

STATINTL



BLUEFIELD, WEST VA.
SUNSET NEWS-
OBSERVER

E-7.383R 13 1970

It is reported that CIA agents posing as AID men are taking part in military operations in Laos. But no ground troops, mind you.

OBSERVER
MAR 13 1970M - 174,906
S - 204,225

Nixon Assertions Jolt U.S. Officials In Laos

By JAMES MCARTNEY
Observer Washington Bureau

VIENTIANE, Laos — President Nixon's charge that North Vietnam has escalated the war in Laos with a huge military buildup is flatly contradicted by official intelligence estimates here. In fact U.S. embassy officials here were astonished at figures cited by Nixon in his major policy statement on Laos in which he claimed growing North Vietnamese strength.

They say it just hasn't happened. But they are reluctant to

publicly dispute the President. They have frantically been seeking an explanation from Washington but as yet have not received even a courtesy reply. The "buildup" was a key point in Nixon's Laos policy statement a week ago. The President said that North Vietnam has poured over 13,000 additional troops into Laos during the past few months. He cited this buildup as a justification for the highly controversial increase in U.S. bombing.

Intelligence estimates here are that North Vietnamese strength has not changed substantially in the last six months. An official estimate given to reporters in Vientiane the day before Nixon's statement made no mention of any kind of buildup in North Vietnamese strength. One official was asked if he was surprised by the figures in Nixon's statement.

"I was damned surprised," he said, "and I'm damned surprised there haven't been more questions about it."

Nixon's estimates of overall North Vietnamese strength were also far larger than anything that makes sense to the embassy here. Nixon said total North Vietnamese strength in Laos now is over 67,000.

He said this was an all-time high.

The day before he issued the statement the official estimate given here in Vientiane was 50,000 and that figure has been used repeatedly in Washington for many months.

Officials here were jolted by the President's facts and figures. One wrote a long memo saying that the government's credibility again was threatened in Laos. He suggested that the government furnish an explanation for the President's figures and for the difference between those figures and official estimates made here. He was told that no explanation could be given until Washington provides new instructions.

Officials have considered it possible that the North Vietnamese may have added about 2,000 troops to their forces over the last six months. Up to the time of the President's statements, however, they had not added 2,000 to their official estimate because they considered evidence to be inconclusive. One North Vietnamese division, the 312th, was moved from the Hanoi area into Laos last fall. Officials say however it is believed the division was sent to Laos in part to replace losses.

The embassy here has its own intelligence specialists. In fact it is shot through with representatives of the Central Intelligence Agency. One official remarked wryly, "I guess

you know that the embassy really would have no interest in seeking to downplay North Vietnamese strength.

"Asked where he thought Nixon may have gotten his figures, he replied he must have gotten them from the air force in Vietnam.

"They'd like to justify the bombing of the Ho Chi Minh Trail in every way they could." Most intelligence estimates are not made by the Air Force nor exclusively on the basis of aerial reconnaissance. They are a product of all forms of information, including questioning of prisoners captured documents and all other possible sources.

STATINTL

DES MOINES, IOWA
REGISTER

M - 246,841
S - 514,496

MAN 13 1970

AID a CIA 'Front'

The United States economic aid program in Laos evidently has been a front for CIA operations. Jack Foisie of the Los Angeles Times reports from Vientiane that CIA agents have been posing as members of the U.S. Agency for International Development (AID) rural development staff in Laos.

These agents have been recruiting and training guerrillas to fight against the North Vietnamese and Laotian Communist forces. Foisie estimates that the number of CIA agents posing as civilian economic aid workers totals several hundred.

In modern diplomacy it is common practice for some officials in foreign embassies to be leading a double life as clandestine CIA agents, that is, spies. Sometimes the ambassador himself may not know all the CIA agents he has working under him in such jobs as Army attache or commercial attache.

The "spooks" as they are called seem to be an essential part of foreign relations. Certainly the United States has to gather intelligence about foreign powers, as they do about the U.S. But sometimes this cloak and dagger stuff seems ridiculously overdone. The major elements of intelligence are open, even in Russia, and do not call for any elaborate under-cover work. Spying has become a passion in the U.S. since the cold war began. It is another way in

which Americans copy their Communist foes.

But that sort of spying is at least understood and accepted. When the U.S. uses an economic assistance agency for conducting hostile acts against an enemy, however, that is something else. In Laos, as in Vietnam, and probably many other countries, AID officials and employees evidently must be assumed to be not just spies but *agents provocateurs* who may be aiding and abetting anti-Communist guerrillas or trying to foil Communist guerrillas; engineering assassinations, destroying military supply caches, etc.

The United States has failed to receive credit for much of the valuable economic assistance it has provided for underdeveloped countries just because of the suspicions that it was being conducted as part of the cold war. The news about what is going on in Indochina will surely reinforce this opinion of American aid.

It is not possible, of course, to divorce the activities of an economic assistance agency or of the Peace Corps volunteers from the government of which they are a part. But if the U.S. is going to conduct these programs for peace and economic improvement, then it ought at least to make a determined attempt to keep the agencies and their personnel separate from the war and cold war departments of government.

ELMIRA, N.Y.
STAR-GAZETTE
D - 51,075
TELEGRAM
S - 55,644

MAR 13 1970

STATINTL

U.S. Toppling Dominoes?

To the Editor:

It seems certain that Nixon has adopted the domino theory.

We are now bombing Laos to protect South Vietnam, and tomorrow we can bomb Malaysia to protect Laos, and the day after that we can bomb Formosa to save Malaysia, and then maybe we can lay one on Hiroshima for old times' sake, to protect Japan from itself, and after that we can demolish China and get it over with once and for all.

Except this time it is not the Communists who are pushing over the dominoes—it is us.

To be an American these days, you must wake up in a state of lunacy or wonder.

Nixon has said no more Vietnams and there we are in Laos, with all those crewcut overgrown boys in the CIA playing James Bond, and all those brave pilots dropping explosives from on high, and there doesn't seem to be anything we can do about it.

We now have a Laos-Vietnam war and there is no way to disguise that by announcing that you are bringing home 50,000 men while you simultaneously spread death across

the Plain of Jars.

Agnew, I suppose, will start some sort of counter-offensive. After all, the CIA and the Pentagon were having a nice little war in Laos until the news media started blowing the whistle.

I suggest that Nixon and Agnew and any congressman who votes funds for Laos be required to serve in that country, that the great pilots who make their living by bombing Laos be brought home and put to work with their hands in a slum, and that it is late in the day for Nixon & Co. to get a case of Asian infection.

The Laos-Vietnam war is not going away, and if you buy the Nixon-Agnew public relations job you can be sure that the son you have in the first grade this year will eventually end up in the muck of Asia.

However, you don't have to buy that public relations job. In a democracy such as ours we, the people, are the boss and in the last analysis we get the kind of government we demand and deserve.

Some Elmiraans don't deserve good government because when there is a special City Council

election less than half of those registered to vote do so and when there is a City Council meeting the members of the Council and of the news media far outnumber the audience.

That may be one of the reasons for the declining population of Elmira, the business district which is starting to approach that of a ghost town, and the poorly lighted and potholed streets.

If we Americans don't write our representatives and our newspapers, we will surely get a larger war in Asia and a bad political system, for a democracy without participation is meaningless.

EDWARD M. LEPKOWSKI
1013 Davis St.
Class of 1970
City University of New York

LITTLE ROCK, ARK.
GAZETTE

M - 108,821
S - 124,741
MAR 13 1970

"-The Congress Shall Have Power--All This Time
I Thought It Was the C.I.A.--to Declare War--"



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VIEW U.S. AS SENIOR PARTNER

Yanks Get Along Better With Laotians Than With Viet Ally

BY JACK FOISIE
Times Staff Writer

VIENTIANE, Laos—one of the notable differences between the wars in Vietnam and Laos is that generally the Americans get along better with their Lao ally than with their Vietnamese counterpart.

In Laos there never has been uncertainty over who is the senior partner. It's the American. Laotian military commanders tend to be more willing to accept advice. If they sometimes play the American for a fool, it is mostly to gain personal profit.

Loss of "face" seems not as important. Talking out a problem here doesn't have to be an exercise in obtuse diplomacy. Candor is possible. At Pakse, southern Laos, the other day, a Lao pilot readily explained that his T-28 prop plane bombed only in areas not heavily contested. The Ho Chi Minh Trail

and other "hot" places are left to the faster, more expertly flown American jets.

Genuine coordination in assignment of air missions is possible because of Lao reality. Air strike forms reflect it: "Request Lao AF— or Allied AF—check one" is about how the choice is presented.

Unlike in Vietnam, in Laos there has never been debate over whether Americans can supervise the distribution of aid supplies down to the village level.

The Laotians readily agree the task is beyond their capability. The Vietnamese wanted to take charge of American aid cargo from the moment it was unloaded from ship or plane, with resulting large-scale diversion into black markets.

Until last year, the Americans in Laos also felt restrained in what they could do for the Laotians. With neither press nor Congress paying close attention, it was easier to make allowances for Lao inadequacies.

As a major participant in raising guerrilla forces to stiffen Lao government resistance to the Communists, the Central Intelligence Agency had secret funds to spend. Agencies which had to keep public books were able to disguise some of the extralegal expenditures.

Partly because of such comfortable working arrangements, some strong attachments between Americans and Laotians have developed.

One remarkable friendship is that of Gen. Vang Pao, fiery leader of government troops in northeast Laos and Edgar (Pop) Buell, an Indiana farmer and widower who came to Laos as a volunteer aid worker 10 years ago.

The affection is voiced in pseudo-tough language by "Pop."

Deprived of Booze

Asked about his health when visited by correspondents recently at his mountainous headquarters at Sam Thong, "Pop" replied: "My last malaria attack was a bad one and I've had no booze for three months. The general (Vang Pao) told his people anyone who gives "Pop" a drink goes in the hole for three days."

"Pop" reciprocates with superlative praise for Vang Pao.

"He's the greatest leader of men and people in the world," Buell said, referring to Vang Pao's command of an estimated 10,000 Lao army regulars and an equal number of guerrillas. Most of the guerrillas are Meo mountain tribesmen.

Vang Pao is a Meo, and acknowledged leader of 350,000 hill tribesmen who live in northern Laos, according to "Pop." Buell is probably the most knowledgeable American on the tribes in the highlands after his years of catering to their needs through distribution of U.S. aid supplies.

Daring anyone to criticize Vang Pao, or suggest that he has a challenger for power, the 56-year-old American declared heatedly:

"There's no other Meo living who could do the job the general's done."

Such untempered admiration makes Buell the target of some criticism in the rear areas. But the unschooled man from Hamilton, Ind., is not unsettled by it. American ambassadors and air directors come and go, but Buell remains the American with the most influence on the fightingest general on the Royal Lao government side.

Less Confidential

Vang Pao's relations with his American military advisers seem less confidential. During the seasonal Communist offensive now under way against Vang Pao's forces, it is the general's habit to visit his major units each day. He goes by helicopter or light aircraft flown by Air

American civilian pilots. Air America is a U.S. government chartered airline in Asia.

Vang Pao is accompanied by several non-Asians in civilian clothing, presumably CIA and U.S. military men. The flights originate from Long Cheng, Vang Pao's headquarters just over the hill from Buell at Sam Thong. There never has been any explanation as to why there are two air bases 15 miles apart. Possibly the idea was that separation of civilian aid and military assistance was possible and desirable.

The twin bases have been politically convenient. Curious congressmen and reporters are shown Sam Thong and kept away from Long Cheng. Vang Pao tends to bristle at outsiders.

Vang Pao's daily trips are dangerous. Only two weeks ago, the doughty general, who claims to be only 40, survived his umpteenth crash. His plane's

engine lost power on takeoff and the pilot crash-landed with Vang Pao getting only a cut nose.

Vang Pao accepts advice but sometimes his decisions do not have the concurrence of his American advisers. Nor does he always inform them of his plans.

The general decided to evacuate the road junction town of Muong Soui without a fight during the enemy's current offensive on the Plain of Jars. The Americans did not discover that the small garrison had pulled out until nine hours later.

Vang Pao's offensive over the same ground late last summer was his own idea. He differed with Americans on how far he should push the retreating enemy. They feared that Vang Pao, with his limited forces, would try to gobble up too much territory.

This year's enemy comeback with not too much resistance by Vang Pao's troops may have proved that the American judgment was right.

LUABECK, TFX.
 AVALANCHE JOURNAL
 # - 63,232
 H - 37,751
 S - 79,009

MAR 18 1970

NIXON PATIENCE STRAINED

Nonsense About Laos Overdone

THERE ARE two methods through which Sen. J. William Fulbright could be told forcefully to lessen his unnecessary mouthings about the U.S. Government's efforts to settle Southeast Asia's bloody conflicts.

His latest performance is introduction of a resolution that would put the Senate on record as opposing use of U.S. air or ground forces in Laos without prior Congressional approval. He complains illogically that the Central Intelligence Agency and the Agency for International Development seem to have cooperated in an effort to block conquest of Laos by North Vietnam and the Communist Pathet Lao.

The best method of public deflation of this sort of arrogance from the chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee would be censure by the Senate, calling for adherence to the Committee's constitutional role in foreign affairs.

Another would be a hard-hitting denunciation by President Nixon.

Mr. Nixon has been most thoughtful in

seeking Congressional cooperation in his peace efforts. However, surely there must be a limit. Last year, the Senate adopted a resolution saying the President should be denied authority to commit troops overseas without Congressional approval. It is not binding, and neither would be the new Fulbright resolution.

Fulbright has "gone to the people" in an effort to force his "peace-at-any-price" notions on the Government. Mr. Nixon could "go to the people," with a far better case.

There's little chance for Senate action. For one thing, Majority Leader Mike Mansfield is far too sympathetic to the "bug-out" forces.

He did say Thursday that he failed to see the point of Fulbright's delusion that Communist aggression in Laos is "unrelated to the war in Vietnam." However, that's scarcely the reprimand needed.

It might be up to the President, whose patience has been sorely strained.

MIAMI, FLA.
HERALD

M - 375,469
S - 468,167

MAR 13 1970

Foreign Aid At The Well

HAVE you ever wondered why foreign aid so often fails?

Well, one good example was the story out of Laos that CIA agents were posing as aid workers in a rural development mission.

The CIA men recruited and trained guerrillas, scouted enemy movements and helped direct aircraft from the ground.

What was the effect in the Laotian villages where that occurred?

Laotians logically would regard the aid mission as suspect. They would have ample reason to believe the true purpose was not to help Laotians, but to forward U.S. military objectives.

Such a conclusion destroys aid objectives at their base.

Let us consider further the cover of these CIA agents. The Los Angeles Times dispatch explained that digging wells was one of the aid objectives. On hand were 15 well-digger supervisors. Ten of these were CIA agents.

Even if Laotians did not realize their military activities, an unawareness not likely in those circumstances, such a surplus of well-digger supervisors fashions an impression either of corruption or gross inefficiency.

Why does foreign aid fail? Add this to the examples.

STATINTL

All Foreign Forces

U.S. Endorses French Call For Withdrawal From Laos

A French call for the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Laos, including American air and North Vietnamese ground units, was endorsed yesterday by the United States.

The State Department endorsement came in a statement that also urged that all 14 nations which signed the 1962 Geneva accords neutralizing Laos "live up to their responsibilities."

The United States has supported informal consultations among the 14 nations but progress in this direction has not been made because the Soviet Union has not responded.

Further attention on Laos will focus today on the appearance of Richard Helms, director of the Central Intelligence

Agency, in a closed-door session of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on covert CIA activity.

Helms was summoned as Committee Chairman J. W. Fulbright (D-Ark.) pursued his inquiry into reports that great numbers of U.S. personnel listed as employees of the Agency for International Development in Laos are actually CIA agents.

Published government records show more than 230 Americans in Laos as AID personnel. The personnel are listed in a wide variety of categories, ranging from "community development adviser" and "air traffic control adviser" to public safety advisers, engineers and "area coordinator."

In another development in the continuing Laos controversy, Senate Democratic leader Mike Mansfield (Mont.) expressed "grave reservations" about one implication of a resolution on Laos introduced by Fulbright on Wednesday.

The Fulbright resolution would require action by the legislative branch, as well as by the executive, to justify use of U.S. armed forces "in combat in or over Laos."

Mansfield told newsmen that he was concerned that the resolution, even though not binding on the President, might impede U.S. bombing of North Vietnamese troops and supplies infiltrated down the Ho Chi Minh trails across Laos and into South Vietnam. "I don't think anything should be done to make it more difficult and deadly for our 400,000 troops in Vietnam," said Mansfield.

Fulbright's resolution was intended to distinguish between air interdiction of the North Vietnamese infiltration, and what he called "action in Laos which is unrelated to the war in Vietnam," Senate sources noted.

In presenting the resolution, Fulbright said, "An argument might be made that the Tonkin Gulf resolution (of 1964) is broad enough to authorize the President to engage the armed forces of the United States in stopping North Vietnamese traffic headed for South Vietnam over the Ho Chi Minh trail." But there is no congressional action authorizing U.S. forces to engage in combat in the war directed against Laos itself, Fulbright emphasized.

This distinction between the two kinds of combat in Laos is made in the "whereas" sections of the Fulbright resolution, but not in the operative section of it.

STATINTL

CHARLOTTE, N.C.
NEWS

E - 65,014
MAR 12 1970

Terry And The Pirates, AFL-CIO

In a world that is fast losing its romance, we suppose it had to happen. But nonetheless we were shocked to read that the real-life equivalent of Terry and the Pirates—that is, the CIA pilots flying in the shadowy Laotian war—now have a union.

That's right, a union, just like the unions for railroad workers and truck drivers. Known as the Far East Pilots Association, the union has just negotiated a new and finer contract for the men who fly supplies to the Laotian forces and, in some cases, fly the troops to and from battle. The new contract gave the pilots better pay, plus hospitalization, life insurance, home leave, sick leave, a seniority system, and even tuition payments to send their children to private schools.

Apparently money—\$24,000 to \$30,000 a year including overtime pay—is a major attraction for the pilots, many of whom are ex-Marines. Though, says one, "Practically all of these guys have a streak of Steve Canyon or Terry and the Pirates in them or they wouldn't be out here." Many of them also have families with them in the Far East, children in school, and, no doubt, membership in whatever passes for a golf club in that corner of the world.

We don't begrudge the men their pay and some amenities, for their work is long on hazard and short on reward. But somehow the romance is gone now. After all, can you imagine John Wayne with a union bug stenciled on his Flying Tiger?

12 MAR 1970

STATINTL

Asks Congress Rule on U.S. Laos Policy

(Chicago Tribune Press Service)

Washington, March 11—Sen. J. William Fulbright (D., Ark.) proposed today to advise President Nixon to obtain congressional approval to use United States troops or airmen in Laos.

Fulbright introduced a resolution stating that it was the sense of the Senate that American military operations now being conducted in Laos require prior approval of Congress under the Constitution.

No Treaty on Effect

Fulbright, who is chairman of the Senate foreign relations committee and a leading Viet Nam dove, declared in a statement:

"The United States has no treaty or other national commitment to the government of Laos or to any faction in that country. The Congress has not granted authority to the President to wage war there.

"As commander-in-chief, the President may use the armed forces of the United States to defend the United States. He may have authority to dispatch American armed forces abroad to protect American citizens.

"The President does not have authority, however, nor has Congress given him authority, to engage in combat operations in Laos, whether on the land, in the air, or from the sea."

Not Authorized

Fulbright said an argument might be that the President received broad enough authority under the Tonkin gulf resolution to use American forces to engage North Vietnamese troops and supply trains going down the Ho Chi Minh trail thru Laos.

"But neither that resolution

nor any other affirmative constitutional action by the Congress has authorized the use of any United States armed forces in action in Laos which is unrelated to the war in Viet Nam," he said.

Fulbright charged the Nixon administration has attempted to distinguish between combat action in the air and combat action on the ground.

"I submit that such distinction is specious," the senator said.

Earlier Fulbright said he thinks it is obvious a relationship exists in Laos between the agency for international development and the Central intelligence agency.

Cites Published Reports

He cited published reports and the testimony of a reluctant AID official to support this thesis.

The AID official, Robert H. Nooter, agreed to supply Fulbright's foreign relation committee with a memorandum on any such relationship.

STATINTL

In view of these other cuts, I cannot conscientiously and rightfully contend that Portsmouth is being discriminated against as compared to other Government shipyards—as I could, and did, in the case of the 1964 McNamara-Johnson closure order against Portsmouth and which discrimination I proved by facts and statistics.

Nor can any of us contend that we are taken by surprise with these cuts. Anyone who read in the newspapers about the onslaughts of the Defense budget in the Senate last year by the critics of the Department of Defense and those who were pressuring to take away from defense to give to welfare spending and antipollution spending could see what was coming.

It was as plain as the nose on your face that money was going to be taken away from defense and given to the domestic welfare and antipollution programs.

With the exception of the Safeguard ABM, which I think is worthless, I opposed deep cuts in defense spending and defended the defense budget against the Senate attacks on it.

Nor can we of the Maine and New Hampshire congressional delegations be surprised, for Portsmouth has been living under the closure-10-year-phase-out McNamara-Johnson order for more than 5 years since its announcement on November 19, 1964.

In a way, since Portsmouth is under the closure order, it could be concluded that Portsmouth has fared comparatively well on this cutback in comparison with Government shipyards that have not been ordered closed—such as Boston, Philadelphia, and Mare Island.

It may be recalled that when I warned in a December 16, 1963, Senate speech a year in advance that a decision had been made by Defense Secretary McNamara to close the Portsmouth shipyard but that the decision would not be announced until after the 1964 November election, I was excoriated by a Portsmouth newspaper, denounced by a Senator, charging that I was deliberately "calculating to panic the employees," repudiated by another Senator, and contradicted by then Deputy Secretary of Defense Gilpatric.

Yet, just 16 days after the 1964 November election, the McNamara-Johnson decision to close Portsmouth was announced by Defense Secretary McNamara exactly as I had warned.

I have repeatedly talked with Secretary of Defense Laird urging him to rescind the post-election-1964 McNamara-Johnson closure order. On the basis of those talks, I have repeatedly stated publicly and privately that I saw no indication of any tendency to rescind that closure order. I have done so because I wanted to be as truthful and realistic with the people as possible, just as I unpopularity was with my December 1963 warning instead of getting their hopes up falsely with optimistic talk that I did not feel was justified.

As one who has fought against cuts in defense appropriations, I am in a far more consistent position to protest a defense cut in my State than some others.

I am not in the politically hypocritical position of leading a fight for cutting defense spending generally but then militantly protesting any cut on defense spending in my State.

In all fairness, consistency, and political honesty, how can any Senator or Representative pressure for large cuts in defense spending so that the money can be diverted to domestic welfare programs and fighting pollution and on the other hand demand special treatment for military and naval establishments in his State or district and oppose any economy and defense cut moves with respect to his State or district?

In all good conscience, how can any of us support cutting everyone else but demand special exemption for ourselves?

If there are to be cuts, I expect Maine to take her equitable share of the cuts directed toward greater economy, better domestic welfare and antipollution programs, and fighting inflation—and I think that the unselfish people of Maine feel the same way.

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. MANSFIELD. I also ask unanimous consent that, pending the arrival of the senior Senator from California, the junior Senator from California (Mr. CRANSTON) be recognized briefly.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered. The Senator from California is recognized.

HOW WE OBSERVE THE GENEVA ACCORDS

Mr. CRANSTON. Mr. President, yesterday the Senator from Arkansas, the distinguished chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations (Mr. Fulbright), rendered a very valuable service in discussing Laos, and introducing a resolution relating to our military activities there. Among other things, he cited the fact that we are not fulfilling any treaty obligations in going to the assistance of Laos. I would like to point out that, even worse, we are violating a treaty signed by our Nation by the military actions we are now taking on the ground and in the air over Laos.

I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the Record at this point the relevant passages from the Geneva Accords.

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

EXCERPTS FROM GENEVA ACCORDS

The Governments of the Union of Burma, the Kingdom of Cambodia, Canada, the People's Republic of China, the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam, the Republic of France, the Republic of India, the Kingdom of Laos, the Polish People's Republic, the Republic of Viet-Nam, the Kingdom of Thailand, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the

United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America. . . .

2. Undertake, in particular, that
(a) they will not commit or participate in any way in any act which might directly or indirectly impair the sovereignty, independence, neutrality, unity or territorial integrity of the Kingdom of Laos;

(b) they will not resort to the use or threat of force or any other measure which might impair the peace of the Kingdom of Laos;

(c) they will refrain from all direct or indirect interference in the internal affairs of the Kingdom of Laos;

(d) they will not attach conditions of a political nature to any assistance which they may offer or which the Kingdom of Laos may seek;

(e) they will not bring the Kingdom of Laos in any way into any military alliance or any other agreement, whether military or otherwise, which is inconsistent with her neutrality, nor invite or encourage her to enter into any such alliance or to conclude any such agreement;

(f) they will respect the wish of the Kingdom of Laos not to recognize the protection of any alliance or military coalition, including SEATO;

(g) they will not introduce into the Kingdom of Laos foreign troops or military personnel in any form whatsoever, nor will they in any way facilitate or connive at the introduction of any foreign troops or military personnel;

(h) they will not establish nor will they in any way facilitate or connive at the establishment in the Kingdom of Laos of any foreign military base, foreign strong point or other foreign military installation of any kind;

(i) they will not use the territory of the Kingdom of Laos for interference in the internal affairs of other countries;

(j) they will not use the territory of any country, including their own for interference in the internal affairs of the Kingdom of Laos. . . .

For the purposes of this Protocol
(a) the term "foreign military personnel" shall include members of foreign military missions, foreign military advisers, experts, instructors, consultants, technicians, observers and any other foreign military persons, including those serving in any armed forces in Laos, and foreign civilians connected with the supply, maintenance, storing and utilization of war materials;

Mr. CRANSTON. The President stated, in his report on Laos last Friday, that the North Vietnamese were escalating the Laos campaign in violation of the Geneva accords. Any introduction of military personnel into Laos is a violation of those accords. We are escalating, too, in violation of the accords.

I suspect that the first to violate the accords were the Communists or North Vietnam. I presume this although I do not know it. Conceivably we had military personnel in there, or began to recruit the Meo mercenaries, before the Communists moved in from outside.

This did not happen, I point out incidentally, under the Republican administration of President Nixon. Except for the current escalation, the violations began under a prior, Democratic administration.

The Communists deny that they are violating the Geneva accords; so we deny that we are violating the Geneva accords. If we consider that the Geneva accords are null and void because of Communist violations of them and what

E - 592,616
S - 827,086
MAR 12 1970

USA—THE DETROIT NEWS—Thursday, March 12, 1970

Hanoi--the treaty breaker-- is real culprit in Laos

By COL. R. D. HEINL JR.
News Military Analyst

WASHINGTON — Whether the attack of Laos jitters in the Senate and segments of the press results from hypersensitivity to "another Vietnam" or a desire to score points on the Nixon administration, or both, the subject is one which needs to be put into military perspective.

The fact that one, or five, or even 27 American advisers may have lost their lives in this obscure and intermittent conflict (which has gone on since 1949 with U.S. involvement for at least the past 13 years) doesn't make Laos "another Vietnam."

For that matter, the fact that certain U.S. military people in Laos are drawing combat pay means nothing more than that their duties involve individual hazard on dangerous business in dangerous places. Laos itself is bound to be a dangerous place in a war whose guerilla aggressors proclaim: "The front is everywhere."

NEITHER FACT ought to be used to try to hang some kind of credibility gap on Mr. Nixon, which apparently is the object of some of the Laos hand-wringing. There is nothing in the Constitution which requires the President to tell all he knows, especially when there are good reasons not to.

A third cause for alarm — the recent Communist recapture of the Plain of Jars from the Laotian government—has to some extent been defused by the Communists themselves.

Prince Souphanouvong (the Pathet Lao "Red Prince") has apparently signaled to his half-brother, Laos Premier Souvanna Phouma, that the recent offensive was a "political" attack intended to lay favorable groundwork for internal negotiations, rather than a North Vietnamese escalation of the war.

The main reasons why Laos is worth fighting are geographic and geopolitical.

LAOS SHARES common frontiers with almost every other state in Southeast Asia: with China, the two Vietnams, Cambodia, Thailand, and Burma.

As one planner remarked, "Almost any straight line from here to there, as the crow flies in Southeast Asia, passes through Laos."

Laos therefore lies astride the interior communications, such as they are, of the whole region.

