much larger percentage of dependents of those fighting men, who also have been displaced.

But Kennedy took a different view. He said he believes the AID program has been used as the primary source of money for the irregular Lao forces.

The funds are siphoned not just from the refugee program, he said, but from public health, agricultural, economic and technical projects, and from the "Food for Peace" program.

The refugee program apparently is actually run by four agencies jointly, The Department of Defense, the Royal Lao government, the CIA and AID.

Cites Special Interest

The CIA apparently has funded parts of the program from its own money, pointing out its special interest in the program.

One of the few western newsmen stationed in Laos, Tammy Arbuckle of the Washington Star, has detailed the operations of what he has called "the American directed secret army" which he reports operates throughout Southeast Asia.

In Laos the secret army has wiped out Communist headquarters and taken over prison camps and rescued inmates, Arbuckle reports.

Its leader is Gen. Vang Pao and its troops are mostly Meo tribesmen, although some Thais also are included.

The Meos have been active roaming the Plain of Jars and intercepting North Vietnamese men and supplies attempting to use the plain for infiltration south, Arbuckle has reported.

Directed by Mann

The director of AID in Laos is Charles Mann, who directed the AID mission in Vietnam until a few years ago. His program there came under fire because of inefficiencies in the Port of Saigon and he was transferred.

Besides heading the Laos program, Mann is said to be heading a de facto AID program in Cambodia.

The GAO report is said to have indicated that AID headquarters in Washington appeared to have been

in Laos. Sources on the Senate refugee subcommittee expressed the fear that similar abuses would develop in Cambodia. The State Department is said to have told the committee that there is at present no refugee problem in Cambodia, despite the war and the heavy bombing in recent weeks.

Kennedy said the cost of the entire Laos AID program is less than the cost of two days of bombing sorties when American B52s are operating at a peak in Laos.

"After they are finished siphoning off money, they spend about as much on the refugees as on one day's bombs," he said.

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Don't Ask

"One hundred years ago, Abraham Lincoln stood on a battlefield and spoke of a government of the people, by the people and for the people. Too often since then, we have become a nation of the Government; by the Government and for the Government."

- Richard Nixon, January 22

How true. How often the government not only neglects to ask the people whether it may, but doesn't tell them when it does. We were reminded of that again last week by Sen. Clifford P. Case's legislative proposal to cut Radio Free Europe free from CIA funds, something most of us thought the Katzenbach Committee had accomplished in 1967. President Johnson publicly accepted that report's recommendation that "no federal agency shall provide covert financial assistance or support direct or indirect, to any of the nation's educational or voluntary organizations," and that "no programs currently would justify any exceptions to this policy." So that was that, and we turned to other things. But CIA still subsidizes the allegedly private Radio Free Europe. Or have we been deceived into thinking it is private by all those ads? Apparently so. In response to Senator Case, the State Department's Robert McCloskey says that RFE is "not an educational or private voluntary organization," and so the restrictions against secret funding do not apply. Then it is a governmental organization, in which case why have we not been told, and why is its budget not debated by the appropriators of public funds? Actually, the CIA is the conduit of "unvouchered funds," a handy device allowed by Congress in the National Security Act of 1947. A review of that Act would be a good place to start if Senator Case believes Congress and the people should be cut in on what's going on.

Secret bureaucracies have a life of their own. A case in point is the CIA Meo operation, the "clandestine army" of at least 25,000 men, which in less hectic days played cat's paw with the Communists in the hills of Laos and did a little inconsequential spying on the rugged, unmarked China border. What these wretched bands of Meos are to discover of military significance that cannot be learned by satellite is something that has never been explained.

Subterfuge on a much more dangerous level goes on in Cambodia. Secretary Rogers assures us that there are no US ground troops there. But, says the Department of Defense, the Green Berets are right over the border in Thailand and in South Vietnam. Doing what? Training Cambodian troops. And in Cambodia? Jerry W. Friedheim, the Pentagon spokesman, states that American Embassy personnel in Phnompenh are helping the Cambodians get acquainted with new American military equipment, to show them "where the on and off buttons are." No troops, just "military delivery teams," and helicopters over the tree tops.

STATINTL

KANSAS CITY, MO.
TIMES

M - 334,249

FEB 5 1971

Chew Well Before Swallowing

Legal it may be, within the narrowest interpretation of that word. But the practice of converting Food for Peace dollars into military assistance—to the tune of nearly 700 million dollars over the last six years—has been deceiving to say the least. The revelation this week in testimony before a committee of the U. S. House can only cast a new taint of misrepresentation over this country's aid-giving activities abroad.

For years, tinhorn propagandists kept clamoring that U. S. foreign aid was a cover for operations of the Central Intelligence agency. Fatent nonsense! Then, lo and behold, last year it turned out that the charge in at least one case—the aid program in Laos—had an element of truth.

Now it will be heard that the Food for Peace program, intended both to relieve U. S. farm surpluses while putting food in the mouths of needy peoples, has been a guise for supplying military goods instead. In his committee testimony John N. Irwin, undersecretary of state, saw no fault in the system. The way the program works, countries pay for American foodstuffs in their own currencies, then are given dollar credits for the procurement of other goods in this country. As Irwin pointed out, there is nothing in the fine print that says they can't buy military supplies.

We do not always agree with Sen. George McGovern (D-S. D.), but we will have to share his astonishment and regret at this bit of paper manipulation. McGovern said he deplored "even the slightest hint of a connection" between military aid and this partly humanitarian program of which he was the first director. We deplore it for two reasons.

First, Congress, whatever its wisdom, is charged with voting funding levels for aid, including military aid. And Congress has a right to expect that the bureaucrats will not juggle the books behind its back. Second, and perhaps more important, those well-motivated Americans who believe in foreign aid in principle have a right to know that their efforts and their conviction will not be undermined by such crashingly bone-headed blunders as this.

Whoever conceived or even tacitly sanctioned the practice of converting food into military aid deserves to be called on the carpet—and then have the carpet pulled out from under him.

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PHILADELPHIA, PA.

BULLETIN

E - 640,783

S - 681,831

FEB 4 1971

Bulletin Backgrounder

U.S. Role Has Grown In Laos Since 1962

By PAUL GRIMES
Of The Bulletin Staff

Military involvement in Laos by the United States and North Vietnam has risen steadily since 1962, when both promised to leave the kingdom virtually alone.

They and 12 other countries signed the 1962 Geneva Accords, which established a neutral Laos and barred foreign military personnel. There have been repeated violations, however, on both sides.

The United States has kept most of its activities secret, it apparently wants to preserve the neutral flavor of the Geneva Accords as the basis of an eventual political settlement. It doesn't want to give a propaganda advantage to Hanoi, which has never publicly admitted that it has troops in Laos.

Russia Goes Along

The Russians, meanwhile, have appeared willing to go along with Washington's secrecy so that they can continue to recognize the purportedly neutralist government of Prince Souvanna Phouma. Moscow is said to fear that any alternate government in Laos would be pro-Chinese.

This reasoning emerges from a close study of official statements, congressional hearings and news reports from Laos itself.

The study also produces a stark picture of how U.S. involvement has intensified in an effort to preserve Laos as a protective buffer for Thailand and to block infiltration routes into South Vietnam.

Among other things, it shows that before the current step-up in involvement:

--Laos, though sparsely settled (2,225,000 persons in 81,425 square miles), had long been one of the heaviest recipients of U.S. aid. It reportedly

has received more than \$200 million a year, more than two-thirds of it for secret military purposes.

--At least 26 Americans, most of them former military personnel, had been assigned to the Agency for International Development mission in Laos, arranging for and expediting delivery of U.S. military aid.

--About 125 U.S. Air Force attaches had been working with Laotian officers in planning targets for U.S. and Laotian bombing of Communist positions. The American team also included about 21 forward air controllers who flew spotting missions and personnel to man radar and tracking stations, some of them on remote jungle plateaus.

--About 70 U.S. Army attaches helped plan Laotian army operations, operated communications systems, engaged in military intelligence and sometimes visited front-line positions to gather information.

--Through the Central Intelligence Agency and at least 50 American advisers, the United States armed, equipped, trained, financed and often transported a private army of Meo tribesmen under a French-trained general named Vang Pao. There were persistent reports that the CIA also abetted the Meos' trade in opium, their principal cash crop.

--U.S. air activity increased substantially in the last three years. According to U.S. newspaper dispatches, U.S. planes were flying between 12,500 and 15,000 sorties per month over Laos by the second half of 1969 and between 18,000 to 20,000 sorties by last May. Before the Nov. 1, 1965, halt in bombings of North Vietnam the United States flew 12,000 sorties a month against targets in North Vietnam and 4,000 in Laos.

N. Vietnamese Stay

Last March 6, President Nixon said 1,040 Americans were directly or indirectly employed by the U.S. Government in Laos. He said North Vietnam has 67,000 troops there.

Two days later, the White House said that since 1962, one Army captain and 26 American civilians had been killed by Communist troops or listed as missing.

Mr. Nixon said 685 Americans had been assisting the Laotian Government before the Geneva Accords but had withdrawn by an Oct. 7, 1962, deadline set under the accords. He charged, however, that more than 6,000 North Vietnamese troops had remained.

Military Aid Asked

The Geneva Accords were signed on July 23, 1962, allowing Laos to accept foreign military aid in "such quantities of conventional armaments" that it might consider "necessary for the national defense."

Souvanna Phouma invoked that provision two months later when he asked both the Soviet Union and the United States for aid.

Unwilling to irk North Vietnam, the Russians refused.

The United States complied. In addition, there is strong evidence that many clandestine military activities of U.S. personnel continued in Laos beyond the deadline.

Hostilities between opposing Laotian factions resumed in early 1969. Helicopters of Air America, a private airline controlled by the CIA, were seen transporting Laotian government troops as early as that spring.

Vietnamese Newspapers Report Laos Assault

By Peter A. Jay

Washington Post Foreign Service

SAIGON, Feb. 4 (Thursday)

Vietnamese newspapers reported today that at least 5,000 airborne troops have made a parachute assault on the Bolovens Plateau in southern Laos.

American and South Vietnamese government sources denied the report, the latest in a series of speculative articles in the Saigon press concerning South Vietnamese and American military operations.

Most of the reports, with-

out attribution, said a joint operation was under way aimed at North Vietnamese sanctuary areas in southern Laos, near the boundary of South Vietnam.

The first article to appear was an Associated Press dispatch from Phnom Penh, which quoted "travelers from South Vietnam" as saying a military blackout had been imposed on newsmen that barred the reporting details of such an operation. That article appeared last Sunday.

The South Vietnamese government censored the word "Laos" from headlines in the papers carrying the story.

The following day, the respected Saigon daily Chinh Luan reported a massive movement of troops in South Vietnam's first military region, the area just south of the Demilitarized Zone.

Another paper said 20,000 South Vietnamese troops were conducting a joint operation with American units near the Laotian border.

Chinh Luan speculated that the troops, or at least the South Vietnamese elements, would cross the border for a sweep through the Communist sanctuaries. The paper did not say any border crossing has yet taken place. Later, two Japanese news agencies reported that South Vietnamese troops were already in Laos.

The army of South Vietnam denied the report though this morning stories described an operation on the Bolovens Plateau, a strategic area in extreme southern Laos that has been defended by CIA-led Laotian mercenary forces against stepped-up Communist pressure in recent weeks. Most press comment said the various cross-border operations were—or would be—well to the north.

The area singled out by

most of the papers is west of the old Marine base at Khesanh, 15 miles east of the Laotian border in Quangtri province, South Vietnam's northern-most.

The Saigon papers have speculated that Khesanh has been reopened in the past few days by American Army units as a base for operations to the west.

Many correspondents have visited Khesanh in the past week. There has also been much discussion here of reports in Washington that 9,000 American troops are engaged in a joint operation with 20,000 South Vietnamese in the Quangtri area.

The Vietnamese newspapers today made little mention of the news blackout reported earlier by the AP dispatch from Phnom Penh.

However, such blackouts—or embargoes—are not unusual in this and other wars.

In many respects, the operation—as described by South Vietnamese papers—is different from that in Cambodia.

For one thing, Cambodia asked for help to clear the Communists from their sanctuary areas after Prince Sihanouk was deposed. The government of Laos has not asked for such help, at least not publicly.

A simpler distinction is one of geography. Compared to the incredibly rugged, triple-canopy jungles and razor-edged mountains of the Laotian border areas, Cambodia's ricefields and rubber plantations resemble a putting green.

Many military men, especially in the South Vietnamese command, have long favored an operation into Laos to destroy sanctuary areas and cut the Ho Chi Minh Trail with ground forces as it has never been cut by repeated air strikes.

"An operation like that could end the war," one military man said several weeks ago.

The trail has become even more critical since Cambodia, military sources say, because it is the last possible infiltration route into South Vietnam left open to the North Vietnamese.

The Cambodian ports of Kompong Som, former Sihanoukville, has been closed to Communist shipping since last spring. Before that, it was the last possible entry point into southern Indochina for Communist supplies.

Naval operations have apparently halted most infiltration by sampans plying the coast and interior waterways.

"The trail is all he has left," said one source, referring to the enemy. "Cut it and that's all she wrote."

In the past, however, high-ranking officers have emphatically said that any operation—even by the South Vietnamese alone—was out of the question for political reasons.

"The ARVN want to go," a high-ranking general officer said as recently as a month ago. "But they can't go without our help and we're not going to give it."

A FEB 1971

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Allies Sweep Along Laotian Border

Offensive Meets Little Resistance

By Peter A. Jay

Washington Post Foreign Service

QUANGTRI, South Vietnam, Feb. 4 (Thursday) —

The U.S. Military Command removed the wraps today from the biggest allied operations in South Vietnam in nearly three years.

In the operation, code-named Dewey Canyon II, and begun last Saturday under cover of a military

imposed news blackout, 29,000 American and South Vietnamese troops swept westward just south of the demilitarized zone to South Vietnam's border with Laos. They met virtually no resistance.

Some 9,000 American troops from infantry and cavalry units reopened the old Marine base at Khesanh, which had been abandoned by the Marines in July, 1968, after a long siege by the North Vietnamese was lifted.

At the same time, 20,000 South Vietnamese troops followed the Americans in their drive into the rugged mountainous border country that contains some of the most famous battlefields of the war.

Other allied units were moving into the Ashau Valley in the mountains along the South Vietnam-Laos border south of Khesanh. The operation was supported by a massive American airlift. During the first days of the operation, huge C-130 transports were landing every few minutes here and at nearby Dongha, unloading troops and equipment.

Only three American casualties were reported. They included two men injured by a booby trap and one killed in an accident.

There were reports of small-arms fire directed at U.S. aircraft, but there were no significant ground contacts with the enemy. Enemy losses were reported to three dead.

The U. S. Command lifted the news blackout today, saying it had accomplished its purpose by keeping information out of the hands of the enemy.

The operation is the largest mounted in South Vietnam since Operation Quiet Thang in April, 1968. There has been persistent speculation in the Vietnamese press in recent days that the purpose of the operation was to launch a drive into North Vietnamese sanctuary areas in Laos by South Vietnamese forces. Military spokesmen refused to comment on this, but said that no troops had crossed the border.

Route 9, an old French-built highway that connects Dongha, north of here, with Savannakhet in southern Laos just across the Mekong River from Thailand, was reopened by army engineers as far as South Vietnam's border with Laos.

A forward base was established at the old special forces camp of Langvei, only about two miles from the border. Military spokesmen said that the base included border and artillery bases were being set up nearby.

Earlier, South Vietnamese officials announced another thrust into Cambodia, but said the operation involved only about 2,500 fresh troops supported by American air power.

That force joined 7,500 South Vietnamese troops who had already been combing North Vietnamese sanctuary areas in Cambodia. The 10,000-man force then launched a new operation that has been going on for about a week, officials said.

Military sources in Washington said that one reason Gen. Creighton W. Abrams, commander of American forces in Vietnam, massed so many troops around Khesanh was to make Hanoi re-examine its plan to make the area around Sepone, in southern Laos, a big staging area for dry-season offensives.

The American command in Vietnam, these sources said, intercepted messages from Hanoi about a week ago ordering one of its regiments to clear out unfriendly forces around Sepone.

The North Vietnamese regiment, these sources said, was supposed to move south from Sepone to clear the way for war traffic to supply troops in Cambodia and South Vietnam.

Khesanh is on a plateau off Route 9 — the east-west road which runs into Sepone. So the base is a good launching point for operations against Sepone.

Another reason for the massing of allied troops in northwest Vietnam, informed sources said, was to force Hanoi to spread its own forces thinly all along the Laotian border.

Allied commanders hoped this would take the pressure off friendly forces farther north trying to hold the Plain of Jars.

Gen. Van Pao and his force of irregulars — troops trained by the Central Intelligence Agency — is trying to hold

that plain for the neutralist Laotian government of Prince Souvanna Phouma.

But yesterday's wire service reports out of the Laotian capital of Vientiane indicated that the Communists were making significant gains in its dry season offensive in northern Laos.

Reuter reported that the neutralist headquarters town of Muong Soui had fallen to the North Vietnamese as well as the nearby hilltop base at Phouse and four government positions about 10 miles east of Luang Prabang.

The North Vietnamese were moving toward Luang Prabang, the Royal Capital, according to the Laotian Government.

A Defense Ministry spokesman told a news conference in Vientiane yesterday that two North Vietnamese divisions were deployed east of the Banna Mountain Ridge, the last natural obstacle in front of the Central Intelligence Agency headquarters at Long Cheng and the refugee center at Sam Thong.

The defense minister Muong Soui fell early yesterday after the North Vietnamese battered the battalion of neutralist troops for nine hours with mortars and rockets.

Phouse, also known as Site 57, was a Laotian Government observation post for watching Communist troops movements on the Plain of Jars.

Severe Blow

Reuter said that observers in Vientiane considered the loss of Muong Soui a severe blow to Souvanna Phouma and his shaky coalition government. Muong Soui had been recaptured by Laotian forces in October after being in Communist hands for 15 months.

Spokesmen at the Laotian defense ministry said five Soviet-built PT 76 tanks were for Muong Soui, but it was not

continued

STATINTL

Laotians Are Kept in Dark on

War's Progress

By Lee Jescaze

Washington Post Foreign Service

VIENTIANE, March 8—The day after South Vietnamese troops began massing at the border for their invasion of Laos, Premier Souvanna Phouma was talking to a French reporter.

"What's going on in southern Laos?" the reporter asked.

"I don't know."

"Why don't you call the Americans and find out?" the reporter suggested, according to the account given by a diplomat here.

When Souvanna called, U.S. Ambassador G. McMurtree Godley said he didn't know either, but would find out and let the prince know.

The story is clearly self-serving. As one well-informed source explains: "If Souvanna had been consulted or kept informed, it would have put him in a difficult position" since he is the leader of nominally neutral nation.

For the U.S. embassy here, it is also useful to profess no knowledge or control of events in southern Laos.

However, it is also true that the Lao government and army have been kept almost totally in the dark since the South Vietnamese invasion of their country began, and the American embassy here has complained that it was not being kept adequately informed by Washington and Saigon.

The lack of information in this traditionally rumor-swamped capital has resulted in unusually candid

confessions of ignorance by high-ranking Laotians, wild reports of nonexistent troop movements and whimsical theorizing by Lao officers who feel they should know more about the southern fighting—some of the bloodiest fighting on Lao soil during more than 20 years of war.

"I've had a couple of briefings from the Americans," one cabinet officer said recently, "but they didn't amount to anything."

One of the wilder reports that appeared in the American press last week was that a joint Lao-Thai force was sweeping eastward from Savannakhet along Highway 9 as the South Vietnamese invasion force was attempting to drive westward from the border on the same highway.

According to the report, the Lao-Thai force had stalled less than halfway to its objective—the town of Muong Phine.

Looking for War

Two journalists set out from Savannakhet by bus last week to ride east as far as possible looking for signs of war. The first snag came when a small mud skipper—a small fish—broke out of a plastic container and sailed out the back of the bus onto the highway.

The mud skipper's owner set up a cry and the bus driver was persuaded to stop and back up until the fish was retrieved and returned to its plastic sack with four or five other mud skippers destined to make a meal's main course.

At Seno, somnolent garri-

son town less than 90 miles away from battle-scarred Sene, the windows are occasionally rattled by U.S. bombs, but those shock waves are the only link with the fighting further east.

Refugees from past American bombing now live in many of the Seno barracks built by the French army and used as a way-station for reinforcements en route to the battle of Dien Bien Phu in 1954.

The dusty base is far too large for the small headquarters of the Royal Lao army's GT-318 unit, and parts of the base appear abandoned.

Officers speak of the South Vietnamese invasion in very vague terms and have trouble showing visitors on a map where the fighting is taking place. They are more concerned with the pressure that mixed Pathet Lao-North Vietnamese units are putting on Dong Hene, a town about 20 miles east of Seno. Dong Hene is the easternmost population center held by Royal Lao troops.

"We are waiting for an attack on Dong Hene and we expect to be hit by rockets," one colonel said.

Little Activity

There is no sign in Seno of any large-scale military activity, and officers there and in Savannakhet speak of defending positions, not of driving eastward to catch the Communists in a vice. "We don't have the forces for distant offensive operations," a colonel at regional headquarters in Savannakhet said when talking of enemy-held towns less than 50 miles away.

The regional headquarters for the CIA-financed Special Guerrilla Units—popularly called the Tigers of the Forest—was also quiet last week.

The year-old base at None Savang is far sprucer and better equipped than regular Lao army bases, including the central headquarters.

The guerrilla units operate behind enemy lines and have participated in sabotage raids against North Vietnamese on the Ho Chi

liable reports. Some Americans have been reported to have accompanied these raids, but American officials here strongly deny that Americans ever participate in the missions.

When two American reporters walked into the camp last week, it was payday for one guerrilla unit. The men were lined up and a paymaster was doling out fistfuls of notes. A Tiger of the Forest makes much more than the roughly \$5 a month a regular Lao recruit gets. In addition, the guerrillas get combat pay while in the field.

The guard at the camp's gate saluted the reporters even though they disembarked from a bus, hardly the means of transport used by official Americans who work with the guerrilla unit.

'Right to Win'

The deputy camp commander, however, was quick to escort the reporters off camp grounds, but courteously invited them to have beer at a nearby roadside stand. He explained that no major operations were under way and that he knew almost nothing about the South Vietnamese invasion.

His unit's motto "We fight to win" is a curious choice which perhaps makes an interesting distinction in Laos' long-lasting, see-saw war.

The special units with their guerrilla training, American and Thai advisers and American financial support are not cut from the same cloth as the regular Lao and Pathet Lao units.

As one American remarked, "The opposing commanders in this war went to school together and they are used to giving a little and taking a little each year. It can be an almost gentle war."

Many Americans in Laos are not interesting in traditional military operations. Some, at least, prefer the larger-scale fighting and higher stakes of the war in

EDITORIALS

A Different War

In a sense it is, as Eugene McCarthy told a Boston audience last week, "a different war." Different because it is more dangerous, less easy to defend or justify, and because our perspectives about it have changed. Different, too, from a legal and constitutional point of view, for the invasion of Laos follows in the wake of adoption of the Cooper-Church amendment and repeal of the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution. "I have been unable to discover a single instance in our history," Rep. Paul N. McCloskey (R., Calif.) told the House on February 18, "where an American President ordered offensive operations in a foreign country immediately after Congress has specifically repealed a prior resolution authorizing him to wage war in that country." But in another sense, it is still the same cruel and senseless war, extended in area and with a more intensive application of American air power.

The public knows more about the war today than it knew when President Johnson left office, but it has permitted itself to be caught up in the mystifications and double talk of the Administration. Neither the media nor the politicians have been particularly helpful in telling the public what it needs to know. True, it has become increasingly difficult for the media to find out what is happening on the ground and in the air in Laos. But at a different level—the level of analysis and interpretation—the media have often been less than candid. Like the politicians, they have been inclined to give the President the benefit of the doubt. Too often reporters have been willing to pass along the firm and radiant optimism of Laird, Kissinger (see article p. 296) and the President, without serious critical analysis. (For an example see "The New Optimism," *Newsweek*, March 1.) In part, too, this willingness to deal gently with the Administration's "game plan" stems from fear that it just *might* succeed. Neither the mass media nor the President's critics have wanted to venture too far out on the limb of speculation and conjecture; they have preferred to wait for failure rather than predict it.

This attitude is totally out of phase with the urgency of the situation that now confronts us. We are not playing guessing games. This war has been with us for a long time. We have heard these "optimistic" reports before. It is no longer a question, if it ever was, of whether a particular operation might succeed in purely military terms. "The basic flaw in our Southeast Asia war policy," as Kingman Brewster, president of Yale University, sees it, "is moral." Our moral position becomes only the more untenable as we maneuver to get others to assume the painful burdens of a war for which we are essentially responsible. "The reduction of casualties, even the withdrawal of all American troops," as Brewster points out, "does not mitigate the moral responsibility for the spread of the war; for the indiscriminate bombing of neutrals; for the scorching of forests and villages; for the massacre of innocents." All the current domestic sparring over semantics, definitions, whether Operation X failed or succeeded, and legalisms (just what constitutes a violation of Cooper-Church) is

beside the point. It is, Brewster adds, "as though America had no concern for the sanctity of human life, as such; as though, somehow, Americans cared only about American lives."

Even at this late hour the Administration continues to make sport with the facts and the truth. The phrase "combat troops" has been dropped in favor of "ground troops," who are, we are told, forbidden to enter Laos. But we have both a command role and a ground combat role in Laos. A large "secret" army, directed by the CIA, operates out of the base at Long Cheng. The South Vietnamese drive into Laos is totally dependent on American air and helicopter support. Such massive use of air power is not "supportive"; it is primary, and ground troops play the supportive role. Even so, the drive is stalled short of its objective. Hence the President's suggestion that Hanoi is responsible for spreading the war is on a par with the optimism he has voiced about the action itself. It is on a par, too, with the advice of U.S. commanders that the North Vietnamese would not resist the invasion. (See James Weighart's dispatch, *New York Daily News*, February 26.)

We are told that this massive operation is merely designed to insure the safe withdrawal of U.S. troops from Vietnam. Yet according to Jerry Greene, the knowledgeable military editor of the *New York Daily News*, U.S. military commanders in Vietnam are now convinced that the timetable for withdrawal should be accelerated. It is their view that we should take whatever risks are involved in an early withdrawal, since the presence of large U.S. forces hinders the development of whatever military capability the South Vietnamese possess. It would seem, therefore, that the removal of all U.S. forces is being—and will probably continue to be—held up for reasons not directly related to their safe withdrawal. But again, our concern at the moment should not be with considerations of this order. What should appall us is the deepening American moral involvement in a war that becomes steadily more indefensible. Our heritage demands, to quote Kingman Brewster again, that "none of us by his silence contribute to the moral erosion of the war drags on."

GUESSTIMATES OF FLOW

Ho Chi Trail Hides Its Traffic

By TAMMY ARBUCKLE
Special to The Star

VIENTIANE, Laos—Assessing traffic on the Ho Chi Minh Trail is a notoriously inexact science.

Trail-watchers, hidden on hillsides and along suspected roadways, do their best, but they often find themselves counting trucks twice and missing others entirely.

Electronic sensors and aircraft cameras have been put to work, as have the eyes of guerrillas, but the process raises serious questions about the precise arithmetic being reported in Washington and Saigon.

Intelligence Estimates

Speaking Thursday of the South Vietnamese drive into Laos, President Nixon said: "I checked the flow of supplies down the trails from the area in which the North Vietnamese and the South Vietnamese are engaged. And Gen. Creighton Adams (commander of U.S. Forces in Indochina), reports that there has been a 55 percent decrease in truck traffic south into South Vietnam, which means that those trucks that do not go south will not carry the arms and the men that will be killing Americans."

A source here, who did not want his name used, said:

"I doubt whether Gen. Abrams ever knew how much stuff was going down the trail in the first place. His figures are estimates based on intelligence. The 55 percent figure is an estimate of the same kind. That makes it an estimate of an estimate."

When discussing figures on the amount of North Vietnamese traffic along the supply routes through Laos to Cambodia and South Vietnam, U.S. officials here and in Saigon usually qualify their remarks with such phrases as "those are ballpark figures," or "estimates" or even "guesstimates." They use the same phrases when discussing enemy troop strength.

This perpetual lack of hard facts on enemy activities in Indochina must appear bewildering to many Americans, but it can perhaps be understood if the nature of the Communist supply route, its histo-

ry and geography, is better understood.

As far as the United States is concerned, the potentialities of a route to supply Communist activists, outside of North Vietnam was pointed out by a State Department officer in 1958.

The Original Route

Thomas Barnes, after traveling in the Lao Boui area of Laos at the west end of the Demilitarized Zone along the 17th parallel separating North and South Vietnam, wrote a report warning of the infiltration route.

Barnes then was referring to the "original" route that became known as the Ho Chi Minh Trail—a path called Route 92 which entered Laos near Ban Travigne, just north of the DMZ, and looked back into South Vietnam just below the DMZ at Curoc Mountain. Curoc Mountain would later be known to Americans as Candy Mountain, some say for the goodies from Hanoi stored there.

In 1961 and 1962, North Vietnamese troops and their Laotian supporters, the Pathet Lao, cleared out U.S.-backed Lao government forces from such places as Sepone, west of Route 92, which reportedly was captured yesterday by South Vietnamese troops.

By the time of the signing of the Geneva accords in 1954, which called for the neutrality of Laos under a government divided among Communists, neutralists and rightists, the only non-Communist military force remaining in the Ho Chi Minh Trail area was a unit known as Volunteer Battalion 33 at Houe Sane, within the loop of Route 92 close to the South Vietnam border.

The prohibition of foreign troop activity in Laos in the Geneva agreement effectively gave Hanoi a completely free hand in the trail area. To Hanoi, "foreign troops" means Americans, not its own troops.

By 1961, the North Vietnamese had pushed Lao units all the way back to Muong Phalane west of Sepone on Route 9, the east-west road crossing the South Vietnam to Thailand.

Barrier On Route 9

In November 1964, during a visit to the front line at Muong Phalane, I saw a 20-foot high barrier of logs on Route 9 just east of the town. Behind the barrier were Communist machine gunners.

Every night trucks could be heard along Route 9 some arriving at the front line, others continuing to Muong Phine, a junction point for Routes 9 and 23. The North Vietnamese gradually built new paths and roads or expanded old one in the Sepone-Muong Phine area.

By 1965, enemy reinforcements for South Vietnam were moving through Laos by the thousands. They crossed into the south through the A Chau Valley near the Kontum Plateau just below the DMZ.

The United States, in an attempt to disrupt these supply routes, began sending Special Forces teams into Laos to gather intelligence and harass the supply routes. From early 1965 until last month's drive into Laos by South Vietnamese troops, more than 90 Americans were killed on the ground in these operations.

On the western flank of the trail area, the Central Intelligence Agency recruited a guerrilla force and sent Americans to work with the guerrillas in watching the trail.

These Early operations against the trail, part of which I saw, clearly demonstrated the difficulties in penetrating the area.

93 Days in Cave

When Special Forces teams infiltrated from South Vietnam, the enemy always seemed to be aware of their presence, usually because of poor infiltration procedures. One American, cut off from returning, spent 93 days hiding in a cave overlooking Communist activity in Sepone.

Further west, the situation was still more difficult.

One morning, while I was in a forest east of Saravane, I heard firing ahead. Enemy troops had discovered an American who had been with some guerrillas on a slope overlooking the trail. The guerrillas had deserted the American, and Communist troops had captured him. He escaped by using his pistol.

The American said the guerrillas left him when they spotted footprints of the enemy troops.

The early guerrillas were usually of poor quality, making the job of trail-watching and harassment hazardous and quite ineffective.

The trails themselves were difficult to find.

The American trail watcher told me he sometimes would lie for hours on a slope watching what seemed to be a likely trail area in front of him.

He would see nothing, then suddenly would hear truck traffic from a valley behind him. By the time he got to where the sound was coming from, the trucks would be gone and he lost the opportunity to count them and evaluate their contents.

River Bed Routes

Sometimes, too, the North Vietnamese would drive trucks down river beds, leaving no tracks to indicate this was a route for traffic.

Many of these trail watchers became quite daring, if infiltrating the area was not daring enough. In 1967 I visited a three-man South Vietnamese team working along Route 92. The team leader would lie just two feet from the trail itself, after being camouflaged by a partner. The partner would lie about 400 yards away, further up a slope.

When trucks passed, the team leader would take close-up photographs.

By 1968, North Vietnamese efforts to expand the supply network made the Ho Chi Minh Trail an interlocking network of roads, paths and rivers. The North Vietnamese had forced the withdrawal of the Laotian unit at Houe Sane and American Special Forces units at Lang Vei and Kha Sanh in South Vietnam.

Today there is a bewildering variety of trails, well-camouflaged, in the toughest terrain in Southeast Asia formed by the Annamite Mountain chain.

Heavy Rain Clouds

The area is composed of thick rain forests, high mountains and steep river valleys. The trails are often enveloped in rain clouds. In addition to the terrain, the Special

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THE invasion of Laos by South Vietnamese troops with American support seemed to offer at best some dubious short-term rewards and at worst a potential disaster. The risk was great, for as we have been reducing the number of our forces in Indo-China we have actually been increasing our commitment and involvement here—first in Cambodia and now in what is described as an “incursion” into Laos, which began in full force on February 8th. It is still too soon to render a firm appraisal of the venture, whose purpose, according to the Americans who persuaded their South Vietnamese allies to attempt it, was to cut through some of the Ho Chi Minh Trail complex, thus “turning the tap,” as one American commander put it, and reducing to a trickle the flow of North Vietnamese traffic southward. The traffic had been growing heavier. Between the first of January and mid-February, the North Vietnamese poured thirty-one thousand new soldiers in at the top of the Trail, and trucks carrying supplies were moving down at the rate of twelve hundred a month—a considerable increase in both men and matériel over the average monthly flow in 1970. Most of these resources were probably headed for South Vietnam, though perhaps a third of them were destined for Cambodia. But the severe fighting that has taken place indicates that from the start the odds were against the invasion’s turning out to be a success, even if the weather—which has been worse than anyone anticipated—had been favorable.

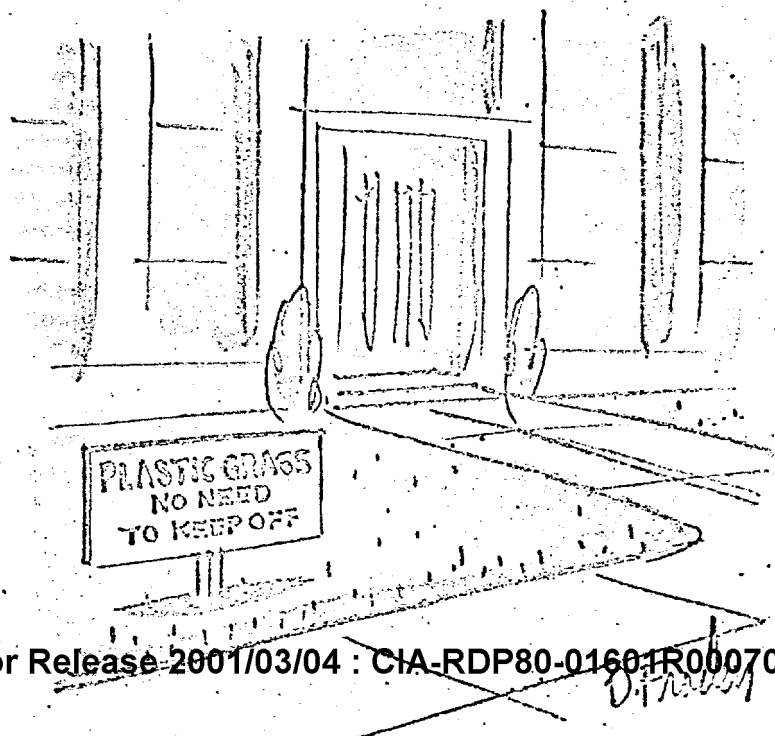
In the third week of February, taking advantage of the mist and of the fact that invading South Vietnamese vehicles and armor had been slowed if not bogged down, the North Vietnamese troops of General Vo Nguyen Giap—whose response to the new developments in Laos had been described by associates in Hanoi as “enigmatic and smiling”—struck back hard at the advanced South Vietnamese fire bases. Giap’s response has always been to wait and adapt himself to what-

ever new situation arises. (He did this brilliantly against the French at Dien Bien Phu in 1954.) Faced with heavy American air support of the South Vietnamese ground troops, he at first decided to pull back, apparently on the theory that the South Vietnamese attack would not be a major one of long-duration. Then, when the weather got worse, he saw his chance. Still seeking to avoid a major confrontation, he moved elements of three regiments and many anti-aircraft and artillery units south toward the South Vietnamese positions along and around Route 9. First, he threw his heaviest and most modern Russian and Chinese rockets onto his opponents’ hilltop posts. Then he sent in sappers and other ground troops, striking at the most vulnerable South Vietnamese outposts and mauling elite Ranger and airborne elements, which, with several thousand soldiers of the best of the regular South Vietnamese Army (ARVN) infantry divisions, the First, composed Saigon’s invading force. Shooting from hidden anti-aircraft emplacements—many of them cleverly concealed platforms deep in the jungle that covers that forbidding region—Giap’s forces took a heavy toll of American and Vietnamese helicopters delivering troops and ammunition. By February 23rd, about twenty-five helicopters had been destroyed on both sides of the border and at least that many were damaged. Casualties are already heavy, and they could become heavier if Giap decides to throw in more troops and, despite American and

South Vietnamese air superiority, risk a large battle on the ground. In any event, Saigon’s early claim that its forces were enjoying a seven-to-one advantage over the North Vietnamese in men killed can no longer be substantiated—if it ever could have been.

At the beginning, the invading troops were obsessed by what one veteran American official calls “the Tehepone complex.” Tehepone, on Route 9 about twenty-five miles inside the Laotian border, lies athwart the major invasion path. As a key station on the Trail, it had a hard-dirt airstrip capable of taking the Russian equivalent of DC-3 transports, and, as a liaison and communications center, it had sophisticated Russian equipment for guiding the Trail traffic to destinations farther south, west, and east. According to the invasion plans drawn up by General Creighton Abrams, the American commander in Vietnam, and his Vietnamese counterpart, General Cao Van Vien, Tehepone was to be seized and held, at least long enough for the South Vietnamese to conduct sweep-and-patrol operations around it in all directions in an effort to destroy as many major Trail supply caches as possible. Even after the South Vietnamese began running into trouble from bad weather and anti-aircraft fire, the airstrip remained an objective, although the communications equipment had already been carried off, and it became increasingly apparent that the basic concept of the attack would have to be altered “in time” as well as “in space”—to use the terms President Nguyen Van Thieu used in describing the operation.

By then, though the invading forces had destroyed some sizable North Vietnamese caches near the border, it was only too clear that the success of the attack would be severely limited by the redoubtable complexity of the Trail network. Nine major Trail routes fan down from the Mu Gia Pass and two other mountain defiles in North Vietnam. (These three defiles, through which nearly all traffic passes, have been hit constantly by American B-52 and other bombers over the years, but with only limited success, since pinpoint targeting is extremely difficult in



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contin

U.S. Jets Knock Out 8 Red Tanks In Laos

By The Associated Press

Enemy tank reinforcements closing in on a major South Vietnamese position in Laos were hit yesterday by U.S. fighter-bombers which destroyed eight of them, Saigon headquarters reported.

American transport planes rushed hundreds of fresh South Vietnamese troops northward as the campaign to cut the enemy's Ho Chi Minh trail remained fluid at the start of its fourth week. More hard fighting was expected.

Far to the south, brisk fighting was announced in a parallel thrust by South Vietnamese troops against North Vietnamese-Viet Cong supply lines in eastern Cambodia. A U.S. Army helicopter supporting the Saigon troops was shot down, the American command reported, and all four crewmen were killed.

Enemy gunners fired mortar shells at an oil refinery near the Cambodian seaport of Kompong Som early today, setting four of six large storage tanks ablaze, a spokesman in Phnom Penh said. He added that three Cambodian soldiers were killed and six were wounded repulsing a ground attack that followed the mortar barrage.

South Vietnamese headquarters said the eight Soviet-made tanks were smashed by U.S. jets near the town of Ban Dong on Route 9 where South Vietnam's 1st Infantry Division has established a position code-named Hotel 2. A spokesman said 52 of North Vietnam's PT-76 amphibious tanks have been knocked out by allied forces since the Laotian operation began February 8.

U.S. helicopter pilots had reported spotting North Vietnamese tanks maneuvering for a new assault on the Hotel 2 position.

Hotel 2 is 11 miles southwest of Lang Vei, and last week was reported under strong enemy pressure.

American helicopter pilots who flew over the Hotel 2 area, as well as around the regions of Hill 31, Hill 30 and several ranger landing zones, reported that yesterday was "their quietest day in weeks." They said anti-aircraft fire was lighter and that most of their missions centered around Ban Dong, 15 miles inside Laos.

While U.S. authorities have declared that no American ground combat support will take part in the Laos operation, U.S. helicopters are flying gunship, troop lift, resupply and medical evacuation missions. The U.S. Command has acknowledged the loss of 36 helicopters on both sides of the border since the Laos operation began February 8.

Other American aircraft, including jet fighter-bombers, also are supporting the operation and pounding heavily at the Ho Chi Minh trail.

A report from the northern war zone quoted sources as saying there were indications that traffic on the trail has been slowed considerably since the operation into Laos began.

There were reports, he said, that some North Vietnamese vehicles were moving south empty, picking up cargo from stockpiles and moving it back northward to keep it from being destroyed or seized.

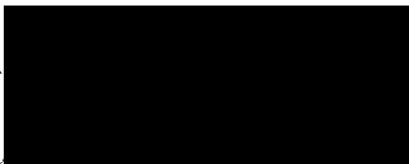
Reports from Vientiane said that in other areas of Laos, North Vietnamese forces were putting pressure on military posts. These accounts said several battalions of enemy troops were reported massing near the secret Long Cheng base in northern Laos, while other Communist-led units knocked out a guerrilla base supported by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency just north of the Plain of Jars.

47 Reds Reported Killed

Although the South Vietnamese push into southern Laos dominated attention in the Indochina theater, more sharp fighting was reported to the south in Cambodia. South Vietnamese troops operating across the border less than 100 miles north of Saigon reported killing 47 enemy troops Sunday. South Vietnamese headquarters reported that government forces lost two men killed and 23 wounded.