Laos is therefore a buffer state for Thailand and Cambodia against the Communist aggressors, China and North Vietnam.

Because, however, of blatant North Vietnamese violations of the 1962 Geneva accords, supposedly neutralizing Laos, the country, instead of being a buffer as regards the Vietnams, is a Communist communications zone.

Along the Ho Chi Minh Trail in eastern Laos, more than

half a million North Vietnamese soldiers and countless thousands of tons of supplies and weapons have marched since 1964 through the jungle to invade South Vietnam.

Of these, 67,000 Communist troops have occupied, and today are operating, in northern and eastern Laos.

BESIDES ITS strategic location, Laos, in the eyes of Hanoi, is part of the old French Indochina which was Ho Chi Minh's goal to communize.

Laos, in other words, constitutes the hinterland of North Vietnam.

Significantly, Dien Bien Phu, the crucial battle of the French Indochina War, was fought for control of a route between Laos and North Vietnam.

For all the foregoing reasons, Laos, remote, sleepy, politically unstable, in some ways a noncountry governed by a nonregime, is nevertheless an important buffer and

communications zone for both sides.

Its potential importance to both is heightened in that it affords a direct access for the Communist powers to Thailand. Thailand is the largest country and principal American ally in Southeast Asia.

Even so, there are few military or political planners who would claim that Laos represents a vital interest of the United States. Former Secretary of State Dean Rusk once said, "Laos is not worth the life of a single Kansas boy."

Despite Senator Mike Mansfield's statement last week that "We are up to our necks in Laos," the facts hardly bear out the metaphor.

BESIDES OVERT advisory work with the Royal Laotian Army and Air Force, our main military involvement is clandestine but extensive CIA support of Neo tribesmen, blood enemies of the North Vietnamese and of the Viet Minh before them.

Under Gen. Vang Pao, the Meos have a 36,000-man tribal army that does more fighting than all the regular Laotian forces put together. We supply and advise the Meos, mainly using Special Forces teams under CIA control, former Green Berets hired by the agency.

In the air, the U.S. Air Force flies extensively over Laos from Thailand bases, as do Navy pilots from Tonkin Gulf carriers.

Nearly 200 U.S. pilots and crewmen are said to have been missing from flights over Laos since 1964.

Ever since the recent Plain of Jars defeat, B-52 strikes have also been flown against North Vietnamese formations in Laos.

The CIA operates two air lines in Laos, Continental Air Services and Air America.

These provide interior communications and airlift to support anti-Communist bands and agents and tribesmen in remote mountains and jungle.

TO TAKE CARE of all the foregoing U.S. activities, President Nixon states that

we have 1,040 Americans in the country. Fulbright says we are paying over \$160 million a year for what he characterizes as "a well fleshed-but war."

The reason why American involvement in this covert war has been kept secret is

not a desire to deceive the public, as Senators Mansfield, Fulbright and McGovern, among others, have charged.

The Geneva accords, negotiated by President Kennedy and Nikita Khrushchev in 1962, provide for complete military neutralization of

Laos. We complied faithfully, but the Communists did not.

Only when we realized that they were keeping thousands of troops in Laos, in violation of the accords, did we again phase in American advisers.

As the Communist presence mounted astronomically, ours

rose modestly to present levels.

But today, Hanoi will not acknowledge the presence of a single North Vietnamese soldier in Laos.

Until it does, we cannot be the first to admit involvement and thus submit ourselves to

world flagellation as a treaty breaker.

Hanoi, of course, is under no internal pressure to confess, and has no public opinion to answer to.

In Hanoi they have no McGovern or Fulbrights to complicate their war effort.

U.S.-Backed Laotian General Scorned by Other Army Leaders

BY JACK FOISIE
Times Staff Writer

VIENTIANE—One of the many problems worrying the American mission in Laos is that it is heavily supporting a general who is despised and distrusted by other Lao military leaders.

The U.S. Army, in association with the Central Intelligence Agency, is assisting Gen. Vang Pao in northeast Laos because:

—That is where the enemy is most active.

—An enemy advance from its northeast bases threatens both the royal capital of Luang Prabang, where the king lives, and the Mekong River city of Vientiane, where almost everyone else in government lives.

—Over the years Vang Pao has been the general most eager to fight the Communist foe. His admirers still call him "another Napoleon."

Leader of Mountain People

The generals in the other four military field commands in Laos do not like Vang Pao because he is not a Lao. He is a Meo—a leader of mountain people whom the lowland Laotians look upon as an inferior race.

Lao generals, and the entire aristocracy of this feudal kingdom, are related to the royal family or belong to families that have fiefs of their own and pay only nominal allegiance to the government, of Premier Souvanna Phouma, himself a royal prince.

None of them accepts Vang Pao as an equal but as a Montagnard, a French word used derisively in Southeast Asia for savage, French-educated themselves, the generals consider Vang Pao's French as vulgar, which it is. Before he came a Lao army general, he was a French army sergeant and learned the language in the barracks.

Furthermore, the generals are jealous of the Meo's favored status with the Americans. On occasion, Vang Pao is treated to an American-financed trip to the United States, traveling accompanied by

(One of the stopovers that amuses him is Disneyland.)

The Americans give Vang Pao's army—both his regulars and guerrillas—the latest equipment and in bountiful quantities. Most of the regulars now have M-16s, the U.S. Army's best rifle.

Vang Pao, being no diplomat, returns the curiously attitude of his fellow generals in full measure. He sometimes rejects a summons to Vientiane for general staff strategy meetings.

Recently the premier, acting upon the urging of the American ambassador, arranged for a new tour of Vang Pao's "front" to gain world admiration and sympathy. Vang Pao torpedoed the visit with the lame explanation he was ill and the area insecure.

In this standoffishness he is abetted by an irascible American, Seagar (Pop) Buell, who supervises the distribution of relief supplies to thousands of war-displaced refugees—most of them Meo and

other hill tribes. He has worked with Vang Pao for nine years and is regarded by many as "the one American whom Vang Pao trusts."

Vang Pao's strength stems from his leadership of the majority of the Meo, although some fight for the Communists. The 40-year-old general claims 450,000 followers scattered through the mountains of northern Thailand, Laos and Vietnam. Other sources believe the number is much lower.

His rise to power has been achieved through years of tribal politicking and the accumulation of a number of wives to form important alliances.

Vang Pao's position as "king" of the Meos has

been fortified by the help he has obtained for them from the Americans. Air drops of rice and other essentials to Meos fighting or—as need be—retreating from the Communists have high priority.

The doughty chieftain's concern for his people seems genuine. With his guerrillas supported by the Central Intelligence

Agency and his regulars by the U.S. Army and Air Force, Vang Pao fights on while "Pop" Buell harasses the U.S. AID mission for more help for the refugees.

The Laotian establishment here is more than irritated with the American generosity toward Vang Pao. Its leaders warn that at a crucial time in the Laotian war he will try to form a "Meo nation" in northern Laos.

They believe that Vang Pao will abandon his American friends and join the North Vietnamese cause, providing he thinks he has Hanoi's promise to support a separatist state.

The theory sounds fuzzy—but almost everything does in Laos.

The uneasy relationship between Vang Pao and other Lao generals has precipitated a minor crisis now, for to stem further enemy advances in his region Vang Pao needs more troops. None of the other general seems willing to give him any of their forces.

Many Desertions

Military observers estimate that Vang Pao's regulars, who may have once numbered 18,000 are down to 10,000 or fewer. Combat losses were reported to be relatively light in recent fighting on the Plain of Jars, but by all indications, there were

large numbers of soldiers who deserted.

Vang Pao is trying to establish a defensive line on high ground south and west of the Plain of Jars. This half-moon line stretches some 75 miles through jagged mountain country. Even by Laotian war standards, his positions are believed to be thinly held.

Despite American pressure, no regional commander has yet been persuaded that he should allow units to be shifted to Vang Pao's command.

Each of the other generals can claim, with some justification, that his sector is also under attack. In

fact, there is evidence that the enemy is purposely putting light pressure on government positions in all other areas and rocketing several Mekong River towns just to keep troops from being transferred to the northeast.

If military considerations were paramount, however, Vang Pao and his American backers

might win out in the high councils of strategy and tactics. With increased U.S. air support of loyal Lao army troops, all commanders appear to have added capability to resist the enemy.

However, there is another factor involved in the reshuffling of troops. No commander likes to turn over men to another

general because then his payroll declines.

It is a well-established practice in Laos that the larger the roster on pay day, the richer the general becomes. The general gets his cut of the American-provided funds for the troops.

MIAMI, FLA.
HERALD MAR 12 1970

M - 375,469
S - 468,167



Jack Kofoed Says

Palace Guard Failed On Facts About Laos

Sometimes the Palace Guard, hard as they try to keep presidents guarded from bad news and wrong utterances foul up the details. Mr. Nixon tried to smooth out strong public reaction to the air war in Laos by saying not one American there had been killed in ground action by the enemy. Then, a free lance journalist, Don Sanche, revealed that not only 26 civilians, but an Army officer, had suffered fatal wounds. This made Mr. Nixon look pretty bad, and his phrase polishers huddled to find a way out. They tried to make out a case that when the Viet Cong gunned down the Americans they really weren't engaged in ground action. So, what the heck was it, a strawberry festival that got out of hand?

Government efforts make it seem a war's not a war unless there's infantry in it — that the loss of hundreds of aircraft and 600 American airmen doesn't make Laos a real battleground no matter what semanticists say. That's war, and all the public information officers on the payroll can't change its complexion in the slightest degree. But the Palace Guard goofed, just as it did with Dwight D. Eisenhower. Ike wasn't told that the CIA had ordered reconnaissance flights over Russia. When one of our spy planes was shot down, the president emphatically announced it wasn't true, because the United States never had planes in Soviet air space. Next day Ike had the reddest face in Washington, and when his ears burned, heads were lopped off.

PRESIDENT Nixon found himself in somewhat the same boat, but efforts will be made to keep the death of any other Americans on the ground a deep secret. Don Sanche, who reported the casualties, was ordered out of the area. If any other American "advisors" get blasted into eternity, the government will have a chance to do a little doctoring on the news. Are you listening, Mr. Vice President?

★ ★ ★

There's always somebody to drag his profession or cause to a bottom spot low rung of public opinion. Judge Julius Hoffman did it for the judiciary. Rap Brown did his own people a great disservice when he allegedly incited to riot and arson. He said that if blacks didn't get what they wanted, they'd burn America down. He advised his listeners to get guns and kill all the whites they could. Now, a former chemistry professor has joined Timothy Leary in smudging the teaching image.

President Nixon's welfare scheme guarantees a minimum income of \$1600 a year for a family of four but requires recipients to accept jobs or job training if they are able to do so. George Wiley, who gave up pedagogy to become director of the National Welfare Rights Organization, roars like a lion in the mating season about that. Wiley swears: "Nobody is going to force us to work in order to get welfare. Our interest is in keeping people from accepting menial jobs or go through the revolving doors of a training program."

IN-SHORT, the professor who once was supposed to teach American youth something about life as well as chemistry figures it's better for a healthy guy to sit on his frances with a pipe and a can of beer than to earn the dollars he gets. Mr. Wiley suggests that charity is easier than sweat and calloused

hands; that anyone who'd work when he can get by without it is a long eared jackass. Leary ruins bodies and minds with his espousal of drugs. Wiley is doing all he can to make America a nation of loafers. Work, Professor Wiley would have you believe, is degrading. Maybe he could make waiting for the welfare check more bearable if he could get the government to supply LSD free to the \$1600 a year recipients.

★ ★ ★

The stupidity of some protesters is beyond imagining. General Electric, as do other large corporations, send to campus on recruiting missions. They offer fine starting pay and glittering potentials. Scouts sent to the University of Wisconsin were chased away, because undergraduates didn't approve General Electric's posture on the war. In any age but this, the offer of a fine future, a highly paid job, even before a

student had even received his diploma, would have been considered a miracle.

Half a century ago the great industrial complexes didn't comb graduating classes for talent. They waited for young men to come to them. A friend of mine, Geary Lauder, graduated from the engineering school of the University of Pennsylvania. He applied for a job with the biggest construction firm in the city. After studying his record, it agreed to take him on. Pay? Don't be ridiculous. For the first six months Geary had to pay five dollars a week for the privilege of working. For the next six he'd pay nothing and neither would the company. In the second year he would start at \$25 a week. Now, young men, still wet behind the ears, begin at \$12,000 to \$15,000. Yet, at Wisconsin all this was protested. It's unimaginable, but that's the way it was.

OCEAN CITY, N.J.
SENIOR EDITOR
WEEKLY
MAR 12 1970
604

A bottomless pit

Capitol Hill . . .

WASHINGTON, D.C.—The North Vietnamese offensive in Laos may or may not be a challenge to President Richard Nixon and a test of his announced new policy of lessening U.S. participation in Asian wars.

This country has not been wholly under the control of its government very much of the time since the 1960 Geneva accord declared it neutral. The Communists have held the eastern part of the country for many, uninterrupted years. That is the area which includes the Ho Chi Min trail.

But last year a CIA organized and equipped army helped government forces push the Reds out of the Plaine des Jarres, where they had been in control since 1964. The recent

North Vietnamese offensive retook the plain; if military operations continue and the enemy seeks to overthrow the government and capture the capital and the rest of the country, Mr. Nixon would be very much on the spot.

For the war in Laos is part of the war in Vietnam. The three Presidents preceding Mr. Nixon were aware of this and the late President Eisenhower, who would not commit U.S. soldiers to Vietnam, was ready to fight to keep the Communists from taking Laos. But Congress is nervous over any U.S. involvement in Laos, fearing it might escalate.

The President knows the American people are in no mood for such a turn of events but he also feels he can't allow

the enemy to take the country, which would almost surely place a stamp of failure on the Nixon Doctrine. That is why, for the first time, U.S. heavy bombers went into action over the plain recently.

This prompted a warning from Moscow, perhaps stemming from a fear of counter U.S. escalation. Washington meanwhile let it be known, even though various members of Congress were speaking out against any U.S. participation in the struggle, that it considered the situation very serious.

And it would be almost impossible for the President to do nothing if the enemy sought to take over the country completely. That is because the next step would almost surely be penetration of Thailand, whose border adjoins the western Laotian border now under government control. The U.S. has no treaty obligations with Laos but does with Thailand, and has bases and men stationed in that country. If the enemy offensive, then, continues, and Thailand appears to be the ultimate goal, Mr. Nixon will be under very heavy pressure to react. The only question is how and when because of the lack of enthusiasm in both Congress and among the public in general.

PHILADELPHIA, PA.

INQUIRER

STATINTL

M - 505,173

S - 913,045

MAR 12 1970

CIA-AID Link In Laos 'Obvious,' Fulbright Charges

WASHINGTON, March 11 (AP). —Sen J. W. Fulbright said Wednesday he thinks it is obvious a relationship exists in Laos between the Agency for International Development and the Central Intelligence Agency.

The Arkansas Democrat and chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee cited published reports and the testimony of a reluctant AID official to support this thesis. Then he added:

"If it is true, it is only another sign warning that we are in over our heads."

PROMISES MEMORANDUM

The AID official, Robert H. Nooter, agreed to supply the committee with a memorandum on any such relationship after stating: "Or guidance on these matters does preclude us from affirming or denying" in public reports that AID serves as a front for the CIA in Laos.

Fulbright said he is sure, if no relationship exists, that Nooter would denounce the reports.

On the Senate floor, meanwhile, Sen. Henry Bellmon (R., Okla.) defended President Nixon's handling of the situation in Laos and Vietnam, while delivering a sharp attack on criticism last week by Sen. Edmund S. Muskie (D., Me.), a potential 1972 rival of Mr. Nixon.

'CUT AND RUN'

Bellmon noted Muskie's call for renewed efforts for negotiations, including a firm U. S. withdrawal plan linked to "an informal arrangement regarding the withdrawal of North Vietnamese forces."

The Oklahoman then declared, "This is just a prefabricated excuse to cut and run on our allies."

"As usual with those who put their trust in a foe who has an unbroken record of betrayals," Bellmon said, "the senator seeks to put the onus on the back not of the enemy but of the American President."

A new attack on the administration was delivered by Sen. Stephen M. Young (D., O.), who asserted Mr. Nixon's statement on Laos last Friday "represents a massive effort by officials of the defense establishment of the United States to deceive the American people."

The question of the relationship between AID and the CIA was raised by Fulbright at a hearing on Nooter's nomination to be assistant AID administrator for Vietnam. He has been deputy assistant administrator for the rest of Southeast Asia, including Laos.

Fulbright asked about a report that some AID personnel in remote areas of Laos serve also as forward air controllers.

"To the best of my knowledge," Nooter replied, "that is not true."

Asked then about AID's relations with Air America and Continental Air Services, which have been described as CIA fronts, Nooter said the two lines perform various services for AID, including transportation of rise to Laotian refugees.

He said, in response to a further question, that he believes Air America is owned "by a Taiwan-based corporation." He added would supply details to the committee.

Nooter, 43, is a former St. Louis businessman.

SAN FRANCISCO, CAL.
CHRONICLE

M - 480,253

MAR 12 1970



"You mean we're all CIA agents?"

Fulbright Proposes Hill Rebuke on Laos

By Murrey Marder

Washington Post Staff Writer

Sen. J. W. Fulbright (D-Ark.) introduced a resolution yesterday challenging the use of American armed forces "in combat in or over Laos" without congressional action.

The chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and several other members of Congress pursued their opposition to U.S. policy in Laos despite recent statements in which President Nixon denied any intention to send ground combat troops into Laos and said there are only 1,040 Americans on the ground in Laos.

"Efforts have been made to distinguish between combat action in the air and combat action on the ground," said Fulbright, but "I submit that such a distinction is specious."

Fulbright was referring to President Nixon's first official acknowledgement that U.S. aircraft are engaged in "combat air operations" in northern Laos at the request of the Lao government, as well as "air operations" to "interdict" North Vietnamese troops and supplies sent down the Ho Chi Minh trails to South Vietnam.

"The President does not have authority . . . nor has Congress given him authority," said Fulbright, "to engage in combat operations in Laos whether on the land, in the air or from the sea."

"Two years ago by an overwhelming vote," said Fulbright, "the Senate went on record stating that a national commitment to a foreign power arises only from affirmative action taken by the executive and legislative branches . . . The Senate must not remain silent now while the President uses the armed forces of the United States to fight an undeclared and undisclosed war in Laos."

What Fulbright proposed is a "sense of the Senate" resolution, in effect rebuking the President for failure to comply with the national commitments resolution.

Fulbright also clashed yesterday with a nominee for the Agency for International Development, who discussed reports that about half of the members of the AID

staff in Laos are actually Central Intelligence Agency men.

At a confirmation hearing for Robert H. Nooter of Missouri to be an assistant administrator for AID, in charge of the Vietnam program, Nooter, reading from a prepared statement, said:

"We prefer that these matters should not be discussed—either confirmed or denied—in public session."

Fulbright retorted: "I think it is obvious from both the article (a newspaper article by Jack Foiese of the Los Angeles Times) and your reluctance to speak that a relationship exists . . . otherwise the report would be denounced as a gross libel on the integrity of your agency."

Sen. Stephen M. Young (D-Ohio) said the disclosures of operations "of our CIA in Laos and of our air and ground forces" are "shocking," and "in direct violation of the national commitments resolution . . ."

An attack from the opposite direction came from Sen. Henry Bellmon (R-Okla.) who defended U.S. policy in Vietnam and in Laos. Bellmon accused Sen. Edmund S. Muskie (D-Maine.) of advocating in a National Press Club speech last week a "cut and run policy" in Vietnam. Bellmon said "the senator seeks to put the onus on the back not of the enemy but on the American President, whomever he may be."

STATINTL

YORK, PA.
GAZETTE & DAILY

M - 37,175

MAR 12 1970

REPEAT PERFORMANCE?

President Nixon, in a major policy speech last November, said, "I believe that one of the reasons for the deep division about Vietnam is that many Americans have lost confidence in what the government has told them about our policy. The American people cannot and should not be asked to support a policy which involves the overriding issues of war and peace unless they know the truth about that policy."

This is the kind of logic which should, but doesn't, govern the Administration's flow of information, not only in regard to Vietnam, but to neighboring Laos as well where we seem bent on repeating the same pattern of mistakes, operating under the same lack of government and military candor, that led us into the Vietnam mess.

The President has paid lip service to full public disclosure, but his practice has been quite the opposite. It is only now, after continual prodding from Congressional critics and news reports filed from within Laos, that the American public is beginning to get true wind of what has been going on in Laos.

Until this week, for example, we were not told that American military ground forces have been killed during battles in Laos; we have not yet been told the full truth as to the number of American fliers who might have lost their lives in air missions over Laos; we have not been told how much money we have poured into Laos, what this money has purchased in terms of equipment, manpower and operations; and above all -- what for?

Now for the first time, the U.S. military command in Saigon indicates a reluctant willingness to discuss the extent of America's military involvement in and over Laos; heretofore, it was an unmentionable

subject, off limits in military jargon to the press, who were also refused permission to visit the American-run bases in Laos.

Finally, a reporter for the New York Times took a fifteen mile hike through the forests of Laos with some other newsmen and wrote a first hand report on an airport operation there involving the CIA U.S. planes and supplies. And there are American ground forces in Laos too, most of them ex-Green berets, hired on CIA contract to "advise" and "train" Laotian troops. In truth, they are temporary CIA personnel no longer connected with their army units, a subterfuge which the U.S. employed to say it had no soldiers fighting in Laos.

If there's any merit to the truism that those who don't profit from their mistakes are doomed to repeat them, we have only to look at what's going on in Laos, where the same kind of pattern we saw in Vietnam is now being unveiled next door -- where we are becoming involved in the internal military affairs of a foreign country, fraught with the danger that Washington will involve the American

people in another illegal, ill-advised war.

Let's not allow those who would repeat the past mistakes of Vietnam to get away with it a second time around in Laos.

CHARLOTTE, N.C.
OBSERVER

M - 174,906

S - 204,225

MAR 11 1970

Nixon's Statement On Laos: Does It Really Lead At All?

Suddenly, President Nixon sounds like a president who never heard the sad story of Lyndon B. Johnson.

Suddenly, another benighted piece of Asian real estate seems to be moving him to utter a familiar kind of double talk: No Americans die in Laotian combat; one or two or 10 or 20 simply fall victim to hostile action.

Then, there are variations on tired themes about troubles inherited from past administrations, about wanting no wider war, about the other side doing what it's doing ...

And suddenly, there seems good reason for the country to get a sick feeling in its collective stomach. It's as though someone said, "Here we go again."

Happily for the nation and for Mr. Nixon, we aren't going again. The trip we took in Vietnam was too recent and too bitter to be repeated any time soon.

Americans won't be conned now by "frank" presidential appraisals that have

to be promptly and embarrassingly clarified in hair-splitting explanations by lower-ranking White House spokesmen.

The sick feeling generated by the Nixon statement on Laos is not a matter of fearing that President Nixon is leading us into another Vietnam, next door in Laos. What the statement generates are doubts that the President is leading anywhere.

Where is the new era? Where are the new directions proclaimed in the President's "New Strategy For Peace?" Is there no Nixonian approach to Laos except shopworn games played by the CIA — games whose danger is diminished only because a general call to wade in patriotic gore in Laos would be rejected by the American people? ✓

At the moment, Laos bids to be a different order of tragedy from the one that Lyndon Johnson led us into. But unless President Nixon can come up with something better than his Key Biscayne statement on Laos, it will be tragic nonetheless.

CHICAGO, ILL.
NEWS

STATINTL

E - 461,357

MAR 11 1970

Contract settlement**Strike of U.S. civilian pilots in Laos averted**By Keyes Beech
Daily News Foreign Service

VIENTIANE -- A threatened strike by 160 American "bush pilots" that would have paralyzed the war effort in Laos has been averted.

James A. Cunningham Jr., base manager for Air America, better known as the "CIA airline," said Wednesday the company and the pilots reached agreement on a contract four days ago in Japan.

Last month when the pilots threatened to strike, U.S. Ambassador G. McMurtrie Godley warned that he would bring in U.S. Air Force planes, and pilots if they did.

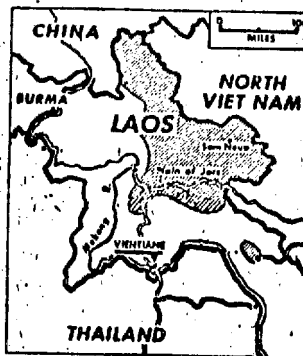
The alternative was a collapse of U.S. logistics support for Laotian army forces.

CUNNINGHAM SAID the pilots, many of whom average about \$25,000 a year, agreed to continue all "essential" operations pending settlement of the dispute.

Air America and its smaller competitor in Laos, Continental Airlines, operate under a \$6-million-a-year U.S. government contract. The lion's share of this goes to Air America.

All but a few Air America pilots are former Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps fliers. A few are World War II pilots now in their 60s.

AIR AMERICA is an off-



spring of Civil Air Transport, founded by the late Gen. Claire Chennault, of Flying Tiger fame, in China more than 20 years ago.

Air America pilots in Laos fly a "cat-and-dog" operation that includes hauling everything from pots and pans to refugees, guns and ammunition.

Last month two C-130s evacuated more than 15,000 refu-

~~Turn to Back Page, this section~~ gees from the Plain of Jars in six days, flying 20-minute shuttle runs between the plain and Vientiane. This happened as North Vietnamese forces recaptured the plain from Laotian government troops.

None of the pilots is signed up for combat, but this doesn't mean that they don't get shot at. Since October, 1968, Air America has lost eight Americans, including five helicopter crewmen. Some died in air

crashes that had nothing to do with enemy action. But one fixed-wing aircraft pilot was shot through the head while in his seat.

"What bugs most of the pilots is that they make anywhere from 20 to 40 landings in the course of a day — and each one is a thrill," one pilot said. "Some of the strips where they land are no bigger than a carrier deck."

Treacherous air currents and temperatures, especially in mountainous northeastern Laos, are a bigger hazard than occasional enemy fire.

A FORMER marine pilot said the pay is the major incentive for most of the pilots.

"But practically all of these guys have a streak of Steve Canyon or Terry and the Pirates in them or they wouldn't be out here. Many of them are family men. Their children go to school like kids back in the States."

Recognition of their union, the Far East Pilots Assn., as bargaining agents was a key issue in the dispute between the fliers and the company. Air America employs 451 pilots throughout the Far East, including South Vietnam, Okinawa and Japan.

ONE PILOT said the newly negotiated contract not only gave the pilots in Laos better pay but included such fringe benefits as medical and life insurance, home leave, sick leave, a seniority system and school tuition for their children.

North Viet penetration deeper than ever

Laos calm in face of Red moves

By Daniel Southerland
Special correspondent of
The Christian Science Monitor

Vientiane, Laos

The sleepy atmosphere in this Lao Government capital makes one wonder why the rest of the world is making such a fuss about Laos.

It was on a Saturday that the Plain of Jars fell. The Prime Minister was playing bridge. The Defense Ministry was closed for the weekend and no one stirred there except some tennis players.

The commander in chief of the Royal Lao Army was seen in a sport shirt and slacks relaxing with friends.

Asked about this apparent lack of concern, an American diplomat remarked that the Laos have been through so many crises in the past 20 years they have learned to take them in stride.

There are, however, a number of reasons for concern:

- The Communist forces, mostly North Vietnamese regulars much feared by the Lao, have already pushed to the point they reached only by June of last year in the course of their annual offensive.

Although estimates of the number of North Vietnamese troops in Laos vary widely from 45,000 to President Nixon's figure of 67,000, most sources agree there has been another Communist buildup since last fall, with a new North Vietnamese division coming into the picture.

- The North Vietnamese troops are described as well-equipped, and Lao Government officials say they have brought heavier artillery pieces with them this time.

- The weather also favors the Communists. Last year the Communists had to slog through June rain and mud to take Muong Soui on the western edge of the Plain of Jars. In this year's offensive, they took it toward the end of February, without a fight — and with more than two months of good dry weather yet to go.

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Although estimates of the number of North Vietnamese troops in Laos vary widely from 45,000 to President Nixon's figure of 67,000, most sources agree there has been another Communist buildup since last fall, with a new North Vietnamese division coming into the picture.

- The North Vietnamese troops are described as well-equipped, and Lao Government officials say they have brought heavier artillery pieces with them this time.

- The weather also favors the Communists. Last year the Communists had to slog through June rain and mud to take Muong Soui on the western edge of the Plain of Jars. In this year's offensive, they took it toward the end of February, without a fight — and with more than two months of good dry weather yet to go.

The Communist troops move more easily in dry weather and the dust is now getting thicker and rising to great heights, thus providing a protective cover against American fighter-bomber strikes.

"We had no idea they would get that far that fast," said one United States official after the lightly defended Muong Soui airfield was abandoned.

If the Communists stop where they are now, however, there will not be much cause for concern.

By taking the Plain of Jars, they merely recovered territory they had previously held for five years.

The Lao Government forces never intended to make a strong stand either on the plain or at Muong Soui, and this helps account for the light casualties they received during their recent retreats.

The American B-52 raids near the Plain of Jars—the first in Laos outside the Ho Chi Minh Trail area—were intended as a warning to the North Vietnamese, not as an attempt to stop their advance across the plain, according to informed sources in Saigon.

"The decision to use the B-52's was taken by President Nixon after military authorities had written off the Plain of Jars," said one source.

"The idea was to hit them with the B-52's as a warning before they committed themselves irrevocably to using the Plain of Jars as a springboard for further attacks," he said.

There are indications, however, that the Communists might ignore the warning. The evidence at the moment is that they are regrouping and moving supplies up to the western edge of the Plain of Jars in order to prepare for the second phase of their offensive.

If the Communists are determined to advance, American bombing, including further B-52 strikes, can slow them, but not stop them. Only infantrymen can do that.

March 11, 1970

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CONGRESSIONAL RECORD — SENATE

S 3431

Citizen's Housing and Planning Council; Mr. Carlson is an economist for F. W. Dodge Co. They explain their strategy of cross-commitment in an intriguing essay in the Public Interest—winter 1968.

Cross-commitment is the policy of designing two programs which aim at different goals, but which interact in such a way that each promotes the achievement of the other program's goal.

Mr. Starr and Mr. Carlson want to combine a clean waters program with an attack on poverty. This is how it would work in a program to eliminate combined sewer systems in major cities.

Combined sewer systems are systems that unite storm and sanitary sewers into a single system. Heavy rains often cause discharge of considerable raw sewage in water that is not processed by a treatment plant. Thus we could cut down on water pollution in and around cities if we could separate combined sewer systems into separate storm and sanitary systems.

This would be a clear environmental blessing to everyone. It would cost a great deal and Mr. Starr and Mr. Carlson argue that this cost could be a blessing in disguise. They penetrate the disguise with an argument I will explain.

It is common now to separate sanitary and storm sewers in new subdivisions. But it might cost \$30 billion to separate them in older urban areas. Sample estimates are that it would cost \$160 per resident in Washington, D.C.; \$215 in Milwaukee; and \$280 in Concord, N.H.

Mr. Starr and Mr. Carlson look upon this expense as a possible instance of cross-commitment between the wars against poverty and pollution. They speak somewhat jokingly about "the economic beauty of sewers" but the point they are making is very serious and what they say deserves quoting at length:

Of all the major types of construction activity, the one that requires one of the highest proportions of unskilled labor is the placement of sewage lines. Labor Department studies indicate that common laborers account for over 40 percent of all on-site man-hours involved in the construction of sewage lines. And on-site wages normally account for between one-fifth and one-fourth of the dollar value of a typical sewage-line contract. Adjusting for the fact that wage rates paid to laborers would be somewhat below the average for all employees on the job, the decision to undertake only the modest \$30 billion expense of complete separation of sanitary and storm sewers would result in direct wage payments of around \$2.5 billion to unskilled laborers. At an assumed annual wage of \$5,000, this could generate half a million man-years of employment. That's enough to provide jobs of one year's duration for three-fourths of all males in the nation who are currently unemployed for five weeks or more.

The point is: Aside from the tremendous benefits that such an undertaking would have in improving the nation's water resources, it could also be a formidable tool in any program bent on eradicating poverty.

Roughly twenty-five cents of every dollar spent on sewer lines or treatment plants goes for direct wage payments. But, more important, almost half of these wages go to unskilled or semi-skilled employees. If putting people to work and the value of the work experience is recognized as a necessary first step in acquiring job skills, then ex-

penditures for construction in this area, coupled with an active recruitment program of the unskilled employed, is a very efficient means of employing a lot of people to work in a relatively short space of time.

Mr. President, I feel compelled to add that while this material is used for the sake of illustrating the idea of cross-commitment, I must say personally that the one statement that \$30 billion would be a modest expense somewhat cools me off as a member of the Committee on Appropriations. But it illustrates one thing in this entire environmental problem and that is that we are not going to solve these problems without spending a lot of money.

Mr. President, whether Mr. Starr and Mr. Carlson are correct on this particular matter is a question that could only be settled by extensive and intensive investigation. But one thing is clear.

Their idea of cross-commitment is ingenious and intelligent. It should be examined by all of us as we prepare to embark on large-scale expenditures for environment improvement.

Our resources are limited. Our taxes are high. Our needs are many. Thus, if we can kill two birds with one stone—by attacking two problems or even more than two problems with one appropriation—we should do so.

Further, as we seek ways to implement the strategy of cross-commitment we will be alert to the existence of hidden environment policies, as well as to hidden policies in poverty, transportation, and many other areas.

Actually, we are already prepared to do this. The Cabinet Committee on the Environment, created in 1969, is coordinating departmental activities affecting the environment. This group should help us to be aware of hidden environment policies.

This will encourage clear thinking about environment problems and will enable us to get maximum mileage from our resources.

TRANSACTION OF ROUTINE MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order the Senate will proceed now to the consideration of routine morning business.

VIETNAM REPORT

Mr. YOUNG of Ohio. Mr. President, Americans should know that from January 1961 to March 1, 1970, in North Vietnam, South Vietnam, and Laos approximately 3,200 American warplanes have been destroyed and that during this same period more than 3,500 American helicopters have been destroyed.

Most of these were shot down by enemy action in and over South Vietnam. Some were destroyed on the ground by mortar fire. In the course of the bombing of North Vietnam many of our planes were destroyed by enemy fire before President Johnson stopped bombing north of the 17th parallel.

The results of our bombing targets in North Vietnam did not justify the losses of airmen and destruction of our planes.

This, particularly in view of meager damage done by our bombing. American taxpayers should know that the average cost of every airplane destroyed was \$2 million and the average cost of every helicopter was \$250,000.

This total destruction exceeds \$7.275 billion.

Recently in Laos newsmen who eluded our CIA operatives and walked nearly 10 miles through jungle trails observed American fighting men wearing civilian clothes. Even more important, they witnessed our B-52's flying from bases in Laos at 1-minute intervals. Since 1965 our bombers in Laos have hurled a greater tonnage of bombs than were hurled on North Vietnam throughout the entire period we were bombing north of the 17th parallel. It is estimated that our gigantic B-52's have not only bombed the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Laos which extends from North Vietnam along the border of Cambodia and Laos, but we have bombed areas in Laos more than 200 miles distant from the Ho Chi Minh Trail. On these bombing missions which are said to approximate 6,000, our casualties, mostly in airmen killed and missing in combat, are more than 400. In addition approximately 300 have been wounded in Laos. In October 1965 when I was in that underdeveloped country for nearly 10 days our warplanes were disguised. In 1962 and in previous years we had guaranteed the neutrality of Laos. Regardless of that, when I was in every area of this underdeveloped country for several days in 1968 traveling by helicopter throughout the entire length and breadth of Laos I observed then that our warplanes were no longer disguised as I had observed in 1965. We had violated an agreement to maintain Laos as a neutral country in 1965, so we disguised our planes at that time. However, we were openly intervening in a civil war in that unhappy inhospitable land. Furthermore, literally hundreds of CIA operatives were all over the place, calling the shots and conducting the war that we were waging.

ATTORNEY GENERAL JOHN N. MITCHELL'S PROPOSAL OUTRAGEOUS AND UNCONSTITUTIONAL

Mr. YOUNG of Ohio. Mr. President, on reading the first page of the Washington Post of March 10, I was astonished to learn that John N. Mitchell, the Attorney General of the United States, stated that he would ask Congress to permit courts to order fingerprints, voice prints, blood tests, and other identification checks of suspects even before they are formally accused of any offense.

No doubt the Attorney General of the United States was a very skilled lawyer, but his specialty as a partner in the law firm of Nixon, Mudge, Rose, Guthrie, Alexander, and Mitchell, up until the time of his appointment as Attorney General, was passing on the merits of municipal bonds and tax-exempt bonds.

It is evident to me, as former chief prosecuting attorney of Cuyahoga County, Ohio, and as a lawyer who practiced law for more than 40 years in the courts of Ohio, the U.S. courts, and the courts of neighboring States, that At-

STATINTL

Senate

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 11, 1970

The Senate met at 9:30 o'clock a.m. and was called to order by Hon. JAMES B. ALLEN, a Senator from the State of Alabama.

The Chaplain, the Reverend Edward L. R. Elson, D.D., offered the following prayer:

O Thou, who hast been our dwelling place in all generations, help us to treat this world as our Father's house wherein Thy family dwells. Deliver us from fear of making this earth our home. Give us wisdom this day and every day to create a dwelling where all may come and go with equity and justice. Help us so to order our lives that this Nation and the whole world may be an abode fit for Thy children to dwell in safety and in peace. Let goodness and mercy abide with us here that we may abide with Thee forever.

In Thy holy name we pray. Amen.

DESIGNATION OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will read a communication to the Senate. The assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, D.C., March 11, 1970.

To the Senate:

Being temporarily absent from the Senate, I appoint Hon. JAMES B. ALLEN, a Senator from the State of Alabama, to perform the duties of the Chair during my absence.

RICHARD B. RUSSELL,
President pro tempore.

Mr. ALLEN thereupon took the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

THE JOURNAL

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the Journal of the proceedings of Tuesday, March 10, 1970, be dispensed with.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMITTEE MEETINGS DURING SENATE SESSION

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that all committees be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate today.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ORDER FOR ADJOURNMENT TO TOMORROW AT 10 A.M.

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it stand in adjournment until 10 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ORDER FOR RECOGNITION OF SENATOR SCHWEIKER TOMORROW

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that tomorrow, immediately after the prayer, the distinguished Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. SCHWEIKER) be recognized for not to exceed 30 minutes.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. In accordance with the previous order, the Senator from Ohio (Mr. YOUNG) is recognized for not to exceed 15 minutes.

U.S. SECRET WAR IN LAOS MUST END

Mr. YOUNG of Ohio. Mr. President, President Nixon ended a long administration silence about Laos last Friday by announcing that the United States has 1,040 ground forces in Laos, has lost 400 planes there, and has suffered approximately 300 casualties. That statement is, at best, a very conservative estimate of our involvement in Laos. At worst, it represents a massive effort by officials of the Defense Establishment of the United States to deceive the American people. That deception must not be allowed to continue. It is most unfortunate that President Nixon is escalating and expanding our involvement in a civil war in Vietnam by intensifying our fighting on the ground in Laos and bombing areas in Laos, sometimes 200 miles, and more, from the Ho Chi Minh trail. The Pathet Lao, seeking national liberation in Laos, have been fighting for 20 years, first against the French seeking to maintain their lush Indo-Chinese empire and now against the American CIA and air and ground forces waging a war of aggression seeking to continue the policies of the French in violation of the Geneva agreement, which we approved, to neutralize Laos as a neutral barrier nation.

President Nixon has announced that he is withdrawing combat troops from Vietnam on the basis of a secret timetable. Whatever may be the President's plan—and that plan is still his secret—our withdrawal has clearly been too slow. Now it is obvious that even our gradual disengagement is not a reality. What is really happening is a reengagement in Laos with new titles and different uniforms.

At present we are waging an air war on a tremendous scale in Laos. U.S. planes, including B-52's, are currently hurling more than 16,000 tons of bombs a month onto Laos. Without doubt, our bombing of North Vietnam, which considerably exceeded the bombing in World War II in both the Pacific and European areas, has not ceased as we had been told. That bombing has simply been

shifted—as have some of our ground forces—across the border into Laos. Much of our recent bombing has been in the Plain of Jars, in areas more than 200 miles away from the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Therefore, that bombing could have nothing to do with infiltration from North Vietnam.

In October 1965 I spent approximately 10 days in Laos, and again in 1968 I was in every area of Laos, traveling to many places by helicopter in that landlocked country. By the way, Laos was the most underdeveloped country I have been in, and I have been in a great many. Laos is not worth the life of even one American youngster. I had learned from previous visits in Laos and Vietnam that they have a way of directing so-called VIP's over certain areas. I learned in a short time to get away from escort officers, say I was looking for Ohio GI's, and get on my own. With my eyes open, and with a lot of energy throughout the day, and sometimes at night, I tried my best to get away from the restrictions and from the travel programs stipulated by the top brass in Saigon. Less than 2 weeks ago, three American newspapermen did the same thing as I did, on a much larger scale. They walked 8 miles through the jungle without informing anyone of their intention and reached an airfield staffed by a small army of American soldiers dressed as civilians. They observed U.S. B-52 planes taking off from this airfield at the rate of one per minute loaded with tons of bombs.

Mr. President, the United States has lost more than 400 airplanes and many helicopters shot down over Laos or destroyed on the ground by Pathet Lao fire. Many airmen have been killed or are missing—some, no doubt, being held as prisoners of war.

The intervention of this country into the civil war in Laos, a civil war which has continued for more than 20 years, has been achieved without any congressional authority whatever. The discredited Tonkin Gulf Resolution of 1964 gives no authority to pursue military adventures not directly related to the war in Vietnam; our bombing of northern and central Laos clearly has no relation to the Vietnam conflict.

In fact, U.S. military activity in Laos is in direct violation of the National Commitments Resolution which requires specific congressional approval for every new engagement of American troops abroad. It is also contrary to the recent amendment to the defense appropriation bill prohibiting use of funds for U.S. ground combat troops in Laos or Thailand.

President Nixon attempted to make our conduct of the war in Laos as much a secret as his plan for ending the war in Vietnam, which he told about while a candidate for President. He tried to

MIDDLETON, PA.
PRESS & JOURNAL
MAR 11 1970
WEEKLY - 10,964

NEWS REPORT FROM WASHINGTON

WASHINGTON, D.C.—The North Vietnamese offensive in Laos may or may not be a challenge to President Richard Nixon and a test of his announced new policy of lessening U.S. participation in Asian wars.

This country has not been wholly under the control of its government very much of the time since the 1960 Geneva accord declared it neutral. The Communists have held the eastern part of the country for many, uninterrupted years. That is the area which includes the Ho Chi Ming trail.

But last year a CIA organized and equipped army helped government forces push the Reds out of the

Plaine des Jarres, where they had been in control since 1964. The recent North Vietnamese offensive retook the plain; if military operations continue and the enemy seeks to overthrow the government and capture the capital and the rest of the country Mr. Nixon would be very much on the spot.

For the war in Laos is part of the war in Vietnam. The three Presidents preceding Mr. Nixon were aware of this and the late President Eisenhower, who would not commit U.S. soldiers to Vietnam, was ready to fight to keep the Communists from taking Laos. But Congress is nervous over any U.S. involvement in Laos, fearing it might escalate.

The President knows the American people are in no mood for such a turn of events but he also feels he can't allow the enemy to take the country, which would almost surely place a stamp of failure on the Nixon Doctrine. That is why, for the first time, U.S. heavy bombers went into action over the plain

recently.

This prompted a warning from Moscow, perhaps stemming from a fear of counter U.S. escalation. Washington meanwhile let it be known, even though various members of Congress were speaking out against any U.S. participation in the struggle, that it considered the situation very serious.

And it would be almost impossible for the President to do nothing if the enemy sought to take over the country completely. This is because the next step would almost surely be penetration of Thailand, whose border adjoins the western Laotian border now under government control. The U.S. has no treaty obligations with Laos but does with Thailand, and has bases and men stationed in that country. If the enemy offensive, then, continues, and Thailand appears to be the ultimate goal, Mr. Nixon will be under very heavy pressure to react. The only question is how and when, because of the lack of enthusiasm in both Congress and among the public in general.

11 Mar 1970

Credibility on Laos

Following an embarrassing slip when it decided to "set forth the record" on Laos last week, the White House has ordered all casualties in the air and on the ground in Laos will be listed separately from Vietnam war casualties. That's a step in the right direction.

But does this really prove what Press Secretary Ronald Ziegler says it proves—an "intention to keep the American people fully informed"?

Last week in his report, President Nixon gave what he described as "a precise description of our current activities in Laos."

It contained the much discussed statement that "no American stationed in Laos has ever been killed in ground combat operations." A press report of Captain Joseph Bush's death in combat promptly came to light. Mr. Nixon, it turned out, had not known about that.

The blunder was compounded by a White House spokesman, in a semantic twist, attempting to show that the cap-

tain had died in "hostile action," not "ground combat operations."

The White House further disclosed that 26 civilians had died in Laos, some also in "hostile action." The ring of candor first sounded by the Nixon report was swallowed up in the thud of these revelations.

The "precise description," moreover, sheds no light on news dispatches about Central Intelligence Agency operatives working under the cover of the Agency for International Development. (Stories like that are not likely to help AID much around the world, are they?)

Nor, as Senator Symington reminds us, has the Government revealed anything but the barest total of air casualties, a much larger figure than for those on the ground.

It would seem, then, that there is a way to go officially in "fully informing" the American people on Laos under that reservation "consistent with national security."

PORTLAND, ORE.
OREGONIAN

M - 245,132

S - 407,186

MAR 11 1970

Victories give Hanoi free Laos hand

BY DENIS WARNER

CANBERRA — With the fall of Muong Soui to the North Vietnamese forces in Laos, the only real question now is how far Hanoi wants to push its offensive.

Gen. Vang Pao's clandestine force of guerrillas was at its lowest ebb when, by a stroke of good fortune and great daring, the Meo leader took the initiative on the Plain of Jars last year.

That victory there raised the morale of his men to the point where they thought that they were capable of taking on the North Vietnamese regulars in set-price battles.



WARNER

Suddenly, the task of the American Green Berets and the CIA was not to encourage them to fight but to restrain them from destroying themselves by attempting an impossible defense against the advancing North Vietnamese divisions.

Vang Pao reluctantly agreed but only after extracting promises of American air support, which he and other Laotian leaders hoped would stop the North Vietnamese in their tracks when they reached open country on the Plain of Jars. The Americans knew better, but if they wanted to keep Vang Pao intact and still with some capability to harass the North Vietnamese lines of communication, there was nothing else they could do but try.

Now they have tried. It seems certain that they have inflicted heavy casualties on the northerners and equal-

ly certain that they have delayed their advance. But they have not succeeded in holding the Plain of Jars, or Muong Soui, where the Royal Lao Air Force had a close support base, and there is now nothing to stop a quick advance to the junction of the Luang Prabang-Vientiane roads.

In fact, there is nothing in Laos capable of stopping two North Vietnamese divisions from going almost anywhere they want. North Vietnam did not launch the current offensive until it had made sure that the land and water communications within Laos were no longer safe for the use of government forces or supporters.

The Royal Lao Army, as distinct from Gen. Vang Pao's guerrillas, it stretched quite thin in the preservation of security in and immediately beyond the towns in the Mekong Valley. Its reserves are few and cannot be expanded without adding to the risks for towns like Pakse which came under mortar and rocket attack early in February.

In all the area west of Luang Prabang, for example, there are only a couple of companies of Lao troops and a guerrilla base. Most of the country adjoining the Thai border here is freely used by those who want to supply the guerrillas engaged with the Thai government forces in the northern provinces of Thailand.

The area south and west of Pakse is also of great concern to Bangkok. A mixed force of North Vietnamese, Pathet Lao, Thai and Red Khmer has taken possession of the stretch of Laotian territory to the west of the Mekong, with the obvious intention of increasing insurgency action in eastern Thailand.

As things stand now, no effective action is likely, or conceivable, to reverse the situation in Laos, or even to restore assurances of its neutrality. The 1962 Geneva Agreement was not worth the paper it was written on and a return to the conference table would be as fruitless now as it was then.

The Thai forces are frequently accused of meddling in the Laotian situation and the reports are no doubt accurate enough; but the Thais are also becoming extended by the still low-level but now quite widespread insurgency in their own country.

SEATO is a dead duck, and the United States, which alone possesses the means, is not going to bury its fingers by intervening in Laos beyond the present level of its CIA, Green Beret and air support.

This is the reality of the situation and it is as obvious to those in control in Hanoi as it is to President Nixon.

1 MAR 1970

Questions St. Louisan On AID, CIA In Laos

By WILLIAM K. WYANT JR.
A Washington Correspondent of
the Post-Dispatch

WASHINGTON, March 11 — Senator J. William Fulbright (Dem.), Arkansas, questioned Robert H. Nooter of St. Louis today about reports that the American economic assistance mission in Laos was being used as a front for the Central Intelligence Agency.

Nooter appeared before Fulbright's Foreign Relations Committee as a preliminary to his Senate confirmation as the Agency for International Development's assistant administrator for Vietnam.

He was asked by Fulbright to comment on a news story that appeared in yesterday's Washington Post. It reported that the AID mission in Laos was being used as a cover for CIA agents engaged in clandestine operations against the Communist enemy.

Nooter would not comment. He explained that his instructions were that questions relating to the intelligence community were not to be confirmed or denied in a public session but could be gone into at a closed session of the committee.

"There are enough problems with AID without it being a front" for the CIA, Fulbright said. The Arkansas Senator said one of his objectives was to try to keep Laos from developing into another Vietnam "by osmosis."

Nooter's new post involves him in Vietnam but since 1968 he has been AID's deputy assistant administrator for East Asia with duties relating to economic assistance in Laos, South Korea, the Philippines, Indonesia and Thailand.

Los Angeles Report

Persisting, Fulbright asked Nooter whether it was true, as reported in a news story in the Los Angeles Times, that intelligence agents posing as foreign aid personnel in Laos had at times served as ground controllers for aircraft.

"To the best of my knowledge, that is not true," Nooter replied. He said he had been to Laos and talked to a number of

persons and had encountered nothing to support the allegation in the news story.

Fulbright said that in his experience with the situation in Southeast Asia he had found that newspaper men have been much more accurate than the Government.

In response to other questions from Fulbright and Senator Clifford P. Case (Rep.), New Jersey, Nooter said the American economic assistance program for Laos totaled about \$50,000,000 in fiscal 1970. He said AID had about 350 employees in Laos, a country of 3,000,000 persons.

The American funds for Laos, the St. Louisan explained, are used for economic development, agriculture projects, health measures and relief for war refugees, as well as for American participation in an international effort to help stabilize the Laotian economy.

Nooter said the International Fund, to which the United States contributes 70 per cent and Japan, Britain, France and Australia lesser amounts, runs at a level of about \$23,000,000. It is used to finance the country's import requirements.

When Fulbright said corruption is inevitable in that kind of program, Nooter said the Agency for International Development had tried to control import programs of the type used in Laos and Vietnam as much as possible.

Promises Statement

"I know it is difficult," Fulbright said. Nooter agreed to supply the committee with a written statement for private consumption on the CIA question.

Fulbright insisted that if the CIA story had been untrue Nooter would have denounced it as such.

"If it is true, it is only another sign that we are in over our heads," said Fulbright, a chief critic of the Vietnam war.

The reception given Nooter at the hearing was friendly. His exchange with Fulbright was in a quiet, conversational tone. Fulbright indicated that he would go into the CIA-Laos report later.

ST. PAUL, MINN.
PIONEER PRESS

M - 104,387

S - 223,806

MAR 11 1970

Editorials

More Light on Laos

The public is beginning to learn more about United States military activities and involvements in Laos, and that is a most desirable development.

The more the people know about this situation, the less likelihood there will be of creeping escalation which might lead to another Vietnam quagmire.

Despite secrecy by the military, the State Department and the Central Intelligence Agency, American news correspondents in recent weeks managed to report enough facts so that the Nixon Administration was persuaded to adopt a more candid and forthright attitude on public information.

The President's statement from his Key Biscayne headquarters eliminated some of the governmental hypocrisy which for so long had shielded Laos maneuverings from public scrutiny. His report is subject to differing interpretations, but at least it went part way in giving Americans information they are entitled to have.

It also leaves numerous questions unanswered. Nixon said, "We have no plans for introducing combat forces into Laos." He said it is his goal "to reduce American involvement in Laos." But on the other hand he stated that "the levels of our assistance have risen in response to the growth of North Vietnamese combat activities."

Does this mean that further expansion of North Vietnam activities will bring on more American escalation? And if so, to what extent? There are no "present plans" for American combat forces (although U.S. war planes are flying 400 sorties a day into Laos) but what about future use of combat and supportive forces? The President has left these matters deliberately vague.

Meanwhile, the Administration has invited the Soviet Union to cooperate in seeking to calm down the Laos situation, something Moscow may or may not be inclined to do. The Communist Pathet Lao leadership has put out a vague pro-

posal for negotiations with the neutralist Laos government headed by Souvanna Phouma. The Pathet Lao is headed by Phouma's half brother. Possibly some results may come from this interchange, no one knows.

The fact is that the United States is caught in a bind in Laos. North Vietnam has the manpower to take more Laos territory if it desires, which could lead to a threat against Thailand. Or Hanoi could keep up its pressure for the purpose of pushing its demands for a neutralist government in South Vietnam.

Nixon inherited this situation from past American administrations. As far back as December 31, 1960, then President Eisenhower said, "We cannot let Laos fall to the Communists even if we have to fight." President Kennedy in 1961 added: "Laos is far away from America, but the world is small . . . The security of all Southeast Asia will be endangered if Laos loses its neutral independence."

The American public's views about how far the United States can or should go in trying to decide what Asians do in that part of the world and how they settle their quarrels among themselves have changed since 1960 and 1961. Ideas of American omnipotence and infallibility have changed.

Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield gave recognition to this in his proposal that the United States now limit its military activities in Laos to policing the Ho Chi Minh trail by bomber interdiction of supplies going into South Vietnam. That would definitely downgrade the Plain of Jars operations.

This suggests that what happens in the rest of Laos, away from the Ho Chi Minh trail, should no longer be considered a life and death matter of American policy. A decision on this issue has not been announced by the Nixon Administration. But it is a decision which may have to be made, regardless of the political difficulties involved.

UTICA, N.Y.
PRESS

M - 28,782

MAR 11 1970

Hanoi's Offers to Stop Fighting In Laos and Vietnam Encouraging

Are the North Vietnamese showing signs of wanting peace in Vietnam and Laos? Their latest moves in this direction could be just another propaganda effort, but there is enough substance to suggest that a major peace effort could be in the making.

THE OFFER TO CALL a halt to the fighting in Laos has been given considerable publicity, and the Laotian government appears to be anxious to do most anything that will stop the fighting.

Our involvement there is highly questionable, with the CIA offering combat support without congressional approval or the public's knowledge. Now we have also extended our South Vietnamese forces to provide aid combat assistance.

More important, but less publicized, is the report from Daniel DeLuce, of the Associated Press, that the North Vietnamese told him they were willing to agree to a ceasefire in Vietnam, if we would make public a total troop withdrawal plan.

Normally, this might be considered another of many similar proposals that always seem to have strings attached. But this one appears so simple and direct that

it suggests the North Vietnamese might have allowed DeLuce's visit so they could present a true ceasefire plan.

IT MIGHT BE SAID that such a proposal could have been made at the Paris talks, but Hanoi might have felt it would lose face if it made such an important proposal in Paris, after it has refused to talk without a top-level replacement for Henry Cabot Lodge.

"If the United States will agree to carry out such a withdrawal, discussions can be held and a date agreed on for completion of the withdrawal," DeLuce quoted a Hanoi spokesman as saying.

"Conditions will be assured that all foreign troops will be able to leave South Vietnam in perfect safety and without harm."

Assuming that the two offers are bona fide, it would suggest that Hanoi has recognized that we are not giving up easily in either country and that they might do better by talking.

THE OPPORTUNITY appears to be there for us to exploit, and hopefully we will do so without delay.

11 MAR 1970

U.S. Blesses Laos Peace Feeler With an If

By STAN CARTER

Washington, March 10 (NEWS Bureau)—The State Department gave a cautious blessing today to peace talks between Prince Souvanna Phouma, the neutralist premier of Laos, and his Communist half-brother, Prince Souphanouvong.

But officials made clear that the United States would not agree to any Laotian settlement that did not include withdrawal of the estimated 67,000 North Vietnamese troops in the country.

The Pentagon disclosed these additional bits of information about American activities in Laos:

• Although Laos has not been designated a combat zone, American military personnel stationed there have been receiving \$65 a

month in "hostile fire pay" since Jan. 1, 1966.