The drive into Cambodia also is aimed at destroying enemy supply systems and knocking out possible efforts to build up for action in the III Corps area that surrounds the South Vietnamese capital.

STATINTL



Tribes Open 2d Front

Saigon, Feb. 28 (Special)—
Laotian tribesmen organized by
the U.S. Central Intelligence
Agency have opened up a sec-
ond front. The aim is to cut the
western routes of the Ho Chi
Minh Trail being used by the
Communists to avoid the South
Vietnamese drive into Laos, re-
liable sources said tonight.

Several thousand guerrillas,
initially deployed between Se-
pone and Muang Phin, two key
Laotian transshipment points,
are now throwing their full
weight into blocking and haras-
sing Communist supply move-
ments.

—Joseph Fried

CIA-Trained Force Reported Blocking Ho Chi Minh Trail

SAIGON (UPI)—A CIA-trained force of 2,500 hill tribesmen in Laos has moved into the Sepone area to block another section of the Ho Chi Minh Trail and backstop a renewed drive into Laos by South Vietnamese forces, military sources said today.

With more than 10,000 South Vietnamese reinforcements and hundreds of U.S. helicopters reported preparing for a new drive toward Sepone, Laotian Premier Prince Souvanna Phouma was disclosed to have appealed to U.N. Secretary General U Thant for intervention with the great powers to remove all foreign troops from Laos.

The heavy fighting of the past week in Laos died down today but a South Vietnamese infantry unit of 900 men abandoned another fire support base in the bogged down fight to cut the communists' supply lines, front dispatches reported.

The South Vietnamese incursion by 16,000 men has been stalled for two weeks 16 miles inside the border. The main target of the drive, which began Feb. 8, reportedly was Sepone, a crossroads of the supply trail 27 miles inside Laos where mountain passes open from the north.

Guerrillas at Muong Phine

Military sources in Saigon said the Laotian hill tribesmen trained, financed and equipped by the Central Intelligence Agency, had been moved to block the road junction of Muong Phine in Laos, another crossroads of the trail west of Sepone.

North-south Route 23 and east-west Route 9 — the axis of the South Vietnamese drive into Laos — cross at Muong Phine, about 10 air miles southwest of Sepone.

Its capture would block a major sector of the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Communist supplies were reported passing through there after South Vietnamese cut Highway 914.

Spokesmen said the guerrillas in one operation last week destroyed a dozen Communist supply trucks, blew up a bridge and drove off the security detail guarding the North Vietnamese convoy.

UPI Correspondent Kim Wiltonson reported from Vientiane that Souvanna disclosed his appeal to Thant in a speech to students, made public today in the Laotian capital.

Fourth Base Abandoned

The sources said the South Vietnamese infantrymen left the fire support base, called Hotel 2, because heavy antiaircraft fire prevented U.S. helicopters from dropping supplies or evacuating wounded. It is the fourth base the South Vietnamese have abandoned under Communist fire in a week.

Sources also reported that 10,000 South Vietnamese reinforcements are being sent to aid the stalled drive in Laos.

(Pentagon press spokesman Jerry W. Friedheim, when asked today about the reports from Saigon that 10,000 South Vietnamese reinforcements are being sent to aid the stalled drive in Laos, replied, "I have absolutely nothing here to substantiate those stories.")

(Friedheim did not rule out future movements of additional troops in to Laos.)

Official spokesmen said 320 South Vietnamese soldiers have been killed in the three-week-old Laotian operation, with 1,002 wounded and 99 missing in action. They said 3,118 Communist troops had been slain in the campaign.

38 Copters Officially Lost

The U.S. command put American losses at 40 dead, 35 wounded and 18 missing in action. The Command said an Army UH1 Huey helicopter was shot down over Laos yesterday, wounding a crewman.

Spokesmen said it was the 38th American chopper destroyed in support of the Laotian operation in addition to two U.S. jets.

(Maj. Richard Gardner, a spokesman for the U.S. Command, said 1,400 of the enemy had been killed by American air strikes, the Associated Press reported.

(Gardner also said additional American helicopters had been moved to Khe Sanh to support

the Laotian operation, but refused to say how many. Other sources said they would replace those shot down and also would increase the fleet, which numbered about 600 at the start of the Laotian operation, AP said.)

The Hotel 2 base was evacuated yesterday by two battalions of 1st infantry division troops, who walked out carrying their wounded, the sources said.

The South Vietnamese abandoned a damaged \$2 million CH-43 Sea Stallion troop-carrying helicopter to prevent its falling into enemy hands. They also destroyed a 155-mm. howitzer.

UPI correspondent Joseph W. Galloway said they fought their way to the border post of Ham Nghi in South Vietnam, carrying men who had been wounded as long as three days ago.

The artillery base is about 20 miles southeast of Hill 31, another South Vietnamese combat base overrun Thursday by North Vietnamese troops and tanks and the scene of bitter fighting over the weekend.

Claim Victory

South Vietnam today claimed victory in that four-day battle, scene of the first major fighting between tanks in the Indochina war.

Col. Nguyen Trong Luan, commander of a South Vietnamese armored column, said South Vietnamese troops are in the area of Hill 31 today, but not on the hill itself. The North Vietnamese withdrew.

The Communist Pathet Lao said their forces captured more than 100 South Vietnamese paratroopers in storming Hill 31 and that 207 American aircraft have been destroyed in southern Laos since South Vietnamese forces moved into the area Feb. 8.

A broadcast communique by the Pathet Lao said those captured at Hill 31 included the colonel who commanded the 3rd South Vietnamese Paratroop Brigade.

Col. Luat said he saw more than 15 Communist PT76 tanks go up in flames in the battle of Hill 31 but he did not see a single man leave the tanks.

"It was remarkable. The tanks were burning, but kept moving and firing," he said. "Not one crewman got out of those tanks. I think their leaders locked the tank doors before the battle."

South Vietnam was reported rushing the 10,000 men into Laos to reinforce that 16,000-man task force trying to cut the Ho Chi Minh Trail supply sys-

The first reinforcements, more than a battalion of South Vietnamese marines, were airlifted to the big base at Khe Sanh 12 miles from the Laotian border yesterday and flown into Laos aboard an armada of helicopters.

According to military sources the reinforcements are needed to meet a threat posed by an estimated seven North Vietnamese regiments and tank units operating along Route 9 inside Laos.

The South Vietnamese operation has been stalled about 16 miles across the border for nearly two weeks.

Lt. Gen. James W. Sutherland, commander of the 9,000-man American team which is supporting the South Vietnamese in the Laotian invasion, said in Khe Sanh that the offensive "has not gone as well as we intended."

However, he said, it is an over-all success.

Major fighting has been underway for more than a week centered around several key spots on Route 9, including Hill 31.

CLASSIFIED
21 FEBRUARY 1971

White House lies mask Laos defeat

By Richard E. Ward

The U.S.-sponsored invasion of Laos plainly reveals that the White House still nurtures illusions of a U.S. military victory in Indochina.

U.S. actions under the Nixon administration closely parallel the self-delusion of French policy before France's final defeat in Indochina in 1954. The latest events can be better understood in light of this historical parallel, especially because of Washington's efforts at mystification—the lies about U.S. aims and actions intended to lull to sleep the American people and world opinion, overwhelmingly opposed to U.S. intervention and aggression in Indochina.

After decisive Vietnamese victories in 1950, the resistance proved that it had the ability to check any French offensive, and final victory for the Vietnamese became only a question of time, which always runs in favor of the popular forces in a peoples war. Ignoring this reality, and prodded by U.S. pressure and dollars, Paris kept vainly searching for a position of strength or an even more illusory military victory. A comparable situation has existed in Indochina since 1968, when the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam mounted its Tet offensive. The DRV defeated the U.S. air war and the Pathet Lao achieved important victories in Laos.

During the first resistance war of the Indochinese peoples, the French government, like the U.S. today, kept issuing a steady stream of false communiqués about imaginary gains, minimizing and disguising French losses and setbacks. And when the Vietnamese resistance joined forces with the Pathet Lao, Paris accused the DRV (the Vietminh) of "invading" Laos. That proved to be the final self-deception for the French before their defeat at Dienbienphu. Today, the three peoples of Indochina, again confronting a common aggressor, are fully justified in providing each other mutual aid, a truth which Washington is trying to obfuscate.

Just as the French efforts to hold all of Indochina set the stage for France's final defeat, the full-scale extension of the war to Laos and Cambodia by the Nixon administration may well be the prelude for the final act of Washington's hopes for maintaining hegemony in Indochina.

Public in the dark

This may not be readily evident here while Washington is doing everything in its power to keep the press and public in the dark about what is happening in Laos and Indochina as a whole. Washington is desperately trying to disguise the extent of U.S.

involvement and U.S. and Saigon losses in Laos. For example, as of Feb. 19, the U.S. command in Saigon officially stated that only 12 U.S. helicopters had been lost in the current invasion of Laos and an additional six had been lost in related operations in northern South Vietnam. But the Feb. 20 Washington Post, quoting a Reuters dispatch, reported that "reliable U.S. sources in Saigon" said "that well over 50 U.S. helicopters had been downed in the Laotian operation."

The catalog of U.S. lies is virtually endless. The Nixon administration says that the invasion of Laos is a test of "Vietnamization," that no U.S. "ground forces" are participating in it. If that were true, why are U.S. journalists prevented from observing what is taking place along the "Ho Chi Minh trail?" And what are the thousands of U.S. troops doing in and around Khesanh in what is an intrinsic part of the Laos invasion?

Actually, U.S. units are participating in the invasion on a large scale, which is not to speak of U.S. "Green Berets" that have been operating in Laos for years and are involved in the current operation as well. Most of the actual fighting in Laos may be given over to Saigon's forces, but without U.S. "Green Berets" that could not have moved into Laos. According to estimates of the U.S. press, approximately 500 U.S. helicopters are making over 1000 sorties per day into Laos, ferrying in supplies and troops and bringing the dead out. These are Saigon's "elite" forces that are being brought to battle in Laos, and they have been pinned down from the start. The truth has begun to leak out from Western sources despite the lies and news blackout.

First, it was bad weather that allegedly had slowed down the elite of Saigon's army, who apparently are incapable of going into battle without U.S. helicopters. Then came the absurd claim that the advance was slowed by the need to inventory the huge caches of weapons and food being seized in Laos. One Saigon spokesman got carried away on this theme, claiming that men and supplies coming from the North were literally falling into the laps of Saigon forces astride the "Ho Chi Minh trail."

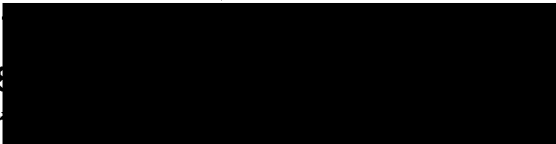
The latest Western press reports more realistically indicated that the fog and mist impeding the invasion was invented by U.S. and Saigon military spokesmen. If the actual extent of casualties was not revealed, by the weekend it was impossible to conceal the fact that Saigon casualties were "heavy," and that earlier reports of Saigon success were pure myths. The invasion is meeting extremely heavy resistance on the ground and in the air.

Reality creeps in

As the U.S.-Saigon drive ground to a halt last weekend, American news analysts began to perceive some of the realities of the resistance in Laos. Washington Post staff writer George C. Wilson reasoned that Saigon's tough sledding in Laos was in part due to "two weeks" advance warning Hanoi had to prepare for the invasion. Wilson further observed in the Feb. 21 Post: "Helicopters are running into the deadliest fire so far in the Indochina war," which could prove fatal to a strategy based on use of helicopters; "the South Vietnamese are spread out in a vulnerable thin line" having "no wedge with a secure rear," and weather and the geography of the area give B-52s, jet fighters and helicopter gunships "limited usefulness."

Despite these observations, Wilson thought it is too early to say if Saigon and Washington had miscalculated, perhaps because he is not fully aware of capabilities of the resistance in Laos. He completely omits any mention of the Pathet Lao and ascribes everything to the "Ho Chi Minh trail" if this were true, that the resistance along the "Ho Chi Minh trail" is entirely in the

GUARDIAN STATINTL
27 Feb 1971



Invasion smashed in Laos

By Wilfred Burchett
Guardian staff correspondent

Paris

A military disaster of Dienbienphu-proportions is building up around President Nixon's Laotian invasion force.

Saigon's units are isolated from each other and also from their command posts and supply bases. They are encircled and being cut to pieces unit by unit. A "Ranger" unit of over 1000 men was being wiped out in such an action Feb. 20-21. The extent of the disaster is being hushed up in Saigon where political tempers are rising as news of a similar disaster in the "Fishhook" area in Cambodia is leaking through.

Contrary to propaganda communiques, puppet units in Laos have not advanced from their original positions since the operation started. They have not cut the "Ho Chi Minh trail." The only thing being cut is Highway 9 along which they were to stage their "victory advance." It has been cut between them and their rear supply bases, and it has also been solidly blocked in front of them.

Instead of reducing supplies to the resistance forces, the result of the operation thus far has been to put more weapons, munitions and other supplies into their hands in the past couple of weeks than could have come down the "Ho Chi Minh trail" in a couple of months.

Anti-aircraft fire, from perfectly camouflaged batteries in hillside caves, is so intense and accurate that planes and helicopters cannot drop their supplies with accuracy—or land to evacuate the puppet, dead and wounded. Often supplies are dropped haphazardly as soon as anti-aircraft fire is spotted. Losses are now so heavy that pilots are now refusing to fly missions. A helicopter unit commander was interviewed on British television admitting this, stating that pilots refusing to fly were being put on "perimeter defense" duties.

Parallels with Dienbienphu

There are a number of parallels with the French defeat at Dienbienphu. First, like France's ill-fated Navarre plan of which Dienbienphu was the key element, the strategy behind the current operation was conceived in Washington. Second, about the same number of troops were involved—about 16,000 at Dienbienphu and about 20,000 in the Laotian operation. Third, what was intended as a key offensive operation quickly bogged down into a desperate defensive action both in 1954 and 1971. Fourth, elite troops were used at Dienbienphu and now in the current drive. The French put the best they had into Dienbienphu, which in part was why they had to quit the war after the loss of those 16,000 men. The Saigon puppets have also committed their elite troops: the First Division, normally responsible for the defense of I Corps just south of the

17th parallel, and elite commando, parachute and marine units earmarked for the defense of Saigon. Fifth, like Dienbienphu, the current operation is dependent on airborne supplies and thus the weather factor becomes important. Sixth and most important, Gen. Creighton Abrams, like Gen. Navarre, made the same subjective blunder of underestimating his opponent.

The resistance forces have been expecting this operation for a long time and were in no way caught by surprise. They knew that plans for a thrust into Laos were originally thought up by Gen. William Westmoreland, then commander in Saigon, who ordered the original buildup at Khesanh for this purpose. It was to have been launched in November 1967 but the National Liberation Front spoiled it by encircling Khesanh, transforming it from an offensive to a defensive operation and springing the Loc Ninh and Plei Mei battles in October-November 1967. The original Westmoreland plan, evolved into the present form last year, was given the green light by Nixon at the beginning of this year and received a final touching-up when Defense Secretary Melvin Laird visited Saigon in mid-January.

To make things even clearer, two U.S. aircraft carriers steamed into the Gulf of Tonkin on Jan. 30, with news of a third one (with 1500 Marines on board) ostentatiously for "intimidation" purposes also on its way to the gulf. The Pentagon was obviously following its own propaganda line that North Vietnam was suffering from a "crisis in morale."

Between Jan. 30 and Feb. 3, elements of the Americal, 101st Airborne and the 5th Infantry (mechanized) divisions—over 10,000 troops in all—plus about 20,000 puppet troops from the Saigon 1st Division, and a brigade each of Rangers, parachutists and marines were brought from Hue, Danang and other bases in I Corps to Dong Ha and from there along Highway 9 to Khesanh. U.S. engineers on Feb. 5 started to repair the old Khesanh air field to accommodate as many as 40 huge C-123 cargo planes.

Increased bombing

By the time the invasion started on Feb. 8, there had been 117 days of continuous bombing raids against Laos, averaging about 300 missions and 3000 tons of bombs daily. After advance parties were airlifted on Feb. 7 to prepare landing pads, about 400 helicopters were employed on Feb. 8 to set the invaders down at three main points—Ban Dong, almost astride Highway 9, Lang Sen to the north and Ca Khi to the south of the highway. A few small reconnaissance groups were also parachuted into the vicinity of Tchepone, a bombed-out town officially designated as the first target of the operation which was "encircled" within the first 48 hours, Saigon spokesmen stated.

Anticipating the invasion and knowing that its main strategic aim was to cut Indochina in two, by securing the line from Quang Tri in South Vietnam to Savannakhet near the Thai border with Laos, the Pathet Lao forces on Jan. 27 drove right wing Laotian and Thai forces out of Moung Phalane, also on Highway 9, between Tchepone and Savannakhet. This was to block any attempt by Thai troops to link up with the Saigon invaders.

The resistance forces engaged the advance parties on Feb. 7 and the main body the next day while they were still airborne. The 74 helicopters downed during the first four days indicate this: Feb. 7, 10 helicopters downed; Feb. 8, 22 helicopters downed; Feb. 10, 42 helicopters downed (at Ban Dong and Ca Khi).

continued

ASIA

SOUTH VIETNAM

The massive Washington-led invasion of Laos bogged down last week and President Nixon admitted the bombing of the three countries of Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos would continue to be unlimited. At the same time, several ground actions were reported in South Vietnam. By Feb. 18 fire support-base Scotch in northern South Vietnam had been surrounded for three days. A base for American troops, it is 10 miles northwest of the main jumping-off base into Laos-Khesanh. . . . U.S. and Saigon troops lost 500 tons of artillery shells and tear gas canisters when an ammunition dump outside Quangtri blew up. . . . There were five attacks in three days on U.S. military vehicles in Saigon. On Feb. 17 firebombs were hurled against the fence surrounding the U.S. embassy in Saigon. Two youths who threw the homemade bombs and fled on motorcycles scattered leaflets as they left, calling on people to burn U.S. vehicles throughout Saigon in retaliation against the sending of "South Vietnamese mercenaries" into Laos and the killing of civilians by a U.S. soldier in Quinhon. . . . The GI who killed a Vietnamese youth in Quinhon Dec. 10 was convicted this month of negligent homicide, sentenced to six months in prison, fined \$360 and reduced from Pfc. to private. He shot the boy in an alleged attempt to prevent other hungry teenage boys near a Buddhist school from taking C-rations from a military truck. . . . Several hundred forced labor companies in the Saigon army are made up of captured deserters, the New York Times reported. These "field labor battalions," comprised of many men who have deserted for religious reasons, are assigned some of the most dangerous jobs of the war and suffer high fatalities. Without weapons and not allowed to speak to other soldiers, they bring water to the front lines, carry the dead from combat and run errands. Since by decree of puppet president Nguyen Van Thieu, the deserters' deaths are not reported, the men use the buddy system: when one is killed a friend writes the family telling where the body is buried so it can be reburied properly later on. Sentences to the forced labor battalions are usually for three years, the report said, but often service is extended for five. . . . Jack Anderson revealed in his Washington Merry-Go-Round column "a top CIA pilot [stationed in Thailand] can make as much as \$100,000 a year flying high hazard missions" in the CIA's Air America planes. "Station allowances" of up to \$320 a month are paid additionally. . . . The U.S. is financing the Saigon regime's notorious jails, according to the National Liberation Front's English-language newspaper, South Vietnam in Struggle. It said the U.S. paid \$9.9 million for the current fiscal year to maintain the regime's 41 prisons.

CHICAGO, ILL.
NEWS

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FEB 25 1971

Reds putting squeeze on Meo tribesmen

By Keyes Beech
Daily News Foreign Service

BAN SON, Laos — Once again the North Vietnamese are on the offensive in the wild and mountainous country of northeastern Laos.

Once again the Meo families are fleeing to the valleys from their mountain homes, leaving behind their able-bodied men and boys to fight.

But this time there is a difference. After a decade of bitter fighting and nearly 10,000 war dead, the Meos are discouraged and dispirited.

YEAR AFTER year, the North Vietnamese have systematically squeezed the Meos into an ever smaller space.

"We are running out of places to hide," said a Meo chief. "We also are running out of sons."

"This year it looks as though Hanoi is determined to break the back of Meo resistance once and for all," said Edwin T. McKeithen, 29, of Old Greenwich, Conn., a U.S. AID field worker who has spent six years in Laos.

At the moment, the United States is supplying rice and other essentials to approximately 200,000 refugees in northeastern Laos—about 35,000 more than three months ago.

Roughly half of these people are Meos, the opium-growing mountaineers who for years have borne

clandestine U.S.-backed "forgotten war" in northern Laos.

APPROXIMATELY 30,000 refugees have been resettled in this lovely little valley 60 miles northeast of Vientiane. Some of them are no longer considered refugees since they have

been here for three years or more.

But at the CIA-backed Meo base at Long Cheng, 22 miles to the northeast, fresh refugees have begun to trickle into the area. Ban Son serves as the nerve center for the American effort to cope with the refugee problem.

Of the estimated 250,000 Meo in Laos there is hardly a family that has not lost one or more of its members to the invading North Vietnamese. Over the last decade the royal Laotian government has paid death benefits for 9,700 war dead, mostly Meos.

"But that figure by no means accounts for all the Meo losses," McKeithen said. "In many cases no death benefits were paid."

IMPORTANT," McKeithen continued, "the Meos lose from 10 to 15 per cent of their population during every forced migration. Some die from malaria and dysentery and pneumonia. Others die because they simply lose the will to live once they are forced from their traditional homes."

Unless forced to, the Meos refuse to live at altitudes below 3,000 feet. When forced into refugee centers in the valleys they often migrate back to the nearest mountaintop.

"I know of some Meos who have killed at least 10 North Vietnamese for every man they've lost," said McKeithen. "But what does it gain them if the North Vietnamese keep coming?"

THE LAST remaining Meo stronghold in northeastern Laos is at Long Cheng, where the cocky little Meo general, Vang Pao appears to be determined to hold out.

Vang Pao has about 8,000 troops, but only 40 per cent of these are Meo. The remainder are a mixed bag of Thais, Laotians and other tribal groups.

"There is little doubt that the North Vietnamese can take Long Cheng — if they are prepared to pay the price," said a U.S. military source. "But the price will be high."

But to the primitive Meos, who wish only to be left alone, Long Cheng has no significance. They are tired of war and only want to find some mountaintops where they can live in peace.

25 FEB 1971

Green Berets— Saying Goodby to Themselves

BY GEORGE McARTHUR
Times Staff Writer

NHA TRANG, South Vietnam—The fabled Green Berets, possibly the only American soldiers who liked this war, made their formal farewells Wednesday. There were a few half-hidden tears as the band played but no regrets.

Col. Michael Healy, a rumpled, deep-throated soldier, stood beneath a drizzling rain and said the final words:

"Our job is done. We can withdraw from the battlefield with our heads high and pride in the gallant officers and men of the 5th Special Forces Group."

It was a brief moment in history, a footnote perhaps, and the words were appropriate. The rhetoric would have sounded false in other units which have long since lost most of their identity in Vietnam. But the Green Berets, battered though they were, played their own game to the end.

Dignitaries Absent

Though U.S. Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker and military commander Gen. Creighton W. Abrams were invited to the final parade at Green Beret headquarters, neither attended. It didn't matter to the close-knit band of sturdy men talking about such places as Loc Ninh, Bu Dop or Lang Vei. It was as if the Green Berets were saying goodby to themselves.

They were on their good behavior, though some admitted hangovers from a private party Tuesday. The small, white-painted compound, the neatest military camp in South Vietnam, was spotless. A camouflage cargo parachute was spread over a bit of grass where drinks were served. There was pink champagne and succulent lobster lifted Wednesday morning from the South China Sea by Nha Trang fishermen. There were even big dolphins carved in ice by a Green Beret rifleman.

It was a far cry from the John Wayne days when small teams of Special Forces troopers recruited motley bands of mercenaries from feudal remote camps along the borders.

Hazardous Duty

Through those lean years every Green Beret in almost 100 such camps knew he probably could be overrun—if the enemy wanted to pay the price. At places like Bu Prang, shelled and besieged for 45 days, life literally depended on the flick of an eyelash. The Green Berets, who seldom numbered more than about 1,500 men in Vietnam, left 700 dead, mostly in camps like that.

Unlike most Army units, the Green Berets remember such things as vivid, only-yesterday experiences. Their memory is active since nobody much pays any attention to a Special Forces type on his first tour. They keep coming back and a few have served eight and even nine years in Vietnam.

Sgt. 1 C. Antonio J. Coelho, a 44-year-old who has been a Green Beret since their earliest days, is more or less typical. He resigned from the Army a few years ago but came back "because I missed these so-and-sos."

A stocky short-spoken man, Coelho stood at attention with the staff Wednesday to get the last medal which will be presented at a Special Forces formation in Vietnam. It was the Distinguished Service Cross, the nation's second highest combat medal, given Coelho for two rescue missions only last August. Twice he led helicopter teams through halls of fire to save both American and Vietnamese soldiers.

The Vietnamese were members of the Civilian Irregular Defense Groups which are the pride of the Green Berets. Though they are frequently called mercenaries, the CIDGs are mainly Montagnard or ethnic Cambodian peoples who choose the Special Forces rather than face the South Vietnamese draft.

The Green Berets formed fierce attachments to the CIDGs, mainly to the simple, sturdy tribesman of the highlands. Almost every Green Beret sports one or more of the hand-hammered copper and bronze bracelets the Montagnards give away as tokens of esteem (along with lots of rice wine liberally at ceremonial events).

Saigon Conflict

"We took them out of loincloths and put them into uniforms and now they are elite forces," Col. Healy says. "It does something to you to remember the old days and then see some of them now wearing officers' shoulder boards. They are no longer social outcasts, they are part of the country."

In those early days Healy referred to, the Green Berets got into trouble siding with the Montagnards in their fights with the Saigon government. The conflict sometimes had humorous aspects.

In those mixed up days the Central Intelligence Agency was actually paying the salaries of the CIDG troops and the money came down through the Green Berets to be distributed by the South Vietnamese officers who were nominally in command. The South Vietnamese would frequently pocket much of the money. One Special Forces captain, who was unable to get his counterpart to cooperate in properly paying the troops, used a blunt solution.

One month on payday he called the camp together and explained what had been happening. Then he put the money—about \$5,000 worth of Vietnamese piasters—in a gasoline soaked pit and burned it all. Next month, with the camp near mutiny, the South Vietnamese captain agreed to set up a reasonable accounting system.

The loyalty of the Green Berets for the CIDGs, whom they affectionately call "Yards," a shortening of the French pronunciation for Montagnards, is evident in other ways. Of the nine Medals of Honor won by Green Berets in Vietnam, (four posthumously), four were won by men risking their lives to save their CIDG comrades.

Large Command

At the peak of Special Forces strength in South Vietnam the CIDG forces numbered 60,000. Technically South Vietnamese were in command of

these and the Green Berets were advisers, but in practice the bird colonel who commanded the Green Berets from Nha Trang controlled more troops than any American divisional general in the country.

This gave the Green Berets much of their character. They wore bronze bracelets, ate Vietnamese and Montagnard food and bragged about their capacity for rice wine. (They also usually had the best food in the country in their own messes. It was a poor Special Forces camp that hadn't scrounged iceboxes, stoves and whatnot. One camp in the delta spirited a Chinese cook from Saigon and kept him as a well-paid but restive prisoner for months. A guard was sent with him on the infrequent times he was given leave).

The funding of the CIDG by the CIA was an early example of the embarrassing marriage of convenience between the Green Berets and "the spooks."

In the delta regions where the CIDG troopers were ethnic Cambodians, they were also mostly at least nominal members of the "Khmer Serai," a free Cambodia movement headed by Son Ngoc Than. In effect, while denying all such charges, the CIA and the Green Berets created almost a private army of Cambodians, to the natural chagrin of then ruling Prince Norodom Sihanouk.

When Sihanouk was ousted last March Than soon surfaced as an "adviser" to the new regime and five battalions of CIDG troopers, now called Khmer Krom, quickly went to serve the new Cambodia government. They were, in fact, considered the only dependable troops the Phnom Penh regime then had.

The liaison with the CIA flared into a major embarrassment almost two years ago when eight Green Berets, including their respected and rising commander Col. Robert B. Rheault, were accused of murdering a suspected

double agent. The CIA convincingly denied any involvement but the suspicion lingers.

Although the charges were finally dismissed, another suspicion lingers that Gen. Abrams, an old-fashioned ground soldier, was out to bring the free-wheeling Green Berets to heel. This, too, has been denied but it rankled some Wednesday when Abrams canceled his scheduled appearance at Nha Trang and sent instead Lt. Gen. William McCaffrey, commander of the Army's housekeeping command in Vietnam.

It was also noted that Green Beret records still proudly list Col. Rheault as a former commander of the 5th Special Forces Group (another former commander is retired Col. Jonathan Ladd, who is now the American military pro-consul in Cambodia).

The Green Beret spokesmen, however, were at pains to play down such memories Wednesday. They pointed out that Abrams' picture was proudly displayed in the final issue of their in-house magazine (along with one of the long-time Green Beret house mothers, Martha Raye). He also recently spent the night at their command post, one of the few times in Vietnam that Abrams has ever honored a unit by staying overnight.

Conscious of the disillusionment with Vietnam that has set in, the Green Berets now emphasize their "nation-building" role. With some justification they point to innumerable projects they have sponsored in Vietnam.

And they privately mourn that all this will now be absorbed by the Army and the famed Green Beret headgear will soon disappear after a decade in Vietnam.

Remnant Absorbed

Within two weeks Col. Healy will head home with the unit's proud colors, headed for Ft. Bragg, N.C. When the colors formally leave the country

the few hundred Green Beret officers remaining there will be absorbed by other units. They may still wear the Special Forces patch but the beret can be worn only by members serving with an active unit.

Meanwhile, the remaining Green Berets are housekeepers, with nothing to do but prepare their camp for some other outfit.

"It's sad, you've got to admit it," said Healy. "But we go on."

The chaplain, Roman Catholic Rev. Michael Ortiz, a two-tour man in Vietnam himself, went to the Book of Timothy for the appropriate passage to read to the sad men in camouflage fatigues standing in the rain. Quoting Paul, he said:

"I have fought the good fight. I have finished the course. I have kept the faith. For the rest, there is laid up for me a crown of justice."

With that, the half-hour ceremony was over. Officially, the proud role of the Green Berets in Vietnam was ended.

S 1872

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February 24, 1971

U.S. air support of South Vietnamese efforts to cut the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Laos and by nonpartisan unity behind our President and Commander in Chief.

Administration spokesmen have said repeatedly they are convinced that cutting off the major supply line of the North Vietnamese, the Ho Chi Minh Trail complex, will, more than any other single effort in Indochina, bring a quick end to the Vietnam war.

I question, then, why war critics both inside and outside the Congress criticize our President for supplying U.S. air support to the Laos trail mission when it appears to offer the greatest hope for bringing our boys home sooner.

Mr. President, I object to the repeated implications that the President is committing the United States to greater involvement in Indochina rather than working toward phasing out our involvement.

Certainly, the facts do not bear out such implications. These facts are clearly set out in a column by Joseph Alsop in the Washington Post of February 22. I ask unanimous consent that this article be published in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the article was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

LIGHT AND HEAVY NEWS

(By Joseph Alsop)

If there is anything more trivial than yesterday's newspaper column, it is hard to know what it may be. Yet an old column by this reporter has just brought down the thunders of four admired colleagues—an honor indeed!

It would not be worth mentioning, except that it has a certain symbolic significance. Rightly or wrongly, after all, the United States by now has a heavy investment of blood and treasure in the Vietnamese war. What mainly matters, therefore, is what happens in Vietnam. But while Washington trivia gets so much attention, what is really happening in Vietnam is quite impossible to discover from each morning's news.

To make this contrast worse, what is happening in Vietnam grows daily more significant. It is a 10-to-1 bet, for instance, that only a tiny minority of those who read these words will have grasped the fact that there is serious fighting going on in Cambodia.

The fact itself has been dimly recorded, here and there. Yet neither the nature, nor the purposes, nor the meaning of the South Vietnamese offensive in this part of Cambodia have found their way into print.

The nature of the fighting is simple enough. The flamboyant but able General Do Cao Tri is leading his South Vietnamese forces against the enemy, in what was supposed to be the new North Vietnamese fortress-base area in Cambodia. With less than two South Vietnamese divisions, General Tri has been taking on Hanoi's Fifth, Seventh and Ninth divisions—which used to be three of the most feared enemy units in South Vietnam.

The grisly "Body Counts" (originally introduced by the U.S. Army to appease the New York Times) have already mounted to above 1,200 North Vietnamese soldiers. It is a simple rule that any unit having 40 percent of its men killed in action, is a unit effectively put out of action itself. This means the equivalent of two enemy regiments already crossed off the list—at least for the time being.

If the Ho Chi Minh trail-complex is successfully cut in Laos, the "time being" is likely to be indefinitely long. Worse still, the

enemy's rate of loss is currently running at an average of 100 men per day. And this is the proportional equivalent, for North Vietnam, of an American loss of 1,000 men per day. Meanwhile, General Tri's losses have been painful but small.

THIS almost-ignored Cambodia campaign, therefore, has very great potential meaning. If all goes well (and that is always a very big "if") the enemy's forces in Cambodia will be torn to ribbons, and their laboriously established new base areas will be knocked to smithereens. This can happen before the present dry season ends. Already, moreover, by their performance in the field, General Tri's troops have strikingly proved the worth of President Nixon's scheme of Vietnamization.

As to the concurrent invasion of Laos, to cut the Ho Chi Minh trail-complex, it has caused more public turmoil than General Tri's operation in Cambodia. But there has been an almost equal paucity of information about its nature and its meaning.

The Laos operation's risks should not be underrated, to begin with. If the South Vietnamese under General Hoang Xuan Lam attain their ultimate objectives, they will own a swathe of the trail-complex about 50 miles wide and 35 miles deep. That means the equivalent of two South Vietnamese divisions holding a salient whose northern and southern flanks will each be 35 miles long—and in very rough, enemy-infested country!

The very fact that General Creighton Abrams has been eager to mount such an operation, speaks volumes about his confidence in Vietnamization. If the operation succeeds, (and the "if" is again crucial) about 130,000 North Vietnamese troops and support personnel will also be cut off to the south of the trail—cut, at any rate until the next dry season begins in December, 1971.

Proportionally, that means for Hanoi the equivalent for Washington of 1,300,000 Americans left without supply, reinforcement, and in a good many cases, even without rations, for a period of 10 months. Of the readers who have followed this report thus far, one wonders how many have previously been made aware of that remarkable fact, or of more than the tiniest proportion of the other foregoing facts.

The world's first Stalinist, the Chinese political philosopher, Lord Shang, remarked bleakly about 2,400 years ago, "If a state emphasizes the light and ignores the heavy, that state is doomed." The rule can one day apply to the trade of reporting facts, like the silly business of alleged Panther-genocide.

Mr. BELLMON. Mr. President, the United States began supplying air support to South Vietnamese troops in Laos February 8.

Since that time government spokesmen have reported significant strides in the effort to totally block out North Vietnamese supply movements along the Ho Chi Minh Trail south to Vietnam.

South Vietnamese ground troops are now holding positions on two strategic routes which constitute the greater trunk of the trail complex. The North Vietnamese are now waging fierce attacks on those ground troops, a sign that the enemy indeed considers access to the trail essential.

South Vietnamese troops have been able in the last 2 weeks to destroy 134,000 gallons of fuel, a service station capable of repairing 30 trucks a day, and 115 vehicles.

They have cut an important POL line which will severely limit the enemy's supply of oil and gas for their vehicles.

An administration spokesman reports the combined efforts of South Vietnamese ground troops and U.S. air support are inflicting heavy enemy losses. The enemy reportedly has lost in excess of 2,000 men, while U.S. losses were less than 3 percent of that figure.

Mr. President, a year-and-a-half ago I personally visited with South Vietnamese General Lam. He convinced me his troops are dedicated to their mission of defending their country and would continue that effort to the limit of their capability. They are dedicated to retaining their freedom, and I am convinced that they will accomplish their mission by assuring the security of their country.

The administration has repeatedly emphasized it has put no ground troops in Laos and has no intentions of doing so in the future. It has pointed out that air support in Laos is a vital means to the end we all want to achieve: that of bringing the Vietnam conflict to a speedy end.

I believe we should furnish vital air support to the South Vietnamese troops to accomplish their objective and ours.

Mr. President, it would appear that those who continue to criticize the administration for supplying air support in Laos are not bothering to look below the surface facts before unloading their invective on the President. If their advice were followed, and we withdrew support, the war would be prolonged and death losses of friend and foe alike would rise.

As a result, the critics are doing their country a disservice by advocating a measure that would likely prolong the conflict.

THE INDOCHINA WAR

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I know I speak for millions of Americans in expressing deep dismay over the unending rhetoric of progress being used by our national leadership in describing the Indochina war.

It is a rhetoric which grossly misleads our Nation's people and disguises the mounting violence and widening character of the conflict.

It is a rhetoric which conveniently ignores an expanding American involvement and new commitments.

It is a rhetoric which tragically evades genuine concern—let alone some responsibility—for the devastating impact the conflict is having on the civilian population and countryside of the entire area.

It is on this latter point—on what a correspondent recently called "a slaughter of innocents"—that I wish to comment briefly today.

I am prompted to do so, not merely because the longstanding problems of refugees and civilian casualties continues, but also to underscore that the latest ingredient in our national policy of violence for Southeast Asia, can only add heavily—and needlessly—to the horrendous human toll that already exists.

Our national leadership has now officially told us that all of Indochina is a target of American bombs. The President has said that he would place no limitation on the use of American airpower throughout the area.

The Meo Of Laos-II

U.S. Finances Victor-To-Refugee Transit

By JOHN E. WOODRUFF
Sun Staff Correspondent

Vientiane, Laos—On September 25, 1945, Toubhy Lyfong received a letter from Gen. Le Thiep Hong, then Viet Minh commander of the Vinh region of North Vietnam.

It is from this letter that Mr. Lyfong, who soon afterward would be dubbed "King of the Meo" by French journalists, dates the chain of events that eventually brought his people to their current state of total dependence on United States aid.

Refused Reds Help

Mr. Lyfong says the letter notified him that Viet Minh troops planned to cross into Laos through Xieng Khouang province, where he was the French-appointed chief of Meo hill tribesmen. It asked him to let them pass so they could start organizing resistance to the expected return of the French after World War II.

Perhaps Seminal Battle

He refused—largely, he says, out of loyalty to the French, who had given him eight years of schooling, the most ever permitted a Meo. Two weeks later, Viet Minh troops and a few of their Lao allies fought Mr. Lyfong's Meo mountain tribesmen at an outpost near Nong Het, just inside Laos.

The fight was a chaos of aged French and British colonial weapons, Meo crossbows and flintlocks and a few Japanese and American rifles scrounged during World War II; history seems to have overlooked it, although it may well have been the seminal battle of the tragicomic struggle that still sputters backward and forward across Laos today.

That day, according to Toubhy Lyfong's memory, the Meo were the winners.

Mr. Lyfong organized loosely run Meo guerrilla forces for the French from then until 1954, when the Viet Minh scored their spectacular victory at Dienbienphu and drove the French from Indochina.

When Mr. Lyfong went to France to retire after the war, though, his loyalty was scarcely rewarded: refused permission to transfer his \$250,000 fortune to Paris from the colonial bank, he relates, he had to return to Indochina after only two weeks.

Helpful To U.S.

By 1950, his continued presence in Laos was to prove helpful to new foreigners: the Americans, who were starting to organize an army of hill tribesmen to supplement the pathetically ineffective Royal Lao Army they tried to build for the Vientiane government in the late 1950's.

It was in that year that Toubhy Lyfong says he cemented an alliance with the right-wing Gen. Phoumi Nosavan and Prince Boun Oum—and thus with the United States Army and Central Intelligence Agency, which then were financing and supplying the Phoumi army in southern Laos.

Refused Promotion

Throughout 1960, Mr. Lyfong lent his prestige—as well as the many local officials he had appointed while province chief and his remaining friendships from the days as a guerrilla organizer—to a little-known army major named Vang Pao.

Maj. Vang Pao, the highest-ranking Meo in the Lao Army, twice had been refused an overdue promotion to lieutenant colonel by Lao officers who could not accept the idea of a hill tribesman as their equal, according to Mr. Lyfong.

Promised better treatment by General Phoumi and Prince Boun Oum—and promised money and arms by the Americans—Vang Pao set out to build a hill-tribe army. For General Phoumi and Boun Oum, the alliance offered at last the prospect of a friendly force in parts of northern Laos that long had been largely the preserve of neutralist and pro-Communist forces with whom they frequently had quarreled.

In Government Office

By early 1961, as minister of social welfare under a short-lived government headed by Prince Boun Oum, Mr. Lyfong was able to give Vang Pao's infant army more tangible help. He diverted Lao and American refugee goods to the Meo of the Plain of Jars region, whom Vang Pao had regrouped according to a prearranged plan when neutralist troops took over the plain as they retreated before a drive on Vientiane by General Phoumi's men.

Soon afterward, Vang Pao became commander of Military Region II, Xieng Khouang and Sam Neua provinces, the toughest Communist-held territory in northern Laos.

On 7 Strategic Hilltops

Vang Pao's regroupment of the Meo onto seven strategically located hilltops surrounding the plain radically altered the course of the war in northern Laos, for it welded a large group of rugged Meo mountaineers into the beginnings of what gradually became the Vientiane government's most effective single fighting force.

It also radically altered the lives of the Meo by separating them from their tiny hilltop villages of no more than 20 or 30 houses each.

Now Vang Pao's Meo followers were gathered into settlements that soon proved too crowded for their way of farming, which consists of cutting and burning trees and brush from the sunny side of a mountain, planting rice and corn for two or three years until the soil is depleted and then starting over again on a different hillside.

The refugee supplies sent from Vientiane by Mr. Lyfong—largely rice, bought in Thailand with American money—thus became the first step in the Meo's decade-long walk to total dependence on United States aid.

It is fashionable among high American officials in Vientiane today to say that the Meo

already had had some fights with the Communists before the Americans organized them and to insist that the Meo "came to us."