• Capt. Joseph K. Bush Jr., an assistant army attache who was killed in a flight with North Vietnamese soldiers in Laos on Feb. 10, 1969, was posthumously awarded the Silver Star for gallantry in action but, awarding of the citation was not made public at the time.

• On the night of Feb. 17-18, there was a B-52 raid against concentrations of North Vietnamese troops and supplies in the Plain of Jars in Laos. Previously, B-52 raids on Laos have been centered on the Ho Chi Minh trail, near the Vietnam border.

In addition to the "hostile fire" for the 228 military personnel now in Laos, Pentagon representative Jerry W. Friedheim said: "I am also informed that State Department personnel in Laos

receive certain hazardous duty benefits."

These benefits presumably also are paid to several hundred CIA agents engaged in clandestine operations against the Commu-

nists in Laos. It is an open secret in Laos, that agents posing as members of the U.S. Civilian Aid Mission's rural development division recruit and train pro-government guerrillas.

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The Laos squeeze

President Nixon has been caught in a squeeze in Laos, and the squeeze, rather than easing as a consequence of his long statement last week on Laos, may in fact be tightened.

The Defense Department contributed to the pressure by failing to tell the President the truth about Laos. Mr. Nixon said, on Friday, that no member of the U.S. military forces had been killed in ground fighting in Laos when in fact there had been such a death more than a year ago.

If Mr. Nixon has been uninformed about Laos it is time he remedied that situation. He could begin by matching what responsible reporters have been writing about the U.S. involvement in Laos—especially about the military advisers on the scene, the CIA financing and operation of a native army and its operation of two airlines—with what the Defense Department has to say. The sight of an American President embarrassed before the world because of a lack of information is demeaning.

The indigenous Communists of Laos, the Pathet Lao, have put another squeeze on Mr. Nixon. The Pathet Lao have unveiled a "peace plan" for Laos. The plan calls for immediate withdrawal of the United States from Laos and Thailand, the formation of a coalition government and the eventual election of a neutralist government. Hanoi has been pushing similar demands for South Vietnam which the United States has refused to accept in part.

Mr. Nixon is sharply limited in his room for political maneuver in Laos. He has pledged no widening of the war in Southeast Asia. He faces an aroused Congress which demands to know the whole truth about Laos and the evidence is that not even Mr. Nixon knows the whole truth. Furthermore, Mr. Nixon has asked Russia and Britain to help restore the 1962 Geneva Agreement on Laos which bans all foreign soldiers from Laotian soil.

The United States is in violation of that agreement, as is North Vietnam, which has 67,000 troops in Laos. It is possible that Russia could respond to Mr. Nixon's request by demanding the United States show its good faith by getting out of Laos completely. It is not likely that Russia would make such a demand of North Vietnam. Hanoi might turn to Russia's rival, Red China, for support.

The Laos affair is a severe and earliest test of Mr. Nixon's declared low-profile foreign policy. He can meet that test by getting all the information that it is his right to have from the Defense Department and pre-empting that department's self-assumed prerogative for telling only what it wants to tell—even to a President.

So long as the Defense Department fails to tell what is going on, so long as the CIA can do the same thing, both are in effect making U.S. foreign policy—and that is not the function of either.

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CONGRESSIONAL RECORD — SENATE

and interaction between people in North and South America. After all, understanding comes from knowing about problems and attempting to resolve them.

One of the important programs in which Alabamians participate is the Partners of the Alliance Program. Alabama is one of 40 States joined in a citizen-to-citizen program now operating in 17 Latin American countries. It is logical that people in Alabama are playing an important role in the partners because of our nearness to Central and South America.

Last May, in Salt Lake City, Utah, delegates to the fourth inter-American conference of the Partners of the Alliance selected Guatemala as the site for their next conference to be held in November of this year. We are especially happy with this selection because of the fact Alabama is joined in a strong partnership program with Guatemala. Numerous small projects have been implemented because of the involvement of Alabama citizens in the partnership with Guatemala. Self-help is the key to the partners program and the people of Alabama have shown a willingness to respond to self-help on the part of their partners. Thousands of ties are being established throughout the hemisphere under this program. It is therefore one of the more important efforts in establishing better relations and understanding among the peoples of the Americas. Last month, two outstanding citizens from Guatemala visited Alabama to discuss plans for the partners conference to be held later this year in Guatemala. The visitors were Sra. Mariflor de Solis and Hector Sanchez-Latour who spoke to service organizations in the State.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that an article from the Birmingham News relating to the visitors and the plans for the partners conference be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the article was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

PARTNERS PROGRAM IS PEOPLE—BRIDGE TO BETTER UNDERSTANDING

(By Pat McGuire)

"Help your brother across, and you will find that your own boat has reached the shore."

This old Hindu proverb, read by Mrs. Elizabeth Horne, president of the Quota Club of Birmingham, exemplified the spirit of the program president at a joint meeting of women's service clubs hosted by the Quota Club Monday at the Downtown Club.

Alabama's participation in the Partners of the Alliance program was discussed by John W. Bloomer, managing editor of The Birmingham News and member of the Alabama executive committee of the Guatemala-Alabama Partners of the Alliance.

"Alabama is on the doorstep of Central and South America," Bloomer said. "We are building a stronger, more effective bridge with the Latin American countries through the Partners program than through any big government program. This concept involves people, and the more people involved, the more understanding there is."

About 40 states are involved in the program, associated in a partner relationship with 40 Latin republics or sub-divisions. Committees of individual citizens are currently carrying out beneficial projects in

education, public health, business and commerce and agriculture.

Bloomer told of visiting a Guatemalan farmer who had raised and educated five children, and of his pride in his children. "This man started out as an illiterate porter and ended up as president of a 100-man farm cooperative, but the biggest thing was his pride in his children and their futures. In him I saw the same thing that I would see in a farmer in Alabama. Right there is the story of Guatemala and how we can help. The best thing about the program is that because of people in Alabama, people in Guatemala can have a better life."

Introducing Senora Mariflor Solis, secretary general, Federation of Partners of the Alliance for Central America and Panama, Bloomer said, "She has made an effective organization in Alabama possible."

"I felt from the beginning there was a certain affinity for Alabama in Guatemala," Senora Solis said, "and now it has developed into a love affair."

Senora Solis feels very strongly about the people to people concept. "This is a program which I would call an investment in human relations. We are extremely fortunate in having you as a partner. We hope sincerely that we can return what you have invested in us."

A community development program in Guatemala was cited by Senora Solis as an example of the help Alabama has given in teaching the people various aspects of public health, agriculture and home economics. She mentioned the possibility of a team from Samford University working in Guatemala for a six-week period.

Hector Sanchez-Latour, president of the Guatemala Partners organization, was introduced by Senora Solis as "one of the finest minds in our country."

Sanchez-Latour issued an invitation to the women at the meeting to be present at Fifth Inter-American Conference of the Partners of the Alliance to be held in Guatemala Nov. 9-12. "We would like to have a hundred Alabamians there!" he said. The conference is being organized by the Guatemala-Alabama Partners of the Alliance.

Five service groups were represented at the meeting, including Altrusa, Pilot, Soroptimist, Zonta and the sponsoring Quota Club. A project of the Quota Club has been the Guatemala Partners' booth at the International Fair.

U.S. INVOLVEMENT IN LAOS

Mr. WILLIAMS of New Jersey. Mr. President, the situation in Laos is becoming more serious every day. It has become clear that the United States is involved in an escalating military operation there and, furthermore, that our involvement has been concealed from the American people. To some degree it is still being concealed. President Nixon, while proclaiming his desire to disengage American fighting men from conflicts in Asia, has increased our military operations in Laos.

I wish I could state with some certainty precisely what that involvement now consists of. Unfortunately, because of the President's policy of secrecy, I cannot do so. Neither the American people nor the Congress have had sufficient explanation of the extent of this country's involvement in Laos.

The President's much heralded statement on the subject last Friday did very little to improve that situation. To make matters worse, the authenticity of what the President did say was very quickly

thrown into doubt by revelations regarding Americans killed in Laos which have given to Mr. Nixon his own credibility gap. The President's latest release of information about U.S. casualties in Laos is no more than what should have been done all along.

Most of what we know about what is happening in Laos comes from reporters on the scene. They have reported American planes flying combat missions at the rate of more than 200 a day in direct support of Royal Laotian combat troops. They have reported American soldiers who were mustered out of the Army so they could go on the CIA payroll as advisers to Laotian troops. They have reported an entire army, independent of the Lao Government, which was recruited, trained, and equipped by the United States. And they have reported that President Nixon himself approved bombing raids by American B-52's on the Plain of Jars.

Last July, and again in November, Mr. Nixon declared his intention to disengage the United States from the war in Vietnam and to keep our fighting men out of future conflicts of that nature. His actions with regard to Laos cast doubt on just how he is going about avoiding any new Vietnam-type involvements.

I am afraid that the United States stands today in Laos precisely where we stood 5 years ago in Vietnam. The rhetoric we hear today bears a frightening resemblance to the rhetoric which preceded the tragic escalation of U.S. involvement in South Vietnam.

Mr. Nixon blames "previous administrations" for our presence in Laos but fails to recognize that it is folly to let the policies of the past dictate our future.

He says we increased our combat air operations in Laos only when the North Vietnamese increased their aggression. But the President forgets that this was the same argument used to justify increasing our role in Vietnam.

The President justifies our involvement in Laos by saying the Laotian Government asked for our help. This, of course, was the same reason we were given for escalating American involvement in Vietnam. But at least Vietnam was a signatory to the SEATO agreement, providing some framework for our response. Laos has specifically avoided any such mutual defense pacts.

The 1962 Geneva agreement on Laotian independence, which the United States was a party to, prohibits foreign military intervention in Laos. The President now says we are justified in violating that agreement because North Vietnam has done so. That argument falls of its own weight; it is like saying two wrongs make a right.

And President Nixon plays on semantic niceties to hide the fact that American military men are fighting and dying in Laos.

The similarities to the things our Government said and did in Vietnam are appalling. Already we are reading reports of bewildered, homeless refugees pouring into Vientiane as they flee from bombing raids by U.S. planes. Refugees have been pouring into Saigon for 5 years, many of them for the same reason.

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ning. In fact, as smoke is reduced through higher temperatures of combustion, the production of oxides of nitrogen is increased. The technology must be developed.

We haven't even cleaned up normal jet engines and now we are going to have the SST. Not only is this multi-billion dollar airplane being subsidized by the taxpayers with the profit to go largely into private hands, not only are scientists concerned about the noise pollution it will cause, but now it also turns out the scientists fear that the exhaust pollution it creates will never dissipate. It will fly at a high level where the atmosphere is basically stable. The effect, some think, will be that its exhaust emissions will generate great expanses of clouds which will remain there indefinitely, reducing markedly the sunlight reaching the surface of the earth.

And consider this: The President, for fiscal 1971, has asked for \$275 million for the SST—and only \$106 million for the Air Pollution Control Administration.

Solid Waste Pollution.—We create trash—cans, bottles, paper, and so forth—faster than we can dispose of it, and we are running out of safe places to put it. We need to find innovative ways to recapture our solid waste. We must also demand that packagers stop making virtually indestructible containers and come up with ones that are easily and cheaply disposed of.

The Administration position on this problem last year was interesting, to say the least. Secretary Robert Finch of HEW testified about the critical nature of the problem during hearings on bipartisan legislation which would move toward recovery, recycling and reuse of the resources which today the nation burns, buries or dumps. He made an eloquent presentation of the scope of the problem. Then he flatly opposed spending the money required to implement the solutions.

In his message President Nixon also waxed eloquent on this problem, but he did not ask either for the necessary funds or legislation to deal with it. Instead, he suggested further study.

In Great Britain, a much poorer nation per capita than we, the citizenry decided a few years ago that it was tired of pollution and began paying the price of cleaning up its air. That price has been very dear to the average Briton. But it is paying dividends.

Now, while thick fog still rolls over London from the ocean, it no longer combines with air pollution to become the kind of killer smog for which that great city had become notorious.

There had been no fish in the Thames river for over a century. But the British went to work here, too, and by 1968 some 40 different species had come back.

It has been done in America, as well. Last year in the New Jersey Air Quality Region, where a great phalanx of chemical plants is situated, emissions of oxides of sulfur—the sulfur content of fuel—were down a full 50% from what they were in 1966, before there were regulations.

We can have clean air and clean water. This mighty technology of ours can produce pollution abatement in the same way it produced pollution.

What used to be lacking was the national will to do it. Now the will is present, and the public is willing to pay for it. And that means that both government and private purse strings must be loosed—now.

THE LAOTIAN SITUATION

Mr. GRIFFIN. Mr. President, recently the Senator from Arizona (Mr. GOLDWATER) delivered a perceptive, illuminating speech on the floor of the Senate concerning the situation in Laos. His speech was largely overlooked by the

press at the time it was given. However, on March 5 the Omaha World-Herald carried a news story and an editorial and I ask unanimous consent that they be printed in the RECORD.

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

[From the Omaha World-Herald, Mar. 5, 1970]

GOLDWATER TELLS TRUTH ABOUT LAOS TROUBLES

Congressional critics of the United States position in Laos, as well as some of the eastern press, have not been telling "the whole truth" about the situation, says Sen. Barry Goldwater, R-Ariz.

Goldwater is suggesting that they read the 1962 13-nation declaration on the neutrality of Laos, signers of which included the United States and Russia, and Red China, North Vietnam, Britain and France as well.

Goldwater pointed to a key phrase in the declaration:

"They (the signatories) will not introduce into the kingdom of Laos foreign troops or military personnel in any form whatsoever, nor will they in any way facilitate or connive at the introduction of any foreign troops or military personnel."

It was the Communists who breached that agreement, the Arizona senator said.

REDS RESPONSIBLE

It was the Communists who breached that across Laos, using it as a supply route for its troops in Vietnam, Goldwater pointed out.

No American ground forces are in Laos, Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird has said, but U.S. planes have operated there to try to cut off the supplies going across Laos bound for Vietnam and Red forces there.

"Lately," Goldwater told the Senate, "I have listened to some of my colleagues berate the United States for supposed activities in Laos and have read similar stories in the New York Times and Washington Post.

"I have kept wondering when some of that group would come out with the whole truth."

UNITED STATES NOT CULPRIT

Goldwater said he hadn't seen that whole truth "so far."

He said both Russia and Red China "pledged themselves to respect the neutrality of Laos."

"Now, he asked, "who is causing the trouble in Laos and, as long as we are at it, the trouble in South Vietnam and northwest Thailand? The Communists, whether they be Russian, North Vietnamese, or Red Chinese. The United States is not the culprit. . . . So I would hope that in the future that when Senators or members of the press decide to ascribe all the trouble in Laos to the United States (that they point the finger at Russia, Red China and North Vietnam and ask the question, what are you doing upsetting the neutrality of Laos?"

Goldwater introduced in the Congressional Record the complete declaration of Laotian neutrality as adopted by the 13 powers July 23, 1962.

WE DIDN'T START IT

Barry Goldwater has pointed out something his colleagues in the Senate and everyone else should remember as the war in Laos continues:

The President, the Pentagon and the CIA did not start the war. The Communists, particularly the North Vietnamese, are responsible for it, just as they are responsible for the war in Vietnam and the troubles in Thailand and other countries of Southeast Asia.

Goldwater pointed out that North Vietnam, not the United States, put a force of 50,000 to 60,000 soldiers in Laos.

And he recalled for the senators that the 1962 13-nation declaration on the neutrality of Laos was signed by Russia, Red China and North Vietnam as well as by the United States.

Goldwater's words were overdue, for it has appeared from the remarks of some senators that they thought the United States, on its own, was trying to get another major war going in Laos.

Sen. Mathias has warned, for example, that "every American escalation has been met by a North Vietnamese escalation" in Laos. That is the kind of intellectually dishonest blame-shifting that liberal politicians have been practicing for years in regard to the fighting in Vietnam.

Now Mathias appears to be trying to institute more of it in regard to Laos, talking about American "escalation" when it is perfectly clear that the Communist offensive across the Plain of Jars and beyond was the first step in the current intensification of the fighting.

Sen. Cooper has repeatedly described the fighting in Laos as "an internal war," recalling the attempts to pass off the conflict in South Vietnam as a "civil war" rather than a war of aggression launched by North Vietnam.

If it is strictly a Laotian war, as Cooper seems to imply, what are those 50,000 North Vietnamese doing there? Or would Sen. Cooper, like Hand, simply deny their existence?

Sen. Mike Mansfield has commented critically on the "decided enlargement of the number of sorties flown over Laos" by American warplanes. He did not comment, however, on the fact that the number of air strikes is in proportion to the increased efforts by the North Vietnamese and Pathet Lao guerrillas to take over Laos or significant parts of it.

Sen. Gore has said that "our activity in Laos is in violation of the Geneva agreements." He has not bothered to mention who first violated the agreements, or the magnitude of the Communist violations.

Said Goldwater:

"I would hope that in the future that when senators or members of the press decide to ascribe all the trouble in Laos to the United States, that they point the finger at Russia, Red China and North Vietnam and ask the question, what are you doing upsetting the neutrality of Laos."

We think that statement puts the Laotian situation in a clearer and much more honest perspective than some of the critical assessments made by other senators.

Laos seems unlikely to become another Vietnam militarily, but it easily could become one politically here at home, if the concerned senators are not more careful to acknowledge the truth of Communist aggression, and balance their criticisms accordingly.

OIL IMPORTS NO SECURITY THREAT

Mr. PROXMIRE. Mr. President, the Department of Defense official who is in charge of making sure that our Armed Forces have enough oil said yesterday that oil imports are no threat to our national security.

This statement by Barry J. Shillito, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Installations and Logistics, should put to rest any doubts about the national security justifications for the oil import program—there are none.

The only justification that the oil industry seems to be able to put forward is that what is good for the oil industry is good for the national security; an idea

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Nixon Pledges Disclosure on Laos

By Martin Schram

Newsday Washington Bureau

Washington—After teetering on the brink of a possible credibility gap, President Nixon reversed policies last night and promised to reveal future American casualties in the once-clandestine war in Laos.

Nixon swept away much of the secrecy that has cloaked the U.S. operations in Laos with his decision. The President ordered the State Department last night to release the names and the circumstances surrounding the deaths of the six U.S. civilians killed by hostile enemy action in Laos since he became President. Included were three employes of the Air America charter airline, which has been linked by some sources to the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).

Nixon also promised that in the future:

- The secretary of defense will inform the American public of all U.S. military aircraft losses and military air personnel casualties in Laos as soon as the search-and-rescue missions have been completed.
- All casualties suffered by U.S. personnel stationed in Laos due to hostile enemy actions will also be reported.

The President's reversal of policy came at 6 PM, hours after White House Press Secretary Ronald Ziegler had declined to provide newsmen with the identities of U.S. civilian personnel casualties suffered in Laos. Reporters had peppered Ziegler earlier in the afternoon with questions aimed at the credibility issue, since the White House was maintaining that despite the revelation Sunday of 26 civilian deaths and one U.S. military casualty, there had been no U.S. deaths in Laos in "ground combat operations."

Meanwhile, Sen. Stuart Symington (D-Mo.) was charging on Capitol Hill yesterday afternoon that Nixon's "partial release of facts does not give an accurate picture" of U.S. involvement in Laos. Symington said: "If the American people are going to be taxed to pay for this undisclosed war, they are entitled to know more about it than the administration has seen fit to disclose in bits and pieces."

In announcing Nixon's new disclosure policy last night, Ziegler said: "The purpose of this administration is to discuss completely the U.S. involvement in Laos. These orders and this policy which the President is stating today clearly shows the intent of the President to fully inform the American people of the scope of the U.S. involvement in Laos and to keep the American people informed of U.S. activities in Laos."

Ziegler said that there had been six U.S. civilians killed in Laos by hostile enemy action since Nixon was inaugurated. Three of the dead men were em-

ployes of Air America, a charter airline believed to be at least partly controlled by the CIA. Air America operates officially under contract to the U.S. Agency for International Development, the government's foreign aid agency. The Air America employes identified as killed were J. C. Merkel, William J. Gibbs and Ralph S. Davis. The State Department could not provide any home town addresses last night.

The other three fatalities were men who were members of the International Voluntary Services, a private Peace Corps-type organization whose members help people in underdeveloped countries on agricultural and other community projects. That organization received \$1,500,000 a year in grants from the U.S. international development agency, according to a 1967 report. The International Voluntary Services' members killed were: Arthur Stillman, Chandler Edwards and Dennis Mummert. The names of the other 26 U.S. civilians, all presumably killed before Nixon took office, were not disclosed.

In addition to those civilians, one U.S. military man also has been killed in ground action in Laos during the Nixon administration. He was U.S. Army Capt. Joseph Bush, a military attache who was killed after returning enemy fire during a North Vietnamese commando attack. His identity was confirmed by the White House Sunday only after it was first revealed by the Los Angeles Times.

Nixon's staff had not learned of Bush's death before the President's declaration in Friday's official

Laos statement that "no American stationed in Laos had ever been killed in ground combat operations." Nixon also was embarrassed by an official White House briefer who said Friday that all American deaths in Laos had been caused by U.S. air operations; the White House later conceded that perhaps 27 had died in ground action since 1962.

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American Losses in Laos From Now on to Be Told

Compiled From News Wires

Washington — Amid congressional charges he is dodging demands for disclosure of U.S. Laotian involvement, President Nixon has ordered the public release of American casualties and air losses as they occur in the Southeast Asian country.

In announcing the policy change Monday night, the White House disclosed six civilians were killed in Laos last year as the result of hostile enemy action.

Press secretary Ronald L. Ziegler said the administration will immediately "inform the American public about all military aircraft losses and military air personnel casualties in Laos once search-and-rescue missions are completed."

Ziegler said this is the same policy followed on Vietnam losses. In the past, casualties in Laos have been lumped with those of Southeast Asia as a whole.

Of the six civilians all

described as having support rather than active military roles, three were killed by ambush, one was shot as he was piloting a helicopter. And two were killed by what the White House called possible hostile fire.

Meanwhile, the Los Angeles Times reported Tuesday that Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) agents posing as members of the agency are involved in military operations in Laos.

The Times' story from Jack Foiese in Vientiane estimated the number of CIA agents at several hundred. The newspaper said their activities include recruiting and training pro-government guerrillas, detecting enemy troop movements, and acting as ground controllers for aircraft.

The White House confirmed Sunday that Joseph K. Bush Jr., an Army captain, was killed in Laos Feb. 10, 1969, in an exchange of fire with North Vietnamese commandos. The administration said his death did not occur in combat action.

At Temple, Tex., the widow and parents of Bush said the government never tried to keep secret the location of the 25-year-old captain's death.

Carol Bush, 24, said she had

known "all along where Joe was. And when he was killed, the government made no attempt, so far as I know, to keep it quiet that he had been killed in Laos."

The White House statement came after a day of Senate debate on U.S. involvement in Laos.

Sen. Hugh Scott of Pennsylvania, the Republican leader, said Democrats are looking for a political issue in the debate over Laos.

Sen. Alan Cranston, D-Calif., said two soldiers told him American troops were sent into Laos "to pick up (U.S.) bodies and bring them back into Vietnam so when they were counted as dead they would be counted as dead in Vietnam and not in the Laos theater."

Sen. Stuart Symington, D-Mo., whose Senate Foreign Relations subcommittee conducted a week of hearings on Laos in October, said the administration's "partial release of facts does not give an accurate picture."

Symington has been trying to have the State Dept. agree to release a censored version of the transcript.

He told newsmen the transcript contained "very interesting disclosures" about U.S. casualties in Laos and asked "why only ground combat troops are considered casualties."

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Special Groups Cloak Actions of Many Agents

BY JACK FOISIE

Times Staff Writer

VIENTIANE — The U.S. civilian AID mission in Laos is being used as a cover for Central Intelligence Agency agents engaged in clandestine operations against the Communist enemy.

Agents posing as members of the Agency for International Development mission's rural development division are recruiting and training progovernment guerrillas to fight Communists, detect enemy movements deep in their own territory and to act as ground controllers for aircraft.

The Americans involved in these military activities are members of the AID mission's Rural Development Annex to distinguish them from other rural development workers engaged in the agency's normal functions—assistance to civilians in remote areas.

Total Several Hundred

Based on talks with people throughout Laos the past several weeks, the number of agents posing as AID workers totals several hundred.

In one area there are almost 50 Americans and about half of them are listed as members of the Rural Development Annex. In Military Region II in northeast Laos, where much of the fighting has occurred, Annex members are very numerous.

In the northeast, both regular and guerrilla forces are under the command of a Meo tribal general, Vang Pao. For years the CIA has been active in supporting Vang Pao's mountain people.

Originally the activity was under the code name of "White Star." It now appears that Rural Development Annex is the successor to White Star.

Although nominally under control of the AID mission director, Charles Mann, Annex people answer only to the CIA chief in Laos.

There is another secret organization hidden within the AID mission compound. It is called the Special Requirements Office. Its personnel provide the supplies for the clandestine units.

Even AID workers who are in remote areas to assist villagers to dig

wells, build schools and teach sanitation are sometimes called upon to act as forward air controllers; it was learned.

Within the AID mission there is some discontent over the military role that is being forced upon them.

"It breeds distrust of the people we are trying to help," one field worker said. "I won't say that we perform humanitarian work free of political implications. But now some people think we're an adjunct of the military."

Request Questioned

It is particularly embarrassing for field supervisors when they ask for more money or more staff and the request is questioned by an unknowing bureaucrat in Washington.

"How can you ask for more men when you've already got 15 supervising well-digging?" is the query.

He doesn't know that 10 of the well-digging experts are really CIA agents.

The only strong opposition to the AID mission's change of its original peaceful role, however, comes from a youthful group of overseas workers, members of the International Volunteer Service. Privately chartered, IVS preceded the Peace Corps. Its members have served with distinction in Vietnam and Laos.

There are 49 IVS members in Laos, and they serve under an AID mission contract. Although they have made no formal protest, there is deep discontent and some are considering voicing their dis-

Former Servicemen

Many members of the Annex are former American servicemen who fought in Vietnam. Often they come from the Special Forces and their job in Laos is about the same—without the green beret.

The men for the Annex are recruited as their discharge date from service comes due. Many have a desire for further adventure overseas and like the high pay, triple or more what they earned when in uniform.

There is the possibility that some men have gained temporary leave from the armed forces and can return to the military after their contract expires.

In the past several years the membership in the Annex has remained constant, it was learned. Only the American air support to the Royal Lao government forces seems to have escalated.

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The Old Road to Credibility Gap

Before President Nixon's belated statement on the subject, many Americans were apprehensive about the U. S. liability in Laos. They still are—as questions multiply about the reliability of his report.

The President asserted specifically, for example, that “no American stationed in Laos has ever been killed in ground combat operations.” Apparently he knew at the time that 25 U. S. civilians had been slain or were missing as a result of “hostile action” but chose to distinguish these casualties from any sustained in “combat.”

In any event, he did not mention them, and it was only after press reports that an American Army officer had been killed 13 months ago as he vainly sought to drive off a North Viet-

namese commando attack on a rear area that the White House acknowledged his death and the other casualties; even then, lame attempts were made to preserve the pretense that “ground combat operations” were not responsible. The alleged distinction can be of small comfort to the victims.

How many more casualties have actually been sustained? And if it is really U. S. policy—as one diplomat claimed yesterday in commenting on the Laotian government's response to a peace-talk proposal from the Pathet Lao—to be “all for the Laotians settling problems among themselves,” why has the U. S. become steadily more involved? The White House has now belatedly agreed to release future casualty figures in Laos. Will CIA men be included in the count? ✓

On a Muddy Track

“As long as he's a reliable horse,” one American said of Thieu, “we'll ride him. But if people think he's beginning to falter, that could cause difficulties.”
—from a Washington Post story, datelined Saigon.

* * *

That is not too felicitous an image of the South Vietnamese President, who behaves each day in every way like a man on horseback himself—in the saddle, gripping a tight rein, refusing to dismount and riding roughshod over his political opponents.

NEW YORK, N.Y.
POST

E - 708,180

MAR 10 1970

Nixon Orders Full Laos Data

By a Staff Correspondent

WASHINGTON—The Administration today was under orders from President Nixon to give a full accounting of all future casualties and aircraft losses associated with American activities in Laos.