"Look, these people came to us for help, and we have given them plenty of help," one top-level diplomat says.

An anonymous memorandum of the Vientiane office of the agency that preceded the United States Agency for International Development presents a more complex picture.

Official Memo

Arguing in favor of giving the Meo help that was soon to be justified publicly as humanitarian refugee aid, the 1960 memorandum said, in part:

"Toughened by their hard work in the high mountains, accustomed from childhood to firearms and to hunting in groups, used to traveling long distances on foot from one village to another, they become excellent fighters with a minimum of training.

"For many months now, ever since the Communists seized control of the Plain of Jars, the Meo, working together with officers and soldiers from the Lao armed forces, have been formed into regular [Laotian Army] military units. They have defended their homes and given great assistance to their brothers in arms elsewhere in Laos by harrassing the enemy's convoys and military columns."

Some lower-level Americans who work with the Meo argue that the relationship established in 1960 was by nature unequal, even if it had been a simple case of responding to a Meo request for aid.

Thought Help Generous

One says: "It's no help to your case if you tell the judge the 12-year-old girl invited you into her bedroom.

"The Meo were primitive people who thought for a long time that we were generously helping them defend their little hilltops and thatched huts. They know now that they are being used in something bigger, of course, but now it's too late.

"We say the thing in terms of

BOSTON, MASS.
HERALD TRAVELER

M - 216,305
S - 298,557

FEB 22 1971

A Few Basic Facts About Laos

The accidental bombing of a friendly base in Laos last week touched off a minor explosion right here at home. Anti-war critics expressed surprise and shock to learn that the base was used for assorted undercover activities of the Central Intelligence Agency—and they went on from there to denounce the CIA's "private war" in Laos.

The CIA's activities in Laos over the past four or five years have scarcely been a secret, and with a grand total of approximately 100 agents in Laos, the CIA is hardly in a position to conduct a war.

What it has been doing is feeding, supplying and training a few thousand Meo tribesmen, under orders from the National Security Council in Washington and under the direct control of the American ambassador in Vientiane. The Meo tribesmen are poor farmers scattered over the mountains of northern Laos. They don't like the North Vietnamese or Pathet Lao Communists, and with a small amount of help and encouragement from the CIA, they have proved to be very useful and effective at harassing the enemy.

In comparison with the 70,000 North Vietnamese soldiers operating in Laos, the small CIA contingent is almost insignificant. And there would be no need for its presence if it were not for the huge invading force from Hanoi.

A little history seems in order.

Prior to the 1962 Geneva treaty guaranteeing the "neutrality" and "territorial integrity" of Laos, a contingent of U.S. Army Special Forces or "Green Berets" was stationed in that country to support the royal government. When that treaty was signed, they left. It was not until a year later—after it was obvious that the North Vietnamese had no intention of abiding by the treaty and removing their troops, and after the Laotian government asked the Americans for help once again—that the CIA sent in a small number of agents.

Incidentally, while we're on the subject of the Geneva treaty, it strikes us as rather ironic that former Ambassador Averell Harriman is denouncing South Vietnam's attempt to cut off the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

Harriman will be the main speaker at one of today's "teach-ins" protesting the South Vietnamese invasion of Laos. Perhaps someone in the audience ought to remind him that the 1962 Geneva treaty, which he negotiated, and which North Vietnam signed, prohibited the use of the Ho Chi Minh Trails by foreign troops—and ask him what's wrong with South Vietnam taking it upon itself to enforce his treaty after nine years.

Don't Forget China.

In one respect the Laos invasion differs decisively from the Cambodian invasion, and the difference makes it far more hazardous. Laos has a common border with Communist China. Thailand's northern border is close to China—about 80 miles at the nearest point, or four minutes in a supersonic fighter. This geography had better be taken into account.

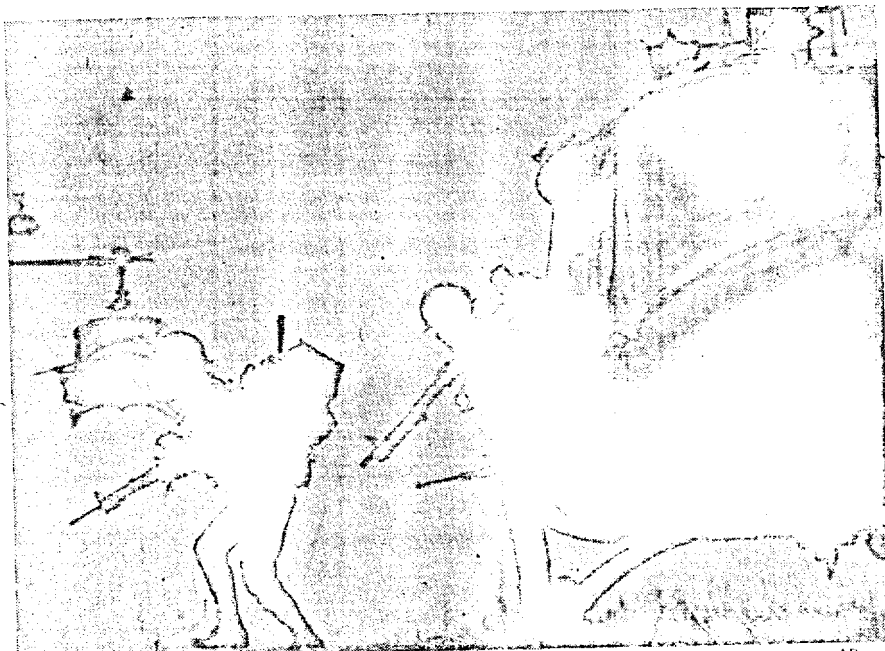
One may doubt that President Nixon is temperamentally able to acknowledge the risks of a U.S.-China confrontation. In 1954, when he was Vice President, he and Admiral Radford wanted to come to the aid of the French garrison trapped at Dienbienphu, reportedly with nuclear bombs if necessary. There is no sign that his judgment has improved.

Former U.S. Sen. Wayne Morse, one of America's most able analysts of foreign policy, said at a recent press conference in San Francisco that Mr. Nixon's Asian policies, if unchecked, will lead to an all-out war with China—a war in which the United States would probably stand alone. He pointed out that we do not have the manpower for such a war. Experience with non-nuclear bombing indicates that the air arm itself cannot conquer a small country like Laos, much less the giant China. According to Mr. Morse, it was the view of Robert S. McNamara, when he was Secretary of Defense, that not only aerial bombing on a vast scale but also 3 million foot soldiers would be needed to cope with China, even if nuclear weapons were brought to bear.

The Chinese, we know, are cautious. During the Korean War they remained aloof, but as General MacArthur approached the Yalu they sent repeated warnings through Indian diplomatic channels, and when these warnings were ignored they moved. Man for man, and with equal weapons, the Chinese foot soldier is at least as formidable as the American. Our people are superior technologically; from a purely military standpoint, one can only admire the agility with which the U.S. Army engineers and other units reactivated the base at Khesanh. But we had better not take on the Chinese.

The risk is that, without intending it, we may be dragged into such a situation as we abet the South Vietnamese militarists logistically and with air power in the forays into Laos. There are understandings, perhaps only nebulous at the moment, among the rightist generals of Cambodia, Laos, South Vietnam and Thailand. Thai troops are operating in Laos now, and if the Ho Chi Minh "trail" is shifted to the west the Thais may react in accordance with their interest which, together with their opposite numbers in the other countries of Indochina (with the exception of North Vietnam), is to batten on American aid. The United States has commitments in Thailand, the scope of which is known only in the top echelons of the Pentagon, the CIA and the Administration. The present American incursion into Laos appears to have been initiated by Thieu and CIA people who have long been operating in Laos. Repeated often enough, it may have results that are not envisioned under the Nixon doctrine.

22 FEB 1971

THE WAR IN INDOCHINA

Supporting role: Borne by U.S. helicopters, ARVN troops land in Laos

The Most Decisive Turn Since Tet

"This is without a doubt the most important military engagement in Indochina since Tet." That was how one Washington insider characterized last week's invasion of Laos. For like the Communists' devastating lunar new year offensive three years ago, the South Vietnamese assault against the Ho Chi Minh Trail was aimed at dealing the enemy a decisive blow. A great deal—perhaps the outcome of the war itself—was riding on the success or failure of the operation, and the Nixon Administration seemed genuinely confident that the high-risk gamble would pay off. To those skeptics who raised the specter of a possible savage counterstroke by North Vietnam, emboldened U.S. officials replied: "We can handle that, too."

The Administration's confidence was not noticeably dampened by the fact that, while most of the 65,000 North Vietnamese troops in the Laotian panhandle were nowhere to be found, a relentless barrage of Communist anti-aircraft fire brought down a painful number of American helicopters. And so far as results on the ground went, Operation Lam Son 719 (named after a seventeenth-century Vietnamese battle) did, in fact, give Administration optimists something to cheer about. Despite heavy rainstorms, U.S. fighter-bombers scored a direct hit on a vital target: the 4-inch pipeline that North Vietnam has used to pump gasoline through the Mu Chai pass to Communist outposts in the panhandle. And although the 10,000-man force of

the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) found it slow going over mud-clogged Route 9, it managed to push all the way to the village of Tchepone—the enemy's main supply base in all of southern Laos (map, page 33).

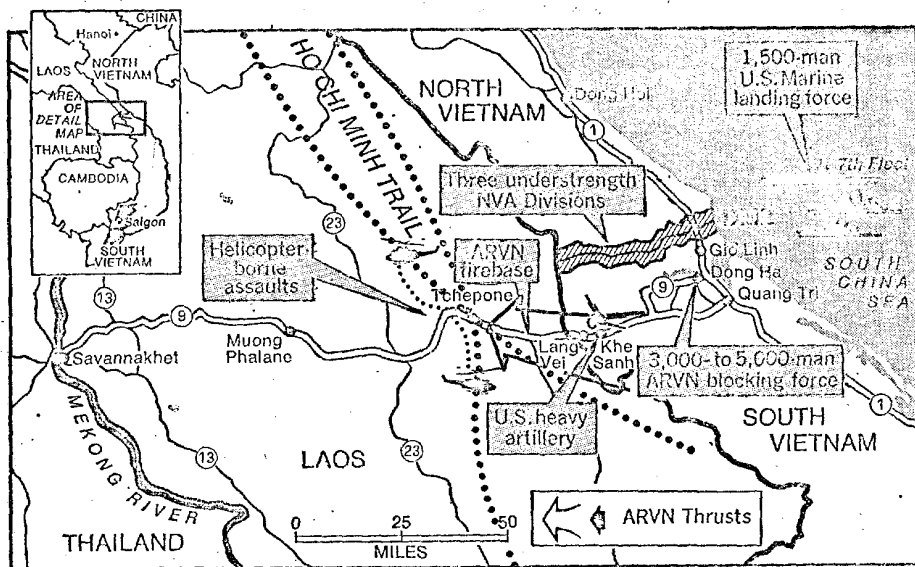
Like last spring's allied invasion of Cambodia, the ARVN thrust into Laos presented the Communists with a painful dilemma. Allied military strategists planned to wreak havoc on Hanoi's supply lines as far as Route 23 in the central Laotian panhandle, thereby choking off the flow of food and ammunition to the 375,000 Communist troops stationed in Laos, Cambodia and South Vietnam. Once the ARVN achieved that goal, Hanoi would then presumably either have to shift its logistic system farther west to Route 13—where Communist convoys would be sitting ducks for U.S. air strikes or even Thai artillery—or try to break through ARVN blocking units.

But Lam Son 719 had an even more ambitious aim. Above all else, the Laotian operation was a test of the Nixon Administration's policy of Vietnamization—and if the ARVN came through with flying colors, that would at least partially validate Mr. Nixon's pledge to turn the war over to the South Vietnamese. Indeed, with the U.S. scheduled to give up most of its combat role by this summer, the incursion offered the ARVN a chance to prove its fighting ability under the best possible conditions. It was by massive U.S. logistic, air and artillery support in the field and covered at home

by the remaining U.S. combat troops.

Considering the vital importance of the operation, domestic reaction in the U.S. was curiously muted. Partly, this was because the Administration repeatedly assured its critics that no U.S. combat troops would cross into Laos. But partly, too, it was because—despite all the public confusion in the days preceding the invasion (page 32)—the allies had clearly telegraphed their blow, thus robbing the move of any element of shock or surprise. Still, both in the Congress and across the nation, serious questions were raised about the Administration's optimistic interpretation of the fledgling invasion. Some critics pointed to the fact that, in sharp contrast to the mammoth arms caches found during the Cambodian invasion, only a few sizable supply dumps had been uncovered in Laos during the first week of the campaign. Indeed, when South Vietnam's President Nguyen Van Thieu helicoptered into an ARVN base near Khe Sanh for an inspection of captured weapons, the best his hosts had to exhibit were three Chinese-made 57 mm. anti-aircraft guns, a grenade launcher, a few AK-47 rifles and 80 rubber bicycle tires. Said one U.S. officer: "We haven't reached the goody box yet."

Blood: Another source of concern were reports that enemy anti-aircraft guns were swatting U.S. helicopters out of the sky. In fact, the helicopters were said to have been lost in one day alone, twenty in less than a week. Ac-



ARVN thrust into panhandle: Above all, a test for Vietnamization

According to U.S. helicopter pilots, the Communists have hundreds of gun emplacements in the panhandle. "At Khe Sanh," cabled Newsweek's Tony Clifton, "there are 120 U.S. choppers making 2,000 landings a day. You see them with their glass fronts blasted in, their sides and blades punctured with bullet holes, their seats splattered with blood. It's getting real hot out there," a pilot said, pointing toward Laos. "The NVA usually won't attack our gunships. They let them go past and go for the Hueys when they come in with loads of troops."

With U.S. helicopters, jet fighters and B-52 bombers playing such a crucial role in the operation, many people wondered whether Lam Son 719 was, in fact, a fair test of Vietnamization. And, the Administration's claim that the campaign was conceived and planned entirely by the South Vietnamese Joint General Staff was patently untrue; the real architect of the operation was Gen. Creighton Abrams, the U.S. commander in South Vietnam. Beyond that, there was even reason to question Washington's claim that no U.S. troops were engaged in the Laotian fighting. Reports from the field last week told of U.S. Special Forces troops taking part in battles. A Khe Sanh control-tower officer admitted that there were some 100 U.S. "Pathfinders" in Laos, guiding helicopters to landing sites. And it was no secret that U.S. helicopter rescue crews were operating on the ground from the border to Tchepone.

Patience: For the most part, however, the Laotian incursion was a South Vietnamese show. And a one-sided show at that. By the end of the week, the North Vietnamese had still not given any clear indication of how they would respond to the attack. And there was a distinct possibility that Hanoi might decide to do nothing at all. Throughout the Indochina conflict, patience has been one of the Communists' most valuable assets. And now, with the U.S. committed to

withdrawal, Hanoi's Defense Minister, Gen. Vo Nguyen Giap, may choose to bide his time. "If Hanoi assumes that the invasion is just a temporary spoiling operation," remarked Douglas Pike, a leading expert on North Vietnam, "then it won't play the game. The Communists usually fight on their own schedule. They don't pick up the gauntlet when it's thrown down."

But as General Giap is aware, there are grave risks to a wait-and-see policy. The ARVN command has hinted that it intends to launch repeated incursions into Laos over the coming months. And for Hanoi to fade back into the jungle now might ultimately destroy the momentum of the Communist insurgency in the

south. Given that risk, there is a possibility that Giap might decide to stand and slug it out with the ARVN. But in order to do so, he would have to commit three understrength divisions now stationed just above the Demilitarized Zone—a move that would seriously weaken Hanoi's home defense forces. (To discourage such a move, the U.S. last week ostentatiously moved a Seventh Fleet landing force of 1,500 marines to a position just off the coast of North Vietnam.)

Noises: The North Vietnamese did not necessarily have to rely only on their own resources; they could turn to their allies for help. And Peking seemed to be making cooperative noises. "The U.S. imperialist aggression against Laos," said an official government statement, "is also a grave menace to China." But despite rhetoric reminiscent of the days just before Peking's entry into the Korean War, analysts doubted that Hanoi would invite Chinese "volunteers" to help fight the common foe. And many questioned whether Hanoi's other main ally—the Soviet Union—would be enthusiastic about any escalation of the war.

On balance, it seemed likely that if North Vietnam decided to respond massively to the Laotian incursion it would do so with its own forces. And although it was impossible to predict the outcome of a North Vietnamese counteroffensive, no one underestimated the fighting ability of Giap's legions. Last week in Cambodia, for instance, seven ARVN task forces, under the flamboyant leadership of Gen. Do Cao Tri, were bogged down in bloody fighting with North Vietnamese regulars. The crack E-6 regiment of the Fifth North Vietnamese Division effectively turned back an ARVN drive toward Kratie, the political capital of



Logistical lifeline: U.S. convoy rolls toward Laotian border

HOW THE INVASION WAS PLANNED

For nearly a decade, U.S. military strategists in Washington and Saigon have argued that the Ho Chi Minh Trail held the key to the war in Vietnam and have pleaded to be allowed to attack the jungle-supply route. But time after time, they have been turned down by the White House. Ironically, it was Richard Nixon—the President who promised to withdraw from Vietnam—who ultimately flashed the signal to go. Just how Mr. Nixon arrived at the fateful decision to invade Laos is still shrouded in secrecy and confusion. But from interviews with officials in the U.S. and Vietnam, NEWSWEEK correspondents pieced together this account:

Following last spring's Cambodian incursion, it seemed to some senior Americans in Saigon that the objections to a Laos invasion had begun to dissolve. For one thing, the ARVN forces had proved themselves in battle, and could be used instead of U.S. troops. For another, the port of Kompong Som (formerly Sihanoukville) had been closed to the Communists and they no longer had an alternate supply route to fall back on if the Ho Chi Minh Trail were blocked. In late spring, Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker and Gen. Creighton Abrams urged President Nixon to approve a Laos invasion. But a crucial Congressional election was approaching, and the U.S. was already in an uproar over Cambodia and Kent State. Mr. Nixon not only vetoed the plan but publicly announced that the U.S. would not fly close air support for

ARVN troops fighting outside Vietnam.

After last November's elections, however, the antiwar movement in the U.S. seemed to have run out of gas. The closure of Kompong Som, Abrams and Bunker argued, had practically turned off the war in the southern part of South Vietnam; blocking the trails could do the same thing for the northern part of the country. Furthermore, U.S. intelligence was warning of a massive Communist buildup of men and supplies in the Laotian panhandle in preparation for a major offensive in 1972. Just what information this warning was based on is unclear, for the number of supply trucks entering the Ho Chi Minh Trail was roughly the same as in previous years. Pressed for details, intelligence men say the report of a buildup was based on the "assumption" that Hanoi would make a tremendous effort to compensate for the loss of Kompong Som. But even such an effort would seem to prove only that the enemy was trying to maintain present force levels.

Be that as it may, American and South Vietnamese officers prepared a set of about ten detailed plans of action for a Laos invasion, and in early January, Defense Secretary Melvin Laird flew to Saigon to look them over. Laird was concerned that American casualties in an operation involving the recapture of Khe Sanh would run unacceptably high. So it was decided that if the Americans reoccupying Khe Sanh ran into heavy resistance, the actual ARVN invasion of Laos would not take place. On Laird's return to Washington the Pentagon presented the ten plans to President Nixon, assuring him that they would protect his policy of withdrawal and Vietnamization. "The plans," recalled one U.S. official later, "ranged from mild to starchy. The one under way now, the invasion, was among the starchiest." The President gave a go-ahead for the first, or Dewey Canyon II, phase of the operation.

From there on things moved quickly. The timetable:

January 25, the eve of Tet: Making their way through crowds of officials dressed in their holiday best, Abrams, Bunker and Gen. Cao Van Vien, chief of the Vietnamese Joint General Staffs, called on President Thieu in Saigon's Independence Palace. Thieu added his OK to the invasion order.

January 29: Troops moved northward. In the expectation that there would be bloody fighting around Khe Sanh, Abrams embargoed all news of the operation. In Washington, Secretary of State William Rogers startled a news conference with the statement that "we do not rule out the use of air power to support Asians in any effort that they make to fight [the] one enemy in . . . Indochina,

that is North Vietnam." Remarked one official later: "Despite reports that the State Department dragged its heels on the Laotian invasion, Rogers was on board from the start."

January 31: Three American battalions landed at Khe Sanh and met no resistance. Bunker flew to Washington, prepared to argue, if necessary, for the invasion phase of the plan. Rumors began to fly, because not every correspondent in Saigon had been told that the embargo itself was embargoed.

February 1: The embargo was scheduled to be lifted but, according to an American general, "Abrams prolonged the embargo deliberately to confuse the enemy. Hanoi was frantically trying to figure out where we were going and when we would strike." Washington officials purposely declined to deny—for the record—that the invasion was on.

February 2: Still no contact with the Communists. In the Oval Room of the White House that afternoon, Mr. Nixon met with Rogers, Laird, Bunker, CIA Director Richard Helms, JCS chairman Adm. Thomas Moorer and Presidential adviser Henry Kissinger and asked them for all the pros and cons they could think of. "Very many cons were presented, most of them domestic political reasons," said an adviser who attended the meeting. Meanwhile, a Japanese news agency reported that the invasion had started (although it hadn't). Abrams in Saigon created still more confusion by sending a small naval task force into the Tonkin Gulf, and had Lao irregulars, supported by the CIA, stage small attacks near the Laos-Thai border. These moves, later described as "feints," generated rumors that a landing in North Vietnam and an invasion by Thai forces were under way.

February 3: Abrams, still unsure of whether Mr. Nixon would approve the invasion, extended the embargo once more. By keeping Hanoi uncertain of where the main thrust would come, Abrams was possibly delaying any Communist counterattack. This not only protected his forces but also postponed any major engagement that might have persuaded the President to call the invasion off. That morning in Washington, alone in his office, President Nixon signed the order that assured President Thieu and his generals that their advance into Laos would be supported by U.S. air power.

February 4: With the green light for the invasion glowing, Abrams lifted the embargo, and correspondents' stories on Dewey Canyon II were released. At about the same time, determined not to repeat the mistake he had made by failing to consult Congress on Cambodia, Mr. Nixon let about 30 key senators and congressmen in on the invasion secret. All of the legislators were told that the invasion would begin Sunday night, Washington time. And so it did. On schedule, officials insist.



Francis Sully—Newsweek

Abrams: Deliberate confusion

rebel Cambodian forces. Near the Chup rubber plantation, South Vietnamese troops inflicted heavy casualties on Communist units. But even there, the North Vietnamese launched a number of successful night assaults on ARVN camps.

Despite its greater ferocity, however, the fighting in Cambodia was a mere sideshow to the events in Laos. There, following the guerrilla maxim to strike at the enemy's weakest point, Communist forces attacked the CIA base at Long Cheng and threatened to drive Gen. Vang Pao's "secret" Mco army into the surrounding hills. At the same time, North Vietnamese units tightened their stranglehold on the royal capital of Luang Prabang, prompting Premier Souvanna Phouma to proclaim a "national emergency." (But life seemed normal enough in Vientiane, where the Ministry of National Defense tackled the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in their annual soccer match.)

What this seemed to indicate was that North Vietnam was meeting the allied military challenge with a political challenge of its own. For years, the widely separated wars in northern and southern Laos bore only a marginal military relationship. But now, with one quick blow, the Communists had rocked Souvanna's shaky neutralist government and turned the loudspeakers up on the silent war in Laos. As in Cambodia, Hanoi was suddenly able to thrust the peripheral conflict in Laos into the main arena of the war between North and South Vietnam. And, at least in this respect, the strategy was clear: to embarrass and overextend U.S. and ARVN forces.

Gambit: In southern Laos, too, the Communists were attempting to make the allies pay politically for their military excursions. So far, that meant a headline-grabbing effort to bring down scores of U.S. helicopters—and to inflict as many casualties as possible. In the coming weeks, it seemed likely that the North Vietnamese might broaden their operation. The new gambit would probably call for a stepped-up campaign to lure ARVN units far into Laos, then a pounce on their strained supply lines and isolation of the South Vietnamese forces.

Such a Communist tactic could spell trouble for the U.S. For if a sizable ARVN force were to find itself under siege by the North Vietnamese deep in Laos, the Nixon Administration would be faced with a cruel choice: either to permit a major loss of life and a devastating blow to the concept of Vietnamization or to throw U.S. ground forces into the war in Laos. Just how Mr. Nixon would meet such a dilemma was by no means clear. For although the Administration is legally barred from committing ground combat troops to Laos, some of Mr. Nixon's critics are far from convinced that the mere existence of legal strictures had in fact settled the issue. Even within the Administration itself there are doubters. "I think we mean what we say," said one senior official. "But I don't know what would happen if the ARVN were

really getting messed up." Added another: "I don't have any real doubt about the policy. I'm convinced that the policy is what we say it is--no ground troops, no advisers to ARVN. But there's a lot of room for error on this kind of thing."

Red Attacks in Laos**To Punish Meo Forces**

VIENTIANE, Feb. 27 (UPI) —The representative of the Pathet Lao here said today that the current Communist campaign in northeastern Laos is designed to punish Meo forces supporting the government rather than to carry out a Dienbienphu-like siege of a key Meo base.

The representative, Soth Petrasy, called the CIA-supported base at Long Cheng "an important special forces station which has been used to attack the patriotic forces in Xieng Khouang Province . . . Now the patriotic forces are attacking Long Cheng just to give them a lesson. . ."

The Meo Of Laos

STATINTL

CIA Alliance Brings Ruin To Proud Race

By JOHN E. WOODRUFF
 Sun Staff Correspondent

Ban Son, Laos—A decade of feeding men into the only aggressive pro-government army in Laos has made totally dependent refugees of the hundreds of thousands of once fiercely independent hill tribesmen now gathered about this malaria-infested valley.

"I don't know why we carry on with these people," an Air American pilot shouted over the whine of his helicopter high above a cloud bank somewhere over northern Laos. "They won't fight any more, but we just go on dropping rice and medicine to them, just like in the old days."

"Plenty Of Help"

In Vientiane, a top American official discusses the relationship with the Meo and other hillmen who make up the Central Intelligence agency's clandestine army:

"Look, they came to us for help (in 1960) and we have given them plenty of help."

He then hastens to assure his questioner that the United States can accept it philosophically if rank-and-file Meo finally make the uncomfortable accommodation with the North Vietnamese that he feels sure must inevitably come some day.

The accommodation is one that some Americans insist the tribesmen would have made several years and tens of thousands of lives ago had the Americans not armed them and exhorted them to keep fighting.

Until 1960, the Meo of Laos lived much as their grandfathers did—in primitive freedom and disease, on hilltops seldom lower than 3,500 feet, in villages of no more than 20 or 30 thatch houses.

Way Of Life Changed

Since the mid-1800's, when they came from Yunnan province of China, where most Meo still live, they had often carried their flintlocks and crossbows down to the valleys to defend their independence against their Lao and other neighbors. The fights earned them a reputation as aggressive, cruel attackers.

The alliance with the Americans radically changed their way of fighting—and their way of living.

It turned the Meo into a far more modern and potent army than they could have imagined in 1945—long before the Americans came—when they added a few European rifles left over from World War II to their own primitive arsenal and won their first fight with the North Vietnamese.

Strength For U.S. Policy

For the Americans, it also provided the badly needed military punch that officials readily acknowledge was the main strength of all United States policy in Laos for the last 10 years.

But to many who have long watched the war in Laos, the new strength provided by the Americans seems, in ironic retrospect, to have been the tribesmen's downfall; it made them, these observers say, a force the North Vietnamese had to crush in order to maintain the Laotian Communist control of the "liberated zones" of the country.

Today, a fourth of the Meo, maybe more, are dead—thousands of soldiers from combat and tens of thousands of civilians from exhaustion or illness as they walked for weeks on end to escape the enemy they have fought for 10 years as allies of the United States.

Half At Ban Son

More than half the Meo mountain tribesmen of Laos are gathered here now, and it is virtually impossible to find anyone here who has not lost at least one close relative to the long war.

Semi-official estimates—based on recorded death benefit payments—list 10,000 Meo, Lao Thung, Yao and Thai Dam tribesmen killed in combat, from an army that has probably never numbered more than 15,000 men at any one time.

But by far the greater death toll has been exacted by long walks forced upon entire villages in recent years since the Lao Peoples' Revolutionary Army and North Vietnamese troops began systematically removing both the CIA army and the Meo population from traditional Communist territory.

3-Week Marches

Some villages have walked for as long as three weeks with little rest and scant food to escape enemy pressure. Some have had to move as many as six times in a single year as one outpost after another fell to the Communists.

A few village leaders tell gory tales of reprisal massacres in which, they say, North Vietnamese soldiers methodically slaughtered the women, children and old men who make up most of the refugees.

But these incidents seem to have been the exception. The most efficient killer has been the sheer torture of the long marches.

Weakened by exposure to hot sun or monsoon rains, exhausted by days or weeks of walking with only nominal rest stops, sometimes hungry for days on end until pilots with the United States Agency for International Development can find their trail and drop rice to them, the refugees soon fall victim to the chronic malaria, which their bodies have learned to resist under normal conditions.

Youngest, Oldest Die

The very young and the very old tend to die on the trail. So do mothers weakened by pregnancy or recent childbirth—and their number is far larger than in the West, for many Meo women bear children almost annually.

Many of those who survive the walk soon fall victim to the new strains of malaria or dysentery in their new home—or to the tuberculosis, pneumonia and dozens of other diseases to which the malaria and dysentery leave them susceptible. American refugee workers say that whenever they take a census at the end of a major move, between 10 and 15 per cent of the population is dead a year later.

Edgar L. Buell, a retired Indiana farmer who has worked with the Meo hill people since 1960, believes that the Meo and other hill tribes have lost a fourth of their population in refugee moves and combat.

65,000 Dead

A combination of his estimate with the aid agency's figures showing about 200,000 tribal refugees now under American care suggests that more than 65,000 tribesmen have died—the vast majority of them Meo civilians forced to leave their villages. A few officials give lower estimates; most run far higher.

The Meo of Southeast Asia—there may be as many as 4 million of them altogether, scattered in tiny hilltop villages across northern Thailand, Burma's Shan plateau, northern Indochina and eastern Yunnan and western Kweichow provinces in China—are traditionally among the richest of the many hill tribes that complicate the region's teeming ethnic divisions and subdivisions.

Opium Riches

In Laos, their most famous source of wealth was the poppy, from which they took the opium sap by processes their ancestors brought from China when they came to Laos just over 100 years ago.

The opium of Sam Neua province, now the Communist "capital" of Laos, is known to all the world's smuggling rings as some of the best there is.

The \$100 or so a Meo farmer was able to get for his annual crop enabled some men eventually to adorn their wives with as many as five or six of the heavy, ornate silver necklaces Meo women use to dress up their traditional black shirts and long pants. Even infant daughters—and sometimes sons—commonly wore two or three lighter necklaces, and sometimes a bracelet.

Skilled Farmers

By primitive tribal standards, the Meo also were skilled at raising livestock and fruits, and their herbs and orchards were measures of prestige as well as wealth.

All of that is lost now to the Meo of the CIA army.

The poppy fields and the orchards, if they are still being farmed, are well inside the Lao Communists' territory. The livestock gradually has been left behind in the chaotic mass exodus of the past few years.

Even most of the silver jewelry has been sold off for money. All that is left is American aid.

Indo-China

The CIA at bay

AN AMERICAN base in Laos is under heavy pressure from the forces of North Vietnam and could fall to them. Called Long Cheng and lying some 70 miles north of Vientiane, the Laotian administrative capital, it has no formal connection with the American armed forces. It is run by the US Central Intelligence Agency and has been for some time the headquarters of a 'secret army' of 30,000 men.

North Vietnamese assaults have drawn attention to a base which is out of bounds to newspaper reporters, though some have managed to get there. Another CIA base exists at Pakse, the biggest town in south Laos.

Laos has been the centre of the CIA's biggest operation in South-East Asia since 1962. This is because the Geneva agreements of that year banned the introduction of foreign soldiers or military advisers into the country, while at the same time American policy called for active intervention there.

The North Vietnamese were themselves ignoring the Geneva accord. They were developing their trail system through Laos into South Vietnam. They were also sending their troops to strengthen the pro-Communist Pathet Lao, holding the north-eastern provinces of Laos.

So it was necessary for the Americans to have a force in Laos to counter these Communist activities. The CIA was the only American agency able to carry on such an operation secretly and avoid—technically, at least—a breach of the Geneva ban.

As a result, the CIA went in to recruit, train, pay and direct an irregular army. Formed into special guerrilla units, it was led by retired US Army or Special Forces officers hired by the CIA on contract.

The CIA's biggest coup was the formation of its guerrilla force in the north-east round a group of Meo mountain tribes loyal to a Meo leader called Vang Pao. This force has operated behind the Pathet Lao lines in the mountains reaching back to the North Vietnam border. It would have been physically difficult, as well as diplomatically indiscreet, to conduct these operations from Vientiane. Long Cheng is a supply and communications centre linked to the outside world by Air America and Continental Airlines, both of which are connected with the CIA.

The CIA base in Pakse directs a string of guerrilla bases on the Bolovens Plateau in southern Laos. These, like Long Cheng, are now under attack. But they have never been on the scale of the Meo operation.

2 FEB 1971

Languid Laos a Poor Risk for Any Crusade

PETER C. NEWMAN

The sleepy Buddhist kingdom of Laos, surely one of the world's least noteworthy nations, seems about to be added to the lengthening list of victims in the power politics of the cold war.

I have visited Laos several times, kept up with strange twists of its politics and find myself baffled that the superpowers feel compelled to expend energy attempting to impose their brand of order on this sad little land. The conflicting goals of American and Communist imperialism which are turning Laos into a reluctant battleground are bound to lose; it is one of the poorest risks for an ideological crusade of any kind.

The fact is that Laos has one of the most backward societies in the world. Eight out of 10 Laotians are so primitive that they spend their lives entirely outside the money economy; the commerce of livelihood is carried on largely through the bartering of rice. A U.S. Bureau of Social Research survey discovered that 80% of Laotians believed the earth is flat and peopled entirely by Laotians. Twenty per cent were not aware that such a country as Laos actually existed.

The country is covered almost en-

The author is editor of Canada's Maclean's Magazine.

tirely by monsoon rain forests that hide elephants, leopards, pythons and crocodiles. Few roads are passable except by pack pony and Laos has no railroads, though Savannakhet, the capital of the southern provinces, boasts an unexplained railway station.

No accurate census has been taken, but U.N. estimates place the population at about 3 million. They are mostly border peoples, minorities of many races whose forefathers spent generations in China during their southward migration. The 14 main racial groups speak 80 dialects of six mutually unintelligible languages.

The supreme concern of most Laotians is to win the daily contest against starvation and disease. Families shiver and starve through the winter months before harvest time, suffering from malaria, dysentery and body lice. The peasants of the

population has leprosy. Wounds are still treated with soot-covered spider webs and the poisoned blowpipe remains the main indigenous weapon.

One mountain tribe doesn't even bother to grow rice. Its members forage for snails, catch edible insects, and chew tree barks. Even the more civilized Laotians who live in the fertile valleys are unbelievably indolent. They grow only as much rice as they can eat.

Laos comes close to having no economy at all. There are only three installations in the whole country remotely resembling large scale modern industrial enterprise — a brickyard, a tobacco factory and a small tin mine. Aside from a few elephants and some teak floated down to Thailand, the main export is crude opium, smuggled out to Hong Kong.

The country has what must be a unique balance-of-trade problem: Exports amount to about 1% of imports. The gap is met almost entirely by American aid. Half a billion dollars has been spent by Washington since it decided in 1955 to transform the little kingdom into "a bulwark against communism." Laos has received more American aid per capita than any country in the world.

Apart from the American influence, the only more or less organized presence in the country is the Royal Laotian Army. Western military experts who have compared the military establishments of South Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos are in some disagreement about which army is the worst fighting force, but one American general recently offered this assessment:

"The Royal Laotian Army is without a doubt the worst fighting force I have ever seen. It makes the South Vietnam army look like the Wehrmacht."

In nearly 20 years of retreating before the numerically inferior Communist-inspired Pathet Lao, the 60,000-man Laotian army has inflicted few casualties and won no major battles. Until recently there was only sporadic fighting in Laos. Each time one side or another retired from a hill to shelter from the sun, the movement was reported as a "battle."

The Laotians specialize in loud and dramatic military displays. They

in the general direction of the enemy, use a lot of land mines, but shy away from hand-to-hand combat. When the Laotian army invaded the capital of Vientiane during one coup d'etat to restore the government's authority, there were 300 civilian casualties but only 75 among the troops.

When the soldiers of one army general put up some unusually spirited resistance against the enemy, Western military attaches discovered the reason was not ideological: The Communists were trying to occupy an opium plantation in which the Royal Laotian general had a heavy private investment.

There are two theories on why the Royal Laotian Army is so bad. One is that the Buddhist religion, to which most soldiers belong, prohibits killing. (In fact, the Laotians so dislike killing of any kind that all of the butchers in Laos are imported Chinese.) The other, simpler, explanation is the difference in morale between the loyalist troops and the Communist rebels.

"This difference in morale," I remember the military attache at the Australian embassy in Vientiane telling me, "is that the rebels are fighting their way towards the flesh pots of Vientiane, while the Royal Laotian troops must leave them to go into battle." (This may or may not be a realistic theory, but the flesh pots certainly exist and Vientiane may be the only city in the world where you actually have to bribe a taxi driver not to take you to a brothel.)

Probably the only fighting unit in the world less effective than the Laotian army is the Laotian navy. Commanded by Prince Sinthana-rong (a cousin of the king) the 700-man force has, according to "Jane's Fighting Ships," 23 ships in reserve and six vessels in commission. The reserve fleet consists of some rusting hulks on the banks of the Mekong River and the only activity aboard these relics comes from the chickens who roost among the abandoned bulkheads, providing the Laotian navy with its supply of eggs.

The commissioned fleet boasts five wooden transport vessels, though all lack engines and only one is armed. The navy's only capital ship is an 80-foot, iron-hulled monstrosity, built

Nixon Raises Stakes

By Murrey Marder

Washington Post Staff Writer

The stakes on the allied thrust into Laos have been raised by President Nixon into a more decisive test of his Indochina policy than many cautious officials wanted to risk publicly.

President Nixon has put a "fight here or give up the struggle" challenge to Hanoi. In a war in which words are weapons, the President has an immediate advantage; Hanoi never has admitted having any troops in Laos. Its response there can only come in battle in the guise of Laotian "liberation" forces, or elsewhere in Indochina, in the name of other troops.

Until the President spoke out Wednesday, many administration officials were advising newsmen not to look on the U.S.-supported attack by South Vietnamese forces into the Laotian panhandle in apocalyptic, showdown, terms.

The objective, U.S. officials emphasized, was to "disrupt" North Vietnamese forces along the Ho Chi Minh Trail; "to intercept or choke off" men and supplies. These open-ended terms could permit claims of moderate success even if maximum hopes were unfulfilled.

Administration sources originally forecast that there may be heavy fighting, or the enemy might choose to fall back and only harass in the face of heavy U.S. air power covering Saigon's troops.

Some specialists, however, were convinced North Vietnam would be compelled to mount a major challenge or lose critical "face" to South Vietnamese forces. Mr. Nixon now has publicly doubled that "face" challenge.

The President evidently concluded that whether he publicly acknowledged it or not, the allied foray—whether it stumbles or fails—would be treated by critics as a decisive test of his Vietnamization program.

With intelligence reports showing counter-action developing, the President, in effect, gambled for high psychological stakes on a success when he bluntly said, on Wednesday:

"... We expected the North Vietnamese to fight here. They have to fight here or give up the struggle to conquer South Vietnam, Cambodia, and their influence extending through other parts of Southeast Asia."

Danger Next Year

No other official had expressed the Laos test in such terms. As President Nixon also said, the "greatest point of danger" for the Vietnamization program is not now, but next year, when there will be many fewer U.S. ground combat troops in South Vietnam.

Nevertheless, by his fight-or-stand-down language, the President intensified the consequences of the present allied offensive. The war in Indochina is even more a psychological and political struggle than it is a military conflict. The side that puts the highest public stakes on an encounter risks gaining more or losing more on the outcome.

North Vietnam, while attacking many points in the President's news conference, has not faced the President's "fight" challenge directly or indirectly in any public response.

Statements from the Communist side now show heightened suspicion that other allied attacks may be in the making, perhaps with participation of Thailand's troops.

North Vietnam and the Pathet Lao charged on Friday and Saturday that more Thai troops appear poised to enter Laos beyond "two additional battalions of Thai troops" sent to reinforce the clandestine army of Meeo tribesmen directed by U.S. Central Intelligence Agency advisers in the Long Cheng area near the Plain of Jars. The Pathet Lao protested what it described as plans to "bring into Laos a massive number of Thai troops" to fight in the Long Cheng sector and much further south, in the Boloven Plateau with strong U.S. air support.

Denial by Bangkok

Thailand regularly denies that there are Thai troops in Laos; any Thais fighting in Laos, Thai officials maintain, have been recruited without Bangkok's official sanction. The disclaimer follows a familiar pattern in Indochina.

Real or imagined allied military moves may keep North Vietnamese forces stretched out, and off-balance, as allied strategists intend. If so, Mr. Nixon will have a large psychological warfare dividend.

But U.S. sources concede that the fighting can unfold in slow motion throughout the next eight or more weeks and it is premature to forecast how the test will end.

STATINTL

Hiding the U.S. Role in Laos

By TAMMY ARBUCKLE

Special to The Star

VIENTIANE—The U.S. Embassy here continues to attempt to hide American involvement in the war in Laos as much as possible.

Embassy officials, who do not deny this, say the policy is a result of the involvement of the Central Intelligence Agency.

Much of the secrecy, even to American officials, appears unnecessary, particularly since March when President Nixon admitted the American role and since the official facade of Laos neutrality in the war largely has disappeared.

The CIA role here, originally arose from American decisions to quietly try to prevent the North Vietnamese and their Pathet Lao Communist supporters from overrunning Laos when Laos was under a supposed guarantee of neutrality.

The United States decided that rather than have a full-scale military presence here, it would place U.S. operations—both intelligence gathering and counter-insurgency—under the CIA.

Running a War

In explaining the continuing secrecy on the U.S. effort here, officials say, "It's CIA and therefore it's secret. That's that."

Some CIA "secrets" are innocuous enough, such as the parachute factory the CIA runs for Meo amputees as part of an effort to encourage the Meo to keep on fighting.

But the agency, besides its intelligence operations—which indeed should be secret—is running a war in Laos.

However, to many Lao generals, the war is not being run very well. There is, however, no real way to determine how well it is being run because every aspect of it remains secret.

No pictures ever appear of wounded Americans being carried away, or Americans under fire or in combat.

"That's the way we want it," American officials say.

A look at last week's events in Laos and how the embassy handled the press over that

period demonstrates something of what is hidden and how it's hidden.

Last Sunday, North Vietnamese sappers hit the U.S. base at Long Cheng. The enemy concentrated rocket and mortar fire solely on the U.S. compound, where between 20 and 30 Americans were living.

Americans cowering in the bunker say smoke and fire was so heavy they almost were asphyxiated.

Their homes were burned and one American was wounded by a mortar fragment. A pair of U.S. F4 jets mistakenly bombed Long Cheng, throwing two Americans flat on their backs, including a colonel.

These Americans felt they were in a combat situation, but the embassy spokesman professed not to know about it.

Spokesman Is Silent

In fact, for much of Sunday, the spokesman could not be found. Late Sunday evening he could neither confirm nor deny. By Monday he was talking about medical warehouses being burned, but said nothing about U.S. installations, even when asked. Other American sources eventually supplied some information. Then at midweek, the spokesman reported an American was killed in action on the west portion of the Plain of Jars. This admission resulted from the admin-

istration promise to announce U.S. military deaths.

But most U.S. dead are civilians carrying out military duties here, so it's fair to assume that's why the embassy spokesman omitted to mention that an Air America helicopter was downed near the North Vietnamese border in Laos.

The spokesman, of course, was unable to comment on the U.S. request for Thai troops and the transportation of 1,600 of them into Long Cheng. Asked about the 20,000 to 30,000 refugees pouring out of Long Cheng to Muong Cha, a walk of several days to the southeast, an embassy spokesman said the figures were "exaggerated" and tried to play the whole story down. The figures turned out to be correct and by the end of the week, the embassy spokesman would not respond to requests to go see the refugees at Muong Cha where only U.S. planes are able to land.

To fly to Long Cheng, where only U.S. transport is available, of course, was out of the question.

Correspondent Unwanted

A correspondent aboard one of these Requirements Office aircraft would have seen Americans in Laos combat, so it's understandable why correspondents were unwanted.

The list of hidden U.S. com-

bat actions is inexhaustible—a battle between American commandos and North Vietnamese at Pakkao, near Long Cheng; Americans on the ground trying to find enemy positions in the Long Cheng area and details of U.S. Air Force activities.

One most interesting claim by the U.S. Embassy spokesman here is that press restrictions are the host government's policy.

Indignant Lao politicians and high-ranking military officials, however, say, "Go to the Americans. They decide who goes on their planes," or "The Americans tell us not to let you go. If we don't do what they say, they won't help us."

Stopping a Newsmen

A correspondent for a London paper started driving around the countryside last week. He arrived in Vang Vieng, 100 miles north of here and told an American AID official he was going to a Yao tribal village.

The AID man phoned the embassy, asking how to stop him.

The embassy advised him to get in touch with the local Lao military commander and have him prevent the correspondent from traveling further.

That's what usually happens when correspondents try to find out what's going on.

20 FEB 1971 STATINTL

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Laos invasion is turning

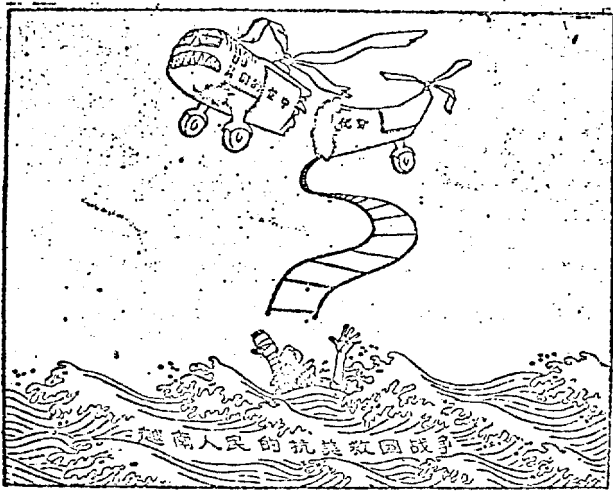
SOUR

By Wilfred Burchett
Guardian staff correspondent

Paris

Sixty-six helicopters and 22 fixed-wing aircraft have been downed in southern Laos in the first four days of the U.S.-sponsored invasion. Two battalions of Saigon troops were completely put out of action on Feb. 13; all their arms were seized and many of them were taken prisoner.

The huge CIA base at Long Cheng is expected to fall at any moment since all its approaches are in Pathet Lao hands. As of Feb. 14, only the airfield was still functioning. It was being used to evacuate vital equipment and U.S. personnel until U.S. planes bombed the airfield, apparently thinking it had already been abandoned. Americans were among those killed by U.S. bombs and the airfield became unusable at least temporarily. About 1000 badly demoralized commandos



Chinese view of U.S. defeats in Indochina.

of "General" Vang Pao, actually CIA mercenaries, fled into Vientiane on Feb. 13-14.

In Cambodia, the Phnom Penh airport was bombarded by rockets on Feb. 14, forcing its closure just a few hours after semi-paralyzed Lon Nol, the puppet premier, had left for a few months of medical treatment in Hawaii after he had suffered a serious heart attack.

[Over 60,000 people demonstrated against the invasion of Laos in the U.S. last week (page 3).

In Peking, hundreds of thousands of people held a protest Feb. 12. People's China has issued three formal protests against the invasion, describing the action as "a grave menace" to China. In a Viewpoint (page 8), the Guardian speculates that the invasion may be intended to broaden the war to China.]

These are some of the fruits of Nixon's latest military adventure in Indochina. It will be necessary to capture inconceivable amounts of resistance equipment and rice stores to offset the losses already suffered by the U.S. and its puppet forces, not to mention the irretrievable loss of U.S. credibility. American pilots have been captured in Laos. Despite what the Nixon administration

is saying about non-participation of U.S. ground troops, there were six Americans wearing South Vietnamese uniforms found among the corpses of Saigon troops killed during a single engagement deep within Laos.

Big Saigon Losses

In order to make losses appear minimal, the U.S. command is only announcing the loss of planes and helicopters piloted by Americans and which have been completely destroyed. The greatest losses, by far, have been suffered by helicopters and planes having pilots from the Saigon forces. And these losses have not been made public.

The biggest casualty of the invasion, so to speak, has been "Vietnamization." The Saigon army has proved that it is incapable of moving without U.S. transport; it cannot function without massive U.S. air and artillery support; it cannot fight without U.S. tactical commanders either on the ground or flying in helicopters at tree-top level. Yet with all its unprecedented support from U.S. airborne supplies, bombing and artillery, the Saigon forces in Laos are heading for certain disaster.

The U.S. news blackout still continues because the operation continues to go badly.

In particular, journalists are being prevented from seeing what is happening on the Bolovens Plateau where there are at least three Thai battalions operating; nor can newsmen go to Long Cheng where Thai troops have been rushed in to replace the fleeing Meo mercenaries; and they are not allowed to go to the CIA base at Udorn, Thailand, to which the equipment and personnel from Long Cheng are being evacuated.

With rightist forces and their battle lines cracking everywhere in Laos, Thailand has concentrated its troops along the Laotian frontier and declared a state of alert. Prince Souvanna Phouma has also instituted a state of emergency for the small portion of Laos that remains under his control. The Democratic Republic of Vietnam has issued new warnings against extension of military activity on its territory by the U.S. or its puppets.

What is Nixon trying to do? It appears that he is trying to turn back the clock all the way to the 1954-55 policies of John Foster Dulles, based on evidence of Nixon's visceral anti-communism, the Dr. Strangelove attitude toward world politics of presidential advisor Henry A. Kissinger and the overweening conceit of Gen. William C. Westmoreland, now Army chief of staff but who is still trying to prove that when he was the U.S. commander-in-chief in Saigon he could have won if he had been given free rein to do what he had wanted.

Dulles had been the god-father of the Southeast Asian Treaty Organization whose purpose was to "contain Communism" or even "to roll it back." In practical terms, SEATO was intended to counter the Vietnamese victory over the French in Indochina in 1954. As Dulles conceived it, the mainland part of SEATO was to be a broad wedge composed of South Vietnam, Cambodia and Thailand, adjoined by Laos—all under disguised U.S. military control. That would have brought U.S. military forces to the borders of the two socialist states—the

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Continued

Laos: Lady Luck's Reject

By JAMES WIEGHART
Of THE NEWS Washington Bureau

Vientiane, Feb. 19—Everything depends on you Americans," the high Laotian official said. "If you let us die, then we will die. But if you send allies and tell us to fight, then we will fight."

The statement, made by a former general who is now a member of neutralist Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma's cabinet, was uttered sadly, but without rancor.

The official added without the slightest trace of animosity that he understood that the United States policy in Southeast Asia must be based on its own interests, even if it meant helping the South Vietnamese carry their war against the North Vietnamese into Laos.

The official's appraisal sums up accurately the cruel position this sparsely populated landlocked kingdom finds itself in after suffering nearly 20 years as a pawn in the relentless struggle between North and South Vietnam.

Throughout that period, despite international agreement that Laos should remain neutral in the conflict, the country has been wracked by warfare between North Vietnamese-backed

Pathet Lao Communists and French and U.S.-supported rightist and conservative forces.

Now, as the bitter war between North and South Vietnam appears to be reaching some sort of climax, it has become increasingly likely that Laos could be the battleground for what may be the decisive engagement.

In the southern panhandle of Laos, about 15,000 South Vietnamese troops, backed by heavy U.S. air support, continue their thrust to sever the Ho Chi Minh Trail, the last North Vietnamese supply route for the 200,000 Communist troops in Cambodia and South Vietnam.

There is a growing fear here that the up to 70,000 North Vietnamese troops guarding the trail will seek to avoid a major battle with the Saigon invasion force by moving south and west, deeper into Laos, overrunning Laotian forces around the Boloven Plateau area and seizing rich rice lands along the Mekong River by Pakxe.

Meanwhile, in the north of Laos, roads have been clogged with tens of thousands of Meos and other hill people fleeing in long refugee columns from the Sam Thong-Long Cheng area, where up to a division of North Vietnamese ap-

pears to be girding for a full-scale attack aimed at wiping out Gen. Vang Pao's CIA-trained army of 8,000 Meo tribesmen.

If successful, the attack would cut off the royal capital of Vientiane, thereby rendering both vulnerable to a Communist takeover.

Thus, while both sides profess to prefer a neutral Laos, both are pursuing policies that appear destined to make the country the focal point of the struggle.

U.S. Ambassador to Laos, G. McMurtrie Godley conceded in an interview that American policy of supporting the South Vietnamese incursion into Laos runs counter to Laotian interests.

But he defended the action as a vital step in carrying on the war against the Communist troops in Cambodia and South Vietnam. Unfortunately, the war in Laos cannot be separated from the wars in Vietnam and Cambodia, he added.

"One of the great tragedies of the debate over the war has been that some people have viewed them as separate conflicts," Godley said. "They are not separate. We are fighting one enemy—Hanoi. The Pathet Lao doesn't amount to anything; he is a tool for the North Vietnamese."

However, Godley said Laos should not join in any united anti-Communist alliance with South Vietnam and Cambodia. "The settlement here," he said, "has to be negotiated on a neutralized basis," since neither Communist China, which borders on Laos to the north, nor North Vietnam, which shares its eastern border, would tolerate a militant anti-Communist state as a neighbor.

But Godley could not say how sweeping Laos into the midst of the Indochina war as a virtual client of the United States would succeed in winning the kingdom a peaceful settlement as neutral state.

The Washington Merry-Go-Round

Escalation of Viet War Is Unlikely

By Jack Anderson

Down through the Vietnam War years, the raw facts about the fighting have gone through such a filtering and flavoring process that the public no longer trusts the official statements.

This is reflected in the large number of inquiries we receive, asking what is really happening on the battlefield. We have sought the answers from our own competent and confidential sources. Here are the most newsworthy replies:

What is the real purpose of the drive into Laos?

The aim is to cut the North Vietnamese supply line. But unfortunately, most of the supplies for the present dry season had already moved down the Ho Chi Minh trail network before the South Vietnamese struck. Intelligence reports show a heavy flow of war goods down the infiltration routes during the dry months of September, October and November. But the flow had already dwindled to a trickle before the South Vietnamese could cut it off.

What is the risk that the Laos invasion will escalate the war?

Hanoi isn't expected to mass a large force in Laos to resist the South Vietnamese operation. Allied forces, complete with waiting planes and massed artillery, are prepared to devastate any North Vietnamese force that might come

into the open. The Communist strategy has always been to avoid battles they might lose and wait for a chance to attack a vulnerable spot. Hanoi is more likely, therefore, to strike back elsewhere at a weak point. The best clue: Communist forces already have increased the military pressure on the Royal Lao government in northern Laos.

Chinese in Laos

Is Red China likely to intervene in Laos?

The Red Chinese have warned that they won't remain indifferent to the South Vietnamese drive into Laos but would take "all effective measures" to aid the Communist forces. In recent months, the Chinese have stepped up construction of a road that cuts across Laos almost to the Thai border. The construction crew and guard force, which formerly had numbered no more than 3,000, has now been increased to more than 15,000. The best estimate is that the road is intended as a supply line for Communist guerrillas, not an invasion route for Chinese troops.

Is the White House telling the truth about the absence of U.S. combat troops in Laos?

American ground troops stopped at the Laotian border, although they are ready for action in Laos if they should be needed to help repel a North Vietnamese counterattack. CIA-led guerrilla bands

of mountain tribesmen also operating in southern Laos, assisting the South Vietnamese invaders. Technically, the American advisers aren't military men but civilians on the CIA payroll. The Army's special forces, however, have sent observation teams across the border.

Is President Nixon trying to win or to wind down the Vietnam War?

The President is seeking to turn the war over to the South Vietnamese but to leave them strong enough to defend themselves. He also wants to protect the withdrawing American troops from a possible Asian Dunkirk. He views the drive into Ho Chi Minh trail complex and the bombing attacks upon North Vietnam as rear-guard action to reduce Hanoi's ability to mount an offensive. Meanwhile, the President has withdrawn almost all draftees from combat operations. Before the end of the year, he hopes to keep all Americans out of combat except for air and artillery support for the South Vietnamese.

Mafia Expose

Some of the nation's most notorious racketeers, identified in federal files as Mafia bigwigs, has been living quietly in New York's fashionable Westchester County until a gravel-voiced newspaper editor straight out of "Front

Page," decided to fight them his own way.

Barney Waters, editor of the Herald Statesman, knew that Cosa Nostra chieftans had settled in the Yonkers area.

Waters ordered his reporters to dig into the criminal backgrounds of the hoodlums who were living in fashionable respectability in the community. Then he sent his photographers around to take pictures of their villa-style suburban homes.

For two years he battled the mobsters, winding up with a dramatic, two-week series. Even before the series began, the hoods learned of it and threatened Waters' life. The Herald Statesman's general manager, Jack Sheils, received a gruff telephone threat against the newspaper plant. Two .38 pistol shots blasted the newspaper's windows one night shattering glass in the advertising department.

During the two years, Waters got hundreds of threatening calls, four broken windshields and six different tires slashings. But through it all, the vinegary editor refused even to remove his name from the telephone directory.

Footnote: Our own Mafia sources said publicity "spooks" the big boys worse than a prosecution. Meanwhile, the Mafia is spreading into other suburban communities.

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South Vietnam Puts the Drive Into Laos at 22 Miles

By HENRY KAMM

Special to The New York Times

SAIGON, South Vietnam, Feb. 18—The South Vietnamese command reported today that the forward units of its forces advancing across Communist supply trails in southern Laos were now operating 22 miles from the border.

A spokesman said that the slowness of the advance into Laos, which began from the

northern part of South Vietnam on Feb. 8, was a result more of the care employed in searching the enemy supply dumps than of enemy ground resistance.

However, a South Vietnamese spokesman at the combat base in Quangtri, South Vietnam's northernmost province, said that 95 enemy soldiers had been killed in the last 24 hours. The South Vietnamese toll was put at eight.

At the same time, there was more evidence of the strength of the enemy's antiaircraft fire. An American briefing office at Quangtri reported that three United States helicopters had been downed during the day while supporting the South Vietnamese drive. The two-man crew of one, a Cobra gunship, was reported rescued.

The Saigon spokesman said that there now were 15,000 to 16,000 South Vietnamese troops inside Laos and that they were operating "in the same general area" as yesterday. With forward units 22 miles from the border, they apparently were still a few miles short of the devastated town of Tchepone, which has been a principal marshaling center of the North Vietnamese supply network.

At a combat base 11 miles inside Laos, South Vietnamese troops displayed a Soviet-built PT-76 tank captured after it

had been hit by rockets, presumably fired by American helicopter gunships.

No action was reported from the area in the northwestern corner of South Vietnam where an American company at an artillery base called Fire Support Base Scotch is said to have been surrounded since Tuesday. American fighter-bombers flew 18 sorties in support of the unit Tuesday night, but efforts to reinforce the company yesterday failed because of bad weather.

Outside Quangtri, an American ammunition dump blew up from unknown causes this morning, with the loss of 500 tons of artillery shells and tear gas canisters. Explosions were reported to have continued for several hours.

Far to the south, South Vietnamese troops operating in Cambodia reportedly repulsed two North Vietnamese attacks on their positions near the town of Suong with the aid of artillery and air strikes. A command spokesman said that the attackers left behind 116 dead. He said that the South Vietnamese losses in the two actions were three killed and 25 wounded.

Reinforcements Sought

The Washington Star

VIENTIANE, Laos, Feb. 18—Laotian military sources reported today that the United States

had asked Thailand for more troops to shore up the battered defenses of the American-backed base at Long Tieng, near the Plaine des Jarres.

The informants said that 1,600 Thai troops had arrived at Long Tieng aboard United States transport planes to reinforce Thai artillery groups and a security company already there.

According to the Laotian sources, the request for Thai troops is being handled through the American Central Intelligence Agency, which has used the Long Tieng base to monitor Hanoi communications and to direct its efforts throughout Laos.

WASHINGTON, D.C.

FEB 1971



Lao Military Cite Role Of Americans in Combat

By TAMMY ARBUCKLE
Special to The Star

VIENTIANE, Laos — The United States has an important command role as well as a ground combat role in Laos, Lao military and other well-informed sources say.

Lao military sources from the rank of general in Vientiane down to captains and majors say it is Central Intelligence Agency officials who command in the Long Cheng second military region headquarters 75 miles north of here. The Long Cheng commander is the station chief of the agency, these sources say. The chain of command goes back to Udorn in northeast Thailand.

"It's the Americans who give the orders," a high-ranking Lao insists. Udorn is informed of events in the second military region before army headquarters in Vientiane, Lao sources say. Meo Gen. Vang Pao is there to lead the Meo tribesmen but Americans give the directions, Lao military men say. The American ground role is small, limited to less than 200 men throughout Laos. Their role is principally advisory but these Americans are in combat. Meos call them "commando leaders," and say they have been based at Pakkao near Long Cheng.

Laotians who visited the area show pictures of Americans in camouflage fatigues carrying weapons. These Americans lead

small teams to gather intelligence in Hanoi's rear or to destroy parts of the North Vietnamese communications and command system in North Laos. These teams have been particularly successful with American participation along Route 7 between the North Vietnam border and the Plain of Jars. The Americans concerned are military men paid by the CIA.

In addition Laotians from the second military region report Americans arrive for special missions of sabotage then depart from Laos immediately after the missions are accomplished. These groups which are believed to belong to the U.S. Air Force commandos flying from Nakhon Phanom in northeast Thailand land at the airstrip near Long Cheng tightly guarded by Meos.

Americans killed in ground action in Laos are put in the Southeast Asia death totals and do not appear in Saigon briefing figures. Americans say over 20 Americans killed in North Laos fall into this combat category.

Well-informed sources say over 90 Americans have been killed in clandestine operations against the Ho Chi Minh Trail in south Laos. These operations include not only intelligence gathering but harassment. These U.S. ground operations in Laos in the trail area are continuing

with both South Vietnamese and Lao special guerrilla units.

The Laos ground operation under CIA aegis is described as useful by U.S. sources. They say two divisions of North Vietnamese have been tied down by the U.S. teams in northern Laos at the expense of a few American lives, though there have been high Meo tribe losses. "It's a sort of early Vietnamization type program," sources said.

Unfortunately with renewed Hanoi pressure and high losses the scheme is now backfiring. The Meos are starting to say they are tired of dying for the Americans. Frantic Vang Pao, angry at not getting Lao reinforcements, allegedly told the Lao, "Don't think my people are going to stay and die for the Americans." This threat led to American commanders calling for Thai troops to reinforce Long Cheng. The fact that Americans command at Long Cheng means the United States will get the blame for any major North Vietnamese victory there.

A desperate Central Intelligence Agency free from press surveillance in its military operations in north Laos, some sources believe, could well suck the United States into deeper involvement there in an attempt to retain the Long Cheng headquarters and the agency's operational capability in northern

16 FEB 1971

STATINTL

Among Americans wounded in Sunday's sapper attack against the base of Long Cheng in northern Laos was a ground employe of Air America, who was "slightly wounded." Previous unofficial reports said the man worked for the Central Intelligence Agency instead of the transport company that has been operating on contract in Laos to the U.S. government for more than a decade, according to the U.S. Embassy in Vientiane. ✓

18 FEB 1971

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The Washington Merry-Go-Round

CIA Life in SE Asia Is Not All Intrigue

By Jack Anderson

The popular impression of CIA men in Southeast Asia is of lean-faced James Bonds talking in whispers to Indochinese beauties in dingy bars or of bearded guerrilla experts directing Meo tribesmen in the Laotian jungles.

The real McCoy, more often, is a rumped civil servant going to lard, who worries about when his refrigerator will arrive from the States and plays bingo on Tuesday nights.

This is the unromantic picture that emerges from an instruction sheet handed to CIA pilots leaving for Udorn, Thailand. The CIA uses a front called Air America to fly missions out of Udorn over Indochina.

Instead of pressing cyanide suicide capsules upon new recruits, the stateside briefer slips them a bus schedule for CIA personnel between Udorn's CIA compound, schools and banks.

"A bowling alley in Udorn has league bowling," the CIA confides to its pilot-agents. Their wives are given such hush-hush CIA tips as "water should be boiled three to five minutes prior to drinking, but it is safe for cooking and washing dishes if it is brought to the boiling point."

The cloak-and-dagger boys are told they will have a su-

permarket, swimming pool, free movies, the "Club Rendezvous" (which doubles as a chapel on Sundays) and bingo on Tuesday and Saturday nights. The CIA bars are called The Pub and the Wagon Wheel and shut down at midnight.

The same humdrum life style can be found at such CIA outposts as Vientiane, Laos, where CIA men usually live with their families in villas and dine at the town's few French restaurants.

One lonely CIA flier, who had left his family in Florida, worried about their safety after reading about racial demonstrations at home. "I'm going to bring them out here where it's safe," he confided solemnly to my associate Les Whitten in Vientiane last summer.

But if the CIA living conditions are vintage suburbia, some of the missions are dangerous. The CIA pilots fly supplies to CIA-backed Meo tribesmen in Laos hinterlands. There are also more hazardous missions, such as flights along the Red Chinese border and ammo deliveries to tiny airstrips in Communist-infested country.

Footnote: Much of the recruiting for CIA pilots is done out of a modern, gold-carpeted office in downtown Washington with "Air America" on the glass doors. One of my report-

ers, posing as a pilot, was interviewed by H. H. Dawson, a beefy man in shirt sleeves. He said prospects were dim right now, because the number of fixed-wing pilots had been cut back from 600 to 500.

Dawson said the basic pay is \$22.93 an hour for captains, \$13.93 for first officers, with bonuses for special "projects." A top CIA pilot can make as much as \$100,000 a year flying high hazard missions. In addition, station allowances run \$320 a month at Saigon, \$215 at Udorn and \$230 in Vientiane.

U.S. Wants More Thais For Long Cheng Defense

By TAMMY ARBUCKLE
Special to The Star

VIENTIANE, Laos—The United States has asked the Thailand government for more troops to shore up the battered defenses of the U.S.-controlled base at Long Cheng, informed Lao military sources said today.

Some 1,600 Thai troops already have arrived in Long Cheng, 75 miles north of here, flown to the surrounded base on U.S. C123 transports, the sources said.

These forces are to reinforce the Thai artillery group and Thai security company already at the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency base.

According to the Lao informants, the Thailand government is holding back on sending any more large scale reinforcements so far north.

They don't want Thailand involved more deeply in the Lao fighting, the sources said.

The Lao military informants say that, to date, only the highest ranking Thai leaders are

aware of the details of Thailand's military involvement in Laos.

If large numbers of troops were sent, all members of the Thai cabinet would have to be informed.

The Laos say the request for Thai troops is being handled through the CIA which has used the Long Cheng base to monitor Hanoi communications and direct its efforts throughout Laos.

The Americans are reluctant to call for any large U.S. units because of possible anger in the U.S. Congress and because of possible repercussions from

Communist China which shares a border with Laos.

The U.S. request for Thai troops followed the Lao generals refusal to give Gen. Vang Pao, leader of the Meo tribal forces at Long Cheng, large scale reinforcements he asked.

So far, Vang Pao has received one battalion of neutralist troops and two commando battalions from the Laotians.

Informed Lao military sources say Vang Pao came to Vientiane and asked for reinforcements but was refused by other Lao generals. Vang Pao then saw Premier Souvanna Phouma, resulting in the trickle of Lao reinforcements sent to Long Cheng.

Vang Pao has threatened to pull his Meo tribesmen out of Long Cheng and out of the fighting.

The U.S. policy of secrecy in Laos has become so confusing that even the Laos are unsure what is going on, they say.

The Lao military said some Thai troops, working for the CIA, were arrested when they entered Vientiane with weapons because Lao officials had no knowledge of who they were.

The U.S. press corps here is not allowed aboard U.S. aircraft, the only means of reaching Long Cheng, to see how deeply the United States is involved.

The Embassy's stated reason is that the CIA operating there must retain secrecy.

Instead of gathering intelligence, however, the agency reportedly is running a war with its own American employes in ground combat roles.

Lao military spokesman Gen. Thongpunn Knoksy said today some fighting continues in the Long Cheng area.

North Vietnamese forces penetrated to within 3,000 yards of the airstrip but ran into a Meo ambush.

A North Vietnamese light artillery piece was captured, indicating Hanoi troops planned another shelling similar to the attack which burned American installations Sunday, wounding an American.

5 More U.S. Copters Lost in Fight for Laos

SAIGON (UPI) — Communist gunners today shot down five more U.S. helicopters in fighting in Laos and across the border in South Vietnam, where fighting subsided around the encircled American Fire Base Scotch.

American military spokesmen did not give the locations where three helicopter gunships were shot down in Laos but said two crewmen were wounded. Two others were shot up in Quang Tri Province across the border but managed to land with two crewmen wounded.

Unofficial figures showed at least 19 American helicopters have been destroyed in support of the South Vietnamese campaign in Laos in the past 11 days. U.S. casualties in the support role were 31 killed, 79 wounded and six missing in action. The casualties do not include GIs wounded in Communist shelling attacks, military spokesmen said.

Military spokesmen said South Vietnamese forces killed 25 Viet Cong and North Vietnamese troops at dusk yesterday in Laos and were meeting only sporadic resistance in the drive.

The U.S. command reported the loss of an Air Force F4 Phantom jet in the lower panhandle of Laos Tuesday. It was the 100th U.S. plane lost over Laos since last March 10. Both crewmen were missing.

U.S. spokesmen gave few details of the situation near Fire Base Scotch, 10 miles from the Laotian border, other than to say the fighting had subsided. Reports earlier said more than a company of reinforcements had been rushed to the battleground to the aid of an outnumbered platoon of GIs fighting a reinforced company of Communist troops attacking from all sides.

South Vietnamese spokesmen said the 16,000-man government force which swept into Laos 11 days ago was meeting only occasional resistance and had killed 25 Viet Cong and North Vietnamese near the town of Lao Bao.

American spokesman said today 51 GIs were killed in the war last week, which included the first six days of the Laotian campaign. It was more than double the 24 killed the previous week. Military spokesmen said six more GIs killed in helicopter crashes were yet to be added to last week's toll.

Military spokesmen said South Vietnamese forces operating on Highway 7 more than 60 miles northeast of Phnom Penh killed at least 116 Communist troops today in two major actions. The spokesmen said 1,600 South Vietnamese troops had launched a new operation 75 miles south of Phnom Penh, bringing to 23,000 the number of Saigon government troops in Cambodia.

In northern Laos, government sources said 1,600 Thai volunteers were being airlifted to Long Cheng, Central Intelligence Agency base that has been under intense Communist pressure for weeks.

Communiqués from Phnom Penh said an American munitions expert was killed today when he picked up a bomb left over from the Viet Cong attack on the airport Jan. 22.

Fighting at Rockpile

Fighting broke out Tuesday night and raged on yesterday and today at the position west of the stone escarpment GIs call "The Rockpile" a mile southeast of Fire Support Base Scotch. Allied jets flew continuous air strikes despite bad weather.

Details on the fighting near the Laotian border were sketchy but the platoon belonged to the

1st brigade of the U.S. 5th Division, one of the American units supporting the South Vietnamese campaign in Laos.

The fighting was part of increasingly heavy action in jungles near the newly activated U.S. airstrip at Khe Sanh, headquarters of the 9,000-man American task force supporting the Saigon government troops across the border.

Government sources in Vientiane far to the north of the Laotian border campaign said the Thai volunteers were being brought to Long Cheng, headquarters of the Meo tribal mercenaries trained by the CIA to bolster the defense of the camp.

Curfew in Vientiane

It was not immediately clear whether the volunteers were regular troops provided by the government of Thailand or Thai mercenaries trained by the CIA. Long Cheng, 80 miles north of Vientiane, was surrounded by Communist forces. In Vientiane, authorities imposed a 1 a.m. curfew and put the airport and military installations off limits to civilians after dark.

At Quang Tri, near the Laotian border, UPI Correspondent Robert E. Sullivan reported a series of explosions rocked an ammunition dump at the rear support base for the allied Laotian campaign.

U.S. officers attributed the blasts and the fire that followed to a leak of highly combustible white phosphorous which touched off rifle grenades. Explosions went on for hours.

South Viet success in Laos

By George W. Ashworth

Staff correspondent of
The Christian Science Monitor

Washington

Hope for South Vietnam. Fears for Cambodia's government. Problems for Prince Souvanna Phouma in Laos.

And the possibility, at least, of more Chinese-Communist involvement in Laos to counter the South Vietnamese incursion and United States air support.

Analysts here make these four points as they try to ascertain what lies ahead in the Indo-Chinese fighting.

If all goes well in the Laos incursion—and officials emphasize the "if"—then South Vietnam will have made a major step toward coping militarily with its North Vietnamese enemy.

As sources here see it, the latest endeavor makes a great deal of sense for the South Vietnamese, who, given their heavy American backing, have very little to lose and much to gain in a military sense. The Americans, as the administration knows, have much more to lose—at home, not in Vietnam nor Laos.

Hindrance forecast

If the South Vietnamese are able to cut the supply line briefly and disrupt the flow—as they now claim to have done—the North Vietnamese will be hindered substantially. This will be even more true if the South Vietnamese continue to do the same sort of thing from time to time in Laos as the need arises.

There is a possibility that the Red Chinese may help the North Vietnamese in rebuilding and guarding the trail once the present operations in Laos are over.

The operations are expected to be of relatively short duration, and the Hanoi leadership will be determining in the interim what degrees and types of Chinese help it would like.

Some sources say they would not be surprised if the Chinese were to offer to share the burden of operating the Ho Chi Minh Trail. The Chinese are already operating in Laos in a road they have built through the northern sections.

Chinese involvement could complicate matters further, and there is no certainty what the American response would be. The Americans have generally kept their aircraft clear of the Chinese operations in the north, and the Royal Lao Air Force has been powerless to do anything.

The ailment of Gen. Lon Nol in Cambodia has caused a great deal of concern here. Officials are hopeful, but by no means sanguine, that the present government can continue to draw the degree of support from

the Cambodian people that it enjoyed under Gen. Lon Nol. While he apparently is not the charismatic sort of leader who attracts widespread support by his personality, Gen. Lon Nol proved a competent figure, adept at holding things together.

If the revamped leadership enjoys support and proves competent, then the departure of Gen. Lon Nol as active head of government should not prove a decisive turn of events. But officials here are aware of the possibilities of infighting among the provinces, with revitalized war lords supplanting the authority of the central government. This breaking apart would be made easier if the Cambodian Army began losing direction.

The result then could be new opportunities for the Communists to exploit the strife in Cambodia. Additionally, the way could be opened for rebuilding the supply network in Cambodia.

All of this is very much in the future, sources agree. There seems to be a good chance now for the war to go very much in favor of the allies.

If the Lao and Cambodian governments can hang on, and the Vietnamese are able, with backing, to keep up their disruptive strikes across the border, the strategic situation for the south may be improved tremendously.

Success in Laos would not provide a final solution for the Saigon government. But it would help. That, coupled with more work on the economy, dedication to an honest election this fall, and other improvements could help make Saigon more the master of its own fate.

Flow reported blocked

Meanwhile, military sources in Saigon claimed Feb. 15 that South Vietnamese forces had succeeded in cutting the Ho Chi Minh Trail and blocking the flow of supplies to Communist forces in the south.

South Vietnamese commander of the ground operation, Lt. Gen. Hoang Xuan Lam, said his forces were aiming to hold key sections of the trail, rather than pushing toward road junctions at Sèpônè.

The South Vietnamese claim that they are advancing at a slow pace because they stop to search and destroy all supply caches they encounter.

[Lao Government reinforcements moved into the northern base of Long Cheng, identified as a U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) center of operations, where a U.S. plane mistakenly bombed and killed up to 30 progovernment troops during a raid by North Vietnamese forces, Reuter reported.]

[Lao Defense Minister Sisouk Na Cham-passak said the government intended to hold on to the embattled valley base occupied by Gen. Vang Paos's American-trained Army of Mee Hill tribesmen.]

could
help at
home

STATINTL

SAN FRANCISCO, CAL.
CHRONICLE

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FEB 17 1971

Royce Brier

CIA Mounts a Light Brigade

GENERALS GRANT and Lee both despised spies, and employed them sparingly, when at all. Both deplored warfare, but since their consciences required it, they tried to keep it straight, devoid of frills and delusions.

The present brass in the Pentagon manifestly dotes on frills and delusions. But it doesn't make for successful generals.

The failure in Vietnam has to be laid at the door of the generals, since the three Presidents who commanded them make no pretense of military lore.

First the generals were deluded that with modern machine warfare they could zap the guerrilla warfare on its own jungle terrain. This raveled out in three delusory years, and the generals were whipped out of their boots at Tet. Then they convinced themselves and a President that massive firepower, about equal to that used against the Germans, would hack it. It didn't.

Meanwhile, the generals had for years been flirting with spies darting about like moths in the Indochina twilight.

* * *

THEY HAD READY to hand a spy outfit, the Central Intelligence Agency.

It was founded in Switzerland in the big war, and it worked out fairly well, as our spies dealt with peoples like our own. So the CIA became a vested empire which survived and grew great in the Cold War.

But when its operations shifted from Europe to Asia, it pulled a series of goofs you wouldn't believe. The source of the goofs is plain: CIA was dealing with Asiatics, who don't think as we do, and who had ample reason to distrust the Man from the West, who had been swindling them, and their fathers and grandfathers for centuries.

* * *

WITHOUT KNOWING the supersecret table of organization of CIA, you can see how it functions in Asia.

The regional managers of the young espionage wizards build a native Asiatic group to move on the "enemy," Communist or tribal, to counter enemy plans and action. They enlist the help of the local military when they can. But CIA is only a body of Washington detectives, untrained in strategy and tactics, but this doesn't stay their meddling. The result is nil, or furiously harmful fomentation, as any sensible army colonel with a gritty war to fight with GIs, will concede.

A UPI dispatch from Saigon yesterday: "Military sources today reported the arrival of 3000 Loatian hill tribesmen, led by American Central Intelligence agents, to harass North Vietnam troops in the Ho Chi Minh Trail complex."

Now, there is a soul-stirring harassment body if you ever heard of one. Half of them will go over to (or back to) the "enemy" at the drop of a cigarette package. How would a CIA battalion leader know what to do to close down a supply trail? These are the guys fighting our war, extricating us from our mess? Let's not be silly.

But it's impressive in the vast CIA hive in Washington, and it must be impressive in the Pentagon. Is it impressive to you, or to your boys mucking around out there? Not if you give it a moment of thought.

February 17, 1971

U.S. Jets

Hit Sites

In North

Coastal Attack Is Deepest In 3 Days

From News Dispatches

SAIGON, Feb. 17 (Wednesday)—American fighter-bombers attacked surface-to-air missile sites 160 miles south of Hanoi yesterday, the U.S. Command announced. It was the deepest penetration of North Vietnamese territory in three successive days of strikes against enemy SAMs.

Headquarters said today that two Navy A-6 Intruders escorting an unarmed reconnaissance jet fired Shrike missiles at enemy radar positions six miles north-northeast of Vinh, a coastal city 119 miles north of the Demilitarized Zone.

The command said results were not known.

Strikes on the previous two days were against SAM sites near the Laos-Vietnam border to protect B-52 bombers on forays against enemy supply routes in Laos, in support of the South Vietnamese ground thrust into the southern part of that country. Yesterday's strike was the breadth of North Vietnam away from the Laotian border.

Hours before the new attacks, U.S. military officials announced the possibility of more strikes against SAM sites to guard the B-52s on their raids against mountain supply passes.

Yesterday's attacks were the 13th and 14th "protective reaction" strikes inside North Vietnam reported by the U.S. Command this year — more than were reported during all of last year.

Bad weather and increased North Vietnamese attacks have slowed the South Vietnamese advance into southern

Laos. Yesterday the Saigon command reported a gain of little more than a mile in the past three days.

Many of the enemy attacks were aimed at the 9,000 U.S. troops on the South Vietnamese side of the border in the northern sector of the country. Two ambushes and two ground attacks Monday and Tuesday killed nine Americans and wounded 12.

Although enemy resistance has been reported on a small scale involving no larger than company-size units of 100 to 200 troops so far, it has been steady. There have been increased rocket and mortar attacks on allied bases both in the northwestern part of South Vietnam and across the border in Laos.

In a similar eastern Cambodia drive against North Vietnamese base camps and sanctuaries, Saigon headquarters reported sharp fighting. Spokesmen said South Vietnamese Rangers and an armored column backed by artillery and U.S. air strikes killed 41 North Vietnamese Tuesday near the Chup rubber plantation. South Vietnamese losses were put at five killed and 10 wounded.

The Saigon command claims 986 North Vietnamese troops killed in the Cambodian operation, which has been under way two weeks by 20,000 government troops. It acknowledged losses of 110 dead and 422 wounded.

In South Vietnam's Mekong Delta, a Navy rivercraft was destroyed by a mine and an enemy mortar attack, the U.S. Command said. Three Americans were reported killed and two wounded.

Meanwhile, an unconfirmed report quoted military sources as saying Tuesday that a force of about 3,000 Laotian mercenaries trained by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency had moved into position to counter a buildup near Sepone, 27 miles west of the Laos-South Vietnam border and a key objective of the South Vietnamese incursion into Laos.

A Laotian military spokesman, Gen. Thongphan Knocksy, said in Vientiane that a force of 16 North Vietnamese and Pathet Lao guerrilla battalions totaling 9,600 men was believed to be in the area of Lao Ngam, 75 miles south of Sepone, and 35 miles northeast of the Laotian southern military headquarters at Pakse.

The said another force of four Communist battalions totaling 2,400 troops had entered an area 40 miles west of Sepone.

At the same time, Laos government forces reinforced the town of Long Cheng, headquarters for the CIA and Meo tribesmen in northern Laos, also under pressure from North Vietnamese forces.

American pilots flying support of South Vietnamese troops in Laos told a UPI correspondent at Khesnah Tuesday that the Communists are putting up heavy antiaircraft fire in defense of the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

"The choppers are receiving the heaviest fire we've ever experienced in Southeast Asia," said Lt. Col. R. T. Mollinelli, commander of the 2d Squadron of the 17th Air Cavalry.

Pilots in his squadron said that more than 300 U.S. helicopters of all types are involved in the Laotian campaign and that 10 per cent have been destroyed or damaged since Jan. 30.

Military sources estimated that the Communists have more than 2,000 antiaircraft guns guarding the various branches of the trail in eastern Laos.

The stiffening enemy resistance, deadly North Vietnamese antiaircraft fire, and the heavy drizzle and fog that forecasters say may continue for the next week seem to indicate that the operation has bogged down for the time being.

South Vietnamese military headquarters said the advance is slow because the 11,000 troops inside Laos are finding so many munitions and food stockpiles, which require them to stop and search. Inventories of caches as given out by headquarters in Saigon seem to be higher than what field observers have noted.

South Vietnamese headquarters said the foremost of three columns pushing along Highway 9 and on both sides of the highway was 14 miles inside Laos.

Lt. Gen. Hoang Xuan Lam, commander of the drive, said some reconnaissance troops were at Sepone. He gave no indication why the reconnaissance troops were there, but other South Vietnamese officers have said their engineers will try to rebuild the airfield in the deserted town to use as a base of operations for deeper penetrations along the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

South Vietnamese troops have cut some segments of the trail, but there still appeared to be plenty of room for the North Vietnamese to move men and supplies along the trail, a series of paths, dirt roads and river crossings that stretch at least three miles wide and more than 300 miles long. Some sources have estimated it would take 50,000 to 75,000 troops to completely cut the trail.

Military sources said the operation had not made as much progress as anticipated. South Vietnamese headquarters claimed that 487 North Vietnamese troops have been killed and tons of munitions seized compared to government losses of 71 dead and 238 wounded.

The U.S. Command said that in the eight days before yesterday American helicopters had flown 5,600 missions inside Laos, including gunship, resupply, troop lift, medical evacuation and command and control missions.