Stung by charges that the public was not being told all it should be about U. S. involvement in the landlocked Asian nation, Nixon late yesterday directed that from now on:

¶ All military aircraft losses and military air personnel casualties in Laos will be reported publicly as soon as search and rescue operations are completed. These facts until today had been lumped together with Vietnam statistics.

¶ The loss or death from "hostile enemy action" of any U. S. personnel stationed in Laos will also be announced. This will cover advisers, trainers and logistical support employes.

Casualties stemming from action along the South Vietnam-Laotian border will still be carried as Vietnam casualties, however, the President ruled.

All this was announced late yesterday by Press Secretary Ziegler after a lengthy meeting with top White House officials at which the directive was ironed out.

Said Ziegler: "These orders and this policy clearly show the intent of the President to inform the American people of the scope of U. S. involvement in Laos and his intention to continue to keep the American people informed of U. S. activities in Laos."

Part of the President's order — the immediate release of the names of the six U. S. civilians killed in Laos during the past year — reached the State Dept. so late that most of the administrative staff there had gone home.

As a consequence, State Dept. spokesmen said, they were unable to provide the ages or hometowns of the six. The information they were able to assemble detailed the deaths as follows:

Arthur Stillman and Dennis Mummert, both ambushed on Aug. 5, 1969, near Ban Nong Keun.

Chandler Edwards, ambushed on April 4, 1969, at Ban Soukhouma.

Shot to Death

J. C. Merkel, fatally wounded by a bullet on Feb. 18, 1970, while piloting a helicopter over the Plain of Jars.

William J. Gibbs, killed by hostile fire on May 13, 1969, following the crash of the helicopter in which he was riding near Nam Bac.

And Ralph S. Davis, also fatally shot on Aug. 16, 1969, after the small fixed-wing aircraft he was riding in crashed southwest of the Plain of Jars.

The first three were members of International Volunteer Services, a private group carrying out a Peace Corps-like function under contract to the Agency for International Development.

Worked for Airline
The second group of three men all worked for Air

America, an airline also under contract to AID but rumored to be financed and controlled by the CIA.

The current flap over the credibility of the Administration's word regarding American participation in the Laotian war came to a head in recent weeks when the White House repeatedly refused to comment on news accounts of growing U. S. involvement in the tiny kingdom.

Nixon sought to allay rising suspicion by delivering a statement last Friday outlining American activities in the area. A claim in his report that no Americans stationed in Laos had been killed in combat was challenged over the weekend by a published report of the death of a U. S. infantry captain at the hands of North Vietnamese commandos in Laos.

While maintaining that the President's claim still stood, the Administration apparently felt compelled to demonstrate further its commitment to informing the public. Yesterday's directive followed.

Observer: Laos for Beginners

By RUSSELL BAKER

WASHINGTON, March 9— Suddenly there is Laos out on Page One. It is a place, judging from the news reports, where a young man with no pull at his draft board could get killed unless somebody does something clever quickly, which is always unlikely. The following pocket guide to Laos is intended to shed the clear light of information on this crucial corner of the world:

1. *What is Laos?*—Laos is a fertile area of opium surrounded by the C.I.A. It is famous for the historic Plain of Jars, the stalwart Meo tribesmen and a rainy season which, if it were to fall into Communist hands, might well upset the delicate balance of dominoes now prevailing between the Mekong and the Irrawaddy.

Sounding Like an Old Hand

2. *Who is the Irrawaddy?*—The Irrawaddy is not a who, but a what; or, to be precise, a river in Burma, a location so remote from Laos that it has absolutely no bearing at all on the Laotian situation, whatever that may be. Use of the phrase "between the Mekong and the Irrawaddy" may, however, make you sound like an old Laos

hand in conversation, and is therefore recommended unless there is a genuine old Laos hand in the room, which will be unlikely since there were only three genuine old Laos hands in the world as of last January, and all of them were far gone on opium.

That Old Pagoda

3. *What about the old Moulmein Pagoda?*—The old Moulmein Pagoda is too far from Laos to have any obvious connection, though what the C.I.A. may be up to there cannot, of course, be officially discussed, as the U. S. Government never officially discusses C.I.A. activities, even in old pagodas.

4. *Where were we?*—we were about to learn how to pronounce "Laos." If you can pronounce the French article "la" and the German preposition "aus" you are well on the way to success; say, very quickly, "la" and "aus," and you have it. If your only language is English, and you can say "louse," you will have it as clearly as most people in the State Department.

5. *Having Vietnamized the war in Vietnam, will President Nixon be logically consistent*

and Laosize the war in Laos?—The President's political advisers object to Laosizing the war. They believe most Americans would think he was talking about "louse eyes" and would complain that their President ought to have weightier things to talk about on television. Nor has Prof. Henry Kissinger's suggestion that the Administration "de-Laos" the situation been greeted very enthusiastically at the White House.

6. *What will the United States do if the capital of Laos falls to the enemy?*—That depends upon who the enemy is, and upon which capital he captures. There are two capitals; they are Luang Prabang and Vientiane. No one is certain yet how many enemies there are. At last count there were Chinese Communists building a road in the north, North Vietnamese extending a skirmish line through the middle, and Pathet Lao (rhymes with "potted cow") digging a ditch in the south.

7. *Let's go back to the old Moulmein Pagoda—Absolutely not! Now quit whining and pay attention.*

8. *Where does the C.I.A. come in?*—Through the good

offices of one Vang Pao (rhymes with "bang! pow!") the C.I.A. has rallied freedom-loving fierce Meo tribesmen on the Plain of Jars.

9. *Who is Vang Pao?*—That's not the question. The real question is, who is Souphanouvong? (rhymes with "you run along").

A Forgotten Quarrel

10. *Who is Souphanouvong?*—Souphanouvong, leader of the Pathet Lao, is the half-brother of Prince Souvanna Phouma, (doesn't rhyme with anything), who is the neutralist ruler of Laos and a good guy. Souphanouvong got mad at his half-brother a long time ago and went out into the elephant-grass beyond the Plain of Jars to form the Pathet Lao.

11. *What did he get mad about?*—No one remembers any more. Old Thai hands say there are rumors along the klongs of Bangkok that they had a political argument in 1948, with Souphanouvong supporting Thomas E. Dewey and Souvanna Phouma favoring Harry Truman, but it may have been the other way around.

12. *Is this some kind of joke?*—Not unless you are one of those lucky people who can die laughing.

CIA Agents Pose As Laos Aid Men, Report Claims

Los Angeles — (AP) — CIA agents posing as members of the Agency for International Development are involved in military operations against Communists in Laos, the Los Angeles Times reported yesterday.

A dispatch from Vientiane estimated the number of such agents at several hundred. It said they recruit and train pro-government guerillas, detect Communist troop movements and act as ground controllers for aircraft.

The story said the agents pose as members of AID's Rural Development Annex to distinguish them from other rural development workers doing the agency's normal job of helping civilians in remote areas.

TIMES

MAR 10 1970

M - 61,042

S - 102,574

President Nixon's Report on Laos May Not Hint at Depth of Involvement

Bowing to pressure from the public and from Congress, President Nixon has given the nation a rundown on the situation in Laos, our involvement there, and future prospects for that part of strife-riddled Southeast Asia. While he stressed that we have no ground combat troops in Laos—and “no plans for introducing” them—there is, overall, little that is reassuring in his report, and much that is disquieting.

Not that Mr. Nixon sought particularly to lull the public by his statement. He made quite clear that the situation in Laos is precarious for the Lao government, that it is the Communist forces, especially from North Vietnam, who have brought about the present peril by consistent violations of the 1962 neutralization agreements, and that Laos matters because it is a part of the entire muddled picture in Southeast Asia and affects our war—and peace—efforts in Vietnam.

Still, we think that the President glossed over some details in the Laotian situation that would suggest how deeply we have already become involved there. It is all very well to speak of the Laotians “settling problems among themselves,” as did a U.S. diplomatic spokesman in the wake of a Communist Lao peace feeler Monday; whether we would readily stand aside for the chance this might happen is another question.

As one illustration of the apparent gaps between the President's words and the existing situation, Mr. Nixon acknowledged that we have been and are furnishing air support to Royal Lao forces, but he said nothing about the extent of that support. The gist of widespread reports is that it is massive; Sen. Harry F. Byrd Jr. said on the Senate floor last week that “It is a fact . . . that the U.S. had dropped more bombs (in Laos) than it has on North Vietnam.” News sources say that we have lost at least 100 pilots on such missions.

For another illustration, while he spoke of the logistical support and military training we have given the Royal Laos, the President did not hint

at the cost or depth of our activities within the country. Various other reports have referred to the presence of Green Berets and Central Intelligence Agency operatives; Newsweek magazine has said the current cost of our operations in Laos is \$300 million a year.

It beggars belief that we could carry on extensive counter-insurgency and combat support within a country without becoming entangled in its political and economic structure. But the President, by citing a figure of 1,040 Americans “employed” by us in Laos, and stressing that all we do there is by government request, seems to imply that our involvement is superficial and could be quickly ended. It seems obvious that it could not.

Mr. Nixon spoke to the point when he placed our Laos activities in the context of the Vietnam war and the defense of the Geneva agreements. But there is little reassurance in this, either. Our war efforts have produced a stalemate that can last only as long as we remain in Southeast Asia in force; we have not managed anything in Paris toward a peace that would allow our safe, orderly withdrawal. “Vietnamization” works to prolong the war, not settle it.

Finally, the Geneva agreements cannot be meaningful as long as the U.S. is the only Western nation interested in seeing them kept. The question is not whether the Communists are a bunch of dirty birds, who cheat on treaties; of course they are. The question is how far we should go — and how much more of our blood and treasure we should invest — in trying to keep them honest (especially since our own hands are not altogether clean in respecting Indochina treaties).

The fact is that there no longer is any graceful exit for us from Southeast Asia's combat theater, and little hope that we can leave behind anything that will endure. If Vietnam has been a bitter experience, Laos looks like a disaster area. We ought to avoid any deeper, and redouble political efforts to find means of extricating ourselves.

SAN ANTONIO, TEX.
NEWS

E - 61,290

MAR 10 1970

President's best weapon on Laos affair is candor

President Nixon has been put in an awkward position by a bit of Pentagon semantics.

Last Friday, in his statement on Laos, the President said flatly that "no American stationed in Laos has ever been killed in ground combat operations."

It has since become known that 27 American—including an Army captain—have died as a result of "hostile action" on the ground in Laos. The other 26 were civilians, one a dependent of a civilian. Presumably most of them were CIA men, who have trained the Laotian army.

A White House spokesman said Nixon did not know of the captain's death when he made his statement. The spokesman, however, stuck with the "hostile action" definition, saying the captain died in an enemy attack behind the lines and thus was not in a "ground combat operations." He would not discuss the other deaths due to "hostile action."

The Army captain apparently presumed he was in combat. He shot and killed one Communist attacker before he was gunned down. The matter of definition is moot for him and the other 26.

The President's efforts to clarify the American involvement in Laos have been damaged by these belated disclosures. The attempt to stick by the original statement by playing with words only makes matters worse. We cannot buy the distinction between hostile action and combat operations. If our

people are close enough to the Reds to be killed by them, they are in combat.

We hope the President is upset with the Pentagon word game. This episode leads us to wonder what else he had not been told before he made his statement on Laos. We assume he is busy finding out all he needs to know and will tell the public when he does.

10 MAR 1970

'Plug 'credibility gap'

Order Laos disclosures

By TED KNAP
Scripps-Howard Staff Writer

President Nixon put in effect today a policy of fuller disclosures of U. S. air and ground casualties in Laos in an effort to head off a credibility crisis and convince the public that Americans are not engaged in ground combat there.

In the midst of rising controversy over how and how many Americans have died in Laos, White House Press Secretary Ronald L. Ziegler announced last night the President had ordered that:

- The secretary of defense inform the American public about all losses of military aircraft and their personnel over Laos after the usual search-and-rescue operations are completed.

- Any U. S. civilian or military casualties resulting from hostile enemy ground action in Laos will be reported publicly.

These have not been reported in the past except as an undisclosed part of U. S. casualties in South Vietnam.

Mr. Ziegler said the new policy "clearly shows the intent of the President to inform the American people of the scope of U. S. involvement in Laos, and his intention to continue to keep the American people informed of U. S. activities in Laos."

RELEASE NAMES

In line with that, the President ordered the State Department to release the names of six civilians killed in Laos as a result of hostile action since he became President in January, 1969.

Mr. Ziegler said three were killed by ambush, one by a bullet while piloting a helicopter and two by hostile fire. A seventh American killed in Laos in 1969 was Capt. Joseph Bush, shot while returning fire during a North

Vietnamese commando raid on a Laotian Artillery command post where he was serving as military adviser.

The state department identified the ambush victims as Arthur Stillman and Dennis Mumert, killed Aug. 5, 1969, and Chandler Edwards, killed April 24, 1969. All three were listed as employed by International Voluntary Services, identified by the State Department as a private refugee relief and community development organization under contract to the U. S. Agency for International Development (AID).

J. C. Merkel was hit Feb. 18, 1970, while piloting a helicopter; William J. Gibbs died May 13, 1969, in the crash of a helicopter hit by hostile fire, and Ralph S. Davis died Aug. 19, 1969, in the crash of a light plane hit by ground fire. Mr. Merkel, Mr. Gibbs and Mr. Davis were listed as pilots for Air America, the charter service employed by AID and the Central Intelligence Agency.

Next of kin were not identified immediately.

It was over those casualties, and about 20 others that had occurred between 1962 and 1968, that the White House became embroiled in a credibility controversy over the weekend.

Mr. Nixon had said in his report to the nation Friday that "no American stationed in Laos has ever been killed in ground combat operations." Two days later, after newspapers had reported Capt. Bush's death, the White House said that Capt. Bush and 26 civilians had been killed or were missing as a result of "hostile action" on the ground in Laos since 1962. The White House insisted they were not killed "in ground combat operations."

400 LINKED TO VIETNAM

White House sources said the controversy grew out of proportion to the relatively small number of ground casualties. The White House had freely reported that nearly 400 Americans had died, were missing or had been captured in the air war over Laos, chiefly while bombing North Vietnamese troops and supplies along the Ho Chi Minh Trail into South Vietnam.

Mr. Ziegler said U. S. casualties resulting from "protective reaction missions" along the border between Laos and South Vietnam will continue to be reported as part of the Vietnam war toll because those activities are directly related to that war.

BEST COPY

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10 MAR 1970

U.S. Plans to List Casualties in Laos

By JEREMIAH O'LEARY
Star Staff Writer

President Nixon has ordered the secretaries of state and defense to follow a new policy of reporting publicly all American personnel casualties and aircraft losses in Laos.

The White House decision — announced last night — partially draws back the veil of secrecy that has shrouded U.S. operations in the Southeast Asian kingdom since 1962.

From now on, the United States will report personnel casualties and plane losses in Laos in the same way that such information is released on the Vietnam war.

One official referred to the President's new policy on Laos as one of "full disclosure." It is not, however, as was made clear when White House Press Secretary Ronald L. Ziegler once again said he could give no dollar figure on how much the United States is spending in Laos and did not anticipate any change in this respect.

Blasted by Fulbright

The White House statement came after a day of Senate debate on U.S. involvement in Laos. Sen. J. William Fulbright, D-Ark., chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, accused the administration of "an awful lot of ducking and dodging in Laos."

Republican Leader Hugh Scott of Pennsylvania said Democrats are looking for a political issue in the debate over Laos.

Sen. Stuart Symington, D-Mo., said the administration "is releasing bits and pieces of information on Laos which do not give an accurate picture of the war out there."

Sen. Alton Cranston, D-Calif., said a number of Americans had told him they were sent into Laos from South Vietnam with orders to say they had gotten lost if they were captured.

The President's decision to re-

lease more information appeared to be a reaction to a rising crescendo of press inquiries and Senate attacks on the U.S. involvement in Laos.

In the past, information about the U.S. role in Laos has been handled amid the tightest possible security, and all U.S. casualties there have been lumped with those in Southeast Asia as a whole.

27 Listed as Lost

Ziegler made known the new policy after an unusual delay of nearly 2½ hours in the regular 4 p.m. White House news briefing.

The lid was partially lifted by the administration itself over the weekend when the White House admitted that one U.S. Army officer died and 26 American civilians were killed or missing in Laos due to "hostile ground action."

But the administration still held to the fine semantic point that there is a difference between "hostile ground action" and American combat action. The White House still insists that no American has ever been killed in Laos during ground action and that no ground combat forces are stationed in Laos.

Nixon said in a statement released Friday that 1,040 Americans were stationed in Laos in a noncombat role. He said no Americans stationed there had ever been killed in ground combat operations.

Ziegler said last night, the purpose of the administration is to discuss completely the U.S. role in Laos and told reporters the President is ordering the following procedures:

o "He is directing the secretary of defense effective immediately to inform the American public about all aircraft losses and military air personnel casualties in Laos once the search and rescue missions are complete. In the past, these losses have been part of the Southeast Asia report.

o "Casualties resulting from protective reaction missions along the South Vietnam and Laotian border and involving U.S. personnel conducting operations in South Vietnam will continue to be reported as a part of the South Vietnam casualties.

o "The President has ordered that any casualties that result from hostile enemy actions of U.S. personnel stationed in Laos will be reported. This refers to advisers, personnel involved in training and logistical support."

Ziegler said during 1969 — since the Nixon administration took office — there were six civilians stationed in Laos in a supporting role who were killed as a result of hostile action. He said the names of the six would be released by the State Department.

Two hours later, the State Department disclosed the names of the six men, three of whom were identified as Air America pilots and three as members of International Voluntary Services.

They were Arthur Stillman and Dennis Mummert, of IVS, killed on Aug. 5, 1969, in an enemy ambush near Ban Nong Keum; Chandler Edwards, of IVS, killed in an enemy ambush on April 24, 1969, at Ban Soukhouma; J. C. Merkel, Air America pilot, killed Feb. 18, when a sniper bullet struck his helicopter over the Plain of Jars.

William J. Gibbs, Air American pilot, killed near Nam Bac on May 13, 1969, when his helicopter was struck by hostile ground fire and crashed; and Ralph S. Davis, Air America pilot, killed on Aug. 19, 1969, when the small fixed-wing plane he was flying was struck by hostile ground fire and crashed in the southwest part of the Plain of Jars.

Air America is a contract company which often has been described as a covert operational arm of the Central Intelligence Agency. IVS is a Peace Corps-type organization generally thought to have no connection

with U.S. intelligence operations.

Ziegler said that in addition to these six men, one military officer, Army Capt. Joseph Bush, described as a military attache at the embassy in Laos, was killed in February 1969 in an exchange of fire with North Vietnamese commandos. His death had been publicly confirmed by the White House on Sunday.

In Temple, Tex., the widow and parents of Bush said the government never tried to keep secret the location of the 25-year-old captain's death, the Associated Press reported.

Carol Bush, 24, said she had known "all along where Joe was. And when he was killed the

government made no attempt so far as I know, to keep figures that he had been killed in Laos."

Ziegler said the "orders and this policy which the President is stating today clearly shows the intent of the President to inform the American people of the scope of U.S. involvement in Laos and his intention to keep the people informed of U.S. activities in Laos."

It was disclosed over the weekend by the administration that aircraft losses in Laos, including helicopters, have been on the order of 400. It is also known that the number of American personnel missing or dead in Laos since 1962 is about 400, although these casualties have been included in the Southeast Asia casualty reports. These were air casualties.

STATINTL

ASHVILLE, N.C.
CITIZEN
M - 47,151
CITIZEN-TIMES
S - 67,768

MAR 9 1970

Curtain Still Covers The Fighting In Laos

What worries most Americans about Laos, we think, is that the whole operation is so secretive as far as U. S. participation is concerned.

Newsmen are barred from the battle areas, visitors are forbidden at the big U. S. base at Longcheng, and the information that is released continues to insist that no U. S. ground troops are involved.

That may be technically true; the American soldiers in Laos have been detached from the Army's Special Forces and assigned temporarily to the Central Intelligence Agency, which runs the base and, we suspect, the war.

If that is accurate, it is clearly in violation of the agreement that established Laos as a neutral country.

President Nixon's Friday defense of the policy was timely and welcome but it was incomplete. What is our purpose, other than the curbing of infiltration from North Vietnam; what is our long-range goal?

The truth is, Americans are sick of frustrating wars in Asia. They have learned that wars can be started, as was the one in South Vietnam, by the assignment of a handful of advisors. They don't want a repeat performance in Laos.

T. D. Allman of the New York

Times—one of three reporters who made an unauthorized trip to Longcheng recently (and was subsequently ordered out)—reports U. S. military men, in civilian clothing, riding in open jeeps and carrying M-16 rifles and handguns.

"The fact that they are temporarily CIA," says Allman, "allows the U. S. government to say that it has no soldiers fighting in Laos. But Americans supply, finance, direct, and sometimes even participate in the fighting against the Pathet Lao and the North Vietnamese around the plain."

The U. S. activities plainly violate the 1962 Geneva accords on Laos, which forbid foreign military intervention.

We are not "kooks" on the subject; Laos may turn out to be a false alarm and the United States may not be inextricably involved. But we don't want the situation to reach the danger point, and certainly not by Administrative decision. If the U. S. is ever again faced with the prospect of war, big or little, let the Congress decide the degree of threat and let the Congress make a declaration.

We blundered into Vietnam; we don't want to stumble into a worse situation in Laos. We are sick of killing.

BOSTON, MASS.
GLOBE

M - 237,967
S - 566,377
MAR 9 1970

Pull Out of S.E. Asia Entirely, Says Mansfield

By Darius Jhabvala
Globe Staff

WASHINGTON — Senate Majority leader Mike Mansfield urged again yesterday a complete United States withdrawal from Southeast Asia since "our wider interests are not affected in any way."

The Montana Democrat also claimed that President Nixon did not give a full report to the nation on the U.S. involvement in Laos, particularly "the clandestine war being waged with the help of the CIA."

"I think we should withdraw from Southeast Asia lock, stock and barrel, in-

cluding our bases. I do not see our wider interests there affected in any way," Mansfield said on CBS-TV's "Face the Nation" program.

On Laos, he insisted, as he did on the Senate floor early last week, "We are up to our necks . . . because we've sent in aid, we've sent in air power. We haven't sent in foot soldiers yet — I don't think we will — whereas in Vietnam, I think we're in over our heads."

The President's statement, issued in Key Biscayne last Friday, he said, "is frank. But I don't consider it full by any means."

"We are following the same pattern there as in Vietnam. First, aid, then logistic support, then air power and then GIs — I don't think the GIs will go into Laos."

The intentions of the administration's response, Mansfield said, are "in keeping with the Guam doctrine." Then he pointed out that "we have gone beyond that by the use of advisers and of planes."

At the same time, Sen. J. W. Fulbright (D-Ark.), chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, on NBC's "Meet The Press" that he fears Vietnamization will lead to indefinite war in Vietnam and Laos.

Fulbright said he is concerned with " . . . the basic policy of Vietnamization — the prolongation of the war in Vietnam and Laos indefinitely."

Sen. Mansfield expressed doubt that the North Vietnamese and the Pathet Lao forces would advance further south from the Plain of Jars which they captured late last month from the government forces.

In any case, he said, the independence of Laos "is not worth American troops" and therefore "we

should get out of Laos."

However, Mansfield suggested support for the continuing air interdictions of North Vietnam's supplies to South Vietnam via the Ho Chi Minh trail in Laos.

On the administration's Vietnamization program, he said it "hold out promise but I have my doubts about it."

"The only answer in South Vietnam is a coalition government," he declared.

He also urged President Nixon to appoint "someone with stature" to the peace talks in Paris in wake of the resignation of Henry Cabot Lodge.

"They (the Communist side) won't deal with any-

one with a lower rank. So what do we have to lose by putting someone of stature?" he asked.

CHICAGO, ILL.
NEWS

E - 461,357
MAR 9 1970

Nixon Laos paper hints escalation

By Keyes Beech
Daily News Foreign Service

VIENTIANE — By going on record with details of U.S. support to Laotian Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma's government, President Nixon may have escalated what was an involvement into a commitment.

The President was careful to state there were no American ground combat troops in Laos and he had "no plans" to commit them.

BUT THE thrust of the President's statement was that he is not going to let Laos go to the Communists. And if Hanoi chooses to accept that challenge, Mr. Nixon may be forced to make the agonizing choice of whether to commit U.S. troops or let Laos go.

"Let's grant the sincerity of Senators Fulbright, Symington, McGovern and others who are concerned about our involvement here," said an American diplomat. "We don't want American ground troops here any more than they do. "The trouble is that there is an extreme reaction against Vietnam. What they suggest is that we drop everything we are doing here. The other extreme is conventional military intervention a la Vietnam,

which God knows nobody wants.

"Of course there is a third way out. That is to pull up stakes and let the Communists have Laos. I don't think that's in our national interest."

IN THE VIEW of allied observers the American involvement has paid reasonable dividends at bargain basement prices.

Here we have succeeded in organizing a guerrilla force that—so far—has more than held its own against the North Vietnamese. For once the Communists find themselves in the uncomfortable position of fighting a conventional war against unconventional forces — the reverse image of South Vietnam.

How much longer our guerrillas — mainly the Meo mountain tribesmen — can hold out under the current North Vietnamese buildup is another matter. That is why American air power is so vital.

Unquestionably, Thailand-based American fighter-bombers have played a major, if not decisive, role in the stepped-up war.

EVEN HEAVIER U.S. air strikes will be required if the North Vietnamese mount an

anticipated offensive against Gen. Vang Pao's Meo forces.

The war is being run mainly by the CIA — just as it has been for the last 10 years — with the assistance of a motley collection of regular Army and Air Force officers and ex-military types who like what they are doing.

Of the slightly more than 2,000 Americans here, about 1,100 are directly or indirectly on the U.S. payroll. Of this number about 600 are actively engaged in the war. This number includes fewer than 200 CIA men, 75 Army "attaches," 150 Air Force "attaches" and a 30-man military advisory group disguised as a "requirements office."

It also includes pilots and crews of the so-called "CIA airlines" — Air America and Continental Airlines. The pilots average about \$25,000 a year and, in their view, more than earn it.

IN ATTEMPTING to justify the American involvement, U.S. officials point out that only 26 Americans have been killed in Laos since 1962. This figure obviously does not include American airmen lost over the Ho Chi Minh trail.

Even so, is Laos worth that much? Most Americans here think so. But the decision is not theirs.

E. - 46L, 357

MAR 9 1970

Credibility gap? U.S. death in Laos jars Nixon

By William J. Eaton
Of Our Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — The White House has revived concern about a credibility gap over the "secret war" in Laos by its belated confirmation that an Army captain was killed in a battle with North Vietnamese commandos early in 1969.

President Nixon said flatly in a Laotian "white paper" on Friday that "no American stationed in Laos has ever been killed in ground combat operations."

Deputy press secretary Gerald L. Warren insists that the death of Capt. Joseph Bush was not a result of ground combat.

BUSH, WHO was listed as an assistant military attache in the U.S. embassy but served as a military adviser to the Royal Lao Army near the Plain of Jars, fired his M-16 rifle at the North Vietnamese attackers.

A copyrighted story in the Los Angeles Times said he killed one raider before Communist bullets nearly cut him in half.

Yet the White House insisted this was not "ground combat operations" because the Red attack occurred about 10 miles from the main battle area.

Bush, said Warren was not engaged in combat operations

but acted to protect other Americans in the compound, Warren said.

THE PRESIDENT was not aware of Bush's death when he made the statement that no American stationed in Laos had been killed in ground combat, Warren said.

A White House official also acknowledged for the first time that 26 American civilians have been killed or are missing as the result of "hostile actions" in Laos.

These actions may have included Communist ambushes and long-range artillery attacks, he added. Some of these "civilians" — most apparently employed by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) — also may have been slain after enemy fire downed U.S. helicopters engaged in the Laotian fighting.

Mr. Nixon's statement — and the on-the-record and background statements by White House officials — may give Democrats in Congress an opportunity to attack the Nixon administration's credibility.

A White House official — who declined to be quoted by name — said Friday that no American military adviser to the Laotian armed forces had been killed in ground combat.

This official said about 400 Americans had been killed, or

were missing, as a result of U.S. bombing and air-support missions of Laotian forces since the war in Laos resumed about seven years ago.

Less than 50 of this total, the official said, were civilians employed by the U.S. government or by companies under contract to the U.S. government. The phrases are regarded in Washington as euphemisms for the CIA—which is widely acknowledged to be the American agency responsible for the "secret war" in the landlocked Asian kingdom.