The South Vietnamese air force has only about 10 of its own helicopters flying resupply missions. The South Vietnamese ground force cannot move very far without the American air armada to cover it, resupply it and evacuate its wounded.

S. Viets Suggesting Asia Site for Talks

From News Dispatches

South Vietnam will suggest

at the Vietnam peace talks in Paris on Thursday that the site of the meetings be moved to Southeast Asia, Foreign Minister Tran Van Lam said in Saigon yesterday.

Lam was quoted by the official Vietnam press agency as warning the French government that if it continued its "unfair activities" South Vietnam might consider severing diplomatic relations with Paris.

He was evidently referring to concern expressed by members of the French government following South Vietnam's move into Laos last week.

There were these other developments in Indochina yesterday:

In Djakarta, Indonesia foreign ministry sources said Japan, Malaysia and Indonesia will make a joint appeal to Britain and the Soviet Union, as co-chairmen of the 1962 Ge-

Continued

take immediate steps to restore peace there.

The pro-Communist Pathet Lao news agency accused the neutralist Laotian government of Prince Souvanna Phouma of helping the United States and South Vietnam and distorting the situation in Laos.

Massive anti-American demonstrations in China spread to Kunming, the nearest major Chinese city to Laos, the New China News Agency reported. Some 300,000 protesters denounced the U.S.-backed South Vietnamese move into Laos, it said.

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CIA-led guerrillas in Laos?

By Daniel Southerland

Special correspondent of
The Christian Science Monitor

Tribal guerrillas trained, financed, and led by the United States Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) are aiding the South Vietnamese in their drive into Laos, according to well-informed sources.

The sources say more than two thousand of these guerrillas, most of them Kha tribesmen, were brought into areas southwest of Sépone in southern Laos when the South Vietnamese began their invasion just over a week ago.

Many of the U.S. armed tribesmen are natives of the Ho Chi Minh Trail area. They had recently been harassing and interdicting North Vietnamese supply lines near the Lao-Cambodian border. Then from Pakse, about 110 miles southwest of Sépone, they moved into the area of the Ho Chi Minh Trail between Sépone and Muong Phine, located about 20 miles southwest of Sépone.

Harassment charged

The sources say the CIA-supported guerrillas, working in small teams, are being used to harass North Vietnamese rear elements to the southwest of Sépone.

Sépone is at the center of a key North Vietnamese base area designated 601 and appears to be one of the main targets of the South Vietnamese troops now pushing into Laos. Supply trails and roads belonging to the Ho Chi Minh Trail complex converge in this area, and large quantities of supplies are transferred here for movement farther south.

The CIA and the U.S. Army's Special Forces have recruited Kha tribesmen as far back as seven years ago. The guerrilla bands are well armed and supplied by helicopters. To lead them, the CIA frequently employs former U.S. Special Forces soldiers with experience in Vietnam.

Probes aided by U.S.

Vietnamese sources say CIA and Special Forces-led guerrilla teams were involved in helping the South Vietnamese make probes into southern Laos late last year in preparation for the big offensive into Laos which started Feb. 8.

Being at home in the mountains of southern Laos, the Kha guerrillas are capable of carrying out reconnaissance missions and acting as guides for conventional units.

Thus, when U.S. officials insist there are no American troops in Laos, they studiously neglect to mention the small

groups of Americans who have been directing clandestine actions there for years. In Laos, the CIA—rather than the regular American military establishment—has played the main military role.

Tribal forces supported

It is the CIA which supports the predominantly tribal forces of the Lao Government in northern Laos, whose headquarters at Long Cheng is now coming under heavy North Vietnamese pressure. Long Cheng hit the headlines again Sunday, when a U.S. jet fighter-bomber accidentally dropped a bomb on government troops, killing 10 and wounding 20 of them.

Some sources estimated that more than 300 CIA men, many of them former Special Forces soldiers, are involved in Laos, supplying and training government guerrillas and leading commando and reconnaissance teams.

In addition to the CIA men, other Americans with military roles on the ground in Laos are the more than 70 military attaches working under the U.S. embassy in the Vientiane and the Army's Special Forces teams, which work primarily in the Ho Chi Minh Trail area.

There is nothing new in all this, of course. Such American involvement in Laos goes back a number of years.



GARDEN CITY, N.Y.
NEWSDAY
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'Could we say we merely wanted a first-hand report on the impact of our bombing?'

16 FEB 1971

STATINTL

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Raid on CIA Base in Laos Rated Worst Yet

BY ARTHUR J. DOMMEN

Times Staff Writer

VIENTIANE, Laos — The Laotian government Monday gave details of a devastating North Vietnamese sapper attack on Long Cheng in northern Laos, compounded by an accidental American bombing of the CIA-run base there.

Considerable destruction of buildings and supplies resulted from the attack Sunday morning at the base, which is used by the United States to support irregular forces throughout northern Laos.

The attack by an estimated two companies of sappers belonging to the North Vietnamese 316th Division was rated by observers here as the most serious to date against Long Cheng, which has been under severe Communist pressure for more than a year. The attackers got through the defense perimeter and briefly occupied an artillery position inside the camp.

Aside from the material damage achieved by the attack, the most devastating effect may be felt in the days ahead as tens of thousands of Meo tribesmen who live in the area become refugees once again and seek safety farther south, depending

on American rice crops to keep them alive.

Unofficial sources said 30 persons in the crowded camp were killed by the mistaken American bombing and many were injured, including one American CIA employee.

Giving reporters details of the attack at a special news conference Monday, Laotian Dep. Defense Minister Sisouk Na Champassak said the sappers fired B-40 rocket-propelled grenades.

The attackers briefly occupied an artillery position which sources here who have visited Long Cheng described as consisting of two 155-mm. artillery pieces manned by Thai soldiers in Laotian uniforms.

The attackers also heavily damaged a rice warehouse and a building containing medical apparatus, as well as a hostel used by pilots of Air America, the pseudo-civilian airline under contract to the U.S. government to fly rice-dropping missions and liaison flights.

Sisouk said 10 civilians

were killed and 20 wounded and government military casualties were still being tabulated. He said the attackers left 21 bodies on the battlefield and the defenders took one prisoner, a North Vietnamese.

Sisouk said that according to the government's information no Americans were killed or wounded in the attack. Among Americans normally working at Long Cheng are a detachment of the Requirement Office which runs the military assistance program in Laos.

The Long Cheng base is used by the United States as the advance base for support operations for thousands of irregular forces, many of them Meo tribesmen, fighting the Communists in northern Laos. The support is the responsibility of the CIA and is operated from a headquarters at Udorn in neighboring Thailand.

The CIA equips and pays the Meo irregulars, and also presumably the Thai artillerymen and other third-country nationals fighting in Laos.

U.S. sources here said that American jets from Thailand called in to help beat off the attack mistakenly dropped a stick of bombs among the buildings inside the defense perimeter. It was still dark at the time of the incident.

Sisouk said an investigation of the American bombing incident is under way.

CAPITOL STUFF

By JERRY GREENE

Washington, Feb. 15.—When an American aircraft through error of some sort dumped bombs on friendly forces at the Long Cheng base in Laos with resultant casualties and material damage, the explosion also blew off a little more cover from the supposedly secret CIA war in the jungle-covered mountains.

News dispatches from Vientiane, the Laotian capital, described Long Cheng variously as "American headquarters" in Northern Laos or as the operating base for assorted undercover activities of the Central Intelligence Agency.

In view of the stepped-up fighting in the Long Cheng area and the celebrated Plain of Jars, and the domestic flap which has brought repeated White House denials that American ground combat troops are involved in the South Vietnamese invasion along Highway 9, this is as good a time as any for a little further clarification.

CIA Director Richard Helms and his "spooks" in the field have got considerable attention for their operations in Laos in the last four or five years, but they have not been running any little private war of their own. Nor has the Laos war been much of a secret to anybody.

There are about 100 CIA agents in all of Laos. They include men who are experts in guerrilla warfare, in sabotage, in counter-insurgency operations, in surveillance and in military training. They are under the direct control of the American ambassador in Vientiane, and follow orders which are approved by the National Security Council in Washington.

Back in the 1961-62 period, the CIA, as well as the Army's Special Forces—the Green Berets—were active in Laos, engaged in surveillance and training operations in support of the royal government. Then, after the Geneva agreement in 1962 creating the troika "neutral" government in Laos, the Americans pulled out.

Some of the spooks may have remained behind. We wouldn't know. But they would have been very difficult to hide in the Laotian population, for the Americans have different colored faces and they are, as a rule, a foot or more taller than the Laotian people.

But a year later, when it was obvious that the North Vietnamese neither had pulled out nor had any intention of pulling out their thousands of regular troops, and fighting was continuing, Vientiane again asked American help. The CIA returned, in small numbers.

While other agencies of the U. S. government are charged with monitoring foreign broadcasts and code-breaking, and while these electronic intelligence duties, of enormous extent and cost, are on a global basis, the CIA does handle local, specific radio interception jobs. Such work would be done in Laos, within easy radio listening range of Hanoi and the North Vietnamese armed forces in the south.

Blowing Cover
Off What Isn't
Such a Secret

They Made Arrangements With the Hill Men

Over the years, the CIA has established an excellent rapport with the Meo tribesmen, the poor hill farmers who didn't get along very well anyhow with the flatlanders in the cities and around the royal throne.

There were, and are, little pockets of the Meo people scattered all over the mountains; the CIA fed them rice, and supplied them with weapons and training. The spooks used the famed Air America flying company which, contrary to widespread belief, is not a CIA unit but a commercial company doing business under contract. The American Embassy uses Air America, and so does AID, also by contract.

The Meo proved to be excellent fighters; they didn't like the North Vietnamese nor their Pathet Lao (Laos Communist) associates, and the tribesmen were adept at harassment and interdiction.

Somewhere along the line, the CIA ran into Vang Pao, a tribal chief who was a leader of remarkable ability, who rallied the hill people around his banner and with a relatively moderate flow of American supplies turned his men into a tough little army. Vang Pao, a patriot, got to be so good at his fighting job that the Laotian government finally commissioned him a general and made him the commander of the region around the Plain of Jars.

Long Cheng was selected by Vang Pao as his major base several years ago, and he had CIA communications experts and advisers at hand. But about a year ago, he decided to decentralize. He separated his troops and scattered them around a number of smaller bases; Long Cheng lost its pre-eminence.

He's Got Only a Few Thousand Men

Vang Pao's immediate army consists of about 3,000 to 3,600 men; he doubtless could muster several thousand more in a pinch.

The Meo Tribesmen have raised a lot of hell with the North Vietnamese over the last couple of years in purely guerrilla operations. In the dry season, the North Vietnamese push forward with the Meos snapping at their flanks; when the rains come the Hanoi invaders pull back. Some of the towns and villages have changed hands fairly frequently.

Now, the North Vietnamese have a fresh division in the Plain of Jars area and it would appear that a battle of some consequence is in the making.

All these matters have been fairly open knowledge and the full details are known to four subcommittees of Congress, the Budget Bureau and the Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board as well as the National Security Council. It's a skimpily concealed secret.

to
with



Richard Helms
Not running a private war

Laotians Fear Siege at Stronghold

By JAMES WIEGHAN
Of The News Washington Bureau

Vientiane, Laos, Feb. 15--The Communists reportedly are mounting a siege to wipe out the strategic royal Laotian stronghold of Long Cheng, defended by Gen. Vang Pao's CIA-trained army of 10,000 Meo tribesmen, as their first response to the invasion of Laos.

Laotian officials said today that up to 7,000 North Vietnamese and Communist Pathet Lao troops had moved into the Sam Thong and Long Cheng areas south of the Plain of Jars in an effort to overrun the stronghold, thus cutting off the royal capital of Luang Prabang from the administrative capital of Vientiane.

Deputy Defense Minister Sisouk Na Champassack told newsmen that the government is rushing reinforcements to Gen. Vang Pao, who has vowed to defend Long Cheng. Although he declined to say how many troops were sent, other Laotian sources put it at about five battalions.

However, American sources were skeptical that the North

Vietnamese would be willing to pay the cost in blood of trying to take Long Cheng with a frontal assault. The sources characterized an attack yesterday, which was backed by heavy mortar and rocket fire, more as a commando raid to inflict casualties and cause damage, than as a serious effort to take Long Cheng.

The American sources estimated the attack force at about three companies, hardly large enough to take the stronghold. They also expressed doubt at the Laotian estimate that there are 7,000 Communist troops massed in the area.

The differing assessment spotlighted a wide gulf between the American and Laotian estimates

of Communist intentions in Laos. U.S. officials here believe that the indecisive pattern of conflict, which has raged between Communist and neutralist forces in the land locked kingdom since it won freedom from French colonial rule in 1949, is likely to continue for the foreseeable future. They consider it unlikely that the North Vietnamese would be willing to divert from the main battle with South Vietnam the kind of manpower it would take to seize and hold Laos.

But the royal Laotian government, headed by neutralist Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma, appeared increasingly apprehensive that the North Vietnamese—frustrated by the lack of success in South Vietnam and angered by

the South Vietnamese effort to cut the main supply route along the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Southern Laos -- might respond by pressing an all-out war against Laos.

Laotian officials said this is precisely what the North Vietnamese did in Cambodia after the joint U.S.-South Vietnamese thrust into Cambodia sanctuary area last May cut the main supply route there.

Concern Over Peking

Laotian officials point out that after the incursion, the North Vietnamese responded by striking deep into Cambodia, even hitting the outskirts of Phnom Penh.

What is more, Souvanna Phouma has expressed a deep and growing concern that the U.S.-backed invasion of Laos might

even prompt Communist China to enter the war.

Again, American officials disagree. They are convinced the

Chinese will not intervene, stating that Peking knows that the incursion is not a threat to China but merely an effort to stop the infiltration of supplies and men down the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

Publicly, Peking's response to the Laotian incursion was the issuance of the stern warning that the Chinese Communist government will not stand idly by while the U.S. works its will on Laos, which shares its northern borders with China.

Privately, the Chinese have reportedly passed a similar but even more ominous warning of possible intervention to Souvanna Phouma through diplomatic channels last weekend.

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FEB 16 1971



Pete Hamill

HANDS OFF HENNY-PENNY

In the end, we might all remember Vietnam as the place from which a great nation sent out fevered bulletins claiming victories over chickens. Our brave allies in the South Vietnamese army have had to be kicked off our helicopters, in some instances, so that they would have to go out to meet the enemy. Our planes go roaring over Laos, dropping bombs on everything that moves, and, of course, they hit a CIA man, apparently because the CIA makes up one-tenth of the population anyway. And then, after a massive sweep around Khe Sanh last week, we announce the capture of the chickens.

* * *

There were 2000 of them, and presumably all of them were card-carrying Communist chickens. We were assured that the chickens were turned over to our South Vietnamese allies, which is probably a violation of the Geneva conventions on prisoners of war. But major questions remain. Who first spotted the chickens? Were they all lost together in the woods, or was this a great Communist chicken farm, used to supply the whole Viet Cong infrastructure further south? How were they captured? I mean, did hundreds of American soldiers rush forward with Baggies, grab them by their rotten little necks and stuff them into the bags? Or did we show large pictures of Joel Oppenheimer, in his starring role from "End of the Road," warning them that a fate worse than death awaited them unless they surrendered on the spot and became Baptists?

The impression remains that some of those crew-cut heroes from the CIA (they're always named Rick, or Dave, and they always come from Wisconsin) have brought back some of the leaders of the chickens for interrogation, probably up at the Fidel Castro Room in the Hotel Theresa. Are you related to the Rhode Island Reds, says Rick. The

head chicken looks inscrutable. Dave says its time to put the bamboo splinters under their fingernails, the little Commie killers. But Rick intervenes. He puts on the Sessue Hayakawa accent, from the World War II flicks, offers the head chicken a joint, squints, and says: "Don't be a fool. I was educated in San Francisco. Tell me the plans."

But the Commie chickens don't rat. They know the plans, in fact, they know the only secret worth knowing about Nam: the location of COSVN. As we all know, from last year's episode in this serial, the reason for invading Cambodia was to find and destroy COSVN, which was the headquarters for the entire Communist operation in Indochina. There were various reports about its whereabouts: it was underground, it was behind a mysterious waterfall, it was at the top of towers disguised as trees, it was in different sections all over the place. We just couldn't find it.

* * *

But the chickens know where COSVN is, and I can reveal exclusively here today exactly where it is located. On Sunday morning, I made a meet with a defecting chicken and he revealed the whole devious plot. COSVN is located in the basement of the Simpson St. police station in the South Bronx. Ever since Eisenhower cancelled the 1956 elections in Vietnam, the entire Communist apparatus has been working out of New York, disguised as Puerto Rican prisoners awaiting trial and Chinese-American gamblers at Yonkers with a few scattered agents working as waiters at Victor's Cuban Chinese restaurant on the West Side. They transmit their plans to the troops in the field through Tex Antoine on Channel 7; every fourth word of his nightly weather report is part of a coded message sent to the Orient. And in reality,

Antoine is Lamont Cranston, with the power to cloud men's minds.

I really wouldn't reveal this now, except that captured enemy documents, from the files of Collier's, combined with interviews with those defecting former Commie chickens have convinced me that treason is taking place at the highest levels of our government. If they were serious about cleaning out that nest of Asian reds, they wouldn't keep invading these empty stretches of real estate. They would go where the enemy lives. Like Mott St. Or Victor's. Or the Simpson St. station. The way it is now it's as if they ordered the capture of Grand Central, and the Army stormed ashore on Staten Island and fought its way to Pennsylvania before discovering that the Jersey Turnpike is not the Ho Chi Minh trail, and Grand Central is in the other direction.

* * *

But in real life, as they say, we're out there, doing that crazy number in Indochina, telling everybody that China is run by madmen, while Henry Kissinger advocates a policy of controlled irrationality. We sit there and write down what our leaders say, and our sons and brothers go back into the woods, chasing around Indochina after phantoms, and it would all be pretty funny, really, if it weren't that some pretty good men are dying. On both sides.

It just might be that Indochina has driven us all slightly insane, that the men who tell us that spreading a war into two more countries is shinking it are not evil, only vaguely demented. The Chinese are warning us now that we have gone too far, and the men in Saigon and Washington are dismissing them, just as their equivalents did during the Korean War, until that moment that we reached for the Yalu, and their border, and then they were behind our soldiers, with their bugles blowing at midnight in the Korean hills. We are acting now as if we will never have to fight someone our own size, which is a state of mind associated with the bully or the madman. We can't go on forever scoring victories over chickens, because sooner or later, they will come home to roost.

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Our 17 Years On the Sly in Deepest Laos

By THOMAS B. ROSS

WASHINGTON (CS-T) — The U.S. involvement in Laos, far from being a new development, has a long and costly history.

The State Dept. acknowledged, in heavily censored testimony released last year by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, that the U.S. spent more than a billion dollars were expended in secret operations dating back to the French withdrawal in 1954.

Sought to Hide Role

The U.S. government has consistently sought to conceal its role in Laos and the Nixon Administration has faithfully followed the practice since the start of the incursion into Laos eight days ago.

"There are no U.S. ground troops or advisers being committed to the ARVN (South Vietnamese army) operations in Laos," says White House Press Secretary Ziegler.

The statement appears on quick reading to be all-inclusive but on closer study turns out to concede the possibility that U. S. military and paramilitary personnel may have been "committed" to other operations in Laos.

In fact, Army Special Forces teams and Central Intelligence Agency units have been in Laos for several years. Most have been operating on the old battlefield in northern Laos but some have been—and evidently still are—in the immediate vicinity of the South Vietnamese incursion.

Since Late 1950s

The CIA has been involved in Laos since the late 1950's. Its first major undertaking was to support Gen. Phoumi Nasavan, chief of the Royal Laotian army, who sought to undermine neutralist Prince Souvanna Phouma, then and now the prime minister.

When the late President Kennedy took office in 1961, the general's troops were being routed by the Communist Pathet Lao and the North Vietnamese. The fall of Vientiane, the capital, seemed imminent.

One of Kennedy's first official acts was to ask his military advisers to draw up a plan for saving Laos. They recommended the introduction of U. S. and, if possible, allied troops. But Kennedy could not get assurances from the Joint Chiefs of Staff that U. S. forces would be able to repel the Communists without resort to tactical nuclear weapons.

And so Kennedy shelved the military plan and launched the diplomatic initiative that led to the 1962 Geneva accords, establishing Laos as a neutral nation with a coalition government, including the Communists.

Pact Quickly Violated

North Vietnam, however, quickly violated the agreement and the U. S. followed suit, expanding its CIA and military operations.

By 1969 the U. S. involvement was so deep that Sen. Symington (D-Mo.), who conducted the inquiry for the Foreign Relations Committee, expressed fear that the U. S. had become committed to Laos' survival.

But William H. Sullivan, Deputy assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, insisted: "Currently, we believe we have no commitment in Laos. Our actions could be reversible today."

NEW YORK TIMES
16 FEB 1971

STAINLE

Aid Rushed to U.S.-Backed Base In Laos After Foe's Penetration

Special to The New York Times

VIENTIANE, Laos, Feb. 15— Reinforcements and supplies were flown today to the American-backed base at Long Tieng, which was penetrated yesterday by North Vietnamese commandos.

"We are determined to hold Long Tieng," Prince Sisouk na Champassak, the deputy defense minister, said at a news conference called to report developments at the base.

He said that several hundred North Vietnamese, attacking before dawn yesterday behind barrages of rocket and mortar fire, reached a base area within one or two miles of the airfield. The field itself was not damaged, he reported, but in two hours of fighting the commandos smashed food depots, the base's medical center, numerous buildings and other properties.

Among the buildings struck by the shelling was the home of Gen. Vang Pao, commander of the military region that includes Long Tieng. The general was not at home at the time.

It was during the commando raid that an American F-4 jet loosed some bombs by mistake within friendly lines. One American stationed at Long Tieng was wounded.

Prince Sisouk and American spokesmen said an investigation was under way to determine whether casualties and damage were caused by the American bombs or by enemy fire.

The commandos, coming un-

der attack by both American and Laotian planes, withdrew from the base a little after 6 A.M., Prince Sisouk reported.

The prince set enemy casualties at 21 killed and reported that a North Vietnamese who was wounded and taken prisoner said the North Vietnamese had suffered heavy losses.

The prisoner was the second taken by Laotian forces during the week. Both are being interrogated. Prince Sisouk said 10 Laotians were killed.

The prince described the situation around Long Tieng and its neighboring positions of Sam Thong and Ban Na as serious, but indicated there appeared to be no immediate threat of their being overrun.

The area is defended mainly by Meo and other tribesmen advised, trained and equipped by specialists from the American Central Intelligence Agency. American advisory, logistics and other liaison personnel work regularly at Long Tieng. Other Americans are also engaged there in relief activity for the United States aid program in Laos.

American transport planes of Air America and Continental Airlines, financed by United States funds, supply the Sam Thong-Long Tieng and other sectors in Laos and haul troops and other materials. Transport planes today were busy replenishing the supplies at Long Tieng.

16 FEB 67

90 Casualties at CIA base

VIENTIANE, Feb. 16 — Laotian military sources reported today that 30 Meo tribesmen were killed and 60 wounded in Saturday's bombing of the CIA's base at Long Cheng, Laos.

American bombers had mistakenly attacked Long Cheng in an attempt to break up a Red siege of the base.

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30 Reported Dead at CIA Base in Laos

By D. E. Ronk

Special to The Washington Post

VIENTIANE, Feb. 15 — Thirty Meo tribesmen were killed and 60 wounded in Saturday's bombardment of the Central Intelligence Agency's base at Long Cheng, Laotian military sources said.

It was reported here that American F-4 bombers mistakenly bombed Long Cheng in an attempt to break up what is being called a siege of the base by Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese forces.

[Reuter reported that the Laotian government sent troop reinforcements to Long Cheng, and Defense Minister Sisouk Na Champassak announced that an investigation was under way into the bombing of the camp.]

Initial reports from Long Cheng said the casualties occurred in a North Vietnamese rocket attack. Origins of the bombardment remain unclear.

Meanwhile, Laotian military sources said today that a North Vietnamese soldier captured late last week revealed that the North Vietnamese command west of the Plain of Jars planned to attack Long Cheng today.

American military sources in Vientiane say the situation around Long Cheng remained stable and quiet Sunday night.

Long Cheng, 77 miles north of Vientiane, is a CIA center for intelligence, logistics and for command of the 6,000 troops of Maj. Gen. Vang Pao in that area. Vang Pao's troops are mixed Meo and Laotian.

Pressures against Long Cheng and Sam Thong, which form a command and logistics complex, have steadily increased in recent weeks. There have been almost daily reports of rocketing and ground probes against the outpost.

A general exodus of tribal residents from the area has begun. Upward of 65,000 tribesmen are moving southwest toward Muong Cha, a refugee center established by the U.S. Agency for International Development, an American official here said. Reliable independent observers confirmed the refugee movement.

Emergency rations are being flown into Muong Cha by Air America planes to meet the demands of a growing refugee population.

Air America pilots estimated that there is a two-week march from Long Cheng to Muong Cha. Edgar Buell, a U.S. aid official in Laos for a decade, says 20 per cent of the people on such marches die en route.

Reports originating at Long Cheng say there has been an increase in Meo army desertions in recent weeks and it is believed soldiers are leaving the base to accompany families on the trek out of the battle zone.

At Ban Son, called site 272 by Americans, observers note an increase in residents and hospital admissions. Ban Son was created as a replacement refugee center for Sam Thong which was abandoned a year ago, then reclaimed, but it remains almost a ghost town, according to recent visitors.

The refugee movements toward Muong Cha rather than Ban Son tends to confirm the belief among observers here that the Meo do not believe Ban Son would offer sufficient refuge.

In a move believed re-

lated to the defensibility of Long Cheng, a new CIA base of operations for guerrilla forces was recently established at Pakkao and a military training center at Phou Koum.

Pakkao is now reportedly surrounded and Air America pilots report receiving enemy fire on approaching the landing strip. An American was reported wounded in a clash there early last week. Nonofficial observers are forbidden entry to Long Cheng, Pakkao and Phou Koum.

Long Cheng, now under siege, is seen by most observers here as the key to Vientiane's northern front.

"If Long Cheng falls, the Meo have fallen, and if the Meo fall there are no northern defenses to the Mekong Plain," one observer said.

"Long Cheng is immensely important psychologically to the Meo," he added. "It's been the only relatively stable place they have known for a decade—they have come to see it as a kind of capital. If it is lost they will be drifting without a home."

Vang Pao's army is called the only viable fighting force allied with the Vientiane government. Nearly all combat operations mounted in the past decade by government forces have involved the Meo. In the past three years they have suffered more than 7,000 killed in action.

Vang Pao himself has frequently told reporters that there are no alternatives to holding the mountains about Long Cheng.

"We must die here," he has been quoted as saying.

CHICAGO, ILL.
NEWS

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FEB. 15 1971

Reds shift fighting to north Laos

By Keyes Beech
Daily News Foreign Service

SAIGON—A week has passed since U.S.-backed South Vietnamese troops began their drive into the Laotian panhandle, and allied observers here are still waiting for the other shoe to drop.

Hanoi may have dropped it on northern Laos, where North Vietnamese troops were reported to be pressing hard on the CIA-backed guerrilla base complex of Long Cheng and Sam Thong, less than 100 air miles northeast of Vientiane.

The thrust at the Long Cheng-Sam Thong complex was not unexpected. It was the cheapest response Hanoi could make to South Vietnam's invasion of the Laotian panhandle in an attempt to cut the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

OBSERVERS here did not doubt that the North Vietnamese can take Long Cheng, which was reported to be under heavy attack, provided they are willing to pay the price. The Meo mountain tribesmen, who for years have harassed the North Vietnamese, have no taste for drawn-out battles. They are hit-and-run guerrillas.

The fall of Long Cheng could be an embarrassment to Laotian Prime Minister Souvanna

Phouma and could pave the way for an attack on Vientiane.

But it was difficult to see how this would benefit the Communists in southern Laos, where their vital supply corridor to Cambodia and South Vietnam is under ground attack for the first time.

ABOUT 14,000 South Vietnamese soldiers, supported by American air power including helicopters, are near Sepone,

hub of the Ho Chi Minh Trail complex, 25 miles from the South Vietnamese border.

Thus far, enemy resistance has been light, but it is expected to harden.

"To protect their supplies they must fight a pitched battle," one intelligence source said. "That means they will have to mass. And that means they will be exposed to our air power. I don't think they are going to like that for very long."

FEB 15 1971

U.S. jets hit CIA base, Red missiles

Daily News Foreign Service

SAIGON — An American fighter-bomber renewed the attack on missile sites in North Vietnam Sunday while other U.S. warplanes accidentally bombed a CIA base in northern Laos.

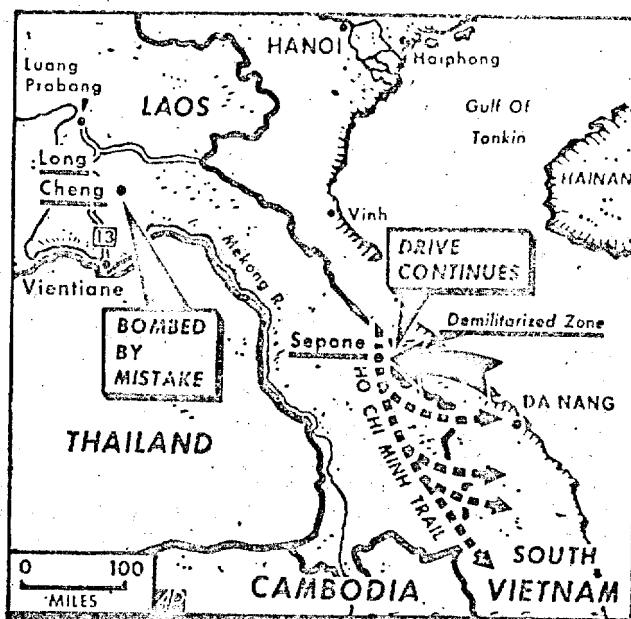
In the ground war, the commander of South Vietnamese troops who moved into Laos to cut the Ho Chi Minh Trail said Monday all Communist traffic on the supply route has been halted.

The attack on the SAM surface-to-air missile site 23 miles north of the demilitarized zone and 5 miles east of the Laotian border was the 11th this year against a North Vietnamese missile site and the first since Feb. 4.

The U.S. Command said the site's radar locked onto a flight of B-52 bombers and an F-105 in the escort fired a Shrike missile at the site in "protective reaction." It was not known if the missile hit anything, the command added.

EARLIER in the day, a flight of Air Force F-4 Phantoms had been summoned from a base in Thailand to help repel a predawn attack in Long Cheng, the base in north central Laos which the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency operates for a guerrilla army of Meo tribesmen.

American sources in Vientiane said Monday 10 Laotians



Map locates Long Cheng in northern Laos where U.S. F-4 fighter-bombers mistakenly bombed the government base. South Vietnamese troops are reported moving slowly along Highway 9 toward Sepone, underlined on map. (AP)

were killed and 20 wounded when the jets dropped anti-personnel bombs on the friendly position at Long Cheng.

The bombs also destroyed a rice depot and a medical storehouse, U.S. sources said.

THE ACCIDENTAL bombing was attributed to the misfiring of a signal flare by an American on the ground at the base.

American sources here said the signal flare landed on a

friendly position and the planes swooped in with the ir bombs.

There were reports that an American CIA agent was wounded, but Sisouk Na Champassack, the Laotian deputy defense minister, denied this.

LT. GEN. Hoang Xuan Lam, commander of South Vietnamese forces in Laos, told newsmen his 16,000 troops were as far as 18 miles inside Laos.

Referring to Communist traffic on the Ho Chi Minh Trail, he said, "I have cut their road, their main supply road," but added that he expected further fighting as the Communists try to regain control of the trail.

Enemy guns have brought down two more U.S. helicopters in southern Laos and field dispatches reported three men killed and three others wounded.

U.S. helicopter gunships went in after the downings and apparently destroyed the enemy gun positions.

Not including the latest casualties, American losses in Laos, by account of the U.S. Command in Saigon, are eight men killed, nine wounded and two missing. Field reports indicate a higher toll, however.

ACCORDING TO the field reports not yet confirmed by the U.S. Command, three men were killed in the downing of a giant cargo helicopter, apparently carrying ammunition. Pilots flying nearby said they saw an air burst, apparently from an antiaircraft weapon, just before the helicopter went down.

The three men wounded were aboard the second helicopter.

One was downed on Sunday; the other Monday.

LAOS INVOLVEMENT EXPLAINED

STATINTL

U.S. Military Seen Abiding by Nixon's Pledge on Troop Use

BY GEORGE McCAATHUR (McArthur)

Times Staff Writer

SAIGON — By almost all the evidence, the U.S. military machine is abiding by President Nixon's pledge not to employ U.S. ground troops in support of the current South Vietnamese drive into Laos.

There may have been some bobbles—though even this is denied by the headquarters of Gen. Creighton W. Abrams—but the policy has been made clear to buck privates and generals alike.

This, however, is only part of the story. In fact, the situation in Laos is almost always so confused you can obtain evidence to support almost anything.

As is usually the case on the Indochinese peninsula, there are several wars being fought simultaneously in Laos, and in varying degrees Americans are involved in all.

First, there is what might be called the old war. It centers on such battlefields as the Plain of Jars and, most recently, the Central Intelligence Agency base camp at Long Cheng, which is under North Vietnamese attack.

In this war, President Nixon's communications director, Herbert G. Klein, recently said that up to 600 U.S. soldiers are involved as advisers. This figure is probably conservative and fails to take into account a good many Americas' civilian and military, who are otherwise imbedded in the Laotian woodwork.

All of these people are under the command of the U.S. ambassador in Vientiane, G. McMurtrie Godley, whose daily activities resemble more those of a general than a civilian ambassador. He reports directly to Washington, bypassing Gen. Abrams' U.S. command in Saigon.

While the claim has sometimes been made that Godley's warriors are not "ground combat troops" it would be difficult to convince some of them.

However, these troops involved in the "old war" are not covered by the White House statements concerning the South Vietnamese drive into the Laotian panhandle.

No Man's Land

That area, until recently, was a sort of no-man's land so far as the Americans were concerned. The CIA conducted some operations there under Godley's nominal direction. Air strikes were cleared by Saigon, Pacific headquarters in Hawaii and sometimes Washington. The area was not within Gen. Abrams' tactical jurisdiction (although Cambodia now is).

However, there was a sometimes varying strip of land in Laos along the border which was marked on Abrams battle maps under the code-name Tiger Hound.

This area was within the tactical scope of Abrams' responsibilities.

Although incursions into this area were forbidden to regular U.S. ground units, no such restrictions applied to the American outfit known as SOG (Studies and Observation Group).

Clandestine Operations

This inoffensively named outfit is openly listed on headquarters phone books (commanded by Army Col. J. S. Sadler) and its headquarters in Saigon is plainly marked (Parking Reserved for SOG). Behind this facade, however, SOG has long conducted clandestine operations in Laos and is still doing so.

At one time those involved numbered some 2,000 Americans and a large number of South Vietnamese.

While SOG operations are far-reaching and certainly many are not known at all, SOG largely conducts clandestine, long-range penetrations into enemy territory (including North Vietnam at one time). Sometimes the patrols are all Vietnamese and sometimes they include Americans.

Some intelligence people insist that SOG personnel could not be classified as "ground combat troops."

Their mission is to get intelligence and avoid fighting though they also sometimes are assigned to sabotage and similar tasks.

While no one will confirm it, it is almost a certainty that SOG patrols were active in preparation for the South Vietnamese strike at the Ho Chi Minh trail which began January 30.

After the South Vietnamese operation had begun—and after President Nixon's official announcement that no U.S. ground troops would be involved

—American correspondents at the old marine base at Khe Sanh saw what was evidently a SOG team coming out of Laos. The men were clinging to extractor cables dangling from the helicopter which had taken them out. Some were believed to be Americans although no one got a conclusive look.

American officers on the scene denied all—they always do where SOG operations or similar long-range penetration groups are involved. The outsider is left to form his own opinions on whether such men are part of ground combat operations.

It appears likely that they were sent in to gather intelligence prior to the South Vietnamese operation. Some are probably still in there. Knowledgeable officials point out, however, that SOG teams would probably be in Laos anyway, whether the South Vietnamese regular forces were invading or not. And these officials say that the number is probably very small.

There are, of course, many other Americans involved in the most recent South Vietnamese operation, known as Lam Son 719. The wording of the White House statements places few restrictions on these men in the view of the Saigon command.

The White House has openly proclaimed that there are no restrictions on air and helicopter support for the South Vietnamese. The number of helicopter missions Sunday numbered 1,000 by official admission. Since the normal chopper crew is four, this means that in the course of the day 4,000 Americans were over Laos—though obviously many of these men made several trips.

Similarly, there is no restriction on medical evacuation helicopters sent in to help the South Vietnamese, or on the use of big supply helicopters.

When choppers are downed and can be recovered, more "riggers" are flown into Laos to get them out. The U.S. command in Saigon says that the South Vietnamese troops on the spot provide the security for these missions.

In an operation as large as the current sweep—involving by conservative figures about 9,000 Americans and 20,000 South Vietnamese—the Nixon rules are going to lead inevitably to some cases of questionable interpretation.

The Saigon command insists, however, that it is abiding strictly by those rules. It has no intention of doing otherwise.

CIA Puts Lao Guerrillas Seeks to Harass Reds Behind Foe Facing the Invasion

By JOSEPH FRIED

Staff Correspondent of THE NEWS

Saigon, Feb. 14 — Several thousand Laotian guerrillas secretly recruited and armed by the Central Intelligence Agency have been infiltrated behind the lines of North Vietnamese troops near Sepon in Laos, reliable sources disclosed tonight.

The mission of the Lao guerrillas is to harass the Communist forces from the rear while the invading South Vietnamese troops drive at them from the front.

The move was disclosed as South Vietnamese troops uncovered fresh caches of North Vietnamese supplies in Laos and twice came under Communist bombardments.

(UPI reported that the commander of South Vietnamese forces in Laos, Lt. Gen. Hoang Xuan Lam, said today that his troops were prepared to stay in Laos until the Ho Chi Minh Trail is "completely paralyzed.")

(Lam's statement appeared to contradict earlier announcements by South Vietnamese President Nguyen van Thieu that the Laos campaign would be of "limited duration.")

The Lao guerrillas, the sources said, had been operating near Pakxe, about 110 miles southwest of Sepon, before being repositioned.

Led by CIA Agents

Their area of operations now lies between Sepon and Muang Phine, a key terminal point where Highways 9 and 23 fuse. Operating in bands, the units, which are separate from the Meo tribesmen, are led by agents of the CIA and possibly by U.S. Special Forces.

The sources said it was hoped that the guerrillas would keep the North Vietnamese off balance and prevent them from adequately preparing their defense against the South Vietnamese attack.

In that operation, infantrymen seized 45 cases of medical supplies and destroyed two tons of rice south-west of Lao Bao. South Vietnamese troops killed six Communists and wounded five in two clashes near Dang Voi. The South Vietnamese troops suffered only four wounded.

4,500 Copter Sorties

In Saigon, the U.S. command reported that a total of 4,500 sorties had been flown by American helicopters in support of the six-day-old invasion of Laos. Military spokesmen continued to withhold the number of tactical air sorties and B-52 bomber raids for security reasons.

The big bombers divided their missions yesterday between Com-

munist targets in Laos and Cambodia.

In Cambodia, South Vietnamese troops killed 23 Communists in three clashes near Suong and Prey Nhey while losing one killed and 12 wounded. Communist gunners fired 95 mortar rounds into the night bivouac of a South Vietnamese unit northeast of Suong. South Vietnamese casualties were light with no fatalities.

Say Jets Hit U.S. Base

Saigon, Feb. 14 (AP)—American warplanes mistakenly bombed a U.S. Central Intelligence Agency base in Laos today, causing heavy damage, reliable sources reported.

It was the second mistaken bombing reported in a week of air operations in Laos.

U.S. Air Force F-4 Phantom fighter-bombers were trying to drive back a North Vietnamese attack on Long Cheng base when their bombs fell on a secret CIA compound and the base airstrip, the sources said. The base, 78 miles northwest of Vientiane, is the headquarters of Gen. Vang Pao's CIA-backed guerrilla army.

Barracks Burned Down

The sources said that the American barracks burned down and at least one CIA agent was wounded. Other bombs reportedly started fires in Long Cheng town.

The U.S. command in Saigon said it had no comment on the report.

Although the fighter-bombers came from bases in Thailand, they are under the tactical control of the U.S. 7th Air Force in South Vietnam.

A week ago, a U.S. Navy fighter-bomber mistakenly dropped scores of bombs the size of hand grenades on South Vietnamese troops massed along the border for a drive into Laos. Six men were killed and 51 wounded.

The situation at Long Cheng, the keystone of Laotian defenses in the north central section of the country, appeared to be worsening. Vang Pao made an urgent trip to Vientiane to seek reinforcements for the garrison but was reported turned down by higher authorities.

C.I.A. BASE IN LAOS REPORTED BOMBED

U.S. Planes Said to Attack Compound in Error

SAIGON, South Vietnam, Feb. 14 (AP)—Reliable sources said today that American planes mistakenly bombed a United States Central Intelligence Agency base in Laos, causing heavy casualties and damage.

The informants, in Vientiane, Laos, said that United States Air Force F-4 Phantom fighter-bombers had been trying to drive back a North Vietnamese attack when their bombs dropped on the secret C.I.A. compound and airstrip at the Long Tieng base. The base, 78 miles northwest of Vientiane, is the headquarters of Gen. Vang Pao's guerrilla army.

The sources said that the American barracks had burned down and at least one American agent had been wounded. Other bombs reportedly started fires in the town of Long Tieng.

Bombs Dropped in Error

The United States Command in Saigon said it had no comment on the report. Although the fighter-bombers came from bases in Thailand, they are under the tactical control of the United States Seventh Air Force in South Vietnam.

A week ago, a United States Navy fighter-bomber mistakenly dropped scores of bombs the size of hand grenades on South Vietnamese troops massed along the border for the drive into Laos. Six men were killed and 51 wounded.

The fighter-bomber was apparently diving to attack North Vietnamese positions on the Laotian side of the border when the cluster bomb dropped prematurely, falling on forward positions of the South Vietnamese.

The situation at Long Tieng, the keystone of Laotian defenses in the north central section of the country, appeared worsening. General Vang Pao made an urgent trip to Vientiane to seek reinforcements but was reported turned down.

The American bombers were called in after North Vietnamese troops launched heavy rocket, mortar and ground assaults against the base. Some of the attackers

Reports from Vientiane said elements of at least two North Vietnamese divisions, totaling about 6,000 troops, had surrounded Long Tieng.

Civilians Flee Town

General Vang Pao is reported to have about 6,000 Meo tribesmen under his command in the Long Tieng area and two Thai artillery batteries. Reliable sources estimated that at least 20,000 refugees had streamed south from Long Tieng in anticipation of heavy fighting.

General Vang Pao is reported to be wondering whether to make a last-ditch stand at Long Tieng or to withdraw into the hills.

In southern Laos, other United States bombers roamed across the east-west axis of the Ho Chi Minh trail attacking North Vietnamese mountain hideouts overlooking Route 9 on the approaches to the town of Sepone.

Elsewhere in Indochina, North Vietnamese gunners fired nearly 100 mortar shells into the night bivouac of a South Vietnamese unit seven miles north-east of Suong, along Route 7.

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FEB 15 1971

Air Force Raids CIA's Laos Base

Saigon — Two Air Force F-4 Phantoms bombed a Central Intelligence Agency base in Laos by mistake yesterday, killing 10 persons and wounding 20, according to American sources in Vientiane.

The U. S. Command said the American planes dropped their bombs short of the intended enemy target and caused "an unknown number of friendly casualties." American sources in Vientiane said all of the killed and wounded were Meo tribesmen. There had been earlier reports that one of the wounded was American.

The base at Long Cheng in north central Laos is operated by the U. S. agency for Gen. Vang Pao's guerilla army of Meo tribesmen.

Flare Mistire

The Air Force planes were summoned to the air strike to help repel a predawn attack on Long Cheng base. The jets apparently dropped their bombs too early because of the accidental misfiring of a signal flare by an American on the ground at the base, American sources in Vientiane told United Press International.

Official sources in Vientiane said the mistake bombing and the enemy mortar and sapper attack wiped out a medical storage depot, a rice warehouse, several other buildings and a dozen houses in the town of Long Cheng.

Other sources told the Associated Press most of the damage at the base was caused by North Vietnamese mortars, while the air strike was responsible for many of the civilian casualties.

Sources said the CIA barracks was among the buildings destroyed, that it burned down.

Antipersonnel Bombs

The Phantoms came from bases in Thailand and the bombs they dropped included anti personnel bombs which fragment on explosion like grenades, sources said. The planes were under the tactical

control of the U. S. 7th Air Force in South Vietnam.

A week ago, a U. S. Navy fighter-bomber mistakenly dropped scores of antipersonnel bombs on South Vietnamese troops along the border of Laos, killing six and wounding 51. A premature bomb-release was blamed.

Vang Pao is reported to have about 6,000 Meo tribesmen under his command in the Long Cheng area plus two Thai artillery batteries.

Reliable sources estimated that at least 20,000 refugees have streamed southward from Long Cheng in anticipation of heavy fighting.

Base Threatened

Long Cheng is considered the keystone of Laotian defenses in the north central section of the country. Vang Pao made an urgent trip to Vientiane to seek reinforcements for the garrison but was reported turned down by higher authorities.

The American bombers were called in after North Vietnamese troops launched heavy rocket, mortar and ground assaults against the base. Some of them drove through the perimeter.

Newsmen refer to the base as top secret. Visitors are barred.

Other Action

In other Indochina action, the commander of South Vietnamese troops who moved into Laos to cut the Ho Chi Minh trail, Lt. Gen. Hoang Xuan Lam, told newsmen today his 16,000 troops were as far as 18 miles inside Laos. Referring to Communist traffic on the network of roads and trails, he said, "I have cut their road, their main supply road."

UPI correspondent Robert Sullivan reported from the northern South Vietnamese city of Quang Tri that a twin-rotor U. S. Chinook helicopter was shot down inside Laos today while supporting the South Vietnamese drive against the Communist supply routes.

There were no details of how many men were aboard the big cargo-carrying helicopter used to sling-carry artillery pieces and heavy loads of ammunition across the border, Sullivan said.

In southern Laos, other U. S. bombers roamed across the east-west axis of the Ho Chi Minh trail attacking North Vietnamese mountain hideouts overlooking Highway 9 on the approaches to the town of Sepone.

"We're trying to clear Route 9," a senior U. S. officer said "We're putting considerable effort in there." Scores of B-52s and smaller tactical fighter-bombers took part in the strikes.

South Vietnamese headquarters said the main column was within 12 miles of Sepone, which is 25 miles from the Vietnamese border.

Cutoff Reported

Associated Press correspondent Michael Putzel reported from Quang Tri in northern South Vietnam that South Vietnamese convoys were remaining south of the border, the third successive day without a border crossing. This led to speculation that the North Vietnamese had cut Highway 9 behind the advancing South Vietnamese tanks and armored personnel carriers.

"We think there are war stockpiles in the Sepone area," one officer said. "It is a way station for North Vietnamese troops. It is a worthwhile target. If Sepone is secured and the airfield is rebuilt, it can be used as a base inside Laos for conducting South Vietnamese operations."

The South Vietnamese drive by more than 10,000 troops with full American air support began last Monday.

4,500 Missions

The U. S. Command disclosed additional details about Americans air support. It said that U. S. helicopter gunships and troop lift, supply lift, medical evacuation and command helicopters flew 4,500 missions into Laos during the first six days.

The command did not give the number of sorties flown by fixed-wing planes, but sources said 400 to 500 combat missions were being flown each day throughout all of Laos.

Elsewhere in Indochina, 20,000 South Vietnamese troops continued a parallel drive against North Vietnamese and Viet Cong sanctuaries in eastern Cambodia, more than 300 miles farther to the south. These sanctuaries are supplied by the Ho Chi Minh trail and its extensions. Sharp fighting was reported.

THE WORLD



U.S. VEHICLES IN LANG VEI NEAR THE LAOTIAN BORDER DURING OPERATION DEWEY CANYON II

JACK HARNETT

Indochina: A Cavalryman's Way Out

SUDDENLY, the Vietnamese ground war came back to life.

For three years, the northwest corner of South Viet Nam had been a misty, mountainous no man's land. Khe Sanh, where 6,000 Marines had endured a bloody 77-day siege in 1968, was a moonscape of shell craters flecked by twisted steel runway sheets and discarded shell casings. A few miles to the south, the Rockpile was overrun by weeds. On a bluff overlooking the Laotian border, the hulks of battered Soviet tanks still lay rusting at the Lang Vei Special Forces camp, where ten Americans and 225 South Vietnamese died in a single night of hand-to-hand combat.

Last week the forbidding ruins, relics of an earlier and rougher stage in the war, were abruptly jolted from their silence. From jumping-off points 50 miles away, long columns of tanks, trucks and armored personnel carriers ground into the rugged western reaches of Quang Tri province, raising towering columns of dust. Overhead, gunships darted around in search of enemy troops. Giant Chinook helicopters flapped into long-abandoned bases, depositing men and massive earth-moving machines. At Lang Vei, a half-track pulled up loaded with expectant-looking G.I.s. One soldier had a single word painted on his helmet: "Laos?"

Good question. All week, rumors of an invasion coursed through the world's major capitals, and frenzied speculation focused on what the U.S. was up to. By keeping everyone guessing—including the Communists—the Administration infuriated more than a few Congressmen, diplomats and newsmen. But it also pulled off a kind of psychological-warfare coup.

Ten months ago, Richard Nixon took the world by surprise when, pointer in hand, he went on national television to announce, in too apocalyptic terms, the ex-

pansion of the war into Cambodia. Last week he said nothing at all about the vast operation under way in Military Region I, South Viet Nam's northernmost war area. When a six-day "embargo" on news from the area was lifted, more than 50,000 U.S. and South Vietnamese troops were involved in strikes that not only spanned the length of South Viet Nam but vitally affected its neighbors as well. Was the main object to sever the famed Ho Chi Minh Trail? Was it a feint to throw the Communists off balance? Was an invasion scheduled and then delayed because Nixon developed a case of cold feet—as some sources suggested but the Administration denied? Whatever the case, the operation suggested that in the process of retreating from South Viet Nam, the U.S. was churning up all of Indochina even more thoroughly than it did when the big American buildup began half a decade ago.

Pulling Up Short

By week's end, three separate operations had unfolded. In the coastal provinces on the Gulf of Siam, ARVN (for Army of the Republic of Viet Nam) troops prepared to slice into new infiltration routes that the Communists had been trying to extend from the Cambodian seaport of Kep into the southern part of South Viet Nam. Northwest of Saigon in Tay Ninh province, 18,000 ARVN armored cavalrymen surged over the border into the Parrot's Beak and the Fishhook. Both sanctuaries were cleared out last spring, but now Communist troops were beginning to drift back.

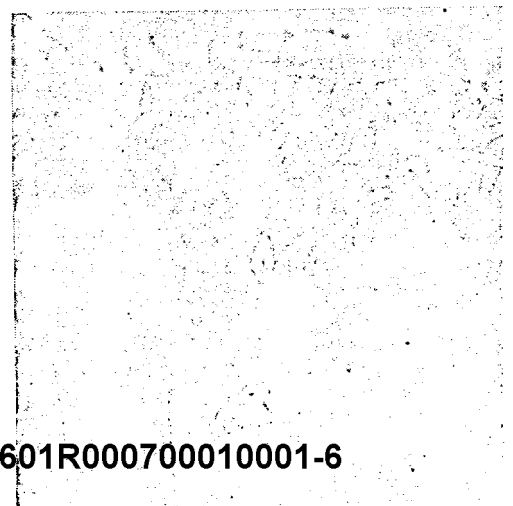
The main thrust—and the one shrouded in mystery—developed in rugged, sparsely populated and Communist-infested Military Region I (formerly known as I Corps). There the U.S. command launched a series of attacks on 2,000 and 9,000 U.S. troops, plus at least

600 choppers. The juggernaut advanced westward on, above and around Route 9, an all-weather dirt road running 40 miles across South Viet Nam into Laos. At Khe Sanh, road graders rolled across the red clay plateau as troops patched one shell-torn runway and built a second to handle up to 40 big C-130 transports a day. Long-disused combat bases with names like Vandergrift, Bastogne and Veghel, snaking south toward the A Shau Valley, were also reopened. Significantly, many of the U.S. troops involved in the operation were told that they could expect to remain for one to three months.

Farther west, Lang Vei was set up as an advance command post for the massive operation, code-named Dewey Canyon II.* Barely 200 yards from the border, a sign was erected: WARNING: NO U.S. PERSONNEL BEYOND THIS POINT. The caveat reflected congress-

* Its predecessor, a 1969 search-and-destroy operation conducted in the same area, was to have been named Dewey Canyon for the heavy fog that enshrouds the craggy terrain, but somebody slipped up on the spelling.

SOUTH VIETNAMESE TROOPS



sional prohibition of the use of American ground troops outside South Viet Nam. One shirtless G.I., bathing in a tributary of the Pone River, which forms the border with Laos, said with a smile: "Don't worry, this is Vietnamese water." ARVN troops, too, pulled up short of the border.

Vaguely Orwellian

There was every indication that for the South Vietnamese, it was only a pause. At least one and perhaps two cross-border thrusts aimed at immobilizing the Ho Chi Minh Trail seemed imminent. One obvious target lay right down Route 9—Tchepong, a Communist staging area and a key control point for the Ho Chi Minh Trail 25 miles inside the Laotian panhandle. A second possibility was that ARVN troops would be helicoptered to the mountainous Bolovens Plateau, which forms the western flank of the trail. Their likely objective: Attopeu and Saravane, two Laotian river towns captured last spring by North Vietnamese troops, apparently in an effort to secure the trail's flanks and provide a starting point for a riverine route into Cambodia.

Last week's action, White House Press Secretary Ronald Ziegler advised, was only "the first phase of the operation." Until mid-April, when Nixon is due to announce a new U.S. troop withdrawal, a series of jabs at enemy stockpiles and supply lines can be expected. The object, the Administration insists, is to cover the U.S. retreat that has been under way since June 1969, when Nixon announced the beginning of a phased withdrawal of the 543,000 troops in Viet Nam. Since the manpower escalator stopped, the U.S. troop level has been reduced by more than 40%; by May 1, fewer than 284,000 troops will remain. Among them, only 40,000 will be regularly assigned to combat duty.

In the process of covering the retreat, however, the Administration has raised the question: Has the U.S. got into the position of invading Cambodia to ease the pressure on South Viet Nam and then sponsoring an invasion of Laos to ease the pressure on Cam-

bodia? Many Americans who believe that Nixon is serious about getting out of Viet Nam nonetheless are unsettled by the way in which the war has slopped over into previously neutral areas, and especially by the vaguely Orwellian-sounding argument that the U.S. must get deeper into the war in order to get out faster and safely.

Actually, up to a point, the Pentagon makes a logical case for this strategy: to keep the enemy off balance and off American backs as the exodus goes on. U.S. muscle in Viet Nam is shrinking by the month, and that is the operative fact. Thus, in a sense, the President is like the fellow backing out of the saloon with both guns blazing.

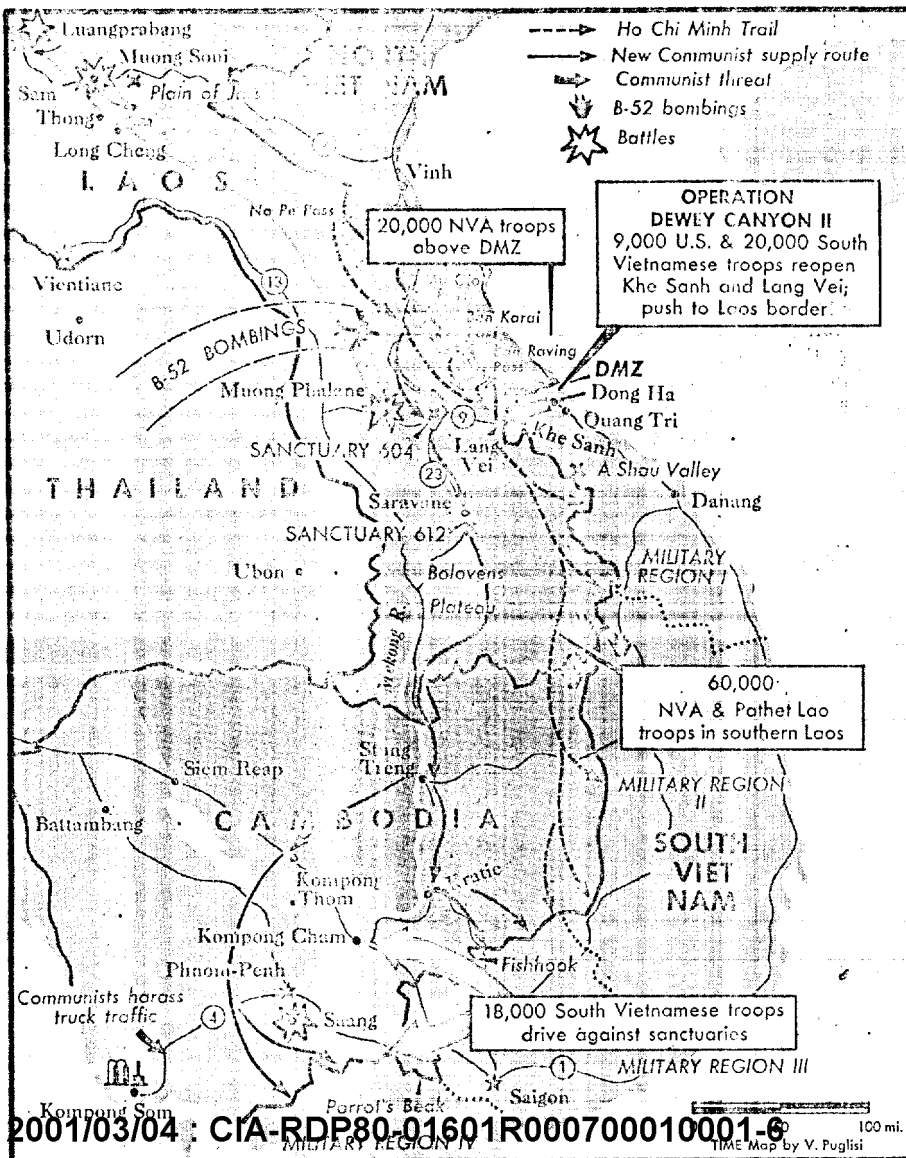
Nixon's surrogate in this enterprise—and the man who must actually wield the guns on the way out of the bar—is General Creighton W. ("Abe") Abrams, 56, the U.S. commander in Viet Nam. A veteran tank commander with a jut-jawed, no-nonsense air, Abrams is pursuing a strategy of withdrawal that would be familiar to any student of cavalry operations: give way gradually but strike continually at the enemy, harass his

troops, destroy his supplies and keep him off balance. Moreover, Abrams is trying to replace U.S. ground forces with U.S. planes and South Vietnamese soldiers. He means to use these like a cavalry troop, anywhere that the Communist forces are vulnerable.

Since the Cambodian port of Kompong Som (formerly Sihanoukville) was closed to them last spring, the Communists have had to rely solely on the Ho Chi Minh Trail to move men and supplies down to South Viet Nam and Cambodia. With the advent of the dry season, they have made fuller use of the trail than ever before (see box, page 28). American commanders have longed to cut the trail ever since the U.S. entered the war. Contingency plans providing for everything from hit-and-run attacks to a permanent troop barrier across the route were drawn up in 1965, but there were formidable arguments against such moves. Aside from the political consequences, there was the fact that at least two divisions might be needed to secure the trail for any length of time.

Mulling over the future prospects of

ARRIVING AT KHE SANH



Vietnamization. The Communists could last November of what kind of trouble the long quiescent Communists could be expected to stir up—and when. The answer: Viet Nam's hour of maximum danger would come late this year, with the onset of the 1971-72 dry season. According to White House thinking, the Communists would devote most of their energies in the current dry season to replenishing their men and supplies. Then, next year, Hanoi's General Vo Nguyen Giap would be able to rev up the war from Mao's Phase II (small-unit guerrilla war) to Phase III (large-unit warfare). One objective would be to hit the Saigon regime at a time when the U.S. was able to throw few troops to its support. The other objective, in this hypothesis, would be to inflict a mortal political wound on Nixon by means of *Tet*-style attacks, thus paving the way for the election of a new President inclined to a hastier exit from South Viet Nam.

Ranger Probes

To crimp the Communist prospects for 1972, the allies would have to stem the flow of men and supplies—especially supplies—in 1971. Shortly after the turn of the year, Nixon decided to take action. Just before Defense Secretary Melvin Laird left on his three-day trip to Saigon in early January, Nixon laid down his general objectives.

In Saigon, Laird discussed Nixon's worries with Abrams. The first signs that something big was afoot came in mid-January, soon after Laird departed. General Cao Van Vien, chairman of

the South Vietnamese Joint Chiefs of Staff, told his subordinates that there would be no more talking to the press—particularly about operations in Military Region I. Soon after, Abrams met Vien and Major General Tran Van Minh, the South Vietnamese air force chief, to discuss strategy. The three met twice more in the next two days.

After his last session with Vien & Co., Abrams and white-haired U.S. Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker swept into President Thieu's Saigon Palace—brushing past a phalanx of startled Vietnamese officials who had been waiting to offer the President *Tet* holiday greetings. Not until four days later, when they were summoned to an urgent briefing at MACV headquarters in Saigon, did reporters have any idea that something was afoot.

Intelligence officers ticked off indications of a major Communist buildup, including a flood of supplies in the Laotian pipeline. According to the briefers, 90% of the matériel earmarked for South Viet Nam was being shunted into I Corps. The buildup obviously presaged trouble in the coastal cities of Hue and Danang. But MACV asserted that it also posed a "serious threat" to U.S. troop withdrawals and that a "pre-emptive offensive" was planned with "limited objectives." Few reporters in

verbal screen for a direct ARVN assault on the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

For weeks as many as 1,000 South Vietnamese rangers had been probing deep into the panhandle to size up the task of taking on the trail. Moreover, for some time, 3,500 mercenaries known as Jungle Tigers and trained in Laos by the CIA have been venturing occasionally into the trail area and Communist supply depots in northern Cambodia.

The U.S. command not only slapped an embargo on news of Dewey Canyon, it also imposed an embargo on reporting the fact that an embargo had been imposed. In Washington only a handful of top policymakers knew what was up anyway. This time, there was none of the hour-by-hour agonizing at Camp David that contributed to the tense atmosphere in Washington during the Cambodian foray. Nixon, in fact, left for a long weekend at Caneel Bay in the Virgin Islands.

Abroad, particularly in Communist capitals, speculation was presented as fact. In Moscow, Soviet Premier Alexei Kosygin charged flatly that American and South Vietnamese troops were involved in "an outrageous invasion" of Laos. In the U.S., the response was remarkably temperate. About the angriest reaction came from Democratic Presidential hopeful George McGovern, who blasted the Administration for imposing "the longest news blackout of the war." Added he: "What a way to run a war! What a way to manage a free society!" The U.S. command in Saigon defended the embargo as essential to keeping the enemy guessing about allied intentions.

The mildest reaction of all came from the man whose country's sovereignty

was violated by the supposed invasion. In Vientiane, Laotian Premier Souvanna Phouma was surprised by the invasion stories—he had to call U.S. Ambassador G. McMurtrie Godley to check them out. The Premier said he was opposed to any foreign intervention but added blandly: "We have no control over the Ho Chi Minh Trail area. That is an affair between the North Vietnamese and the Americans."

By the time Nixon returned from the Caribbean, the Dewey Canyon troops were poised at the Laotian border. In the Oval Office, the President met for more than an hour with his top National Security Council advisers—Laird, Secretary of State William Rogers, CIA Director Richard Helms, Foreign Policy Adviser Henry Kissinger and Admiral Thomas Moorer, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs. Ellsworth Bunker, in Washington for consultations, also sat in.

Without a thrust into Laos and a strike at the trail, Dewey Canyon II did not seem to make much sense. The expenditure of resources was enormous; by week's end helicopter pilots had logged 493 gunship attacks, 216 air cavalry missions, and 4,025 separate lifts of troops and supplies. But the initial re-

sults did not seem to justify the outlay. In the first five days, the operation's 29,000 troops destroyed two trucks, exploded one ammunition storage area and found one 57-mm. recoilless rifle, the mount for a mortar and a few dozen 105-mm. artillery shells.

Buying Time

Even so, U.S. commanders insisted that the very spookiness of the operation had achieved solid results simply by alarming the Communists. There were reports that enemy troops had concentrated at key positions along the trail to prepare defenses—and made tempting targets for extremely effective air attacks. Merely by moving up to the border, the Dewey Canyon II forces may have knocked the Communists off balance.

Just as all actions were rated in terms of body counts back in the war's Pleistocene era, they are now gauged in terms of buying time. Originally, it was figured that the Cambodian foray would "buy" no more than eight months of freedom from significant enemy activity. Now White House aides are saying that in Military Region III (the Saigon area) and IV (the Delta), where war has all but faded away, the buy may amount to 18 months. The massive operation that reopened Cambodia's vital Route 4 last month is judged to have bought a month to six weeks of time for Phnom-Penh. If ARVN troops were to stage periodic raids on the Ho Chi Minh Trail until the monsoon rains return in May, the flow of supplies and Communist operations in both South Viet Nam and Cambodia would be crippled for months. In round figures, says Abrams, the trail is worth a year, and some strategists insist it may be worth twice as much.

To many critics, Abrams' math does not add up. Getting involved in wars in Cambodia and Laos as well as South Viet Nam could make U.S. withdrawal more difficult, not easier. "By edging Cambodia closer to war than it had been," says TIME Saigon Bureau Chief Jon Larsen, "we inevitably moved it from a secondary concern to one almost as intertwined with our interests in Indochina as South Viet Nam. The same will be true of Laos." Another problem is that if ARVN is to be called upon regularly for cavalry duty in Cambodia, and possibly Laos as well, it might be spread perilously thin. U.S. air, artillery and logistic support will be needed to bolster ARVN's actions beyond its borders, even if no U.S. ground troops are sent in. Finally, Abrams' wider war almost certainly means that Laos and Cambodia will be torn apart. Quite aside from the human cost, it is unlikely that any neutralist political force—or neutralist government—will have much chance of surviving in these countries under these conditions. Yet some critics believe that just such neutralist governments offer the only long-range hope for a political settlement.

three main

combat areas are in mixed condition: LAOS. As the struggle over the Ho Chi Minh Trail heated up, so did the "forgotten war" in Laos, where some 65,000 Royal Lao troops and Meo tribesmen have fought a seesaw seasonal struggle for almost a quarter of a century. Traditionally, the non-Communist forces have gained ground during the monsoons, when the Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese regulars in Laos are unable to move supplies. With the arrival of the current dry season, it was the Communists' turn to advance, as usual. The 80,000 Communist troops in Laos made the most of it. Moving quickly, they captured Muong Phalane, routed government troops from Muong Suoi on the edge of the Plain of Jars, began to encircle Luang Prabang, the royal capital, then marched on Long Cheng, site of a large CIA base and headquarters of General Vang Pao's weary army of Meo Special Forces. In the south the Bolovens Plateau was under particular pressure. Communist troops, in the words of a U.S. official in Vientiane, have been "oozing westward" in recent weeks, increasing their force level from nine battalions to 13 or 14. A South Vietnamese drive into Laos might well cause the Communists to step up their own westward push.

There were several reasons for the vigorous Communist advance. On one level, it was a punitive jab at Souvanna Phouma. The Premier is anxious to end the Laotian fighting, which has forced an incredible number of refugees into U.S.-run camps: 700,000, or 30% of the population. But hard-liners on the right threaten real trouble if Souvanna should open serious peace talks with the Pathet Lao or if he should suffer another major defeat. "If Long Cheng or the Bolovens Plateau falls," said one Laotian general, "Souvanna is finished." The Communist advance was also a signal to Abrams that if the U.S. menaced the Ho Chi Minh Trail, the Pathet Lao and the North Vietnamese would take over most of the rest of Laos.

Vientiane, the administrative capital, is showing signs of nervousness. Last week there was the rare sight of Royal Lao troops and a pair of vintage American armored cars passing through the city on the way to the airport. Said one diplomat: "After that attack on Phnom-Penh, you can never be sure."

CAMBODIA. Last spring's drive on the Communist sanctuaries was a short-term military success. But now Cambodia is beginning to look like a long-term liability, with 50,000 North Vietnamese and Viet Cong troops roaming over much of the country. Cambodian forces were taking another beating last week, this time in a battle with NVA regulars at Saang, 18 miles south of the capital.

North Vietnamese units have begun to return to the old Communist sanctuaries in Kompong Cham and Kratie provinces, hard by the South Vietnamese border. COSVN, the Communist command post that President Nixon held

up as the Grail of last spring's Cambodian operation, is now said to be located in Kratie. South Viet Nam's President Thieu is worried enough about the return of the Communists to his own country to have set a limit of 20,000 or so ARVN troops in Cambodia at any one time. But that raises the question of whether Premier Lon Nol, even with his army swollen to 160,000 men, would be able to survive without more substantial assistance from Saigon and the U.S. Indeed, one of the objectives of an effort to cut the Ho Chi Minh Trail would be to relieve Communist pressure on the Phnom-Penh regime.

Cambodia's students, intellectuals, businessmen and bonzes still back the "government of salvation," and the army, though poorly armed and undertrained, shows great spirit. Whether that will be enough to hold off Communist regulars is doubtful. As Cam-

Viet Nam's army is "on a fighting par with U.S. troops."

Saigon's troops have replaced U.S. units along the border areas and around the capital itself. Except in Military Region I, there has been little in the way of enemy activity. Nevertheless, a new cockiness prevails, and according to Sir Robert Thompson, Nixon's favorite consultant on counterinsurgency, ARVN is doing very well indeed. "The fact that you're able to keep withdrawing troops at the current rate [about 13,000 G.I.s a month], that U.S. casualties are down to well under 50 a week, that even South Vietnamese casualties are down—this is the measure of it," says Thompson. "The balance of power has shifted as between the enemy's capability and the South Vietnamese capability."

Still, real Communist strength remains the big question. Over the past two years, say pacification experts, the

JACK HARBETT



G.I.s ERECTING TENT FRAMES AT QUANG TRI ARMY BASE
Backing out with guns blazing.

bodian Poet Makhali Phal writes of her 7,000,000 countrymen, they are:

- A people who do not weigh heavy
In the hollow of the palm of the
Mekong;*
- A people who do not have boats,
but pirogues;*
- A people who have, as fortresses,
Only temples in ruins;*
- A people who have, for an army,
Only their Thought and Faith.*

SOUTH VIET NAM. Since Tet 1968, South Viet Nam's armed forces have grown from 730,000 men to a well-equipped force of 1,100,000. All told, Saigon has more than 2,000,000 men under arms, or more than 11% of the population. Eventually, the South Vietnamese air force is to be expanded to 50 squadrons, which would rank it seventh in size in the world. How good is ARVN? Abrams likes to tell visiting firemen in Saigon that 70% of South

Viet Cong "infrastructure" has been whittled down from 128,000 active cadres to 62,000. Nevertheless, the Viet Cong are still able to collect taxes, recruit troops, and cut practically any road in the country, at least temporarily. Knowledgeable observers smile at onward-and-upward statistics raving the security of South Viet Nam's towns and hamlets. Solid assessments of enemy strength are made difficult because the Communists in North Viet Nam may be deliberately lying low. Directives have been intercepted ordering Viet Cong to do nothing to make American commanders think twice about the wisdom of pulling out.

In view of such directives, and ARVN's growing strength, need the U.S. really fear that Hanoi would pounce as soon as the American forces were small enough to be pulled out? Could the U.S. really be able to protect its forces? Obviously, the Pentagon insists that

the risk would be too great. But couldn't the U.S. set a date for total withdrawal, say by Christmas 1971, and in return obtain from Hanoi a safe conduct to the beaches? In Paris the Communists have hinted that they would arrange such a safe-conduct, but only if the U.S. sets a firm date for withdrawal of all troops, not just ground combat troops.

It can be argued that no safe-conduct from Hanoi could be trusted—even though it might be in Hanoi's interest to keep it. A more convincing objection to the idea is that complete U.S. withdrawal, including support forces, would seriously undermine if not destroy the Saigon regime. Thus it is likely that Abrams' "cavalry" actions are not necessary, primarily to protect U.S. troops but to bolster the Saigon regime and assure its survival. If so, that could be an entirely legitimate goal of U.S. policy (though its cost might be subject to debate). But that is not the way the Administration presents the matter.

The Pentagon marshals massive statistics to prove that Hanoi is increasing

its flow of supplies, and must be plotting a major offensive that would endanger U.S. troops. As a result, many longtime critics have come around to the view that perhaps the Nixon strategy is the only safe approach. As Vermont's Republican Senator George Aiken said last week: "As long as the trend is downward in Viet Nam, as long as U.S. forces don't go into Cambodia or Laos, most of the people up here [in Congress] are saying: 'Let's give Nixon a chance.' I think the President is on safe ground now."

That remains to be seen. Next year's dry season may prove to be the most trying test of the Administration's strategy. The North Vietnamese have been quiet for long periods before, only to erupt in disruptive offensives such as *Tet*. U.S. analysts are convinced that General Giap is planning a replay of 1968 for 1972. They are equally convinced that General Abrams can head him off at the pass—somewhere in Laos, perhaps, or maybe Cambodia—or possibly even in South Viet Nam.

The General v. "The System"

ABRAMS has often summarized his tactical aims in the war as "targeting the enemy's system." He means that U.S. forces should not only seek out and fight Communist troops, but also destroy the elaborate apparatus that supports them—rest camps, ammunition caches, underground communication centers and especially supply lines. Abrams believes that killing one man with maps and plans is worth killing ten with rifles—because without the maps and plans the ten will not know what to do. In massing troops near the Ho Chi Minh Trail last week, the U.S. commander was obeying his long-felt instinct to strike at the very heart of "the system."

In the nearly three years since he was named top officer in Viet Nam, succeeding General William C. Westmoreland (now the Army's Chief of Staff), Abrams has presided over and shaped fundamental changes in the day-to-day tactics used to fight the Communists. Where Westmoreland was a search-and-destroy and count-the-bodies man, Abrams proved to be an interdict-and-weigh-the-rice man. Where Westmoreland insisted on outnumbering the enemy three or four to one with massive, multibrigade maneuvers, Abrams matched battalion against battalion and brigade against brigade. If a unit made contact with the enemy, he hustled in reinforcements aboard helicopters—a technique that came to be known as "eagle flight" tactics. He laced the countryside with small, defensible fire bases. Heavy fighting areas were provided with overlapping artillery support, enabling units in trouble to radio for fire-power instantly.

Abrams ordered commanders to study enemy habits meticulously, then imitate them. As a result

ing paths through the jungle in the hope of finding a hidden base, hospital or supply trail. Says a commander who supports Abrams' ideas fully: "Just focusing on knocking out men is illusory—they will just send more men down. But if you can get the system screwed up, the enemy can be champing at the bit to fight but unable to do anything." That combination has proved effective. Along with ARVN's growing capabilities and the spread of the war into Cambodia, Abrams' quick-strike tactics are responsible for making South Viet Nam much more secure from Communist attack than in 1968.

Abrams works in the huge headquarters building of MACV (Military Assistance Command, Viet Nam), next to Saigon's airport. He is at work at 7:30 a.m. seven days a week. In his map-lined office he dips regularly into one of the cigar humidors that surround him. He confers three or four times a week with U.S. Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker, three times with General Cao Van Vien, the South Vietnamese chief of staff, and even more often with his intelligence officer. Whenever he can, he choppers to the field and once a month flies to Bangkok to visit his wife.

After leaving the office, Abrams often plays a game of badminton with an aide and then retires to his modular housing unit 100 yards from the head-

quarters compound. He seldom attends parties, and one of his aides claims he has never seen the rumpled general in his dress greens. After dinner, he sometimes reads, usually history; his last books were two volumes of James T. Flexner's biography of George Washington and Catherine Drinker Bowen's history of the 1787 Constitutional Convention, *Miracle at Philadelphia*. More often, he switches on his stereo, frequently so loud that visitors have to ask their host to turn down the volume in order to hear him.

His taste in music runs from Wagner to Welk, but he is especially fond of the classics, which may help explain why the Armed Forces Radio Network doubled its classical programming soon after his promotion. Abrams often uses musical terms and once managed to outline his whole battle plan for Viet Nam with a musical analogy. "A great conductor will rehearse his orchestra until all the members are skilled enough to do a perfect job. That's the way a military operation should be regarded. An air strike or a round of artillery must come at an exact moment, just as in a symphony one stroke of a drum must come at an exact millisecond of time."

The Indispensable Lifeline

THE current allied offensive got started after military analysts warned that the Communists were engaged in the greatest overland supply effort of the Viet Nam War. Men and material were being transported, they said, over the route that had long since become a kind of guerrillas' Appian Way in Southeast Asia: the Ho Chi Minh Trail. The U.S. has been interdicting the trail since 1964, and last week completed its 122nd consecutive day of intensive bombing. The holocaust has frequently slowed down the Communists but seems incapable of stopping them.

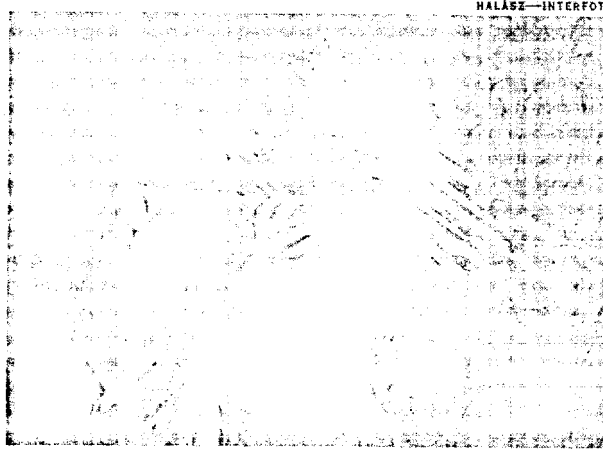
The trail is like a 4,000-mile spider web, a tangled maze of routes ranging from yard-wide footpaths to short sections of gravel-paved highway two lanes wide. The system threads westward out of three North Vietnamese passes (the Mu Gia, Ban Karai and Ban Raving), which cut through the Annamese mountains, then loops south and east for 200 miles, reaching a width of 50 miles at some points. Studded with lumpy hillocks, the trail network cuts through the precipitous terrain and dense, triple-canopied jungle growth.

Traffic down the trail always increases after the monsoon season ends in September or October. It reaches a peak from February to April, the last months when supplies can leave the north and still reach their destination before rains again make the roads impassable in May. This year the trail's cargo has become more vital than ever to the Communists. Since last March, they have been denied the use of the Cambodian port of Kompong Som, where some 75% of the war material for all of South Viet Nam used to be shipped by sea. Thus, except for what they can forage, the some 400,000 Communist troops in southern Laos, Cambodia and South Viet Nam are almost totally dependent on the trail for their supplies and reinforcements.

Troop infiltration, which has run as high as 17,000 a month in the current dry season, is hardest to detect. Recruits are marched single file along foot trails at intervals of five yards, each wearing camouflage greenery. The trip takes between three and five months with oc-

casional stops in primitive way stations for rest and resupply. The attrition rate due to disease, bombing and desertion runs as high as 15%; yet Hanoi keeps sending replacements.

Truck traffic is equally relentless. Each night a fleet of some 1,000 convoy trucks rolls out from hiding places in limestone caves and bunkers and moves south. Each driver covers the same 15- to 40-mile stretch of road again and again until he can negotiate it blindfolded. There is a reason for that: headlights must be dimmed or even doused for much of the trip because of marauding aircraft. At the end of his run,



COMMUNIST SOLDIER IN LAOTIAN WILDFNESS

a driver unloads his cargo at a transfer point and heads back for more. Each section, called a *binh tram* (logistical support) system, is under a separate command. "The man who runs a *binh tram* system is Mr. Greyhound," says a U.S. Air Force officer. "He says 'Send them down' or 'Hold them.'" Shipping time for any one load: about two months.

To cut off that antlike flow, the U.S. has committed more than half of its airpower in Indochina to missions over the trail—about 380 sorties on an average day during the dry season. The raids are conducted by fighter-bombers, C-119 and C-130 gunships and giant B-52 Stratofortresses. Often they must dodge fire from some 3,000 artillery emplacements scattered along the trail. In addition to pilot reconnaissance, the Air Force is relying increasingly on an arsenal of electronic gadgetry developed

to see and hear through darkness and vegetation. Two gadgets that have recently come to public attention in congressional testimony:

► Igloo White is an Air Force ground sensor system modeled on the Navy's acoustic submarine detectors. The sensors are dropped during overflights and either catch in tree branches or bury themselves in the ground. Two main types have been used: seismic, which detect ground movements caused by moving trucks and even marching soldiers, and acoustic, which use tiny microphones so sensitive that they can clearly transmit human voices (several conversations have been picked up among Communist troops discussing how to dismantle the sensor). Information from the sensors is relayed by planes to ground-based monitors stationed in South Viet Nam, who radio the coordinates to an aircraft for bombing.

► Pave Way is a targeting system using the laser beam. Once an object has been identified, an aircraft equipped with Pave Way can "fix" it with a brilliant laser light, then release bombs that are fitted with special light-seeking devices. The bombs are automatically guided to the laser-illuminated target.

The net effect of this massive effort, by the U.S. military's own estimate, is to keep about half of the Communists' supplies from reaching the South. As a result of the air campaign, U.S.

commanders believe, the Communists must tightly ration their ammunition, which helps keep the level of fighting down. Of course, the Communists have the advantage most of the time of being free to set their own schedule for attack. "We make him pay a price for every ton," says an Air Force spokesman about the enemy. "But he never runs out of roads. It just drives you nuts."

The only way to eliminate traffic completely on the trail, military authorities argue, is to cut it on the ground. That, of course, may well be the ultimate goal of Operation Dewey Canyon II. The very fact that a ground operation, with all the risks it involves, is deemed desirable by military experts is a tribute to the Communists' herculean effort to keep the trail open as well as an admission that even the most modern airpower has its limits.

15 FEB 1971

STATINTL

Poster

Secrecy on Laos, Shame of It All

A Commentary

Nicholas von Hoffman

The Army is spending \$3 million on prime-time TV spots to sell young men on joining up. This may be the ultimate test of Madison Avenue's efficacy. Who knows, maybe they can do it. If they could sell lung cancer why shouldn't they be able to merchandise a bullet in the head or loss of a leg?

What might these ads contain? They could have General Westmoreland doing a voice-over about pride in the military uniform while the video shows us reruns of those American soldiers disguised as civilians sneaking into Cambodia. Then they might cut to Melvin Laird snickering about the incident at a press conference.

If it exists, there's another piece of film footage that would go nicely with the pride in the uniform spiel: shots of the dead American soldier stuffed into a South Vietnamese uniform being bootlegged back across the border from Laos.

When the Russians invaded Czechoslovakia it was some days before the Russian people were let in on it; the same holds for us. We had a better chance of learning what was going on by tuning in on a shortwave radio and dialing Hanoi or Peking than Washington. The Pentagon had embargoed its shame.

With Laos it has done so for years. The lying, the misrepresenting, the playing cute with words and technical expressions have been going on for 15 years. In the spring of 1959, when we'd already been in Laos for four years, Walter S. Robertson, Eisenhower's assistant secretary of state for Far Eastern affairs, told a House subcommittee that we were subsidizing the entire cost of the Royal Laotian Army "for one sole reason, and that is to try to keep this little country from being taken over by the Communists."

Ten years later William H. Sullivan, Nixon's deputy assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs, told the Senate we were secretly bombing Laos in order to re-establish operation of the 1962 Geneva agreement concerning that country's neutrality. This week's line is that we're doing it to save our boys' lives.

The impression Nixon seeks to give is we've only started bombing and sending in our horde of armed South Vietnamese houseboys after years of patiently

watching the other side violate Laos neutrality. This is so much twaddle.

In all likelihood we violated Laos' neutrality long before Hanoi did. We can't be absolutely sure because most of the half-way reliable information we have about what goes on in that country comes from the other side. Washington has never come clean about the allegations that the CIA has pulled two coups d'etat there and has twice given out completely fraudulent stories that Laos was being invaded by North Vietnam when it wasn't. That was in 1959 and in 1961.