9 MAR 1970

Nixon admits Yank died in hostile action in Laos

By Tom Littlewood
Sun-Times Correspondent

MIAMI—The White House admitted officially Sunday that an American Army officer was killed by North Vietnamese commandos last year on the Plain of Jars in Laos.

But Gerald L. Warren, deputy news secretary, insisted President Nixon had not been informed of the incident and was not deceiving the American people last Friday when he

Story of U.S. captain's death. Page 4.

issued a policy statement reporting that no American stationed in Laos has ever been killed in ground combat operations.

Mr. Nixon's spokesman said the statement still stood. Warren considered it important that the military attache, or adviser, Capt. Joseph Bush, exchanged shots with the enemy in a Laotian compound 10 miles behind what he described as the "expected line of combat."

Guerrilla warfare throughout South Vietnam and neighboring Laos has not been characterized by normally defined lines of combat.

Capt. Bush's death on Feb. 10, 1969, was disclosed Sunday in a story by free lance writer Don A. Schanche in a Los Angeles Times story appearing on Page 4 of this edition.

Warren was questioned about the credibility implications of the Bush story shortly before the President concluded a restful weekend at his Key Biscayne (Fla.) home and flew back to Washington Sunday.

After the story appeared, Warren said the

White House made a recheck of "agency records." According to his version, Capt. Bush was in his quarters in a command post compound when the North Vietnamese commandos attacked.

Defending others in the compound, Capt. Bush "exposed himself to enemy fire and was killed," the deputy news secretary related. The captain did fire back before being hit, Warren said.

Because the American was defending others, his death was the result of "hostile action" and not "ground combat operations" in the sense that the President used the term, Warren explained.

Reporters were informed by White House sources that 25 American civilians have been

killed or missing in Laos because of ambushes, long-range artillery attacks, and other hostile action. Most of these are assumed agents of the Central Intelligence Agency acting in the guise of military advisers.

Capt. Bush thus becomes the first U.S. ground combat soldier whose death in Laos is officially recognized.

A high administration official, elaborating on Mr. Nixon's Laos statement Friday, explained that approximately 400 American airmen had been killed or reported missing in Laos operations, but none in ground combat. Later, it was said that the 400 figure included something less than 50 civilians.

The administration official who endeavored to interpret the meaning of the President's Laos statement would not be identified.

CIA Goes Casual

By Marilyn Berger

Newsday Diplomatic Correspondent

The popular image of the CIA operative usually comes straight from the movies: a slightly soiled trench coat, a turned-up collar, sunglasses. But in Laos, at least, the reality is apt to be less James Bond and more a clean-cut fellow in a sport shirt.

For years now, the Central Intelligence Agency has played a covert role

in the twilight war of Laos. (Some call it a nonwar in a noncountry.) For years, the agency's undercover activity has been known, but its role has somewhat changed.

In the more free-wheeling days, there was the chance to set up strongmen, polarize political forces and even fill up money bags to buy votes. But now, the CIA, through its agents in their sport shirts, apparently is training and equipping an army of Meo tribesmen.

The fact that the "spies," or "spooks" as they are semi-affectionately called in government lingo, are involved in training an army, a job that might be expected to fall to the Pentagon, is not entirely sinister. Ever since the signing of the Geneva accords in 1962, the U.S. has sought to maintain the fiction that it is abiding by the rules, and that means keeping out American troops. The last four Presidents felt that the accords, which the U.S. accuses Hanoi of being the first to violate, could best be restored if appearances, at least, were observed.

Those within the government who are sympathetic to that view are deeply concerned about the current congressional uproar over U.S. involvement in Laos. They say that congressional leaders, as well as the members of the Senate and House committees dealing with the CIA, armed services and appropriations, have known for years what was going on in Laos. They say that the activity was funneled through the CIA not to keep it secret from the American people but rather to preserve the necessary facade for international diplomacy.

Of course, it was not only for the sake of appearances that the CIA did the job in the old days. In the Dulles-Dulles era, when John Foster Dulles

was secretary of state and his brother Allen headed the CIA, the agency had a relatively free hand, and in Laos, it did a lot more than gather intelligence and recruit local agents.

It was in 1957 that the agency started exerting noticeable influence on the political affairs of that perennially unsettled country. In an effort to dispel the apathy, dissension and lack of organization among the non-Communist Lao, the CIA apparently helped organize the Committee for the Defense of National Interests. The committee described itself as a mass patriotic organization, rather than a political party, which favored civil service reforms and a "hard" line against the Communist Pathet Lao.

The Communists considered its members "lackeys" to American interests, and it appeared that the organization's dependence on the CIA ultimately lent some truth to that.

The committee became the step-ladder for a future Laotian leader who was so closely tied to the CIA that he was known to its agents as "our boy." That leader was Phoumi Nosavan.

Phoumi was, by all reports, a patriot who genuinely sought to develop the country, but he was not above accepting huge sums from a foreign power. Phoumi was so valuable that the CIA rigged the 1960 election in his favor.

If Laotian politics were confused, there was something of a match within the American diplomatic community in Laos. The ambassador was never sure that he was in charge of his own mission, and in many cases was sure that he was not. The CIA was forever pushing for greater activism. Its agents "free-wheeled it," in the words of one informed source, and engineered a coup. And then another one six months later.

Phoumi had begun to count on the CIA, which had chosen him over Souvanna Phouma. But just when Phoumi really needed help, the CIA began feeling a clampdown ordered by President Kennedy because of the Bay of Pigs fiasco. In Laos, where Winthrop Brown was ambassador, the CIA was forced to argue its cases through channels. Officials say that the reins have been tight ever since.

The U.S. started arming and training the Meo tribesmen as early as 1960. Yet it was the recent disclosure that the U.S. was arming the Meos, tough tribesmen with a particular grudge against the North Vietnamese, that helped trigger the current uproar against U.S. activities in Laos. Many of the 1,040 Americans admitted to be working in Laos scene reportedly are with the tribal army.

The army is headed by Maj. Gen. Vang Pao, a Laotian military commander in northeastern Laos who keeps his people in line by force of leadership and also by having one wife for each of the four tribal areas. The Meos have been successful in their battles beyond any expectation and have become a significant thorn in the side of Hanoi. It is believed that the North Vietnamese have made elimination of Vang Pao and his tribesmen one of the goals in their current Laotian offensive.

The CIA and how it grew in Laos is, in an ironic way, almost a success story which runs from the error of trying to set up a western-type army with a military strong man in Phoumi Nosavan to the arming of a highly able guerrilla warrior, Vang Po. What is happening in Laos now, one informed source said, is what should have been done in Vietnam.

HONOLULU, HAWAII
STAR-BULLETIN

E - 115,698

S - 166,171

MAR 9 1970

Credibility and Laos

Almost from the beginning of our involvement in South Vietnam, the Johnson administration suffered from a credibility gap. Partly it could not be helped; the military commanders of a nation at war do not telegraph their punches. But it resulted also in large part because of President Johnson's penchant for secrecy and because he did not take Congress into his confidence.

This latter lack was perhaps most productive of all in stretching the gap so far as the general public was concerned. Even some members of Congress who voted for the 1964 Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, preeminently among them Sen. J. William Fulbright of Arkansas, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, claimed they had been duped.

Since leaving office Johnson has claimed that the reason he asked for the Resolution, which authorized him to take all steps necessary to prevent "aggression," was that he feared a declaration of war might project Red China into the conflict. He has pointed out that certain treaties between China and North Vietnam might have automatically made China a combatant, whether it wished to be or not.

But, taking the former President at his word, the fact remains that the country as a whole did not realize the extent to which it had been committed until it had become an accomplished fact. Then the din of protest rose louder and louder until finally Johnson was forced from office and his party lost the presidential election.

It would seem that, with his predecessor's disaster so freshly before him, and because of his own undisputed sagacity, President Nixon would take all steps necessary to avoid a credibility gap of his own with respect to Laos. Yet in some respects the Laos situation is worse than Vietnam was in the beginning, some five years ago.

In a 3,000-word statement issued Friday, Mr. Nixon said reports that Americans are engaged in ground fighting and that increased U.S. air combat in Laos is escalating that conflict are "grossly inaccurate." Yet the fact is that, regardless of the degree of fighting or escalation, the President was officially confirming for the first time what has been an open secret for months — that Americans are fighting in Laos.

In a further obvious contradiction, Mr. Nixon declared that, as evidence that Americans are not "directly" involved in combat operations, "no American stationed in Laos has ever been killed" in six years by the enemy.

But at the same time the White House confirmed that American casualties in the air over Laos have risen to

about 400 over the six years, including 193 individuals presumed captured or listed as missing.

Furthermore, said Mr. Nixon, and these are his words, he has "no plans for introducing ground combat forces into Laos."

This resort to technicalities of language in an effort to stay within the framework of fact may in the end set the same kind of trap for Mr. Nixon as his predecessor set for himself. If what we are doing in Laos is the concern of the American people — and of course it is — why are American newsmen barred from entering the combat zones?

The American involvement, the CIA's army of mercenaries hired to fight the Communist Pathet Lao and now, presumably, the invading North Vietnamese, who are supposed to have 67,000 troops in the country, has been going on for a long time. But under the terms of the Geneva agreement we were not supposed to be there, so it was not admitted in Washington that we were.

In his message Mr. Nixon appealed to the Soviet Union to use its good offices with Hanoi to refrain from aggravating the situation. The record of such appeals with respect to South Vietnam is such that we can hardly rely on the Russians to help us now. Are we or are we not going to fight to save Laos from the Communists, as we did in South Vietnam? That is the question that the President, sooner or later, must answer.

LOS ANGELES, CAL.
TIMES

H - 948,782

S - 1,255,556

MAR 9 1970

WAR IN THE LAND OF UNANGRY MEN

Since gaining independence in 1953, Laos has sought only obscurity. A writer once called the gentle, friendly Laotians "the world's last unangry men."

Unfortunately, the country was given a front-row, center seat in Southeast Asia: Laos borders China, North and South Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand and Burma.

Despite international agreements signed in Geneva in 1954 and in 1962 which proclaimed its neutrality, Laos is now the site of a war involving the United States and North Vietnam.

Who is violating the Geneva accords, North Vietnam or the United States? The answer, most observers agree, is both—although both deny it.

The Geneva accord of 1962 was signed by 14 countries, including the United States and North Vietnam. (The United States did not sign the 1954 agreement.)

The treaty stipulated the terms under which the three-member International Control Commission (Canada, India and Poland) would enforce and observe the withdrawal of "foreign military personnel" from Laos.

The United States pulled out its advisers before the October, 1962, deadline. More than a month later, the ICC reported that only 40 North Vietnamese troops had filed past its checkpoint. Others slipped out secretly. But in all, an estimated 10,000 were left behind, a clear violation.

The Geneva Agreement also established a tripartite government, representing factions of the right, left and center. Neutralist Prince Souvanna Phouma headed the government.

Within two years, it fell apart when the four left-wing Pathet Lao representatives withdrew. Soon, the Pathet Lao guerrillas, backed by North Vietnamese troops, attacked government-held positions.

The Pathet Laos were experienced fighters, having battled right-wing Laotian forces (financed by the United States) throughout the late 1950s. The Geneva Agreement of 1962, Bernard Fall wrote, "left Laos as divided as ever . . . but with the key difference that the pro-Communist Laotian forces were 20 times larger and much better trained and equipped than in 1959."

The rebels soon captured the Plain of Jars and threatened to cut off the administrative capital of Vientiane from the royal capital of Luang Prabang.

In the spring of 1964, a State Department bulletin says, Souvanna requested "additional U.S. military assistance," and "the United

States continued within the framework of the Geneva Agreement to supply military equipment and supplies . . . and reconnaissance flights."

But there was more. U.S. advisers were sent into Laos. The Central Intelligence Agency financed the establishment of a mercenary army of Meo tribesmen and set up headquarters in Long Cheng.

The Pentagon claims there are only 1,040 U.S. government employees living in Laos, and asserts that none are military personnel. But many others commute (from Thailand) and CIA men and former Green Berets have been seen in action advising Laotian commanders. Sen. Robert C. Byrd (D-W. Va.) recently said he had heard reports "that

American advisers are all but running the Laotian forces."

Newspapermen who slipped in unnoticed to the CIA base at Long Cheng reported seeing armed Americans in civilian clothes.

Even if the United States has no combat troops in Laos, the presence of these advisers is a violation, since the accord specifies that the ban on "foreign military personnel," includes "members of foreign military missions, foreign military advisers, technicians, observers . . . and foreign civilians."

The U.S. bombing raids are also a violation. They have two functions: in southeastern Laos, to hinder infiltration by North Vietnam into South Vietnam, and in northeastern Laos, to aid Laotian troops. North Vietnam now has 67,000 troops in the country, according to the Pentagon, and has taken over most of the fighting from the Pathet Laos.

For years, the United States would not admit that it was bombing inside Laos. In December, President Nixon admitted that the Ho Chi Minh trail in Laos was being hit, but only, he said, to strengthen the position of U.S. troops in South Vietnam.

The United States justifies its aid on the grounds that Premier Souvanna requested the help. Souvanna, himself, said last week that U.S. assistance was not a violation because the North Vietnamese troops entered the country first.

Two wrongs have not made a right in Laos. But they have helped make a war.

—STEVE HARVEY

MIAMI, FLA.
NEWS

E - 93,538
MAR 9 1970

616 Americans in Laos? Shades of Vietnam!

President Nixon's weekend statement on Laos went only a short way toward answering the nation's growing concern that we are headed for another Vietnam.

Even his appeal to the leading nations of the 1962 Geneva conference, Britain and the Soviet Union, for assistance in settling the Laotian problem did not go the whole route. A number of concerned U.S. Senators, including Majority Leader Mike Mansfield, had urged that the 14-nation conference be re-convened, but the President's request fell short of that proposal.

The fact is that the 1962 accords have been broken freely by both North Vietnam and the United States. Still, our bombing of the Ho Chi Minh trail, through which North Vietnam infiltrates troops, and about which Mr. Nixon made so much

in his statement, is not really at issue in the current debate.

The trail has been bombed for years, for good military reason, and without serious complaint from the Senate.

The issue is the extent of our involvement in the Plain of Jars operation, for example, and in protecting the existing Laotian government. There seems little doubt, from eyewitness reports, that the CIA is rather heavily involved and that our airplanes are being used extensively.

Nor did the President address himself to another challenge posed in the Senate, which was to state his authority for conducting military operations in Laos.

Mr. Nixon sounded less than candid in the carefully worded sentences he used to sum up our military presence. He said there are no "American ground combat troops" in Laos, and that we have no plans for introducing "ground combat troops." He said the number of Americans "directly employed" by the U.S. Government is 616.

It is chilling to recall that in 1959, there were only 692 American "military advisers" in South Vietnam. In 1962, when President Kennedy was questioned about his plans to increase that number to 4,000, he replied that although we were increasing our assistance, "we have not sent combat troops in the generally understood sense of that word."

What the public wants to know today is our overall policy regarding Laos. Aside from our obvious interest in the Ho Chi Minh trail, why are we operating there and how deeply are we committed to assist the Laotian government?

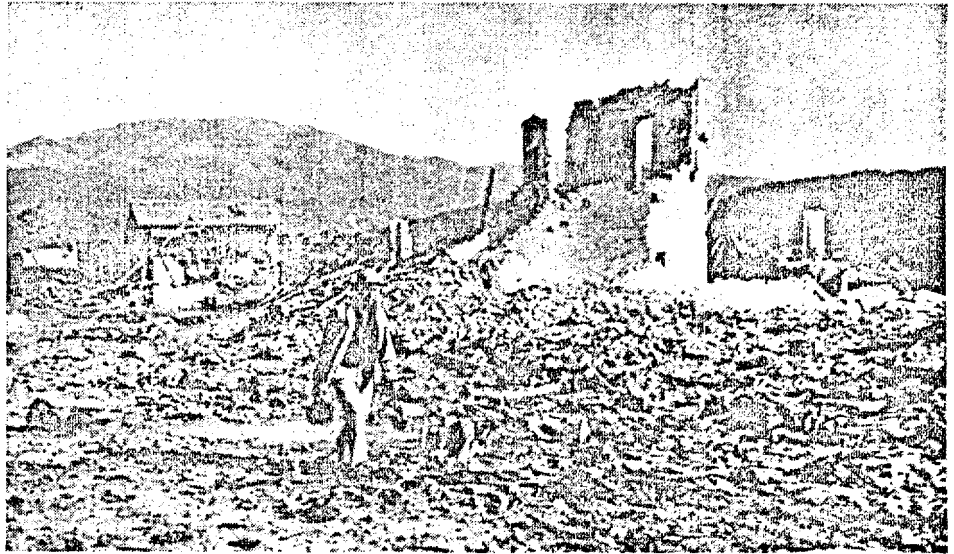
We had hoped for a better explanation of those larger questions than we got from Mr. Nixon this weekend.

9 MAR 1976

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THE WAR IN VIETNAM

Associated Press



Associated Press

Wounded Meo soldier (left) and leveled Plain of Jars: Will the rules change?

The Laos Scenario

Edgar Buell slept in his dust-soiled clothes every night last week in Sam Thong. Up there on the southwestern rim of the Plain of Jars in Laos, Buell cannot go to bed sure that war won't suddenly land on his doorstep. "I've been run out nineteen times before," he explained. A stoic 57-year-old U.S. AID worker, "Pop" Buell has devoted the past ten years to getting American relief shipments to a region that switches ownership between the Communist Pathet Lao and the U.S.-backed Royal Laotian Government with the coming of just about every dry season and the beginning of each monsoon.

For the moment, the tumbledown outpost at Sam Thong and its dirt airstrip were still a score of miles away from the vanguard of a Communist strike force of some 6,000 North Vietnamese regulars. But the Plain of Jars itself had already fallen. And despite a heavy pounding by the U.S. Air Force, including B-52 strategic bombers, the swiftness of the determined Communist advance had thrown the Laotian Government's forces into a rout.

What was even more unsettling was that the North Vietnamese who seized the plain kept right on rolling. Muong Soui, 25 miles west of the plain, was quickly overrun, giving the Communists control of Highway 7, the country's main east-west artery. Probing forces also captured the saw-toothed ridge of Phou Kout, which has been dubbed Steel Mountain by the Pathet Lao because it has been bombed and shelled so often. And Pathet Lao skirmishers in front of the main North Vietnamese force were spotted preparing for an attack on Long Chieng, the not-so-secret, CIA-financed clandestine headquarters.

Yet not even a flood of reports of serious government defeats succeeded in arousing Vientiane, the torpid little administrative capital of Laos. And although Laotian Premier Souvanna Phouma held a Cabinet meeting last week, the commander in chief of the Royal Army, Gen. Ouan Ratikhoun, disported himself on a tennis court. "The only time the war comes to Vientiane," yawned an Indian trader, "is when the Bangkok newspapers come in on the afternoon plane."

Rules: Drowsy Vientiane may be right. This is because warfare in Laos has always been conducted in accordance with rigid rules. Thus, if the Communists follow their well-thumbed scenario for dry-season offensives, they will soon call a halt to regroup and resupply their men. Then, by the customary shooting script, the government should counterattack soon after the monsoon rains fall in June. Customarily, North Vietnamese capture only the territory they feel they need to protect the Ho Chi Minh Trail to South Vietnam. It is conceded that Hanoi, with 48,000 men in Laos, could quickly take over the entire country—but does not do so to avoid provoking a U.S. military response.

To the Nixon Administration, such an equation of forces can only prompt worries that the Communists might have developed a new scenario that does not include halting their offensive. "If the Communists try to keep going, it becomes another ball game," a high official in Washington warned. "And they are about at that point right now."

That the U.S. is already deeply involved militarily in Laos is, by now, no secret. Despite official protestations repeated last week by Defense Secretary Melvin Laird, the U.S. lost still more credibility when newsmen managed to penetrate Long Chieng and spotted at

lation of the 1962 Geneva agreements on Laos which bar the presence of foreign fighting men. But then, U.S. denials are not intended to fool the other side, because the Communists, who violate the same agreements on a massive scale, are not going to complain.

The Administration's refusal to come clean is, however, stirring up trouble in the U.S., where an angry Senate last week protested that the President was exceeding his constitutional authority by double-talking the U.S. into another war in Asia. "Laos has become an arena for the repetition of the mistakes of our Vietnamese involvement," charged Maryland's GOP freshman Sen. Charles McC. Mathias Jr. And another Republican, Sen. John Sherman Cooper of Kentucky, may have set the Senate on a collision course with the White House by promising amendments blocking all funds for Laos—a measure that the majority of senators may very well approve.

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NEW YORK POST

9 Mar 1970

Nixon & That Death in Laos

By WARREN HOGE
N.Y. Post Correspondent

WASHINGTON — The credibility of President Nixon's word and the vaunted efficiency of his staff have been shaken by the disclosures of facts at odds with his weekend explanation of U.S. involvement in Laos.

The White House said today the President's claim that no Americans stationed in Laos had ever been killed in ground combat operations still stood, but Administration spokesmen were obliged to turn semantic tricks to keep it on its feet.

Confirming a story in the Los Angeles Times yesterday, press spokesman Gerald Warren said a U.S. military adviser, Capt. Joseph Bush, had been killed in Laos by North Vietnamese commandos in an assault on a command post in February, 1969.

But, Warren said, his death did not constitute a combat fatality because it occurred 10 miles behind "a line of combat."

Bush, he continued, died from "hostile action," as opposed to combat. Bush had grabbed a weapon and was defending the compound command center against invaders at the time he was killed, a defensive act that the White House argued differed from the kind of aggressive act the word "combat" connotes.

Warren, the deputy White House press secretary, was standing in for Ronald Ziegler, who was in the Bahamas for a conference. Ziegler had spent most of Thursday on the White

House telephone encouraging reporters to come to Key Biscayne to cover the President's Laos statement, issued by the Winter White House Friday.

A large number of reporters responded to the bid and flew down to Florida with the President Thursday night. They were on hand Friday for the statement. But they were also on hand yesterday for the fumbling aftermath.

Warren made no effort to conceal the White House distress. The news story detailing the circumstances of Bush's death was brought to the Administration's attention in the early hours yesterday, and "a number of people" were contacted, he said.

A thorough check of all records of American personnel in Laos was ordered. It turned up the account of Capt. Bush's death and documentation of the deaths "from hostile action" of 24 civilian American officials and one American dependent since July, 1962, Warren said.

He listed ambushes, helicopter crashes and long-range artillery fire as among the hostile actions that might have accounted for their deaths. He would not say if any of the 25 had been associated with the CIA, the U. S. governmental arm reported to be deeply involved in the Laotian conflict.

Nixon knew of the 25 cases at the time he made his Laos statement, Warren said. But the Chief Executive apparently did not consider their deaths the result of "ground combat operations."

Nixon, however, did not know of Capt. Bush's death until yesterday's newspaper account, Warren said. The staff procedure so highly touted by Administration spokesmen foundered on that one.

It wasn't the first such set-

back. In earlier episodes, the President's aides have failed to:

¶ Discover the extensive financial dealings of Judge Clement Haynsworth before sending his name up to the Oval Office as a candidate for the Supreme Court.

¶ Warn him that the language of his original renunciation of germ war-

fare did not clearly cover agents called toxins, which which make up a large part of the U. S. bacteriological warfare arsenal.

¶ Tell him that the newly vocal consumer constituency would not stand for a part-time representative like Good Housekeeping's Willie Mae Rogers, Nixon's first choice for the new post now occupied full-time by Mrs. Virginia Knauer.

¶ Uncover in advance the white supremacy speech and her racially motivated actions of his current Supreme Court nominee, Judge G. Harrold Carswell.

¶ Sound out Capitol Hill critics of the Administration's designated draft director, Charles DiBona who was dropped from consideration after several key senators objected to him.

Credibility Damaged

The latest oversight has caught the President square on his credibility, a particularly vulnerable spot. Throughout the campaign, Nixon scored former President Johnson for not leveling with the people and in his most recent statement on Vietnam, Nixon declared that the American people should

not support a war that was not fully explained to them.

There is evidence, however, that the Administration has been humbled by the latest experience. Asked if the White House was satisfied now that it had researched and revealed all, Warren replied wearily, "I cannot stand up here and flatly say there are no more cases."

SAN FRANCISCO, CAL.
CHRONICLE

M - 480,233

MAR 9 1970

Royce Brier

The War Changes, Remains the Same

IN THE SUMMER OF 1968 the candidate Richard Nixon sensed the Vietnam war was a lost cause which had already ruined a President, and began cautiously to talk about ending it.

He said he had a plan, but he prudently didn't expound it. He was versed in the endless verdicts of history that wars are easier to start than to end. The American people were also getting this idea, and they were willing to give Mr. Nixon a chance, since his opponent was too little and too late with a like promise.

On taking office, Mr. Nixon discovered the war contained unforeseen problems, but he rode a wave of suspended judgment while he probed the option, as we like to say.

The national demand for a solution and the President's only partly disclosed solution, almost collided during the demonstrations last fall, but like a highway sideswipe which misses, the President righted the machine with some token withdrawals. His phrase-makers hit on two rather limp concepts in extenuation of delay, called the silent majority and Vietnamization.

★ ★ ★

THE FIRST PRESUMED a mass support of the Nixon Vietnam plan which was too shy to talk about it, and the second was a self-dissolving concept; that is, it offered no solid promise of a solution, and time was bound to erode it.

Yet during the winter Washington observers thought the President bore a charmed life — the antiwar activists appeared to have lost steam. Whatever plans the President had went their routine way, and congressional critics were unable to marshal a united front. Senator Muskie might complain that at the Nixon rate of withdrawal the war would go on for years, but both the President and the doubters managed to juggle unresolved ideas which had little bearing on the physical issue of war or peace (for the Americans).

★ ★ ★

THE QUALIFICATION is important because, though the word "peace" is still current, neither the President nor anyone else can establish that American disengagement would bring "peace" to southeast Asia.

For wars, as they proceed, whelp problems in violence which remain after the original war is shut down. The problems emerge at war's end, or in a year or two, and we have all seen it, and are seeing it in the Mideast today.

One of the problems now bedeviling Mr. Nixon lies in Laos, a feudal kingdom adjacent to the Vietnames. The North Vietnamese are taking advantage of geography to infiltrate Laos as a hedge against whatever may occur during continued American withdrawals.

The Central Intelligence Agency follows its bent in fomentation, and in committing American forces in Laos, thus making "policy" which Mr. Nixon was scheduled to discuss over the week-end. But no matter what "policy" the President has enunciated, the Laos problem remains for him and for all of us immense, since the CIA, and not he, controls it. Mr. Nixon cannot treat it with candor.

Candor is not a byproduct of faraway wars of adventure, in which a Nation with a bad conscience doesn't know what it's doing, or how what it does may involve it further. In the aggregate, such blind dabbings in history are at least as pernicious to the human condition as naked aggression.

March 9, 1970

THE WORLD

Laos: Deeper Into the Other War

RELENTLESSLY, almost at will, Communist North Vietnamese and Pathet Lao troops advanced last week against Laotian government forces. As they swept forward, concern mounted among U.S. officials. On Capitol Hill, critics of the U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia protested that Washington seemed to be plunging deeper into Laos just as it was pulling back from Viet Nam—though of course the U.S. commitment in Viet Nam is incomparably larger. The Administration denied the charges, but the evidence appeared to confirm them (see box following page).

Familiar Pattern. U.S. support, however, proved inadequate last week. Fresh from their easy victories on the Plain of Jars, the Communists took Xieng Khouang, then moved south and east toward the government position at Muong Soui. When Communist guns neutralized Muong Soui's airstrip, making reinforcement impossible, the 100-man government garrison pulled out under cover of darkness.

Few observers in the sleepy little government capital of Vientiane had expected the Plain, which has changed hands repeatedly for years, to be held in the face of a determined Communist attack. There was good reason for their pessimism. Hanoi has 50,000 troops in Laos, some 16,000 around the Plain,

and the Pathet Lao have another 50,000; the government, by contrast, has a total of 63,000 regulars and another 10,000 Meo guerrillas under General Vang Pao.

What alarmed U.S. officials was the possibility that this time the Communist forces might not be satisfied with the usual gains. In the past, the war has had a special, almost ritualistic quality, with Communist and government forces swapping occupancy of the Plain of Jars and refraining from probing deeper into territory generally conceded to the foe. Now, however, there is concern that the Communists might change the nature of the war by changing the old seesaw pattern. They could do so by moving west and cutting the road link between Vientiane and the royal capital of Luangprabang, or by driving south against a pair of other targets.