What is beyond dispute is that in 1964—seven years ago—the United States began aerial heavy bombardment of Laos. The best estimates hold that we've dropped more tonnage on this poor country than on either North or South Vietnam. By 1968 we had a radar base at Pa Thi in northern Laos for the purpose of guiding our bombers on their runs into North Vietnam. The current South Vietnamese invasion represents the third mercenary army we've had in there, the first being a large force of Meo tribesmen and the second the Thai Army.

Trampled on and invaded by Vietnam, North and South, Thailand, China and the United States, this innocent country has been turned into the Belgium of the Far East, decimated and ruined because it had the misfortune to sit on strategically interesting terrain. Decimated isn't too strong a word. The best figures we have say that 600,000 people or one quarter of the Laotian population have been turned into refugees by our bombardment. One hundred and fifty thousand were turned into wandering, homeless wretches in 1969 alone. (See *The Indochina Story*, by the Committee of Concerned Asian Scholars, Bantam, 1970, \$1.25.)

Here is a description of what's been done to a part of the country that's nowhere near the Ho Chi Minh trail and North Vietnam's line of military supplies southward: ". . . It is an agony difficult for an outsider to imagine. American and Laotian officials estimate that over the last 10 years 20 per cent of the people of northeastern Laos have died in these refugee marches. The verdant limestone mountains that seem to have been lifted from a delicate Chinese scroll are a cemetery for 100,000 peasants! Random air strikes are always a threat; countless unexploded bombs lie scattered half-buried in the hills; exhaustion claims the weaker marchers, epidemics, especially of measles, are common; and, of course, there is never enough food." ("The Laotian Tragedy; The Long March" by Carl Strock, originally printed in *The New Republic*, quoted here from *Conflict in Indochina* compiled by Marvin and Susan Gettleman and Lawrence and Carol Kaplan, Random House, 1970, \$8.95.)

This is the reason for the mystery. Shame. This is the reason for embargoes on the news, for trying to keep reporters and TV cameramen out. Shame. They're ashamed and they don't want the world to know what they've done. They try to hide it; order our soldiers not to talk, put them in civilian clothes and wrap their dead bodies in foreign insignias.

But the truth will out and the truth is that our men are being ordered to commit acts too awful to be seen done in the uniform of our country.

STATINTL

CIA Base Bombed In Error

U.S. Planes Hit Laos Post, Sources Say

SAIGON, Feb. 14 (AP)—American war planes mistakenly bombed a U.S. Central Intelligence Agency base in Laos today, causing heavy casualties to CIA-backed guerrilla forces headquartered there, reliable sources reported.

It was the second mistaken bombing reported in a week during air operations in Laos.

U.S. Air Force F-4 Phantom fighter-bombers were trying to drive back a North Vietnamese attack when their bombs dropped on the CIA compound and airstrip at the Long Cheng base, the sources said. The base, 78 miles northwest of Vientiane, is the headquarters of Gen. Vang Pao's CIA-backed guerrilla army.

The informants told Associated Press correspondent J. T. Wolkertorfer in Vientiane that the American barracks was burned down and at least one CIA agent was wounded. Other bombs reportedly started fires in Long Cheng town.

The U.S. Command in Saigon acknowledged that a flight of F-4 Phantoms dropped bombs short of the intended enemy target. A spokesman said there were casualties to "an unknown number of friendly troops." He said the incident was under investigation.

Although the fighter-bombers came from bases in Thailand, they are under the tactical control of the U.S. 7th Air Force in South Vietnam.

A week ago, a U.S. Navy fighter-bomber mistakenly dropped scores of tiny bombs the size of hand grenades on South Vietnam.

massed along the border for a drive into Laos. Six men were killed and 51 wounded.

The situation at Long Cheng, the keystone of Laotian defenses in the north central section of the country, appeared to be worsening.

Vang Pao made an urgent trip to Vientiane to seek reinforcements for the garrison but was reported to have been turned down by higher authorities.

The U.S. bombers were called in after North Vietnamese troops launched heavy rocket, mortar and ground assaults against the base. Some of them drove through the perimeter.

Reports from Vientiane said elements of at least two North Vietnamese divisions, totaling about 6,000 troops, have surrounded Long Cheng.

Vang Pao is reported to have about 6,000 Mco tribesmen under his command in the Long Cheng area plus two Thai artillery batteries.

Vang Pao is reported to be considering whether to make a last ditch stand at Long Cheng or to withdraw into the hills.

In southern Laos, other U.S. bombers roamed across the east-west axis of the Ho Chi Minh Trail attacking North Vietnamese mountain hideouts overlooking Highway 9 on the approaches to the town of Sepone.

South Vietnamese headquarters said the main column was within 12 miles of Sepone, 25 miles from the Vietnamese border. South Vietnamese reconnaissance teams have been moving in and out of the devastated town, and infantrymen have been patrolling to the north and south to secure the flanks.

Associated Press correspondent Michael Putzel reported from Quangtri in northern South Vietnam that South Vietnamese convoys were remaining south of the border, the third successive day without a border crossing. This led to speculation that the North Vietnamese had cut Highway 9 behind the advancing South Vietnamese tanks

and armored personnel carriers.

A Saigon spokesman said Highway 9 "is drivable but insecure." Units in the field reported that the highway was mined in several spots, further endangering the armored column.

South Vietnamese spokesmen in Quangtri, one of the rear operational bases, said 343 North Vietnamese had been killed in the drive.

UPI reported from Saigon that the commander of South Vietnamese forces in Laos said Sunday that his troops are prepared to stay there until the Ho Chi Minh Trail is shattered. "It will not be a short

period," said Lt. Gen. Hoang Xuan Lam, when questioned by newsmen about the duration of South Vietnamese land operations in Laos. "We will stay until the Ho Chi Minh Trail complex is completely paralyzed." Lam's statement at Khesanh appeared to be contradictory to announcements by South Vietnamese President Thieu. He has said the South Vietnamese planned a Laotian campaign of "limited duration."

Attack Blasts CIA Base in Laos

Red Sappers, Bomb Mistake Hit Long Cheng

By TAMMY ARBUCKLE
Special to The Star

VIENTIANE — Long Cheng, the American headquarters in northern Laos, has been badly damaged as a result of a North Vietnamese sapper attack and a mistaken bombardment by U.S. planes.

American and Lao officials, reporting yesterday's incidents, Laos said the medical warehouse was destroyed, a Thai artillery position overlooking the airstrip was overrun and a Lao 105 mm. howitzer was destroyed. Houses in the Central Intelligence Agency compound were damaged, but American monitoring equipment, ammunition and fuel dumps survived.

Casualties are reported to be at least 30 dead and more than 100 wounded. Most casualties were civilians, and one American was reported wounded.

"We don't know yet who was responsible for what damage," a U.S. Embassy spokesman said when asked whether the damage was caused by the sappers or the air strike, but it appeared that most of the casualties resulted from the bombing.

Mortars Launch Attack

Officials gave this sequence of events:

The sapper attack began at 4 a.m. yesterday with "very accurate" mortar shelling.

This was followed by an assault by an estimated 100 North Vietnamese. About 30 minutes of combat followed in which the Meo troops defending Long Cheng, according to U.S. officials, "fought very well."

By 5:30 a.m. the airstrip was cleared of Communist troops and T28 divebombers took off, bringing firepower to bear. It could not be determined whether

these aircraft were flown by Americans or Laos.

"Other air assistance" was called for, a U.S. official said. This assistance was two U.S. Air Force F4 planes.

An American on the ground in Long Cheng fired a marker flare, causing one F4 to drop a stick of bombs on Long Cheng in error.

Patrols Pursue Sappers

The fighting ceased at 6:10 a.m. with guerrilla patrols pushing south after the sappers.

Sources said the North Vietnamese rocket and mortar fire apparently was directed exclusively at the U.S. compound where 20 Americans are living. The American houses, built of stone and wood, went up in flames. Destroyed were the officers quarters, the American Club and the Air America restaurant.

The American who was wounded was hit by shrapnel from an 82 mm. mortar round.

The Americans sought shelter in a partially built bunker.

The civilian casualties apparently resulted from the delayed action fuses on the bombs. The Meos in the village were not aware that the bombs which had dropped without exploding would explode later, and so were surprised by the delayed action.

Reinforcements Reported

Both Defense Minister Sisouk Na Champassak and Premier Souvanna Phouma say Lao reinforcements are being sent to Long Cheng, but Lao sources close to Souvanna deny this.

They say the only available troops belong to Gen. Kouprasith and Gen. Bounphone, the 5th and 3rd Military Region commanders. They are rivals for the soon to become vacant post of army commander in chief, a job which, in view of Souvanna's shaky position, could lead to the premiership. Because of this, they are unwilling to commit troops.

"Long Cheng is an American affair anyway," a Lao army officer said, reflecting the opinion

The Long Cheng base is run by the CIA. It is the headquarters for two U.S. operations, one of them intelligence gathering.

Long Cheng houses monitoring equipment for listening to Hanoi's communications in North Vietnam and Laos. A veritable forest of aerials rises from the American compound at the end of Long Cheng's main airstrip.

CIA "case officers" deal with refugees, recruit spies to return to enemy-held territory and run various benefit projects such as a parachute factory for amputees.

The second CIA operation involves running a purely military operation. Military men working for the agency lead teams on ground sabotage missions in

Laos and even into North Vietnam.

Americans have full command control, everyone spoken with, from Lao generals to army radio operators, says.

The commander at Long Cheng is the CIA station chief, not the leader of the Meos, Gen. Van Pao, U.S. sources say.

The CIA apparently got into the war business because the Johnson administration wanted to hide U.S. involvement in the Laotian war. This made it impossible to use U.S. military who, Americans say, would need more personnel.

American officials here say President Nixon continued to use the agency, because to put U.S. military forces into Laos would be contrary to his Indochina withdrawal policy.

And the use of the CIA allowed the administration to stop senators worried of American involvement from probing too deeply.

The fall of Long Cheng would place the U.S. in a difficult position, for the U.S. command will be blamed by the Laotians for the failure.

As the U.S. leads, trains and pays the Meo and other tribal troops at Long Cheng, the blame would be difficult to wiggle out of.

Sunday's sapper attack proved just how deeply the North Vietnamese have penetrated the Meo hill country and indicated that Long Cheng is fast becoming untenable.

This is the second time in a year that sappers have entered the base. It is rocketed frequently, also.

Each time Long Cheng is hit, Meo flee and Meo soldiers often go with their families.

As the Meo quit Long Cheng, their capital, they move south-east, leaving the way open for Hanoi to hit Vang Vieng and Vientiane.

It is virtually certain that the squabbling and inefficient Lao generals will not be able to stop the Communists, unhappy Lao civilian officials say, because many soldiers are tired and don't want to fight for the general any longer.

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SUN-TIMES

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S - 697,966

FEB 14 1971

U.S. involvement in Laos old, secretive and costly

By Thomas B. Ross
Sun-Times Bureau

WASHINGTON — The U.S. involvement in Laos, far from being a new development, has a long and costly history.

The State Department acknowledged, in heavily censored testimony released last year by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, that the United States spent more than \$1 billion in Laos between 1962 and 1969. It also lost 400 men, dead or missing, and 380 planes.

Before that, it is reliably estimated, another half a billion dollars were expended in secret operations dating back to the French withdrawal in 1954.

The U.S. government has consistently sought to conceal its role in Laos and the Nixon administration has faithfully followed the practice since the start of the incursion into Laos last Monday.

“There are no U.S. ground troops or advisers being committed to the ARVN (South Vietnamese army) operations in Laos,” says White House press secretary Ronald L. Ziegler.

The statement appears on quick reading to be all-inclusive, but on closer study turns out to concede the possibility that U.S. military and paramilitary personnel may have been “committed” to other operations in Laos.

In fact, army Special Forces teams and Central Intelligence Agency units have been in Laos for several years. Most have been operating on the old battlefield in northern Laos but some have been — and evidently still are — in the immediate vicinity of the South Vietnamese incursion.

The CIA has been involved in Laos since the late 1950s. Its first major undertaking was to support Gen. Phoumi Nosavan, chief of the

royal Laotian army, who sought to undermine neutralist Prince Souvanna Phouma, then and now the prime minister.

When President John F. Kennedy took office in 1961, the general's troops were being routed by the Communist Pathet Lao and the North Vietnamese. The fall of Vientiane, the capital, seemed imminent.

One of Kennedy's first official acts was to ask his military advisers to draw up a plan for saving Laos. They recommended the introduction of U.S. and, if possible, other foreign troops. But he could not get assurances from the Joint Chiefs of Staff that U.S. forces would be able to repel the Communists without resort to tactical nuclear weapons.

And so, Kennedy shelved the military plan and launched the diplomatic initiative that led to the 1962 Geneva (Switzerland) accords, establishing Laos as a neutral nation with a coalition government, including the communists.

North Vietnam, however, quickly violated the agreement and the United States followed suit, expanding its CIA and military operations.

By 1969 the U.S. involvement was so deep that Sen. Stuart Symington (D-Mo.), who conducted the inquiry for the Foreign Relations Committee, expressed fear that the United States had become committed to Laos' survival.

But William H. Sullivan, deputy assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs, insisted: “Currently, we believe we have no commitment in Laos. Our actions could be reversible today.”

Symington retorted: “Don't let's get into a square dance about it, a semantic square dance.”

14 FEB 1971

STATINTL

Rockets Hit Laotian Base

VIENTIANE, Laos, Feb. 13 (AP)—Five enemy rockets hit Long Tieng during the night, killing one Laotian and wounding one.

Several buildings were damaged at the base, which is supported by the United States Central Intelligence Agency and is the headquarters of Gen. Vang Pao's Meo guerrilla army.

Refugees continued to leave Long Tieng, but authoritative sources said reports that 20,000 to 30,000 were fleeing the city were greatly exaggerated.

They said refugees also were leaving Ban Na, Sam Thong and other towns in the area southwest of the Plaine des Jarres, with the total number of refugees possibly approaching those figures.

Later reports told of ground fighting and continued shelling around Long Tieng during the day. Long Tieng is 78 miles north of Vientiane.

Several planes of Air America, a private airline whose principal client is the C.I.A. took ground fire in the Long Tieng area. Pilots asked for tactical air support from the United States Air Force. Some pilots were said to be refusing to fly into the area unless they got such support.

If Not for Outsiders, the Peaceful Laotians Might Stop War

By Peter A. Jay

Washington Post Foreign Service

VIENTIANE, Feb. 13—In Vientiane's Wattay Airport there is a small sign above the immigration counter with this quotation from Buddha, "Hatred never ceases by hatred at any time. Hatred ceases by love. This is the eternal law."

It is a hopeful little sign, a peaceful credo for a Buddhist people not much given to war, and it is thoughtfully written in English and French, as well as Lao. But despite the Buddha's eternal law, the war goes on in Laos as it has for the past 10 years, and the prospects for an end to it look dimmer than they have in some time.

"I would go so far as to say the situation is desperate," said an American official who in the past has tended to put a bright face on most events here.

The troubles facing the neutralist government of Prince Souvanna Phouma, in the eyes of most diplomats here the last hope for even a token stability in Laos, are at least threefold.

There is the border incursion. A week ago, South Vietnamese troops drove across the frontier into the rugged, misty border country southeast of here to attack North Vietnamese sanctuary areas that had been there for a decade. The move brought the Vietnam war directly and irrevocably into Laos, which already had a war of its own.

There is the deteriorating military situation in the northern half of Laos. About 90 miles north of here, the Communist Pathet Lao and their North Vietnamese allies are massing against the government outpost of Long Cheng.

Long Cheng, built and supported by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, has been the center of the government's war effort in northern Laos. It is widely believed here that the base will be lost this year—if not overrun, the base would be abandoned.

Finally, there is the collapse of the government's hopes for peace talks—or at least "talks about talks" that could eventually lead to serious negotiation and an end to hostilities. Although preliminary discussions last fall gave rise to a flicker of optimism about peace talks, progress toward negotiation has halted in recent weeks.

One of the difficulties with the war in Laos, for diplomats as well as journalists, is that it is all but impossible to travel about the country and find out firsthand what is going on.

So the capital serves as a whispering post, where information both solid and shaky is constantly traded and the journalists buzzing from embassy to embassy serve as cross-pollinators of rumor.

The conventional wisdom here is that the South Vietnamese invasion of the Ho Chi Minh Trail, mildly protested by Souvanna Phouma, may actually have strengthened the premier's hand.

For most of the pressure on Souvanna has come from right-wing generals, most of them from the southern provinces of Laos, who want him to abandon his neutralist position and to take a stronger stand against the Communists.

But the recurrent talk of a coup against Souvanna has been muted slightly by the border operation.

"The generals feel the pressure has been taken off them a bit by the South Vietnamese," said one foreign military observer, not an American. "Of course," he added, "a coup is really impossible unless the Americans support it, and they've made it crystal clear to the generals that they won't."

The Americans are completely committed to Souvanna and believe that only chaos could follow him.

One source at the U.S. embassy, asked what he would do if the 69-year-old premier should die or resign, blanched at the thought of what the country would be said.

"He's in a Churchillian mood," said a friend of the prince. "He's got his back to the wall now, but he's decided to stand and fight, and I think he's enjoying it."

The fall of Long Cheng, should it occur, may have serious political implications for Souvanna.

There are indications, however, that the United States prepared to let the base—the home of Gen. Vang Pao and his CIA-equipped and trained guerrilla army of Meo hill country tribesmen—be taken without a last-ditch struggle.

Tons of equipment have been removed, several thousand civilians—the families of the Meo soldiers—have moved out, and only a handful of Americans now remain at Long Cheng. Aircraft based there are flown out at night.

Gen. Vang Pao asked the premier this week for reinforcements from the Royal Laotian army, a rag-tag force with an official strength of 56,000. There was no indication today how much help, if any, he will receive.

It is generally believed in Vientiane that Souvanna could weather the loss of Long Cheng, but that abandonment of the base would be a serious psychological setback both for the regular army and for the Meos, the tough tribesmen who for years have carried the brunt of the fighting in Laos.

The critical period for the base is between now and the end of May, when the rains begin in Laos and the Pathet Lao have difficulty moving supplies. In the past, the government has managed to retake a certain amount of territory in the wet season that it lost during the dry.

Souvanna has long believed, his close associates say, that a satisfactory agreement could be reached and maintained with the Pathet Lao—led by his half-brother, Prince Souphanouvong—if it were not for the North Vietnamese. The Vietnamese were considering

leaving Laos alone, they can't now, can they?" asked a European diplomat recently. "With the South Vietnamese tramping around on the Ho Chi Minh Trail, they'll have to step up the pressure somewhere, and north Laos is the likely place."

There has been increased skirmishing around the royal capital of Luang Prabang, 150 miles north of Vientiane, and speculation that the Pathet Lao might attempt to take the old city and use the victory as a bargaining point in some subsequent negotiation.

This conjecture reached a high point several days ago when the Soviet ambassador travelled to Luang Prabang to talk with King Savang Vatthana, the figurehead ruler whose forebears have occupied the throne since the 18th Century.

The ambassador visited the king to warn him to leave the city before the main attack began, one theory ran. But in true Laotian fashion, there was an equally popular counter-theory available: that the visit was not to warn the king, but to reassure him that no attack was planned.

Generally, the projection offered by most resident diplomatic observers here for Laos is simply more of the same: a war that waxes and wanes with the monsoon, but does not end.

"This is still a sideshow to the real war," a Western ambassador said, "If we left it up to the Laotians, they'd end it. But until the Vietnamese and the Americans settle things, there's not much hope for peace here."

Souvanna Appeals

For Talks With Reds

VIENTIANE, Feb. 13 (AP)—Premier Souvanna Phouma has again called for serious discussions with his half brother, Pathet Lao leader Prince Souphanou-

Reds Said To Take CIA Base

Laotian Town Contained Command Post Of Meo Guerrillas

Saigon, Feb. 12 (Reuter)—The Central Intelligence Agency center for operations in Laos at Long Cheng fell to the North Vietnamese tonight in a significant new escalation of the war in Laos, reliable sources said here.

A substantial movement of refugees from Long Cheng signaled the fall of the town, which is 60 miles north of Vientiane, the administrative capital.

Long Cheng, was the headquarters of the CIA-backed Meo guerrillas of pro-government Gen. Vang Pao.

The nearby base and refugee camp at Sam Thong fell to North Vietnamese and pro-Communist Pathet Lao troops last year, but they later abandoned it.

More Serious

But the news today is regarded by observers in Saigon as more serious, because of the current incursion into southern Laos by South Vietnamese forces.

There was little other information here about the fall of the town just south of the Plain of Jars. The refugees began leaving there five days ago.

According to informed sources in Vientiane, some women and children still remained in Long Cheng and stores were open. About 40,000 people live in Long Cheng and hamlets along the valley.

The CIA turned the once quiet town into a Meo base to direct General Vang Pao's operations against the Communists.

The United States is providing air support against Communists in the area but there were no new reports in Vientiane today of large-scale North Vietnamese build-ups.

Earlier this week American sources reported that Long Cheng and the neighboring town of Sam Thong were besieged by a large number of North Vietnamese troops. This could not be confirmed in Vientiane.

Sporadic shelling was report-

ed around a refugee center about 19 miles east of Long Cheng Thursday night but there were no reports of casualties, according to military sources.

Small clashes were reported elsewhere in the country between North Vietnamese and Laotian government troops, including one near the highway linking Vientiane with the royal capital of Luang Prabang to the northwest.

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Laos: Invasion Follows a

STATINTL

The Vietnam war is in reality an Indochinese war, with Laos now receiving considerable attention. In the following article, Guardian staff correspondent Wilfred Burchett traces the Laotian struggle for independence and self-determination from 1955 to the present.

By Wilfred Burchett

Paris

Just 15 years ago, I was present at the birth of the Neo Lao Hak Sat (NLHS), or Lao Patriotic Front. Looking back, I realize it was an occasion of great historical importance.

It had taken many days on horseback from the Vietnamese frontier to arrive at a jungle clearing, deep in Sam Neua province, where there were freshly built bamboo halls and hostels for meetings and housing delegates.

At that period, the political expression of the Pathet Lao armed forces was the Neo Lao Itsala (Free Laos Front), which had been formed in August 1945 to organize an uprising against the Japanese and the remnants of the old French colonialist administration. When the French staged their comeback into Indochina, it was the Neo Lao Itsala that organized and led the armed resistance in Laos. Side by side with the Vietnamese and Cambodian resistance, the Vietminh and Khmer Issarak, the Neo Lao Itsala fought until the 1954 Geneva Agreements ended the fighting and guaranteed the independence of each of the three countries of Indochina.

Beginning of U.S. activity

To facilitate a ceasefire in Laos and a political settlement with the government set up by the French in Vientiane, the Pathet Lao armed forces were to withdraw from their main base areas and concentrate in the two northern provinces of Sam Neua and Phong Saly, both bordering on North Vietnam. But in 1955, after a visit by U.S. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, the right wing government in Vientiane under Katay violated the ceasefire agreements by attacking Sam Neua in an attempt to exterminate the Pathet Lao forces. This marked the beginning of attempts by successive U.S.-backed right wing governments to physically destroy the forces of the Laotian revolution.

By the time we were unsaddling our ponies in the first days of January 1956 at the jungle congress site, it was clear that the pattern unfolding in Laos was following that of South Vietnam, where Ngo Dinh Diem at U.S. behest had already torn up a major part of the Geneva Agreements by refusing to hold the consultative conference to arrange the July 1956 nation-wide elections. It was in anticipation of tough times ahead that a congress had been called to broaden the Neo Lao Itsala into a new body that could encompass the broadest possible sections of the Laotian people and mobilize them for the tasks ahead.

Under the chairmanship of prince Souphanouvong, a sturdy figure, deeply tanned from his 10 years of leading the armed struggle, delegates of the various political, religious, racial and social groups presented reports or commented on the various documents that had been drafted. It was on the night of Jan. 6, 1956, at an unforgettable outdoor meeting in the light of flaming bamboo torches, that the formation of a new front, the Neo Lao Hak Sat, was announced to the cheering delegates and local villagers. The next day a

generation of struggle

spent in committee sessions, delegates working out the best means of implementing decisions in their local areas. On Jan. 12 an appeal was approved at another plenary session. A glance at some of the points of that 1956 appeal testifies to the political wisdom and foresight of Souphanouvong and his comrades.

"Dangerous enemies"

"The United States imperialists and pro-U.S. elements are considering signing a U.S.-Laos military pact. . . ." [The Katay government was preparing to sign such a pact, which would have been a flagrant violation of the Geneva Agreements, but before this occurred, Katay was replaced by prince Souvanna Phouma, in those days a pro-French neutralist. France was vigorously opposing an American takeover.] "In order to drag our country into the aggressive SEATO bloc," continued the appeal, "and to transform our country into a military base and U.S. neo-colony, they are preparing to rekindle the Indochina war and condemn us to slavery and poverty. It is clear their intentions are to sabotage peace and use 'Laotians to fight Laotians' to achieve their bellicose plans. U.S. imperialism and the pro-U.S. elements are the most dangerous enemies of our nation at the present time.

"Under such circumstances, the immediate tasks for the entire nation are:

- "To unite in a broad, national united front to strictly apply the Geneva Agreements: to promote peace, independence, democracy and national reunification.

- "To consolidate and expand our people's patriotic forces and make of them a solid source of support for our people's political struggle.

- "To seek the sympathy and support of peace-loving people throughout the world."

The congress which set up the Lao Patriotic Front elected a central committee, headed by prince Souphanouvong. After the conclusion of the meetings, the delegates dispersed to the four corners of Laos to set up local branches of the NLHS.

The ups and downs of the struggle that followed, the agreements signed and torn up by various U.S. puppets in Vientiane; the painstaking efforts of the NLHS leaders to bring about lasting national reconciliation; the cloak-and-dagger U.S. intervention in Laos before the stage of open aggression—all this has been discussed in detail and documented in my book, "The Second Indochina War," which also relates the story of the coups and counter-coups of the CIA and the local U.S. puppets against neutralist regimes.

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS
13 FEB 1971

No GIs in Laos, Ziegler Says

Key Biscayne, Fla., Feb. 12 (Special)—The White House denied again today that any American ground combat troops or advisers were involved in the South Vietnamese invasion of Laos, but refused to comment on whether there were any clandestine United States intelligence operations going on in that country.

"I'm not going to discuss intelligence operations" in Laos, said Presidential Press Secretary Ronald Ziegler. "The operations . . . do not apply to ARVN (South Vietnamese Army) operations in the southern panhandle (of Laos). They are not in any way relative to southern Laos."

Training the Guerrillas

There have long been rumors—frequently denied by the Pentagon and the White House—that Green Berets and CIA agents are in Laos to train guerrillas of the Royal Laos Army. In a Senate subcommittee report last week, Sen. Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.) charged, and the State Department did not entirely deny, that up to half the U.S. refugee aid funds for Laos were being spent by the CIA to train Laotian guerrillas.

Besides denying any involvement of American ground combat forces in Laos, the White House also said that the South Vietnamese operations there posed "absolutely no threat" to Communist China. This was in response to reports yesterday from Vientiane that Laotian Premier Souvanna Phouma feared Red Chinese intervention if it appeared that South Vietnamese troops might be on the verge of cutting the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

Ziegler's remarks on Laos

came when he was asked about radio and television reports from Saigon that U.S. troops had been seen across the border in the area of South Vietnamese operations. ABC Radio reported that the body of an American soldier wearing a South Vietnamese uniform had been evacuated from Laos. A film report on CBS showed U.S. troops being landed, apparently inside Laos, to guard a downed helicopter.

Reports Are "Distorted"

"Films can always be misleading," Ziegler said. "I have said on many occasions that there are no U.S. ground combat forces or advisers in the ARVN operations in Laos. We would have no motivation to state that policy as categorically as we have stated it,

and then follow another policy."

Ziegler said that U.S. military officials in Saigon were investigating the television and radio reports. But, he emphasized, "We are not stating policy and then attempting to move through little loopholes in that policy. Reports that suggest the contrary are somewhat distorted. Our policy has been settled and will be followed all the way down the line."

At the same time, Ziegler read a little lecture to newsmen in connection with press reports from Laos: "It is not justifiable that those who can communicate to the American people suggest that the American government is stating one policy and following another."

—Frank Jackman

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Laos Declares Emergency As Red Pressure Mounts

By TILLMAN DURDIN

Special to The New York Times

VIENTIANE, Laos, Feb. 12—Laos declared a state of emergency today and transferred internal security matters from the police to military officers. A Government statement said that the change had been made because of "recent developments in the military situation."

This has been marked by mounting pressure from Communist troops in northern Laos, where the royal capital of Luang Prabang and the Sam Thong-Long Tieng area 80 miles north of Vientiane are threatened.

Long Tieng is the base for an army of irregulars that is maintained by the United States Central Intelligence Agency.

The order for an emergency, decided upon at a Cabinet meeting yesterday, gives increased powers to the military but falls short of martial law. Over-all authority remains in the hands of the civil authorities headed by the Premier, Prince Souvanna Phouma.

The order is believed to represent a compromise between the Premier and more militant civilians and military officers who think that his maintenance of a neutralist stance and his sporadic peace negotiations with the Communist-led Pathet Lao have weakened the Government's prosecution of the war.

As a result of the compromise, observers here believe that Government unity has been improved at a time of crisis. The observers especially note that talk about a rightist takeover has stopped.

The unity of the cabinet was

demonstrated yesterday by the adoption of a communiqué dealing with the incursion this week into Laos by South Vietnamese troops. The communiqué was in roughly the same terms as those used Monday in a declaration by Premier Souvanna Phouma.

The communiqué said that the incursion had violated the Geneva agreement of 1962, which called for no foreign troops in Laos, but said that the incursion had been a consequence of continuous violations by North Vietnamese troops.

The declaration of a state of emergency, signed by Prince Souvanna Phouma, gave Gen. Quane Rathikoune, commander of the armed forces, the power to take measures necessary for general security throughout Laos.

A high Government source said that the state of emergency would increase discipline and facilitate mobilization.

The government order cautioned the people against being unduly excited by the move and said "events are not dramatic."

20,000 Being Evacuated From Periled Laos Area

By THOMAS DUNN

Special to The New York Times

VIENTIANE, Laos, Feb. 11—With enemy forces threatening the Government strongpoints of Sam Thong and Long Tieng, 20,000 to 30,000 civilians are reported on the move from the area near the Plaine des Jarres, 80 miles north of here.

They are among the 226,000 refugees being fed, clothed and sheltered under the United States aid program for Laos. United States planes are dropping supplies to the refugees daily as they make their way in groups along mountain paths to new home sites they have picked in the mountains 15 to 25 miles south and southwest of Sam Thong and Long Tieng.

Many made the same trek last year and then returned after the failure of an enemy drive against the twin positions that guard the approaches to the Vientiane plain.

The refugees are mainly old men, women and children of the Meo and other hill tribes. Younger men of the tribes are at Long Tieng, Sam Thong and surrounding posts in the Laotian forces of the Meo leader, Maj. Gen. Vang Pao, whose special commando-type units are supported by guerrilla-warfare specialists of the American Central Intelligence Agency and supplied by United States transport planes.

American aid sources here say the refugee departure is leisurely. Now experienced at feeling a war zone, the evacuees are leaving in good time before the big attack comes.

But their departure, apparently with the advice of General Vang Pao and his officers, is regarded as indicative of how serious is the threat to Sam Thong and Long Tieng.

Several thousand North Vietnamese and pro-Communist Pathet Lao forces are now attacking outlying defenses of the two mountain towns daily. Some points have fallen and the environs of the two towns have been shelled.

In normal times Long Tieng has a population of around 30,000. Sam Thong is somewhat smaller.

In response to an appeal from General Vang Pao, reinforcements are being sent to him from the Vientiane area, according to reliable sources here, and United States and Laotian planes are stepping up the bombing of enemy areas.

It was announced here today that enemy forces threatening Luang Prabang have occupied another Government-held strongpoint 18 miles north of the royal capital.

Laos Premier Said to Fear Peking Move

By Peter A. Jay

Washington Post Foreign Service

VIENTIANE, Feb. 11—Prince Souvanna Phouma, the premier of Laos, is telling diplomats here that he believes it is highly possible that Communist Chinese troops will cross his borders if the South Vietnamese appear to be on the verge of cutting the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

The premier has said he believes Chinese "volunteers" could begin entering Laos in force in the next few months and joining the Communist Pathet Lao in combat operations. Souvanna's view, according to diplomatic sources here, have been expressed privately on several occasions and were repeated in particularly emphatic terms this morning.

Chinese troops are already in parts of northern Laos controlled by the Pathet Lao, but only as security for construction crews building a road south from China toward the Mekong River town of Pak Beng.

They have never taken part in combat operations, as far as is known here. Their doing so could cause a direct confrontation with the United States—which provides air and logistic support for the forces of Souvanna Phouma's neutralist government.

The prince's concern about the Chinese, diplomatic sources say, was increased after Chinese diplomats here quietly passed the word that Peking is unwilling to stand idly by while the Americans support the South Vietnamese move into the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

Souvanna, who is faced with a badly deteriorated military situation in the northern part of his country as well as the South Vietnamese incursion in the south, reportedly told diplomats he did not think the Chinese would go on the offensive unless the Pathet Lao issued a call

In the south, government troops are needed to protect towns in the Mekong River Valley, and cannot be released to aid Long Cheng.

The following background was provided by U.S. officials in Washington:

The Chinese have been building roads in northern Laos since the early 1960s. Since 1969, they have completed two 40-mile segments of all-weather, two-lane road and are working on a third in the general direction of the Thai border.

There is some anxiety that the last segment will eventually be extended to Pak Beng, a point on the Mekong River 25 miles from Thailand.

The present road goes from Ban Botene on the Chinese border to Muong Sai, where it branches off to the northeast in the direction of North Vietnam and to the southwest, toward Thailand.

The estimate is that there are currently more than 10,000 Chinese working on the road—army engineering units with their own security forces and attached anti-aircraft units.

Peking says it is working on the basis of a series of aid requests made in 1961 and 1962 made by Premier Souvanna Phouma and the rightist general Phoumi Nosavan during trips to Peking. The Laotian government has never repudiated those requests.

Washington sources say the Chinese have never used the roads to move combat troops, but that the North Vietnamese and the Pathet Lao have done so.

As explained by diplomatic sources, the premier's theory is that the Pathet Lao might call for such help if pressured to do so by Hanoi.

American sources here see this scenario as far-fetched and maintain that the situation in Laos is no worse than it was a year ago.

But one European diplomat, who held out real hope three months ago for peace talks between the Vientiane government and the Pathet Lao, said today that the future now looks "very bleak, very serious."

Although there is no sign of it in Vientiane, a sleepily oblivious little capital, the forces of Souvanna Phouma's government are now in the most precarious military position they have been in some years.

Less than 70 miles north of Vientiane, Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese forces have surrounded the key base of Long Cheng, the CIA operated logistics center for the anti-Communist guerrilla forces of Gen. Yang Pao. The base is not expected to last out the next few weeks.

Low Profile Helped Nixon In Laos Test

By Murrey Marder
Washington Post Staff Writer

News Analysis

The Nixon Administration has easily surmounted the first domestic political challenge to the allied thrust into Laos. President Nixon, by keeping his head down in public, has presented the smallest possible target for his opponents.

By maintaining that the U.S. role in the cross-border assault is only a subsidiary one, in the air, above the entrapping grip of ground combat, the administration so far has deflected its presently disorganized critics.

But there are abundant political targets in the making in present U.S. policy, even if the venturesome operation bears out the military success now being proclaimed for it with possibly risky prematurity.

Through a bureaucratic temptation to deny whenever possible, rather than to affirm, the administration appears to be headed into an unnecessary running test of its credibility on the rules of restricted warfare in Laos that it is pledged to live with: the ban on American "ground combat troops."

At best, this can be only a nit-picking, avoidable, semantic hair-splitting controversy about the definitions of words. At worst, it is major duplicity.

By its failure to specify with any common clarity what it interprets as permissible activity for U.S. military personnel in Cambodia—except after the fact—the administration invited suspicion about everything it was doing in Cambodia.

For months the administration played semantic gamesmanship over "air interdiction" vs. "close air combat support," and "airborne coordinators" vs.

"ground air coordinators," only to say finally, as Defense Secretary Melvin R. Laird did on Jan. 20, that the United States would supply whatever "air support that was needed" and "I don't care to get into a question of semantics on that."

Why did the administration not simply say "air support" in the beginning, and avoid the debilitating dispute? The private answer given is that the administration had to "condition" the public, and most importantly the Congress, to accept the gradual, cloaked, transition to the policy of unlimited use of air power anywhere in Indochina which first Laird, and then Secretary of State William P. Rogers, publicly confirmed.

It was this evolution of the uninhibited use of U.S. air power in Indochina, it is now said privately, which enabled, and emboldened, the administration to authorize the South Vietnamese border-crossing assault into Laos.

According to present, official U.S. theology, "The current Laos operation was completely planned by the South Vietnamese general staff." Even if that were true, the operation would never have moved beyond an idle concept without the support of massive U.S. air power of every variety, plus major engineering, logistic and artillery support.

And, it should be added, intelligence and reconnaissance support as well.

This is where the now-burgeoning new dispute comes

in about whether or not the administration is dissembling about its denials that neither American "ground combat troops" nor "advisers" are present in Laos.

The denial that American "advisers" are present in Laos is simply untrue, and to deny it is probably more carelessness than duplicity. There are unquestionably American advisers in Laos and their presence is not prohibited by law there, as it is in Thailand. President Nixon publicly stated last March 6 that there are 1,040 Americans in Laos, military and civilian, in "a military advisory or military training capacity . . ."

What the President did not add, but what has been widely reported, is that the advisers are primarily Central Intelligence Agency personnel, whose primary job is supporting and supervising the clandestine army of Gen. Vang Pao.

When U. S. officials presently say, as Secretary Rogers and other officials have said recently, that there are no U. S. "advisers" in Laos, they are actually referring to the area of the current South Vietnamese border-crossing foray, but failing to make the distinction with operations elsewhere in Laos.

But there are also other U. S. personnel in the Laos border-crossing zone, who, by current publicly imprecise definitions, are neither ground troops nor advisers. They are, as each day's prodding by newsmen on the scene makes official spokesmen disclose, medical evacuation personnel, helicopter salvage personnel—and others, still undisclosed.

Are there also, newsmen increasingly are demanding, Special Forces agents or other military or intelligence personnel disguised in South Vietnamese uniforms? Are there American recon-

naissance men, or other personnel on the ground, neither "troops" nor "advisers"?

It is by no means extraordinary to have covert personnel engaged in military operations. What is unnecessarily corrosive of the administration's credibility, is to make sweeping disclaimers that it cannot sustain, only to end up in the position of strip-teaser discarding on semantic covering at a time.

Laotian General Said to Ask for Reinforcements

Special to The New York Times

VIENTIANE, Laos, Feb. 10—Concern increased here today over the situation at Sam Thong and Long Tieng, the two important Government positions southwest of Plaine des Jarres that have come under increasing pressure from North Vietnamese and Laotian Communist forces.

Gen. Vang Pao, commander in the area, flew from Long Tieng today to Vientiane and reportedly asked Premier Souvanna Phouma for reinforcements. The United States Ambassador George M. Godley, was also present at the meeting.

Communist commando units have taken several hilltop posts flanking the two strong-points, which are about 15 miles from each other, and rocket fire has blasted air strips at Sam Thong and the nearby post of Ban Na.

General Vang Pao's forces

are made up mostly of Meo and other tribal groups. American Central Intelligence Agency personnel have training and advisory roles with the general's troops, and United States transport planes bring in supplies daily for his units.

There was unease among the general's troops because of his absence for several days in Bangkok, where he had taken his wife for a stomach operation. The general returned to Long Tieng yesterday by air when aides reported the situation to him and urged his return. He left before his wife's scheduled operation, according to sources at his headquarters here.

With North Vietnamese and Laotian Communist forces threatening on most Laotian fronts from Luang Prabang to the Boloven Plateau in the south, other regional commanders are reluctant to spare



The New York Times Feb. 11, 1971
Clashes were increasing near Long Tieng (cross).

troops for the Sam Thong-Long Tieng sector 80 air miles north of Vientiane.

General Vang Pao's tribal units are weary from years of fighting, and casualties have been replaced with recruits that knowledgeable sources say are 13 to 15 years of age.

Reds Maintain Pressure Near Laos Base of CIA

By TAMMY ARBUCKLE

Special to The Star

VIENTIANE, Laos — Communist forces launched a dawn attack against American commandoes, Tuesday at Pakkao, 65 miles north of here well informed military sources said.

After 30 minutes of small arms combat the Red attack was broken by the arrival of planes.

Work for CIA

Pakkao is the base for American commando leaders, the Lao military says.

These Americans are military men assigned to the Central Intelligence Agency to lead tribes in combat against North Vietnamese troops in northern Laos, and they reportedly cross into North Vietnam hill areas.

A U.S. Embassy spokesman said Pakkao was attacked by two platoons of Communists but declined to give a U.S. casualty figure or to say whether Americans were in action there.

The Pakkao attack is part of the pressure the North Vietnamese are putting on U.S. commanded tribesmen around the U.S. base at Long Cheng.

Tribes Boxed In

Americans on logistic missions are daily coming under fire on airstrips around Long Cheng. One U.S. helicopter took a direct hit with two Americans injured while a U.S. Caribou transport

was shelled on Sam Thong airstrip.

North Vietnamese units have infiltrated throughout the hills southwest of the Plain of Jars, boxing tribes onto hilltops.

Four government units cut off in Ban Na, North of Long Cheng when its airstrip was closed by Red rockets.

Six Officers Shot

North Vietnamese slipped into Ta Tam Bleung, one of Long Chien's defensive positions, and shot six Meo officers at their meal, including two of Gen. Vang Pao's most trusted aides, Lo and Hang Dang.

American commanders at Long Cheng seem to have made a mistake asking the Meo to fight from fixed positions, instead of as guerillas the Meo's favorite method of warfare.

Many of Vang Pao's officers bitterly quarrel with the general, apparently because they are losing confidence in U.S. commanders. Meo civilians are now abandoning Long Cheng and the United States is building new air strips further south near Muong Ao.

Despite deep U.S. involvement and hard daily fighting at Long Cheng the U.S. Embassy refuses to allow correspondents to use U.S. aircraft which fly into Long Cheng approximately once every five minutes.

More Lao Troops Go to Aid CIA Base

By TAMMY ARBUCKLE

Special to The Star

VIENTIANE, Laos -- Lao government troops are being rushed today from Vientiane Province to reinforce the battered tribal forces around Long Cheng, 75 miles to the north.

However, Gen. Vang Pao, leader of the Meo forces, reports these reinforcements are insufficient.

An estimated 30,000 civilians are trekking out of the Long Cheng area, U.S. officials here said today.

Refugee agency officials esti-

mate 6,000 of these people will die from weakness and disease on the long marches south to new bases in the Meo foothills despite round the clock aid and airdrops of meat and rice by the U.S. Agency for International Development.

Diplomatic sources in Vientiane are not linking the assault on Long Cheng, by some 5,000 North Vietnamese troops, with the South Vietnamese incursion into the southern Lao panhandle.

They say Hanoi has been preparing an operation on Long Cheng for months.

CIA Moves Equipment

Long Cheng has been the center of Laos activities for the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, but the Americans have begun evacuating to other airstrips the equipment used to monitor Hanoi communications.

The fall of Long Cheng would mean the end of government presence in Xieng Khouang Province and, possibly, the end of the Meo forces, which have been decimated from 11,000 combat troops 26 months ago to just 4,000 now.

Long Cheng is said to have no military strategic significance but diplomats say its loss will be a psychological blow.

As part of the Red's pressure

on the Long Cheng area, Communist forces launched a dawn attack against American commandoes Tuesday at Pakkao, 65 miles north of here, well informed military sources said.

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FEBRUARY 10, 1971

JOHN
CROWN

Thank God for CIA

LAMENTABLY, it has become the accepted procedure and the "in" thing to attack the activities -- real and imagined -- of the Central Intelligence Agency.

Politicians who tire of that other popular sport -- denigrating the Federal Bureau of Investigation -- can always fall back on attributing all sorts of dark doings to the CIA.

One of our local worthies, in fact, has attributed his brilliant victory in a legal case to the fact that he implicated the CIA and, according to him, the case was dropped to avoid CIA embarrassment. That should be a landmark case for all aspiring lawyers. Get the CIA implicated and success is assured.

WITH THIS approach to the Central Intelligence Agency, the average citizen might well be forgiven if he gets the idea that the deadliest enemy facing the United States is something called the CIA. It is an organization that is often villified and rarely praised.

Yet it we did not have it -- or something identical -- our security and our world position would be in a sorry state, if indeed, we existed at all.

The Central Intelligence Agency came into being in 1947 during the Democratic administration of President Harry Truman. It came into being in recognition that the United States and the Soviet Union were the dominant powers in a world that was a jungle and would become progressively more so. No longer was the United States one of an assortment of seven or more "first rate" powers. As the leader of the Western world our global

responsibilities were awesome, as they still remain.

Therefore we could no longer blithely move about in such a world with such responsibilities in the naive hope that all would turn out well. No

No longer can we go on the courtly premise that one gentleman doesn't read another gentleman's mail.

longer could we go on the courtly premise that one gentleman doesn't read another gentleman's mail.

BEING AN open and free society, our operating a covert intelligence organization is not a welcome one to many of us. But it is a choice between being dainty and being realistic. Fortunately the choice was for realism and the Central Intelligence Agency was organized as an arm of government.

As noted earlier, there are those who find great rewards in attacking the CIA. They vary. There are those dreamy-eyed idealists who believe if we were to destroy all our weapons, the magnificent gesture of such an act would lead the remainder of the world to follow suit. At the other extreme there are those who find it to the interests they serve to keep both the CIA and the FBI under constant attack.

And in between those two extremes we have different individuals and different groups who are opposed in varying measures of intensity and for varying reasons to the existence of the CIA.

RECENTLY Sen. Clifford Case of New Jersey saw fit to raise his arms in holy horror (or feignedly so) because the CIA was funding Radio Free Europe.

I fail to see the cause for alarm.

Consider the purpose of Radio Free Europe. Consider what it accomplishes. I can see a connection between it and the CIA -- and justifiably so. And I can see where Radio Free Europe serves a larger purpose. Sen. Case must have been hard pushed to get a headline, and experience shows that any senator can get a headline by blasting the CIA.

Consider the plight of poor Teddy Kennedy. After exuding confidence and optimism that he would be re-elected Senate majority whip, the senior senator from Massachusetts went down in abject defeat. So how do you get a headline and divert attention from such ignominy?

You attack the CIA, that's how, and that is what Teddy did recently. With righteous anger (or feignedly so) he accused the CIA of diverting relief money for refugees in Laos to forces fighting the Communist invaders. Bravo!

BECAUSE the CIA of necessity engages in covert operations, it is relatively simple for politicians and lawyers to accuse the CIA of virtually anything they wish. For the CIA to either confirm or deny such accusations could place the organization in a dangerous position. Its operations are of such a delicate nature that it cannot afford to take public stands.

And for my part, I'm overjoyed we have the CIA. Thank God for it.

10 FEB 1971

STATINTL

CAPITOL STUFF

By STAN CARTER

Washington, Feb. 9.—South Vietnam's open invasion has shattered any last illusion that—despite the written guarantee of 14 nations—there is peace and neutrality in Laos, a sleepy-looking land of three million people and one million elephants where marijuana sells for a penny a joint.

Except for brief interludes, the Oregon-sized kingdom in the heart of Indochina Peninsula has, in fact, been a battleground during all its 1,200 years of known history.

Odd Conspiracy To Perpetuate Neutrality Myth

For the past nine years, there has been a myth of Laotian neutrality in the fighting going on elsewhere in Indochina. But it has always been just a fiction, despite the agreement signed in Geneva on July 23, 1962, by the United States, the Soviet Union, Communist China, North and South Vietnam and nine other governments, to "respect and observe in every way the sovereignty, independence, neutrality, unity and territorial integrity of the kingdom of Laos."

The Communists, the Americans, the South Vietnamese and the Laotians all participated, until this week's invasion, in an odd conspiracy to perpetuate the neutrality myth. But the fact is that the Geneva accords were violated by the Communists before the ink was dry—and by the Americans and South Vietnamese soon afterward. Until the publicly announced South Vietnamese thrust into the Laotian panhandle with U.S. air support, they all denied they were doing it.

One of the immediate requirements in the 1962 accords was that all foreign military personnel leave the country within 75 days of the signing, except for a small French training mission. The International Control Commission, composed of representatives of Poland, confirmed that all 666 U.S. military advisers left before the deadline. But only 40 North Vietnamese civilian advisers were withdrawn through commission checkpoints, leaving about 6,000 North Vietnamese troops in Laos.

By the end of last year, the number of North Vietnamese troops in the little country had increased to 70,000.

About 45,000 North Vietnamese troops guard the Ho Chi Minh Trail, the network of jungle-covered roads and tracks in the eastern Laotian panhandle which is the Communist supply line to South Vietnam and Cambodia; the remainder are helping indigenous Laotian rebels called the Pathet Lao in a civil war against the royal government.

Before the Geneva accords were signed, the three main Lao political groupings—rightist, neutralist and Communist—agreed to end years of factional strife and open fighting by establishing a troika government under the premiership of Prince Souvanna Phouma, a neutralist. But the arrangement broke down the next year, with the Communists leaving Vientiane and resuming the civil war centered around the Plain of Jars in the North. The civil war is now in its 20th year.

Souvanna Phouma is still an avowed neutralist. But after the Pathet Lao renewed the civil war, with increasing assistance from the North Vietnamese, he sought military assistance from the United States. The U.S. gave it under cover of a large aid mission.

He Wouldn't Admit He Said Yes

Since 1964, Souvanna Phouma has acquiesced in American bombing of the Ho Chi Trail and in intelligence-gathering activities along the trail by Meo tribesmen recruited by the CIA, but he has tried to preserve his neutralist image by refusing to acknowledge that he gave his approval.

The United States tried until recently to keep other American activities in Laos secret. But a Senate subcommittee headed by Sen. Stuart Symington (D-Mo.) charged last April that "tens of thousands" of Americans were involved in the Laotian war in air combat, training, advisory, supply and intelligence work. A CIA-directed clandestine army of 36,000 Meo tribesmen has done some of the major fighting against the Communists in the Plain of Jars area.

The State Department refuses to say whether Souvanna Phouma also gave approval to the South Vietnamese assault against Communist supply lines in the panhandle. The premier issued a mild protest about the invasion yesterday, but also said that it was the North Vietnamese who had first violated Laotian neutrality and territorial integrity "in defiance of international law accords solemnly concluded in 1962 at Geneva."

It's a good bet that Souvanna Phouma did give at least tacit approval but does not want to acknowledge it because this would further weaken his political standing.

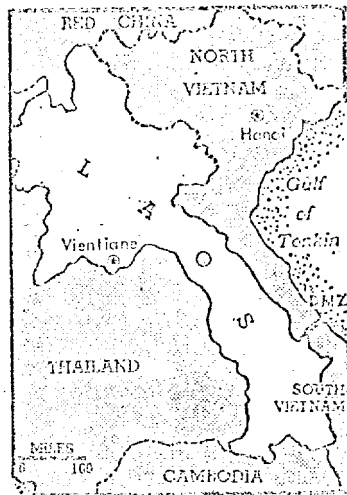
Could Make Difference to Most Laotians

Conceivably, the Communists could react to the assault on their supply lines on the South by opening an all-out offensive in the more populated, northern part of Laos. But if this doesn't happen, the South Vietnamese invasion of a sparsely populated, mountainous part of their country will make little difference to most Laotians.

Most of them won't even know there has been an invasion. Laos, as the late Bernard Fall pointed out in the book "Anatomy of a Crisis," is a landlocked country of mountains, jungles and small villages, almost completely isolated in narrow valleys, with very little feeling of national unity. What really counts in Laotian life is what happens to their own clans in their valleys. Most Laotians are content to eke out a meager living growing opium poppies and corn.

Some have begun growing other cash crops in recent years, however. At a trade fair in Vientiane a couple of years ago, smack in the center of the exhibits, there was a little wooden booth that advertised: "Grass (marijuana)—five kip."

At the prevailing open market rate, 500 kip equals \$1.



10 FEB 1971

Reds Attack

CIA Base in Laos

Vientiane, Laos, Feb. 9 (UPI)
—North Vietnamese troops and Pathet Lao guerrillas have attacked government positions around Long Cheng, an operations base for the United States Central Intelligence Agency in Laos, Laotian military spokesmen said today.

The base also is headquarters for the CIA-trained mercenary army of Meo tribesmen.



ST. LOUIS, MO.
POST-DISPATCH

E - 333,224
S - 558,618

FEB 10 1971

Fund Diversion In Laos

For the second time in a month, the American public has been given a shocking lesson in how programs established to serve humanitarian causes have been subverted for military purposes. First, it was revealed that funds generated by the Food for Peace program have been used by foreign countries to buy weapons. Now the General Accounting Office discloses that the Central Intelligence Agency has been financing paramilitary activities in Laos with funds intended to assist refugees.

Of the \$17,000,000 provided by the Agency for International Development for refugee aid in Laos, Senator Kennedy estimates that nearly half was siphoned off by the CIA for its operations, which include the support of a guerrilla army operating against the Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese forces in the northern regions of the country. For the Laotian refugees, the results have been tragic. Refugee villages are overcrowded and unsanitary and mortality rates are as much as 250 per cent above "acceptable" standards set by the AID.

What are the consequences of these perversions? At home, they add to a feeling of distrust in the Government, a sensation that despite soothing words to the contrary the United States, by continuing covert military assistance, is encouraging chaos in an area of the world that desperately needs stability. In Southeast Asia, they add immeasurably to the human misery for which this country is responsible.

The charade must be ended. Both the Administration and Congress should insist that AID funds for refugees are spent on refugees and not on further killing. Beyond the immediate cases, however, a thorough review of all foreign assistance programs is needed, to determine if others are being used as a front for the intelligence or military establishments.

10 FEB 1971

STATINTL

Approved For Release 2001/03/04 : CIA-RDP80-01601

CIA Base In N. Laos Evacuating

By TAMMY ARBUCKLE

Special to The Star

VIENTIANE, Laos -- The United States today began evacuating its base at Long Cheng, 75 miles north of here, as an estimated 5,000 North Vietnamese troops massed around it, well-informed sources said.

The U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, which uses Long Cheng as the center of its Laos operations, has dismantled some of the monitoring equipment used to spy on Hanoi's communications with Laos and North Vietnam.

The equipment has been flown to other secret airstrips.

Most of the Americans left in Long Cheng no longer spend the nights there. All American commando leaders in charge of guerrilla teams have moved to Pakkao southeast of Long Cheng.

Long Cheng Hospital, with its American doctors, has been evacuated. Bedridden patients have been flown to Ban Son, 20 miles to the southwest and the staff is expected to follow soon.

Meo Gen. Vang Pao's forces, which are under direct U.S.

command, are reported to be tired and suffering from battle casualties which decimated the Meo force from 11,000 combat troops to just under 4,000 in 26 months of fighting.

"The North Vietnamese are fresh, fit and well-armed and we are tired," a government military man said, referring to the arrival of Hanoi's 312th Division north of Long Cheng.

The 312th is a fresh unit brought to fight alongside Hanoi's 316th Division which already was in the area.

Mortar Barrages

Hanoi troops are firing rocket and mortar barrages into positions north of Long Cheng.

Two nights ago they pulverized one post in four hours of shelling, demonstrating that Hanoi has no ammunition shortages.

The North Vietnamese troops, Sunday, briefly probed along Skyline Ridge, a position overlooking Long Cheng.

Twenty of the North Vietnamese were killed in action and an American installation on Skyline Ridge, which guides aircraft, took a direct hit from a rocket.

Civilians Leaving

Meo civilians around Long Cheng already are leaving as the North Vietnamese conduct a terror campaign. In one Meo village, near Long Cheng, North Vietnamese troops reportedly executed all the Meo men Monday night.

This Hanoi military pressure, the weakness of the Meos, and the start of hazy weather preventing adequate U.S. air support, are believed to be the reasons the United States apparently is retreating.

The fall of Long Cheng, however, would likely have important political consequences.

Lao generals have said recently that, if Long Cheng falls, they will make an official alliance with the Thais, South Vietnamese and Cambodians and openly reject the stated Laos policy of neutrality.

DES MOINES, IOWA
 TRIBUNE

FEB 9 1971
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Spreading War

The new joint invasion of Laos by South Vietnam and the United States is to be "limited in time and space", the State Department pronises — and, thanks to an act of Congress, it is further limited for the United States to air power alone.

But at the same time, U.S. air action is to be "unlimited in Indochina" — and in the "limited" Laos action the United States is providing air transport for troops, medical evacuation by air, close air support and long-distance strategic bombing.

So the limits are high, wide and hairy.

Yet this complicated co-operative effort must be conducted without American "advisers" on the ground in Laos. It is a fantastic situation, and it shows how badly the Pentagon or the White House or both wanted to raid Laos.

The limit of space is the area between the 16th and 17th parallels. This means primarily Route 9 and the Ho Chi Minh trail connections to the north and south for about 35 miles each way. The limit of time is secret.

Laos is the country where military logic always tempted the United States to intervention and where (until now) the U.S. has been relatively resistant.

Laos has been the major enemy channel for sending supplies and men into Vietnam, and Laos also has its own Communist guerrilla movement. The war there (and American help to the anti-Communist side) is as old as the Vietnam war, though always smaller, but Americans have avoided getting in very deep.

After all, Laos is a hopeless place to fight—almost roadless, almost all mountain forest like the dreadful central highlands of Vietnam, entirely inaccessible by sea and only marginally accessible by air. You can drop all the weight of World War II's bombs there and hardly hit anything — and we did.

Furthermore, Laotians don't want to fight. The principal fighters on both sides in the Laotian civil war have been mountain tribesmen chivvied and bribed by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency or the North Vietnamese Communist apparatchiks into taking up arms.

The ethnic Lao are much more interested in acquiring Buddhist merit by not killing. When enemy forces came close to the royal capital recently, the king was busy supervising the decoration of a temple with wall paintings of episodes from the life of Buddha.

President Nixon wants to save lives, too, but he claims to be tougher and more "realistic" about it. But isn't he out of touch with reality in trying at the same time to reduce American participation in the Vietnam war by pulling out troops and handing over the "ground combat role" to Vietnamese—and also trying to win the war for them by heavy air blows and combined military expeditions all over Indochina?

WASHINGTON, 2000

STATINTL

Invasion Ends a 'Secret War'

By Marilyn Berger
Washington Post Staff Writer

Since 1962, Washington, Saigon, Hanoi and Vientiane have been joined in one of the oddest international conspiracies to protect the fiction of Laotian neutrality.

That faltering effort, which was more often ignored than observed, came to a complete halt Sunday night with the announced invasion of that war-torn, landlocked country.

The neutrality of Laos was formalized in the 1952 declaration that grew out of the 14-nation Geneva Conference. Laos, according to paragraph 6 of the declaration, "will not allow any foreign troops or military personnel to be introduced" into the country.

Paragraph four of the same declaration stipulates that the Kingdom of Laos "will not allow the establishment of any foreign military base on Laotian territory, nor allow any country to use Laotian territory for military purposes or for the purposes of interference in the internal affairs of other countries, nor recognize the protection of any alliance or military coalition, including SEATO."

Despite the carefully worded provisions, Laos became a principal thoroughfare for the Vietnam war.

In the view of the United States, North Vietnam never

observed Laotian neutrality. Although all foreign troops were required by the Geneva agreements to leave the country, the U.S. has said repeatedly that only 40 North Vietnamese civilian advisers were withdrawn through International Control Commission checkpoints.

According to official U.S. sources, this left 6,000 North Vietnamese troops in Laos at the time. That number has grown, according to official estimates, to 70,000 in all of Laos, with 50,000 in the southern panhandle region.

Substantial Parts

The North Vietnamese had occupied substantial parts of Laos, according to official U.S. publications, in violation of the 1954 Geneva agreements. The failure of efforts to integrate Communist and anti-Communist factions that split the country politically and geographically in a civil war led to the Geneva Conference of 1961-1962.

By this time the U.S. was already involved militarily. Officially, Washington said it provided tactical military advisers to the Lao government forces in 1961 to counter a Communist military threat led by a para-troop commander, Kong Le.

Unofficially, it became known that U.S. involvement went deeper. Roger Hilsman, who served in top State Department positions

under President Kennedy, later wrote of extensive operations by the CIA to organize the country politically against the Communist Pathet Lao and to set up a strong man in General Phoumi Nosaven.

Last April, a subcommittee headed by Sen. Stuart Symington (D-Mo.) disclosed that "tens of thousands" of Americans were involved in the Laotian war in air combat, in training, advisory, supply and intelligence work, including the direction of a 33,000-man clandestine army of Meo tribesmen.

American involvement has reportedly been linked to prior violation of the Geneva Accords by the North Vietnamese who were said to arm, supply and direct the Communist Pathet Lao and who staked out the network of jungle paths known as the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

The North Vietnamese presence in Laos remains clandestine. It has been said that only a desire to maintain the fiction of the existence of the 1962 accords has prevented Hanoi from taking over more territory, including the royal capital of Luang Prabang.

U.S. "air interdiction" and assistance to the Laotian government was an open secret until President Nixon disclosed some of the American operations, including air combat support in northern Laos, on March 6, 1970, linking them to a growth of

North Vietnamese combat activities.

Massive U.S. bombing of the trail area became virtually routine after the bombing half over North Vietnam.

Muskie Complains

The current South Vietnamese invasion brought into the open the so-called secret war. Sen. Edmund S. Muskie (D-Maine) yesterday declared himself dissatisfied with the explanation that the North Vietnamese had tacitly broken the 1962 Geneva Accords.

"This is a major new effort," Muskie said, "crossing the borders into a neutral state whose neutrality we undertook to establish . . . To move from the tacit to the overt is a very serious move in diplomacy."

The political aspects of the accord had already fallen apart. Under the agreement, a three-way coalition was formed under neutralist Premier Souvanna Phouma. His half-brother, Prince Souphanouvong, headed the Communist faction which pulled out of the coalition in 1963.

The 1962 agreements also provided for unification of Communist and non-Communist areas but Laos continued to be geographically divided along ideological lines with the Communists controlling more than 60 per cent of the territory and a third of the population.

9 FEB 1971 STATINTL

North Viet Troops Buy Rice From High Laotian Officials

By TAMMY ARBUCKLE
Special to The Star

VIENTIANE —The South Vietnamese incursion into the Ho Chi Minh Trail area near Sapeone in the north sector of the Laos panhandle will not cut off the North Vietnamese from food supplies, well informed American sources here say.

This is because between 7,000 and 10,000 tons of rice are being

sold to the Communists by Lao officials further south in the panhandle, disgusted Americans say. This is enough rice to supply one North Vietnamese division with food for one year, sources calculate. The rice is surplus produce from Laos' 4th Military Region around Pakse.

Sources allege Prince Boun Oum himself, the traditional rightist ruler in the area, may

be implicated and named one of his associates, Boun Lieng, and the commander of the garrison at Pakse town on the Bolovens Plateau, Gen. Kong Vongnarat, as likely involved in the sales to the Reds.

Meanwhile, another case of corruption in the Lao military has come to light. This case led to the fall of Muong Soui, the

neutralist position near the Plain of Jars which was overrun by the Communists two weeks ago.

U.S. sources say the neutralists at Vang Vieng base, 93 miles north of here, refused to reinforce Muong Soui because they had no winter clothing for the bitterly cold Plain of Jars area.

The American Requirements Office, however, had issued warm clothing in Vang Vieng. The Americans say the neutralist officers sold the warm clothing to the local population.

"We should have issued the clothing in Muong Soui," a requirements officer said ruefully.

Rice is gathered in various places on the western slopes of the Bolovens Plateau near Pakse. From there, it is transported by three-wheeled Lambretta trucks to Pakse.

Rice is hidden in forest caches north of Pakse to be picked up by Communists, sources allege.

Other surplus rice along with fish sauce is taken from southern Laos villages.

Americans say the U.S. Agency for International Development in Vientiane is well aware of the rice sales but unable to do much because high ranking people are involved.

The AID people, in an effort to stop the traffic, offered to buy the rice surplus at \$13 per ton, \$18 more than the usual price to cover rice delivery from Pakse to rice-short northern Laos.

AID planned to use the rice to feed CIA-supported guerrillas and tribal refugees in northern Laos.

However, Pakse officials and

merchants tried to make a double profit. They continued to sell the Pakse surplus to the enemy and at the same time purchased cheap rice in northeast Thailand, eliminating the delivery costs while getting the high price of \$13 per ton from AID, passing off the Thai rice as surplus from the south.

The scheme came apart when AID was informed of the plot in an anonymous letter.

Americans say these rice sales to the Reds have helped save the Lao positions from Communist attack.

They point to the record of Gen. Kong. Kong was commander of Attapeu, a province capital close to the Ho Chi Minh Trail, till it fell to the Reds last year.

Sources believe Attapeu survived for many years because the Reds were getting batteries and medical supplies from the Attapeu military.

When Attapeu fell, Kong and Attapeu officials were warned by bullhorn by the Pathet Lao of a free escape route through Red lines and Kong's units survived with few casualties.

Another freshly arrived Lao unit did not benefit from the

warning and took 93 dead.

This led some Americans to believe that Kong was allowed to escape because of his commercial dealings.

Military Region 4 Commander Gen. Phasouk, close Lao associates say, is aware of the rice traffic but he believes Kong is less greedy than other general officers, therefore as long as he remains in his post less rice will reach the enemy than might be the case.

Middle level American officials apparently are tired of the dealings, however. They fail to see why U.S.-supported officials more interested in money, should get away with feeding Hanoi troops who almost certainly will be engaged against U.S. troops in South Vietnam.

Although the Americans know what's going on, they say there's little proof.

Gen. Phasouk forbids Americans to travel on Pakse Road, claiming it is insecure.

Pakse Road, however, has been hit only once in the past two years by the Reds and some Americans believe the Lao don't want U.S. AID officials to see the rice traffic.

6 FEB 1971

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Laotian Says Key Base Imperiled by Desertions

VIENTIANE, Laos, Feb. 7 (UPI) — Desertions and the absence of the commanding general from his headquarters at Long Tieng have caused a serious deterioration in the defense of northeastern Laos, a Laotian Government official said today.

North Vietnamese troops, he said, have virtually surrounded Long Tieng and appear to be preparing a major attack against the base. It serves both as headquarters for the army of Meo tribesmen led by Gen. Vang Pao and as a communications center for the United States Central Intelligence Agency.

The official, who asked not be named, said about half of the Meo civilians and many of the general's soldiers have fled the big base, 95 miles north of Vientiane, in the last several days. He said that the general has been in Bangkok, Thailand, since the middle of last week, reportedly seeking medical treatment for one of his wives.

7 FEB 1971

STATINTL

CIA Said To Misuse Aid To Lao Civilians

Senate Panel Reports \$25 Million In Supplies For Refugees Given To Private Armies

By GENE OISHI

Washington Bureau of The Sun

Washington, Feb. 6—A Senate subcommittee reported today that nearly half of the materials provided for programs to aid refugees and civilian casualties in Laos are being siphoned off by the Central Intelligence Agency for paramilitary operations.

Senator Edward M. Kennedy (D., Mass.), the subcommittee's chairman, said the disclosure was based on two classified reports prepared by the General Accounting Office, the investigative agency for Congress.

"Sanitized Summary"

While these reports themselves cannot be made public, he said, they confirm findings made independently by the subcommittee's staff. What was released today was described as a "heavily sanitized summary" of the two classified reports.

During the last four years, according to the summary, the United States Agency for International Development has spent about \$51.8 million on refugee programs in Laos.

But according to the General Accounting Office studies, Senator Kennedy said, about 46 per cent, or more than \$25 million worth of the materials provided—such as food, clothing and medicine—have gone to CIA-sponsored guerrilla armies, composed mainly of Meo and Lao Young tribesmen.

Asked why the CIA could not give direct aid to the anti-Communist guerrilla armies instead

of using AID resources, Senator Kennedy said he surmised that it was to avoid an open violation of the 1962 Geneva accords, which bans U.S. military involvement in Laos.

He was, however, critical of the "cynicism" with which the administration comes to Congress to ask for funds to aid refugees and other war victims, knowing that half of it would be used for the war effort.

Harold Levin, chief of the Laos desk at AID headquarters here, confirmed that a substantial portion of AID resources in Laos goes to paramilitary forces and their dependents.

Not To Discriminate

He said this program was administered by AID officials, but declined to discuss the extent of CIA involvement. The policy of AID, he said, is not to discriminate against those who need help because they have been engaged in fighting or may again be engaged in fighting.

Mr. Levin also acknowledged that aid is given to forces actively engaged in fighting, but noted that many of these irregular troops have dependents who have been driven from their homes and can be considered as refugees.

Mr. Levin, however, said he could not confirm the estimate that nearly 50 per cent of the AID resources went to paramilitary forces and their dependents, without a detailed study of

the accounting office reports. His own guess, he said, would be about 30 per cent.

No Fault With Estimate

He found no fault with the subcommittee's estimate that of the total refugee caseload of 280,000, about 45 per cent, or more than 100,000 persons, are in the paramilitary forces or their dependents category. But he said this percentage has fluctuated widely over the years.

Without giving his own views on the subject, Mr. Levin said there has been continuing discussion among various agencies as to who should bear the cost of the various aspects of U.S. activities in Laos.

Senator Kennedy said he was of the view that funds appropriated by Congress to further humanitarian objectives ought not to be used to support military activities.

Might Be Misleading

The subcommittee's staff also notes that budgetary descriptions do not suggest any military implications, and thus might be misleading.

The categories of costs include "refugee relief and resettlement," "air technical support," "public health development," and "PL-480 commodities," more commonly known as the "Food for Peace" program.

The "air technical support" is actually AID's contribution to Air America, a CIA-sponsored organization used in Laos to make deliveries of ammunition, weapons, food and relief supplies to guerrilla forces and refugees.

Too Small

Senator Kennedy also said that even without the diversion of relief materials to military activities, the U.S. aid programs would be too small to cope with the mounting number of war casualties and refugees.

As of last fall, he said, refugees in Laos numbered around 280,000, but "this is going to escalate dramatically due to the activities of the last few days."

Civilian war casualties over the last two years, he said, totaled 30,000, including an estimated 9,000 deaths.

The accounting office, according to the subcommittee's summary, found that the death rate at several refugee centers ex-

ceeded AID standards by as much as 250 per cent. AID, it was noted, established a maximum mortality level for refugees, and if the level is exceeded, remedial measures are supposed to be taken.

Accounting Office

But until the accounting office made inquiries, the summary said, the U.S. mission in Vientiane was not aware of the high death rates in the refugee centers.

The actual death rate among refugees in Laos, however, was not disclosed. The subcommittee's staff said this information was classified by the U.S. mission in Vientiane.

The accounting office's report also was critical of what it termed shabby management of AID programs and overcrowded and unsanitary conditions at AID-sponsored hospitals in Laos, the subcommittee said.

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FEB 7 1971

Refugee aid funds detoured for Laos military - Kennedy

By S. J. Micciche
Globe Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — Half of the funds spent by this nation to help refugees in Laos is being diverted by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) for military purposes in that country, US Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, chairman of the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Refugee Problems in Indochina, based his assessment of the diversion upon findings of a "sanitized" General Accounting Office (GAO) report and the appraisal of the committee staff.

In terms of dollars, Kennedy said about \$27.4 million has been detoured from refugee aid in Laos to finance the CIA-directed military support of the Royal Laotian Government.

CIA activity in Laos has long been recognized. But this is the first time that anyone has been able to approximate a price tag on it, fortified by findings of a Federal agency.

Much of the GAO report is "sanitized," making public only declassified information. However, several areas kept under the cloak of "secret" by the GAO were reported by Kennedy to "document and support" the independent findings of his committee staff.

The refugee program in Laos is handled by the United States Agency for International Development (AID). Since 1968 this program has been channeled

\$54.8 million through AID for Laotian refugee assistance.

"The AID humanitarian programs for war victims apparently still serve as a principal cover for significant amounts of assistance to Laotian military and paramilitary units and their dependents," said Kennedy.

In one program aspect, that of the village health program for civilian medical dispensaries, "nearly 50 percent of funds . . . are being used to support CIA military activities," Kennedy said.

Though the GAO classifies the stated purpose of the AID-sponsored village health project as "secret," Kennedy said: "Unclassified official sources clearly state the project's purpose is to provide medical support to paramilitary personnel and their dependents and refugees generated by military action."

In the generally recognized pattern, the CIA finances guerrilla actions against the Pathet Lao Communist faction and supports the families of those troops.

Kennedy said AID officials are aware of the drain

off of refugee funds, but they "tolerate it and continue it."

The degree of corruption in the Laotian refugee program, said Kennedy, is "about the same as in Vietnam, but the division of funds for military purposes is greater in Laos."

This practice of taking needed funds away from the Laotian refugees is "notorious," Kennedy said, adding that he will seek ways through legislation to "alter and change AID policy."

In other areas, Kennedy said the GAO report found "sloppy management and a lack of records" by the AID mission in Laos. The situation, he said quoting from the GAO report, has led to a "wholesale diversion of drugs."

Hospital facilities for civilian war casualties were found by GAO inspectors to be generally "Overcrowded, congested, dirty and without adequate water supplies."

Without adequate records, it is estimated there have been 30,000 civilian war casualties.

Refugees in Laos total about 232,000, and Kennedy said he expected this number "to increase by 50 percent" because of heightened military activity there in recent days.

In the current fiscal year, the US is spending \$17.2 million for Laotian refugees, which Kennedy said represents "two days of bombing at the average rate of 600 sorties a day" in Laos.

This, he said, "is a tragic indictment of our involvement" in Laos.

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LAOS REFUGEE AID USED BY CIA, TED CHARGES STATINT

N. Viets Strike Allied Forces

By DREW F. STEIS

NY Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — Almost 50 per cent of the multi-million dollar aid to Laotian refugees is being diverted by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) for military purposes, Sen. Edward M. Kennedy charged Friday.

The senator, in releasing what he called "heavily sanitized" reports on Laotian relief efforts prepared by the General Accounting Office (GAO), also disclosed that in the last two years in Laos 30,000 civilians have been killed or wounded and 232,000 have been left homeless.

"Laos has been the only place where we have found almost a 50 per cent drain off from AID (Aid for International Development) program for military activities, said Kennedy who, as chairman of the subcommittee on refugees, has commissioned four government investigations of AID programs in South-east Asia.

Kennedy, who briefed newsmen in his office last Friday on the contents of the report, said the U.S. aid program serves "as a principle cover" for significant amounts of assistance to Laotian military and paramilitary units and their dependents.

"For example," Kennedy said, "nearly 50 per cent of funds allocated to the AID village health program are being used to support CIA military activities."

Although the portions of the GAO report dealing with AID to Laotian military forces were classified and not released to the press, Kennedy said the classified sections "fully document and support the subcommittee's independent findings based on field study and additional investigation not involving official government sources."

Kennedy said his subcommittee's investigation showed that AID began supporting Laos military activities "as early as 1953" and included "direct military and logistical support."

A spokesman for AID in Washington refused to comment on the senator's

charges Friday and said his office had not seen the report.

A staff member of the refugee subcommittee said the AID budget for public health development in 1970 was \$3.1 million of which \$1.7 million was diverted to CIA use in maintaining Laotian military forces.

"We are going to try to insist that AID alter and change its policy to give civilians more aid and assistance," Kennedy said.

The GAO report also was severely critical of the management, staffing and conditions at existing health facilities in Laos.

INVESTIGATORS REPORTED finding overcrowded, dirty and inadequate sanitary facilities at Site 272, a hospital near the Plain of Jars which is the main AID health facility in Laos.

"This hospital consisted of three wards of open huts without screens," the GAO report stated. "Cots were used for beds. There were no mattresses or sheets, and patients were in their dirty street clothes. The wards were dirty and the general condition of this hospital seemed, even by Laotian standards, considerably substandard."

KENNEDY SAID he could not estimate how much financial aid would be necessary to correct conditions within the AID program in Laos. He added that the budget for all AID programs in Laos in fiscal 1972 was \$17.1 million but, because of diverted funds from health to military outlays, it was difficult to determine how much was actually being spent on health services.

"I think this is the primary support for the Laotian (military)," Kennedy told newsmen.

"The war in Southeast Asia has escalated dramatically in the last few days in terms of the bombings and I feel the refugees, in terms of casualties, are also going to escalate dramatically."

Senator Edward M. Kennedy
of Massachusetts

SENATOR KENNEDY RELEASES GAO REPORTS ON LAOS AND COMMENTS ON
WAR RELATED CIVILIAN PROBLEMS IN INDOCHINA

HOLD FOR RELEASE:

Sunday, February 7, 1971

Senator Edward M. Kennedy, Chairman of the Judiciary Subcommittee on Refugees, today released heavily "sanitized" summaries of two classified reports on war victims in Laos prepared by the General Accounting Office (GAO), the independent investigating agency of Congress.

The GAO reports are the last released in a series of studies on war-related civilian problems in Vietnam and Laos, requested by Senator Kennedy. The reports are part of the Subcommittee's continuing effort since 1965 to document these basically humanitarian problems, and upgrade official priority and concern for civilian suffering and needed relief programs.

The findings released today are severely critical of U.S. sponsored programs for refugees and civilian war casualties in Laos. The findings charge --

- ... that official statistics on war victims and other data are "incomplete" and "of doubtful validity" -- the problems are much more serious than officially stated;
- ... that AID humanitarian programs for war victims apparently still serve as a principle "cover" for significant amounts of assistance to Lao military and paramilitary units and their dependents -- for example, nearly 50 percent of funds allocated to the AID Village Health Program are being used to support CIA military activities;
- ... that because of sloppy management and lack of records AID "cannot state with any degree of assurance" that US assistance "has been accomplished as effectively, efficiently, and economically as the situation in Laos permits" -- the situation has led to such things as the "wholesale diversion of drugs";

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Pete Hamill

THE BOMBERS

Men who sneak into buildings and leave bombs behind them are cowards. They might paint themselves with a lot of pretty rhetoric about the "armed struggle" and the "time of the heroic guerrilla." They might have the posters of Che on the walls of the places where they sleep; they might have a literary knowledge of Bakunin or the Spanish anarchists; they might have memorized the simplicities of Mao or Robert Welch. But whether they are Klansmen or Weatherpeople, at heart they are gutless bums.

I suppose that there are people somewhere gloating about the famous victory over the Senate men's room. In its own way, this compares to the great South Vietnamese rout of the card-carrying Communist chickens a few weeks ago. The phone calls in the night, warning of the bombings, are not much different from the Five O'Clock Follies held every day in Saigon to announce the imminent victory of the latest lightning-like strike against a neighboring country. Each has the same moral weight.

* * *
It is not yet clear who set the bomb in the Senate the other night. It could have been people from the Left; it could just as easily have been someone from the Right. If I were in the CIA and wanted a certain number of Americans to support Nixon on Laos, I would set a bomb in the Senate and tell WINS that it was in protest against "the Laos decision." After all, the CIA has had a lot of practice in such techniques, and has been using them in places like Laos for years.

But that is a little too easy. The movement for social justice in this country (a phrase like "the Left" is

not really accurate, because that movement also includes a sizeable number of anti-authoritarian conservatives) has been slow to place the bombers in a rational context. There were strong protests when black churches were blown up in the South; but now that the targets are the ROTC, Defense research laboratories, banks, Army recruiting stations, or other visible symbols of "the Establishment," there is an altered response. We start getting sociological; we talk about "the kids" the way we used to talk about the punks in the street gangs after the war, who grew up to be enforcers for the Mafia.

We don't want to know about those young people who have learned that making change is a long, slow, painful, uphill battle; we also didn't want to know about those tough street kids who did not join the Mob, did not become hitters for the local goombah, who did not break into the world by cutting throats in the balcony of Loew's Pitkin.

Unfortunately, the whole issue of the bombings is clouded by the dirty business of agents provocateurs. We've all read about Tommy the Traveler, an informer who went around stirring up students, turning them violent whenever possible. Most of the prosecutions of radicals now under way come from testimony provided by informers; we'll simply never know how many acts of violence over the past few years were committed by cops or squealers, trying to prove their commitment to the cause (whatever they thought that cause was at the moment, or which direction they wanted to move the people involved.) There are moments when

I think that the second-ranking member of the CIA is Bernadine Doherty; nobody has done better work for those who believe in control, repression, and war.

Those who believe in real change in this country should make very clear that the bombers might be either agents or lunatics, but that they have nothing to do with anything real. The FBI claims that it cannot find them, that they have gone underground, that they are in constant motion in the hippie community or Canada or that they are staying in the headquarters of COSVN, somewhere near Lawrence, Kansas. But it is most likely that politically, it is better for J. Edgar Hoover and his fan, Nixon, to keep these lunatics at large.

* * *

The one clear lesson should be that politics is not therapy, it is work. Through politics, a democracy decides who shall govern, and to what ends that governing should be directed. It is not a two-round fight; it is not like some super TV set, where you can change directions with the ease reserved for changing channels; it is work. It means joining local political clubs, marshaling those forces in the years when there is no glamor and no excitement. It means finding one citizen a bail bondsman and another citizen a place to live. It means helping a Veteran to decode the bureaucratic gibberish of his VA forms and it means trying to get a stop light at a school crossing. A lot of it is dull and tedious; very little of it is apocalyptic; all of it is serious.

Those who believe that blowing up buildings is a legitimate means to a political end are people who have neither the courage nor the tenacity to deal with the real world. They have become prisoners of their fantasies, but acting out those fantasies is doing damage to some things which are a lot more valuable than buildings.

U.S. Reportedly Directs Lao Units From Thailand

By TAMMY ARBUCKLE

Special to The Star

VIENTIANE, Laos—Americans are directing from Thailand Laos guerilla units in militarily and politically

most-exposed places of the Lao-tian war, from Long Chien in the north to Bolovens Plateau in the south, top Lao military sources say.

"Americans pick up the radio and tell the units what to do. It's nothing to do with us," a member of the Laos general staff said.

This is the first time the Lao military has admitted the Americans have a command role in the Laos fighting which they say is directed from Udorn, a base in northeast Thailand.

Admission comes on the heels of rightist military disclosure of an agreement for South Vietnamese intervention in southern Laos and similar agreements with Thailand.

Lao generals have said that, if either Long Chien or Bolovens Plateau falls, they will reject the neutrality of Premier Souvanna Phouma and form an official alliance with Saigon, Bangkok and Phnom Penh against Hanoi.

American officials here claim the rightist generals are making these statements now to embarrass Souvanna.

These officials ignore Washington's ambivalence over reports that a South Vietnamese invasion of southern Laos has begun.

While the rightist generals may be trying to embarrass Souvanna, much of the problem would seem to result from U.S. policies.

For years, U.S. ambassadors here have supported Souvanna with words but continued to supply the rightwing generals with money, arms and encouragement, allowing the neutralist army to dwindle.

Lao rightists have flown often to South Vietnam for consultations with President Nguyen Van Thieu's officers.

Lao Gen. Etam Singvongsa visited Cambodia as soon as Lon Nol came to power.

These visits were to discuss South Vietnamese battalion-sized forays into Lao, the use of Thai troops in Laos and the training of Cambodians here.

The result has been that Souvanna has become a mere figurehead.

Laos long has been a covert member of the South Vietnam-Thai alliance. The CIA, which has helped coordinate the alliance, employing U.S. ground commanders, also has committed the U.S. by proxy to the defense of Laos.

AN... has been come under the cover of pleas to influential senators that U.S. security was at stake.

Given the most likely scenario now of a South Vietnam incursion into Laos and a North Vietnamese move against the Bolovens or Plateau or a Hanoi success in taking Lon Chien, the result could be a CIA debacle.

For, while an Asian military alliance against Hanoi might result and the Indochina war is shifted further from Saigon and Cambodia to Laos, the U.S. would be committed to helping Laos, a nation bordering China, Laos, beset by corruption and inefficiency, would be unable to bear the brunt of war alone. Its fall would endanger the U.S. in Vietnam.

Meanwhile, Lao armored cars took up positions at Vientiane Airport and U.S. aircraft normally parked at Vientiane were flown to the Thai base at Udorn. Lao military sources said these precautions were taken at all Laos airfields in case the North Vietnamese attack following reports of invasion in the south.

STATINTL