A Look at Long Cheng. These were Sam Thong, headquarters for the U.S. aid operation in northern Laos, and Long Cheng, a top-secret, CIA-supported base for guerrilla operations against the Communists. Sam Thong, which serves as a center for refugee assistance as well as standard aid programs, has occasionally been opened to newsmen. Long Cheng, however, remained sealed until last week, when TIME Stringer Timothy Allman, a LIFE correspondent, and a French reporter paid

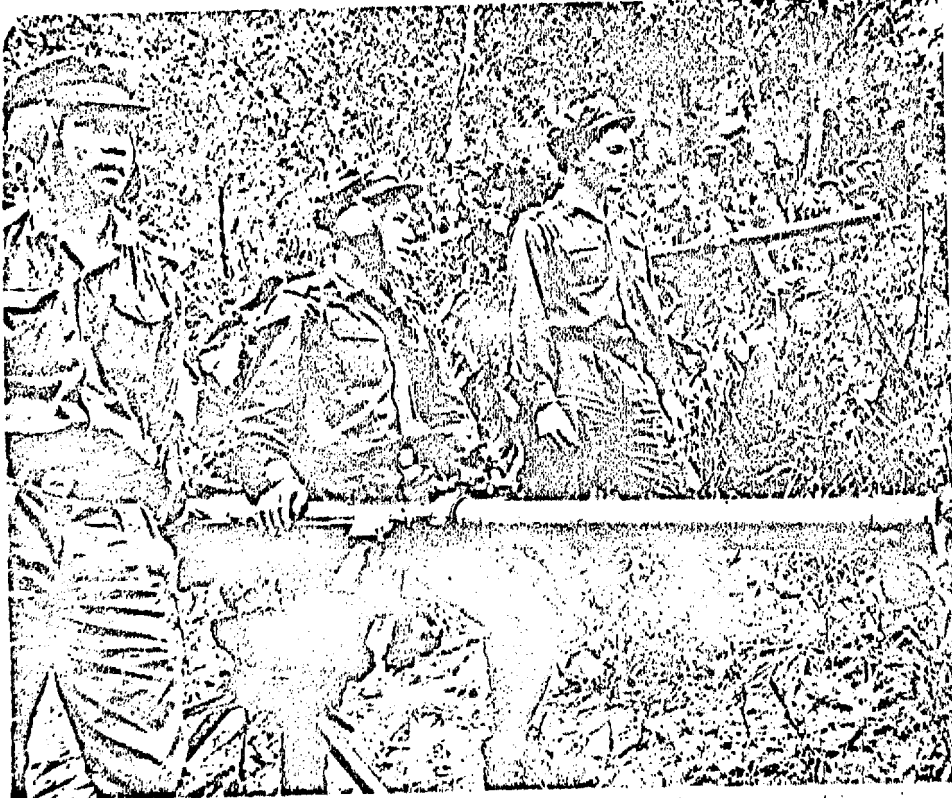
an unauthorized visit. Allman's report: After strolling 15 kilometers along the U.S.-built dirt road that links Sam Thong and Long Cheng, the three of us were picked up by a Jeepload of Meo troopers and driven the rest of the way to CIA-land. They assumed, of course, that we were agency men—no one else is allowed in. The first sight in Long Cheng was encouraging: a barbershop with a sign reading "Welcome."

Five years ago, the valley was deserted; now American money and officials have created a town of 40,000 people dedicated to war. We saw Americans in civilian clothes working on aircraft engines, taxiing unmarked T-28 fighter-bombers up and down the runway and teaching Asians the art of engine maintenance. Although Asians—presumably Laotians and Thais—fly the T-28s, Americans fly rescue helicopters bearing U.S. markings, one of which always has its rotors turning in readiness for a rescue mission. As we watched, U.S. aircraft took off and landed at 60-second intervals.

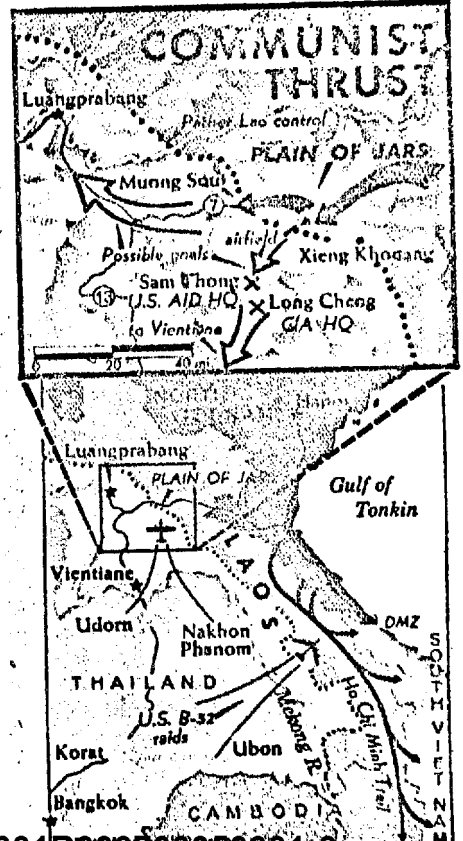
At last we were discovered. An angry Laotian colonel ordered us into his Jeep. Soon afterward a khaki-clad CIA man appeared, seized the French correspondent's notebooks, then left to make arrangements for our departure.

Finally, a light aircraft arrived bearing

NIHON DENPA NEWS



PATHET LAO TROOPS WITH BAZOOKAS



9 MAR 1970

R. H. Shackford / Laos debate



PRESIDENT NIXON'S statement on Laos has fueled new debate about American involvement in the wars in Vietnam and Laos.

It has provided Administration critics with another opening to question its credibility and to demand that the United States should "withdraw from all of Southeast Asia lock, stock and barrel, including bases."

That statement was made in a week-end television appearance (CBS's Face the Nation) by Senate Democratic Leader Mike Mansfield of Montana, who has played a major role in recent weeks in warning about America's in-illa army of Mao tribesmen in Laos.

Sen. Mansfield said "we are up to our necks" in Laos and "over our heads" in Vietnam.

He was joined in his concern about Southeast Asia by another long-standing critic of the Vietnam War — Chairman J. William Fulbright, D-Ark., of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee — on NBC's Meet the Press program.

Sen. Fulbright said the President did not give all the facts on Laos, especially about the heavy involvement of the CIA which organized, trained, equipped and commanded — with "an enormous outlay of funds that do not appear in any appropriation bill" — the guerilla army of Meo tribesmen in Laos.

BOTH senators made it clear that they, and others of the same view, would continue to insist upon the public release of testimony secretly given the Senate Foreign Relations sub-committees on Laos. Secretary of State William P. Rogers thus far has refused to release anything except a version so censored that sub-committee Chairman Stuart Symington, D-Mo., charges it would be misleading.

Sen. Mansfield and Sen. Fulbright share the view that peace never will return to Southeast Asia until American military forces leave.

Sen. Mansfield argues the entire area — Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and Thailand — should be neutralized. He contends it must be done thru the Paris conference to which he thinks President Nixon should send a high-ranking representative.

Sen. Fulbright's version of extricating the United States:

"I think the presence of the United States in (Southeast Asia) is the greatest incitement to the difficulties that afflict that part of the world . . . If the United States should ever remove its presence, I think these people could sort out their difficulties.

"They did it for a couple of thousand years before the United States ever appeared on the scene. And when we intruded into that area — as the French were getting out in 1954 — I think we simply prolonged the war which started out as a colonial war and then a civil war and now we are involved and it is really an international war."

Both senators were skeptical about Mr. Nixon's Vietnamization program. Sen. Fulbright argues it is "a basic policy . . . (for) the prolongation of the war in Vietnam and Laos indefinitely."

Neither Sens. Mansfield nor Fulbright expects American troops to be withdrawn overnight, but both think they should come home faster than now planned. A questioner reminded Sen. Fulbright that President Johnson had offered to get out within six months after the war stopped and asked the senator: "Can you offer them (the communists) anything better than that?"

Sen. Fulbright, whom Mr. Johnson has bitterly criticized in his recent TV appearances, responded: "I don't think President Johnson's statement had much credibility, either abroad or at home."

U. S. toll in Laos revealed

By TED KNAP

Scrapps-Howard Staff Writer

President Nixon was embroiled in his first serious credibility problem today by insisting that 27 Americans killed or missing "in hostile action" on the ground in Laos were not killed "in ground combat operations."

It was something Mr. Nixon had tried hard to avoid, contending as he had that a credibility gap had led to the political downfall of former President Lyndon B. Johnson.

White House confirmation yesterday that Americans had, indeed, been killed in ground action in the war in Laos seemed to invite doubts about other parts of Mr. Nixon's Friday report to the nation on Laos.

"No American stationed in Laos has ever been killed in ground combat operations," the President stated in that report.

By the next night, newspapers were reporting that U.S. infantry Capt. Joseph Bush had been killed by enemy machine gunfire Feb. 11, 1969, during a North Vietnamese raid on a Laotian command post at the edge of the plain

Report on the growing debate over Laos on Page 19.

of Jars. Capt. Bush had been an adviser to the Royal Lao army which had been shelling communist troop concentrations in that combat area in northern Laos.

Deputy White House Press Secretary Gerald L. Warren described the action yesterday:

"Capt. Bush was in his quarters in a compound 10 miles to the rear of the expected line of contact with the enemy when North Vietnamese commandos attacked the compound.

"He took action immediately to attempt to protect other persons in the compound, and by taking such action he exposed himself to enemy fire and was killed."

Mr. Warren confirmed that Capt. Bush's quarters were in the Laotian command post and that he fired his own weapon during the attack. Mr. Warren said Capt. Bush was killed in "hostile action."

In answer to newsmen's questions, the White House said 26 other Americans had been killed or are missing in hostile action in Laos. A spokesman said 25 were civilians and one was a dependent.

The spokesman, who cannot be identified under the ground rules imposed by the White House, said they were the victims of such actions as enemy ambushes, artillery fire and land mines.

The spokesman insisted, however, they were not victims of "ground combat operations," according to the White House definition. He did not explain the distinction.

Mr. Warren said the President had not known of Capt. Bush's death when he issued his extensive report on Laos, but he said the President had been informed about the 26 civilians killed or missing in hostile action.

"Is the president disturbed that this has raised a credibility problem?" Mr. Warren was asked.

"I have no response for you on that," he replied.

Mr. Nixon had said Friday there are no American ground combat troops in Laos and he had "no plans" to introduce any.

He had reported that there were 1,040 Americans in Laos, 320 of whom are engaged in military advisory or military training of Laotian government forces. The White House said 228 of the 320 are military personnel.

A White House spokesman also told newsmen Friday that nearly 400 Americans were killed or missing in the air war over Laos, chiefly interdicting North Vietnamese move-

ment of troops and supplies on the Ho Chi Minh trail into South Vietnam. The spokesman had said no American adviser had been killed.

The White House refused to say today how many, if any, of the 25 civilian victims of hostile action had been former U.S. military personnel employed by the CIA in what for six years had been a clandestine operation.

Mr. Warren said he could not state positively that no other American in military service other than Capt. Bush had been killed on the ground in Laos, but that a thorough check indicated he was the only one.

WASHINGTON, D.C.
NATIONAL OBSERVER

WEEKLY - 553,605

MAR 9 - 1970

Mr. Nixon's Explanation

An Accounting Fails to Choke Off Laos Criticism

FROM WASHINGTON, D.C.

No American combat troops are in Laos and there's no intention of sending any in.

That's the essence of President Nixon's declaration last week of U.S. policy in Laos. The unusual 3,000-word statement was prompted by rising congressional criticism, questions, fears, and politicking over the course of U.S. actions in the Communist-threatened kingdom in Southeast Asia.

The Chief Executive acknowledged that American air attacks in Laos had been expanded to help counter the Communists. It was official confirmation of well-publicized fact.

The President's statement said parts of Laos were now occupied by 67,000 North Vietnamese, compared with 1,040 Americans in the whole country. It said 646 of these Americans were engaged in military or logistics activities.

No Americans have been killed in Laos in combat operations on the ground, Mr. Nixon said. A high White House official followed the statement with an explanation that about 400 Americans had been killed or were missing in the air war. Previous official statements about Laos had reported that 193 airmen were missing, and conceded a military role inside the country only to the 70 Americans on the staff of the U.S. military attache in Vien-

tiane, the Laotian administrative capital.

The President said American air attacks were primarily aimed at keeping North Vietnamese war material from reaching South Vietnam over the Ho Chi Minh Trail through Laos. He said additional missions were being flown to assist the Laotian army against Laotian-Communist and North Vietnamese troops.

These missions were flown at the request of the Laotian government, and the level of the air attacks "has been increased only as the number of North Vietnamese in Laos and the level of their aggression has increased," Mr. Nixon said. The number of North Vietnamese in Laos has grown by 13,000 in the past year, he noted.

Mr. Nixon said he hoped Britain and Russia might be able to help restore peace in Laos by rounding up assistance from the other 12 countries that signed a 1962 agreement that was supposed to ensure the neutrality and independence of Laos. But he said settling the war would mostly "require realism and reasonableness from Hanoi."

The President's statement, issued from Key Biscayne, Fla., where he was staying over the week end, failed to tamp down congressional criticism of his Laotian policy. Sen. Jacob Javits, New York Republican, said he was concerned about the United States supplying air cover to

Laos at the request of the Laotian government. "Our increasing involvement in Vietnam started with just that kind of air support," he said. Sen. John Sherman Cooper called for the immediate withdrawal of all American civilian and military personnel "engaged in air strikes or any other combat activity" in Laos. The Kentucky Republican said he feared their presence in Laos would lead to greater American involvement.

Senate critics of the Laotian involvement were almost as upset at the secrecy which hitherto surrounded it as they were over the fighting itself. They have been campaigning since autumn for the Administration to make public the contents of briefings on Laos it had given privately to senators.

The secret briefings contained little that had not been reported from other sources in the press: accounts of American air raids in support of Laotian forces that are paid, armed, transported, and sometimes controlled by American military advisers assigned to the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). This involvement was common knowledge for a long time, and the secrecy surrounding it was apparently meant to spare Laotian Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma from embarrassment over these violations of the 1962 agreement.

Souvanna Phouma seemed unembarrassed however. He told newsmen last week that "the entire country will become Communist" without the American air raids. "I think the United States should agree to increase the aid we have received and which we need," he said.

The outcry over Laos began last month when Communist forces chased Laotian troops and their American advisers from the Plain of Jars in northern Laos. No significant fighting was reported in the kingdom last week, though the war in words continued unabated here half the world away.

MAR 1970

STATINT-1

CIA Role in Laos Is Cited

Sen. J. W. Fulbright (D-Ark.) said yesterday that he was surprised to learn from secret testimony of large unbudgeted American spending and the extent of Central Intelligence Agency involvement in Laos.

The chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee appeared on the NBC television program, "Meet the Press." He referred to testimony given a subcommittee headed by Sen. Stuart Symington (D-Mo.), which several senators have urged be made public.

Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield (D-Mont.) said on the CBS program, "Face the Nation," he believed there was a good possibility of reaching agreement with the Nixon administration to release part of the transcript.

President Nixon has said the United States has 1,040 personnel on the ground in Laos assisting Laotian forces in the fight against North Vietnamese troops. A number of senators fear Laos could become another Vietnam war, which

began with a few American advisers present.

Both Mansfield and Fulbright, longtime critics of the Vietnam war, said American personnel should be withdrawn from Laos, but that the United States should continue to try to block Ho Chi Minh trail supply routes in Laos leading from North Vietnam to South Vietnam.

Mansfield said he did not believe the independence of Laos was worth loss of American lives. He said he believed the President would not send ground forces into Laos.

Both Mansfield and Fulbright said the Vietnamization policy of turning the war over to South Vietnam would not end the fighting. This can be done only by a diplomatic settlement, they said. Mansfield urged that a high ranking negotiator be sent to the Paris peace talks on Vietnam to replace Henry Cabot Lodge, who resigned three months ago.

Meanwhile, Sen. Charles McC. Mathias (R-Md.), said the enemy probably could take over Laos if it wished and

there is little President Nixon could do about it.

Mathias said in a television interview on WMAL-TV that the North Vietnamese have 50,000 troops in Laos. He said "They have the options in Laos. That's a variable over which we have no control, and with an army of that size, if it were released, I suspect that they could take the country."

Kalong—Where the War Begins in Laos

By Jack Folsie
Los Angeles Times

KALONG, Laos, March 8 — This is where the war in central Laos begins.

Here in barren scrubland there is a rustic fort the size of a football field. Inside its defenses live 150 government militia men, 10 wives, 28 children, one water buffalo, 13 chickens, four pigs and a caged dwarf deer.

Three miles to the east is the nearest outpost of the North Vietnamese army. Twenty miles to the east is a main trail of the infiltration route the enemy uses to reach South Vietnam.

Despite the proximity of the foe and the constant patrolling by both sides, there has been little contact recently. The latest action, the fort commander said, was two months ago when one of his patrols was ambushed. There were government casualties, but the officer declined to say how many.

So this is not like the war farther north that is making headlines. Here the opposing forces appear to be like two boxers circling and feinting, waiting for an opening. And perhaps the rival commanders have a tacit understanding not to fight for a while. Such arrangements are not unknown in Laos.

There is the possibility that Kalong, despite its languid appearance, serves a secret purpose.

It may be the base camp for seven-man special guerrilla units that go on long-range patrols to hideouts from which they can visually observe enemy movements on the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

These elite units are recruited, trained and supported by men of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency who, in many cases, are in Laos disguised as U.S. AID mission civilian employees.

These government guerrillas, as a sign of pride, wear a distinctive insignia when in the rear area. One such insignia was seen on a Lao soldier here. The presence of elaborate radio equipment inside the fort also strengthens the possibility of its secret mission.

The U.S. presence is here in other ways. An army officer visits the camp periodically "to hear our problems," the Lao staff officer said. And the ammunition comes directly from the United States. Mortar shells in cases bear markings indicating they were produced last year.

For most troops here, today was a day for sleep, a bath at a stream two miles away, and scrounging for food to supplement their rice diet.

One young trooper had a snare attached to a long pole and was trying to catch crickets. Another soldier was feeding the deer he had trapped, fattening it for a feast.

Most of the militia men are boyish-looking and several admitted to being only 13. They

are described by authorities as volunteers, but it was learned that the unit includes both impressed villagers and Communist Pathet Lao deserters.

The troops are armed with the best U.S. rifle, but at the moment their favorite weapon was a slingshot. They were launching rocks to stun lizards in the trees.

Married men with families live in straw hootches on two sides of the perimeter, with their fighting positions outside their doors. The single men live in more rustic huts. The lack of a woman's touch is apparent.

The perimeter defense is a mix of modern American weapons and age-old means of protection. There is barbed wire, but also rows of sharpened bamboo stakes. There are trip wires for night illumination, but also tin cans that will rattle if the enemy breaches the wire. There are mines to be detonated electrically, but also homemade booby traps.

The unit in the camp is headquarters company of Volunteer Battalion 33. Four other companies of the same battalion are in similar compounds nearby.

There is supporting artillery at another location and allied airpower can be overhead within 30 minutes, according to the staff officer. If under night attack, the troops have filled beer cans with oil and will light them to point the way to the helicopter landing area if reinforcements become necessary.

As we left by helicopter in mid-afternoon, a bamboo gong was being beaten in the camp. It was time for the men of Kalong to forego their home-making tasks and get back to soldiering.

Vientiane Is Stirred Little By Increased Pace of War

By Laurence Stern

Washington Post Foreign Service

VIENTIANE, Laos, March 8—The war that has caused a new pitch of political concern in Washington is being shrugged at here with a languor that befits the capital's Asian-Gallic tradition.

A banner beside the swimming pool at the Lang Xuan Hotel, chief encampment of the journalistic legion that has landed here these past two weeks, proclaims a "grand soiree de gala for the profit of the Laotian children and victims of the war."

The event is "under the high patronage of his excellency Prince Souvanna Phouma," and two International Rotary Club flags dangle from each side of the banner.

Beside the shaded outdoor bar where Lowenbrau and citron presse are served, there is another sign warning children not to play violently around the pool.

The war, which is centered about 50 miles to the north, has also given a sharp boost to the bar and car-hire businesses as well as the taxi girls and other forms of night life, such as they are.

It is not far-fetched, as one resident philosopher put it, to assert that the two principal sources of national income at the moment are opium and press-telegraph tolls.

The only visible scars here of the war are the pathetic refugees of the bombing in the combat zones who have been resettled in Vientiane after losing homes and loved ones to the bombs, shrapnel and fire.

President Nixon's statement on Laos did little to alter the sense of *deja vu* in Vientiane or to raise any new expectations for settlement of the war that has ground a see-saw course through this primitive country for more than two decades.

Forgetting the ethnic, tribal and personalistic nuances, which could fill books, the issues as seen from Vientiane can be stated in stark form.

North Vietnamese and Pathet Lao objectives in the current offensive seem to be threefold:

- A halt in the American bombings along the Ho Chi Minh Trail and its Communist staging areas in the northeast.

- Establishment of a coalition government in Vientiane that the Communists consider friendlier to their interests both in Laos and South Vietnam.

- Restoration of territorial boundaries of control that correspond roughly to the 1961 battle lines, toward which the Communists are now driving.

Nothing in the President's message on Laos intimated that the Nixon administration is prepared to make concessions in any of these directions.

Similarly, Prince Souvanna Phouma's statement Friday that he has no objections to North Vietnamese use of the Ho Chi Minh Trail through Laos, is viewed as more conciliatory on the surface than it is in substance.

It is the American military command in Saigon and not Souvanna who controls the massive bombing runs over the trail that the North Vietnamese want stopped.

In asking the North Vietnamese to desist from their dry-season offensive in exchange for his averting his eyes from the infiltration, the Laotian premier would seem to be asking for something in exchange for nothing, as experienced observers here see it.

And so the prospect, at least as it looks from here, is for more of the same within the limited framework in which the Laotian war has ebbed and flowed through the years.

Last summer the CIA-organized government army of Gen. Vang Pao surged further into Communist territory, both in the Plain of Jars and toward the infiltration corridor, than ever in the past six years. The tempo of American bombing in Laos also escalated beyond any previous level.

Now the North Vietnamese counter offensive is expected to go beyond any point that the Communists have reached in Laos since 1961, though it will probably halt well short of the capital.

And so, in the privately expressed view of American officials and veteran diplomatic observers from other countries that joined in the 1962 Geneva accords, there is no immediate prospect for diminution of the U.S. role in the long-festering Laotian war.

Curiously, President Nixon's figures for the number of Americans either in the direct employ of the U.S. government or working under contract here — 1,040 — is about 25 per cent higher than the number of 830 given by U.S. officials in Vientiane until the day before Mr. Nixon spoke.

Another number in the President's statement that caused some puzzlement here was the 67,000 troops that he said Hanoi has introduced into Laos. Until then the highest number given by any American spokesman in Vientiane for the North Vietnamese presence was 50,000.

Perhaps the most arresting symbol of at least the short-range American posture in Laos can be found in an AID compound four miles from the center of town.

There a \$50,000 Olympic-sized swimming pool is being built for U.S. government families. It is expected to open in May.

The Washington Merry-Go-Round

Soviet Spy Allowed to Remain in U.S.

By Jack Anderson

A Soviet intelligence agent, caught in a serious act of espionage, has been permitted to remain in the United States.

He is Oleg D. Kalugin, formerly a Tass news correspondent, now second secretary at the Soviet Embassy, who became entangled in a web of espionage and romance.

His undercover activities in this country are known to the FBI. But only the State Department knows the reason he is still here. Other spies caught in the act have been declared persona non grata and have been given 48 hours to leave the country.

The handsome, lotharian Kalugin took over from a fellow spy, Nikolai Kapsov, who had been cultivating a Greek immigrant for undercover work in the United States.

The immigrant, John Makris, had worked for a time as a United Nations intern and, eventually, had ventured into business. He was having a rough time keeping out of the red.

To the Russians, Makris seemed a good prospect for recruitment as an agent, and Kalugin moved in to close the deal. Assuming the name "Victor Kraknikovich," he con-

tacted Makris. Kalugin explained he was a friend of Nikolai's and wanted to help Makris with his business ventures.

Cloak and Dagger

Over the next two years, Kalugin paid Makris \$12,000. Following elaborate rendezvous plans and ever on the lookout for FBI agents, the pair met in hotel lobbies, restaurants, a Greenwich Village bookstore and at various spots in the Bronx.

They discussed a number of plans. First, Makris was to infiltrate anti-Castro groups in New York and Nicaragua. Later he was to move to Washington and set up a business as a front, then travel around the country as a "bagman," distributing money to Soviet agents.

But one by one, each new conspiracy fell apart out of confusion and exaggerated caution.

At one point, Kalugin instructed Makris to cultivate a secretary in the FBI's Manhattan office. Kalugin wanted information on FBI surveillance procedures. Specifically, he wanted to know what cars the FBI agents drove and where they were garaged.

When Makris had won the

girl's confidence, the plan called for Kalugin to appear. He would romance the lady while his wife tended the home fires in their apartment.

Kalugin also offered Makris \$15,000 to plant his own American girlfriend inside the State Department. The girl agreed, applied for a job and was interviewed.

Russian Romeo

There was only one hitch in Kalugin's quasi-bigamous operations: Makris and both girls were working under FBI direction.

When the affair had gone far enough, the U.S. told the Soviets to keep their Russian Romeo on a tighter leash. Strangely, however, he was not asked to leave the country.

He resides today in a nondescript apartment building just four blocks inside the District of Columbia line. It is an unnoticeable location, a thoroughly middle-class habitat in a thoroughly middle-class neighborhood.

Kalugin comes and goes without hindrance, swallowed up in the bustle of big-city life. He and his wife, said one neighbor, "keep very much to themselves." Residents and visitors to the apartment

building go about their business in a routine manner. They know nothing of the spy who resides within.

But for those few who know the truth about Oleg Kalugin, there is a vague feeling of being watched.

Intelligence Notes

A secret staff study, now on President Nixon's desk, claims that Israel can hold her own against the Arab threat without more planes from the United States. . . . At the same time, intelligence reports warn that Russia is preparing to send Egypt advanced jet fighters; fighter-bombers, anti-aircraft artillery and missiles, and the latest electronic-detection equipment. . . .

The B-52 strike against the North Vietnamese on the Plain of Jars was urged by G. McMurtrie Godley, the American Ambassador to Laos. Because this was an escalation of the Laotian war, President Nixon personally made the decision after consulting with the National Security Council. The big B-52s were ordered to blast the North Vietnamese field headquarters. But the bombing, apparently, didn't even slow the assault upon the strategic plain.

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U.S. Admits Death, Denies Combat Role

By Don Irwin
 Los Angeles Times

KEY BISCAYNE, Fla., March 8—The White House confirmed today that a U.S. Army captain was killed by hostile action on the ground in Laos in February, 1969, but denied that the death resulted from "ground combat operations."

Gerald L. Warren, deputy White House press secretary, said a thorough check of agency records verified a Los Angeles Times story that Capt. Joseph K. Bush Jr. had been killed by enemy fire at a command post behind front lines but said Bush was not then in a "combat operation."

At the same time, an administration source disclosed that 26 other Americans—25 civilians and one dependent of a civilian—had died in Laos from what was described as hostile action. Warren said he did not know whether there are more cases like Bush's but that "there may be."

A newsman asked whether President Nixon did not fear that he had created a credibility gap with his assertion Friday in his statement on Laos that "no American stationed in Laos has ever been killed in ground combat operations."

"I have no response for you on that," Warren replied.

Warren said that Mr. Nixon had not known when he issued his statement that an Army officer was included with 26 civilians among Americans whose deaths were ascribed by the Pentagon to hostile action but not to combat. The President did know that such deaths had occurred, Warren said.

On whether Bush's case was known to officials who helped prepare Mr. Nixon's statement, Warren noted that he had said that "the records were thoroughly checked" but went no further.

Warren said it was assumed from available records that Bush, whom he described as a military attache, was stationed in Laos. Even so, he maintained, the President's statement on casualties in Laos was correct because Bush was "not killed in ground combat operations." Warren said he did not know whether Bush had been receiving combat pay.

Warren said official records report that: "Capt. Bush, on the night of the incident, was in his quarters in a compound 10 miles to the rear of the expected line of contact" with the enemy.

When North Vietnamese commandos attacked the compound, Warren said, Bush "took action immediately to try to protect the others in the compound and, by taking such action, exposed himself to enemy fire and was killed."

"He was engaged in military operations; he was a military attache," Warren said. "Did he fire a gun?" asked a newsman, referring to a statement in the Times account that Bush had killed a North Vietnamese with his M-16 rifle before he was killed by automatic weapons fire.

"When he was attacked, he took action," Warren replied. "He fired a gun to protect the others in the compound. . . in our definition of combat, he was protecting persons under attack."

Warren refused to discuss on the record the number of other Americans who had died through "enemy action" that was not "combat."

The figure of 26 was produced by White House sources, narrowing down an estimate of fewer than 50 that was supplied to newsmen Friday. While all except Bush were civilians, the sources said, some may have died in ground incidents.

Hostile action is construed to cover casualties in circumstances other than direct combat, including ambushes, long-range artillery fire and mines.

Twenty-five of these victims were described as U.S. civilian officials or civilian employees of government contractors. Sources were unable to state whether any were military personnel who had resigned their commissions to serve as civilian employees of the Central Intelligence Agency.

The 26 persons in addition to Bush listed as killed through enemy actions were said to have been included in the figure of 200 persons whose deaths officials said Friday had occurred in Laos but not in ground combat. The indication at that time was that all had died as the result of combat or accidents in airplanes or helicopters.

No occasion arose to put direct questions about the Bush case to Mr. Nixon. The President ended a three-day working weekend here this afternoon and flew back to Washington.

BOSTON, Mass.
GLOBE.

M - 237,967
S - 566,377

MAR 8 1970

President strives to avoid credibility gap over Laos

By Matthew V. Storin
Globe Staff

KEY BISCAWAYNE, Fla. — A book written last year by Joseph C. Goulden on the 1964 Gulf of Tonkin incident made the case that the Johnson administration stated a phony attack by North Vietnamese gunboats to provide a vehicle for increased U.S. combat in Vietnam.

Goulden called the book "Truth Is the First Casualty."

Richard M. Nixon indicated here this weekend the extent of his concern that such a book not be written about his administration.

In Laos there has been no question about the role of the North Vietnamese. They have been sweeping powerfully across the northern Plains des

NEWS ANALYSIS

Jarres, threatening the existence of the neutralist government of Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma.

The question in Laos has been: What is the U.S. doing? President Nixon had never denied that Americans might be involved beyond the degree which he publicly admitted — bombing of the Ho Chi Minh Trail, air reconnaissance in the north and logistical support for Laotian ground troops.

CURRENT ACTIVITIES

The President alluded in the past to "some other activities" in the public interest would

not be involved in a further discussion of these.

Last week, under the intense pressure of news reports from Laos and questioning speeches from Congress, the President decided more information would be in the public interest — and no doubt in his own.

He issued a 1300-word statement giving a "precise description of our current activities in Laos." It included a concession that air strikes have been made by the U.S. in defense of Laotian forces in the north, the most direct admission to date that the U.S. violates the 1962 Geneva Accords in response to the violations by the North Vietnamese.

The President made a somewhat self-conscious point of saying he could have revealed these facts

earlier without causing a political problem for himself. He said that the military activities in Laos had been initiated by the Kennedy and Johnson administrations and only continued by his administration.

But of course any President would prefer not to detail a military involvement when it could remain out of the public eye. That would apply no matter who initiated the involvement.

But once the current dry season in Laos produced a renewed Communist offensive, the public — by means of a Vietnam-shy Congress — began raising questions

White House press secretary Ronald L. Ziegler was encountering a barrage of daily questions concerning reports that U.S. civilians, apparently Central Intelligence Agency people, were involved in ground combat operations.

On Wednesday Ziegler was indicating that there were no plans for a presidential statement on Laos, at least through the weekend, but Thursday morning the press secretary called White House correspondents, urging that if they were not planning to accompany the President here they should reconsider.

When the statement came, it was a comprehensive one. And a briefing that followed was responsive to virtually all questions from newsmen. The briefing was conducted by presidential aides under ground rules that they not be quoted directly and be referred to only as "White House officials."

This is standard procedure for briefings which provide background for presidential statements.

Among the items covered in the briefing were:

- A tacit admission that the air strikes in the north violate the Geneva accords.

- Relatively precise figures on casualties among U.S. airmen in Laos, about 200 killed over six years and an equal number captured or missing.

UNPOPULAR THOUGHT

- A tacit admission that the U.S. has increased its combat in Laos in response to the North Vietnamese.

All of these statements, even in the paraphrasing required by the groundrules, were potentially troublesome politically for the administration.

So was the President's statement that 320 U.S. military men and civilians are serving as military advisers (and the more precise disclosure at the briefing that the civilians total 92 men).

The impression is left that virtually all the civilians are CIA personnel, not particularly a popular thought in domestic political circles.

Much of this resembles the early days of U.S. involvement in Vietnam. But administration officials, even while admitting that the Communists probably can overrun Laos, tell newsmen it is not likely that the President would change his announced intention not to introduce ground combat troops into that country.

This is a military and diplomatic problem that still faces President Nixon with potential political danger.

But what he appears to have attempted in Florida this weekend is to avoid making truth the first casualty.

A skeptic scans the military scene

By Ian Wright

Special from the Manchester Guardian

VIENTIANE, Laos — As wheeling buzzards traditionally signify the coming demise of a traveler, so the descent of the world's press on Vientiane invariably precedes new reports that Laos is on its last legs.

But it has been happening at least annually for 12 years and happily Laos is still with us.

This year it was the inevitable fall of the Plain of Jars 10 days ago that caused the furor. Word pictures were painted of thousands of Communists in tanks and lorries dragging heavy artillery pouring toward the strategic plain. But the truth is less dramatic: In the final stages of the taking of the Xieng Khouang airfield no more than four hundred North Vietnamese and Pathet Lao troops were involved.

It looks as if the Americans and the Royal Lao government have certainly withdrawn Gen. Vang Pao's men as the Communists approached.

"They are much more valuable than territory" remarked an American official.

When Muong Soui fell late last month, partly through an error of timing, hardly a shot was fired.

As things stand militarily, this civil war is back where it was last June. The main difference is that the North Vietnamese have three months of dry weather ahead of them and no one knows what they intend to do.

They appear to have three main possibilities of attack. The most attractive would be to harass Vang Pao in his headquarters at Long Gheng and even try to take it; they could move south toward Paksane on the Mekong River cutting their country in two, or they may choose to march west to occupy old positions at Vang Vieng on the road between Vientiane and the royal capital Luang Prabang.

MOVES IN ANY of these directions would begin to confirm the worst American fears. But most diplomats here, nurtured on the long-held theory that there must always be a balance in Laos, doubt that the North Vietnamese will take any big risks. They may simply stay guarding the approaches to the Plain and restock with supplies they lost to Vang Pao last September.

Of course, Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese activity will go on in other parts of the country, most of which is in their hands anyway. The government controls the towns along the Mekong and often even the roads which link them. In many ways it is a classical Maoist situation with the Pathet Lao proselytizing in the countryside without opposition.

Fortunately Vientiane itself, more village than capital city, is the last place to encourage hysteria. On the night Communists attacked Xieng Khouang the prime minister played bridge as usual and few people slept less secure in their beds.

In spite of the diplomatic moves Prince Souvanna Phouma has promised — he speaks about a reconvening of the Geneva conference on Laos — there is a basic pessimism that nothing can be done until the Vietnam war is settled.

The Laotians would dearly like to detach their civil war from the greater conflict and they believe, rightly I think, that it could be soon settled. But unfortunately, thanks to U.S. policy during the last nine months, they have become more seriously embroiled than ever before.

It seems to have begun soon after the bombing of North Vietnam ended. The U.S. Air Force and Navy had spare capacity and, as plans for an American troop pullout from South Vietnam proceeded, the bombing of North Vietnamese supply routes — the Ho Chi Minh trails — running through Eastern Laos increased.

REACTING TO FEARS that the North Vietnamese were also "going for broke" in the Laotian civil war the Americans also greatly stepped up bombing in northern Laos.

They now argue that these fears were real and that last June it looked as if Vang Pao and his so-called secret army — CIA-trained and always the main shield against the North Vietnamese — was on the point of being destroyed. The Americans reacted with more bombing and an unprecedented series of attacks by Vang Pao across the Plain of Jars in September followed by probing of the trails in the southeast with elements of the Royal Lao Army.

This offensive, which has led to the present Lao withdrawals and excitement in the press, is now represented as very much a military affair thought up by Vang Pao. American officials privately claim that it was "to buy time with territory" but others, perhaps more forthright, admit "any time you want to stir up the North Vietnamese, start advancing on the trail or across the Plain of Jars."

The net result now seems to be an escalation that has infuriated the North Vietnamese just at a time when President Nixon has been calling for a scaling down of combat activity in South Vietnam.

It is far from proved that last June, when Vang Pao's fortunes were at a low ebb, the Communists were going to break the rules of what passes for warfare in Laos and were planning to take over the country.

Happily the Americans seemed to have managed to extract Vang Pao from his adventure without too serious losses. The evacuations of the last month culminating in the pull-out from the Plain of Jars were orderly and well planned. Some diplomatic sources here suggest that Washington had as much to do with them as did the advancing North Vietnamese hordes.

The Nixon administration is facing increasing embarrassment over its Laos policy. The Vang Pao adventure together with the unedifying spectacle of the hundreds of tons of American bombs which fall on unwarlike Laos every day is more a reflection of the stalemate in Vietnam than of the realities here.

Certainly the United States has a commitment (as have the other signatories) to prop up Laos, but these sorts of actions are tearing the country apart.

IN A WAY Laos is the Achilles heel of both the Americans and the North Vietnamese.

While the battle in the South goes on, neither is going to agree to neutralization and there always will be the temptation to deal a stealthy blow. Neither side is willingly going to reduce its options, and American action in the last nine months suggests the Nixon administration has been using them to the full — perhaps unwisely.

Vietnamization offers no letup to Laos either: As more Americans pull out of the South the bombing will have to continue.

The Laotians, one of the most gentle people on Earth, will remain hopelessly caught in the middle. Unlike the Vietnamese they have no ideological stake in the war and both Laotian sides contend that without the North Vietnamese or without the American presence they could settle their differences.

The Laotians will continue to suffer as they have for centuries because of their geographical position locked between Chinese, Vietnamese, and the rest of Indochina.

Prince Souvanna Phouma will no doubt continue to call on the Great Powers, becoming more and more a sort of Lear-like figure raging against the elements he can never control.

Clandestine role for CIA 'tigers'

VIENTIANE, Laos — Everyone in Vientiane, from the Russian ambassador to the mama-san of the legendary White Rose, knows what the Americans are doing here—arming, training, supplying, transporting and directing approximately 70,000 Laotian troops in a war which threatens to get out of hand.

Nevertheless, U.S. officials here do things like allowing Gen. Vang Pao to declare recently, before a sizable contingent of visiting journalists, that his Meo forces fight with antiquated weapons, inadequate communications and inconsequential American support.

As he was speaking, American F-4 Phantom jets roared overhead, several American observation planes were parked nearby and three cargo-laden American transport planes landed in quick succession at his official Sam Thong base.

After denying he even received indirect U.S. military support, Vang Pao calmly climbed into an unmarked American helicopter, guarded by Laotian troops carrying American-made M-16 automatic rifles, and was flown back to his secret Long Cheng headquarters by a three-man American crew.

Vang Pao and official verbiage notwithstanding, American involvement in the Laotian conflict takes the following principal forms: in addition to 75 military advisers listed as embassy "attaches," about 300 men are employed in a variety of clandestine military activities supervised by the Central Intelligence Agency. Although technically civilians, many CIA agents in Laos are former Special Forces soldiers recruited because of military expertise and Vietnam experience.

THESE EX-GREEN BERETS train government troops, assist wide-range reconnaissance teams and plan guerrilla and psychological warfare operations. They wear combat fatigues and work out of three main camps, where they administer rigorous training in jungle warfare, guerrilla tactics, communications handling and weaponry.

The CIA also maintains and largely controls Vang Pao's army of approximately 15,000 full-time troops.

Official instructions to the contrary, CIA personnel occasionally accompany these forces on combat forays. More than 20 agents have been killed in Laos.

"These guys are tigers," says an American personally acquainted with many CIA agents in Laos. "They're tough, intelligent guys who know how to handle themselves. They're not afraid to mix it up out in the jungle."

The American is a civilian engineer who befriended many agents while helping to build airstrips on several of their remote outposts.

"They came to Laos because they were fed up with having their hands tied in Vietnam," he says. "Here they're doing things the way they want to and getting better pay for it as well."

The CIA mission chief in Laos is Lawrence Devlin, listed as a "political officer" in the U.S. Embassy. Unlike most political officers, however, Devlin flatly refuses to see reporters.

CARGO AND MILITARY supplies — as well as personnel — are ferried throughout Laos by Air America and Continental Air Services, private charter firms under contract to the U.S. government. They are better known as the "CIA Airlines," and most of their pilots are ex-Air Force officers.

Another form of American air service in Laos constitutes the most direct U.S. involvement in the fighting. Under the euphemism of "armed reconnaissance flights,"

Thailand-based American jets and bombers have mounted aerial bombardments equal to the pounding taken by North Vietnam prior to the bombing halt in 1968.

U.S. OFFICIALS here stress that American money and manpower expenditures in Laos are minuscule compared to those in Vietnam. Washington is spending about \$30 billion in Vietnam and has lost almost 40,000 servicemen there. Less than 200 U.S. personnel — mostly airmen — have been killed in Laos.

A small conflict fought by volunteers may be manageable, they say, but it bears a bloody one by draftees.

Perhaps, but what happens when a little war threatens to escalate into a huge ugly one like Vietnam?

"A top embassy official in Vientiane argues: "There is no chance of turning this into another Vietnam. We know the mistakes made in Vietnam and we have no intention of repeating them. Hanoi understands our position here. We seek no wider war."

Does it sound familiar?

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MAR 8 1970

No outside help likely in Laos

IT IS difficult to be optimistic about President Nixon's appeal to Britain and the Soviet Union for help in dealing with the situation in Laos.

The two nations are cochairmen of the 1962 Geneva accord, guaranteeing Laotian neutrality. But that accord has been repeatedly abridged by a number of parties, including the United States; and it does not stir any deep reverence in Southeast Asia.

Britain has no appreciable influence either in Vientiane or Hanoi; and though the Soviet Union has influence in Hanoi, it is unlikely to exercise it in a way that will be helpful to the American position.

The best hope for a stabilization of the situation in Laos lies, not in Anglo-Soviet intervention, but in the restraint which Hanoi might consider it in its own interests to exercise.

There is little doubt that Communist troops could push on, if Hanoi wanted them to, beyond the Plaine des Jarres to the royal capital of Luang Prabang or the administrative capital of Vientiane.

But there would be no advantage for the Communists in seizing those cities and toppling the neutralist government of Souvanna Phouma; and the disadvantages would be numerous. Apart from the lengthened supply and communication lines and the danger of attack from Thailand, the move into western Laos would be unpopular in Southeast Asia and would lose Hanoi some friends.

The Communists, in any case, have never pushed much beyond the Plaine des Jarres before, and they may decide to stay put now. Their course of action, in any case, is not

likely to be altered by action from London or Moscow.

President Nixon's statement on the Laotian situation was, on the whole, unsatisfying. It contained a number of assertions which were correct in themselves but which gave a misleading rather than an accurate picture of the situation.

The President acknowledged for the first time that the United States has been flying combat support missions in Laos. But he made no mention of the special army of Meo tribesmen, which has been organized, paid, supplied, guided and masterminded by the United States, through its Central Intelligence Agency.

It was that army, with transportation and combat support from U. S. planes, which seized the Plaine des Jarres from the Communists late last summer, at a time when the United States was saying very little about the Geneva agreement and the principle of neutrality.

To report on Laos without describing the costly and extensive efforts of the CIA in that country is to leave out the largest part of the story. ✓

It is also small comfort for the President to report that "no American stationed in Laos has ever been killed in ground combat operations" when there have been nearly 400 casualties in the air war and 400 planes have been lost.

We are pleased to have the President say that he is not planning any escalation of the war in Laos. We would be even more pleased if he would announce a deescalation, both in our official and unofficial activities in that country.

TOP SECRET CASUALTY

One U.S. Officer Was Killed in Battle With Reds in Laos

BY DON. A. SCHANCHE
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Capt. Joseph Bush, an American Army adviser to the Royal Army of Laos, was killed by North Vietnamese soldiers in ground combat at Muong Soui, on the western edge of the Plain of Jars, on Feb. 11, 1969. Before he was almost cut in half by enemy automatic weapons fire, Bush, a light-haired, crew-cut infantry officer, killed one Communist soldier.

I was spending the night in a Lao refugee village about 30 miles south of Muong Soui on the night Bush died. Had I not been on hand early the next morning when Bush's assistant, a Negro sergeant who was called "Smokes" was evacuated for treatment of a bullet wound in the right shoulder, I would never have learned of the incident. The U.S. Embassy in Vientiane immediately declared the captain's brave death top secret and has not confirmed it to this day.

President Nixon's statement that "no American stationed in Laos has ever been killed in ground combat operations," therefore, is incorrect.

Bush's death was not the only ground combat fatality in Laos. A half-dozen young Americans, working for the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and International Voluntary Services, have been killed in ambushes by Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese soldiers since the Geneva accords of 1962. One of them, Don Sjuström of Seattle, Wash., was shot in the head during a North Vietnamese raid on a Lao Army base called Nha Khang, north of the Plain of Jars, in January, 1968.

Sjuström, carrying a loaded shotgun for protection, was cut down as he tried to dash from the hut in which he had been sleeping to a nearby radio shack to call for help. As a refugee relief worker for USAID, he was not technically a combatant, but he did die in combat on the ground.

Don A. Schanche, a free-lance writer who visits Laos frequently, was living among the embattled Meo tribesmen there last winter, preparing his book, "Mister Pop: The Adventures of a Peaceful Man in a Small War" which will be published by David McKay Co. on April 13. He was formerly managing editor of the Saturday Evening Post, editor-in-chief of Holiday, military editor of Life, and an International News Service war correspondent in Korea. A few days after the fatal military action recounted here, he was ordered by the U.S. Embassy in Vientiane to leave the battle area, and embassy officials refused on grounds of secrecy to discuss the affair or to acknowledge officially the death of Captain Bush.

Bush and the 80 to 100 other U.S. Army men who worked under the diplomatic cover of "assistant military attaches" as unit advisers to the Lao army, were definitely engaged in ground combat when I was in northeast Laos, during much of the winter of 1969. At the time, the Royal Lao Army and the CIA-supported clandestine army of Meo tribesmen under Maj. Gen. Vang Pao, had suffered severe setbacks throughout the northeast provinces of Sam Neua and Xieng Khouang. They were engaged in tight holding actions, with the support of U.S. Air Force and Navy fighter-bombers, at mountain bases surrounding the strategic plain.

Thai Airlift

At Muong Soui, where Bush was attached to a Lao army unit made up of former neutralist soldiers, a battalion of Royal Thai artillery had been airlifted in to support a lagging counter thrust toward the

Communist stronghold on the plain. Another American army captain was attached to the Thai battalion, whose presence in Laos also was top secret.

On Feb. 11, Bush and his sergeant helped coordinate ground action involving Thai artillery, American air power and Lao infantrymen against a Communist force that was dug in on a road a few miles east of Muong Soui. After the day's action, the two retired to their own barbed-wire compound at the Muong Soui military headquarters. The Thai artillerymen and their adviser were bivouacked on a hill about 20 minutes' walk away.

Lightly Guarded

As the story was reconstructed the next day by Sgt. "Smokes" and other survivors who included 12 U.S. Air Force radar technicians and a USAID supply specialist named Bob Parshall, the fenced compound was only lightly guarded by four Lao soldiers. It contained a long

aluminum and wood hut used by Bush and Smokes as their living quarters and radio center. Nearby was another, smaller aluminum hut occupied by Parshall, and near that an Army squad tent had been erected only the day before to house the Air Force men. Immediately outside of the compound was the thatch-covered native house of the local military commander, a Lao colonel.

The midnight attack was a smoothly executed commando raid by a force of from 30 to 40 North Vietnamese soldiers armed with Soviet-made B-50 rockets and AK-47 automatic rifles. The first target was the Lao colonel's house, which collapsed in flames after a North Vietnamese tossed a hand grenade into an open window.

Infant Wounded

The explosion left the colonel and his wife with flesh wounds and ripped away the entire left buttock of their five-month-old son. Killed in the

8 March 1970

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WAR IN THE LAND OF UNANGRY MEN

Since gaining independence in 1953, Laos has sought only obscurity. A writer once called the gentle, friendly Laotians "the world's last unangry men."

Unfortunately, the country was given a front-row, center seat in Southeast Asia: Laos borders China, North and South Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand and Burma.

Despite international agreements signed in Geneva in 1954 and in 1962 which proclaimed its neutrality, Laos is now the site of a war involving the United States and North Vietnam.

Who is violating the Geneva accords, North Vietnam or the United States? The answer, most observers agree, is both—although both deny it.

The Geneva accord of 1962 was signed by 14 countries, including the United States and North Vietnam. (The United States did not sign the 1954 agreement.)

The treaty stipulated the terms under which the three-member International Control Commission (Canada, India and Poland) would enforce and observe the withdrawal of "foreign military personnel" from Laos.

The United States pulled out its advisers before the October, 1962, deadline. More than a month later, the ICC reported that only 40 North Vietnamese troops had filed past its checkpoint. Others slipped out secretly. But in all, an estimated 10,000 were left behind, a clear violation.

The Geneva Agreement also established a tripartite government, representing factions of the right, left and center. Neutralist Prince Souvanna Phouma headed the government.

Within two years, it fell apart when the four left-wing Pathet Lao representatives withdrew. Soon, the Pathet Lao guerrillas, backed by North Vietnamese troops, attacked government-held positions.

The Pathet Laos were experienced fighters, having battled right-wing Laotian forces (financed by the United States) throughout the late 1950s. The Geneva Agreement of 1962, Bernard Fall wrote, "left Laos as divided as ever . . . but with the key difference that the pro-Communist Laotian forces were 20 times larger and much better trained and equipped than in 1959."

The rebels soon captured the Plain of Jars and threatened to cut off the administrative capital of Vientiane from the royal capital of Luang Prabang.

In the spring of 1964, a State Department bulletin says, Souvanna requested "additional U.S. military assistance," and "the United States continued within the framework of the Geneva Agreement to supply military equipment and supplies . . . and reconnaissance flights."

But there was more. U.S. advisers were sent into Laos. The Central Intelligence Agency financed the establishment of a mercenary army of Meo tribesmen and set up headquarters in Long Cheng.

The Pentagon claims there are only 1,040 U.S. government employees living in Laos, and asserts that none are military personnel. But many others commute (from Thailand) and CIA men and former Green Berets have been seen in action advising Laotian commanders. Sen. Robert C. Byrd (D-W. Va.) recently said he had heard reports "that

American advisers are all but running the Laotian forces."

Newspapermen who slipped in unnoticed to the CIA base at Long Cheng reported seeing armed Americans in civilian clothes.

Even if the United States has no combat troops in Laos, the presence of these advisers is a violation, since the accord specifies that the ban on "foreign military personnel," includes "members of foreign military missions, foreign military advisers, technicians, observers . . . and foreign civilians."

The U.S. bombing raids are also a violation. They have two functions: in northern Laos, to hinder infiltration by North Vietnam into South Vietnam, and in northeastern Laos, to aid Laotian troops. North Vietnam now has 67,000 troops in the country, according to the Pentagon, and has taken over most of the fighting from the Pathet Laos.

For years, the United States would not admit that it was bombing inside Laos. In December, President Nixon admitted that the Ho Chi Minh trail in Laos was being hit, but only, he said, to strengthen the position of U.S. troops in South Vietnam.

The United States justifies its aid on the grounds that Premier Souvanna requested the help. Souvanna, himself, said last week that U.S. assistance was not a violation because the North Vietnamese troops entered the country first.

Two wrongs have not made a right in Laos. But they have helped make a war.

—STEVE HARVEY

Nixon Tries Diplomacy On Laos

WASHINGTON — The North Vietnamese and their Pathet Lao allies produced the first important indication last week that their offensive in Laos is intended to force the United States into political concessions there—and perhaps in Vietnam. From Hanoi, the Pathet Lao information bureau issued a five-point statement Friday demanding, in essence, that the United States withdraw from Laos completely and that a new coalition government be established under Pathet Lao domination.

The Pathet Lao proposal was similar to those that have been made by Hanoi and the Vietcong in the conflict in Vietnam—and that the United States has found unacceptable. But in Laos, Washington's bargaining position is markedly weaker. Congressional opposition to deeper American involvement in Laos, and pledges by the Administration that the United States will not commit itself to a wider war in Southeast Asia, limit President Nixon's room for maneuver.

At almost the same time that the Pathet Lao spoke up in Hanoi, President Nixon issued a 3,000 word statement on Laos from Key Biscayne, Fla. That statement, in the view of Washington observers, was primarily an effort by the Administration to retrieve something from the military and political reverses it has suffered in Laos—and the political losses it has sustained at home—over the last few weeks.

Mr. Nixon revealed a new diplomatic effort to stabilize the situation through appeals to the Soviet Union and Britain, co-chairmen of the Geneva Conference of 1962 that agreed to the accords providing for peace, neutrality, and independence for Laos.

On past experience, asking the Russians to restrain the North

Vietnamese promised little. The Soviet Union, while not encouraging Hanoi in Laos, has been reluctant to oppose operations there because Hanoi would turn to the Chinese for help. The Russians are anxious not to see an expansion of Chinese influence, either in North Vietnam or in Laos.

The President's statement was an effort to divert the steady criticism that has peppered the Administration from Capitol Hill. It tried to put the onus for the present tension in Laos on the North Vietnamese.

In a largely historical review of the American involvement there, the President disclosed little that had not been known before. The American objective in the landlocked country, the President said, was to "save American and allied lives in North Vietnam which are threatened by the continual infiltration of North Vietnamese troops and supplies along the Ho Chi Minh trail."

He stressed the search for peace throughout Indochina but nowhere did he contend that Laos itself is vital to United States national interests.

Among the notable omissions from the President's statement was a full explanation of how the present confrontation with the North Vietnamese came about or what the Administration would do if it found the diplomatic channel to resolve the conflict closed.

There was evidence here last week that the tension was provoked through miscalculations

by the North Vietnamese on one side and, on the other by the clandestine army of Maj. Gen. Vang Pao and his American advisers from the Central Intelligence Agency.

The President noted that the North Vietnamese had built up their forces in Laos to 67,000 men, far larger than ever before. Those soldiers, mostly in main-force divisions, have been better equipped and better armed with tanks and heavy artillery—and have been backed by more beligerent propaganda—than in earlier campaigns.

Last spring, the North Vietnamese pushed farther across the Plaine des Jarres than in previous offensives, leading authoritative sources here to conclude that the decision for the

present offensive was made many months ago.

Sources with access to intelligence estimates now believe that the North Vietnamese thought they could move with impunity. They saw the United States trying to disengage in Vietnam. Moreover, they were lulled by five years of desultory resistance from Laotian Government forces.

No Negotiations

Sources aware of policy decisions here said that the Administration could see no possibility of negotiating with Hanoi on Vietnam if the North Vietnamese totally broke the Geneva accords in Laos. The United States, they said, could also not permit Laos to become a safe haven for North Vietnamese operations in Vietnam or infiltration into Thailand. Hence, the clandestine army of General Vang Pao, which is financed by the C.I.A., was instructed to blunt the North Vietnamese offensive, but not to go beyond the five-year pattern of seasonal offensives.

General Van Pao, the former French army sergeant, caught the North Vietnamese off guard. Seeing a chance to break the back of the North Vietnamese, and encouraged by his C.I.A. advisers, he struck out westward across the Plaine of Jarres with the support of American air transport and bombing.

The general, an aggressive Meo mountaineer and not a passive Lao flatlander, overextended his forces but wanted to hang on to his conquered territory. That's where he miscalculated. The North Vietnamese, however, massed their forces to retake the plain and route the clandestine army. That brought the decision, after some delay, to bring in the American B-52 bombers in an attempt to slow the North Vietnamese ground advance.

The result, authoritative sources here said, was to put the North Vietnamese in a dominant position to overrun all of Laos at will. The official newspaper in Hanoi called the sweep of the Plaine of Jarres a "brilliant victory" and called for a march to a unified Laos and the overthrow of "the clique of traitors," meaning the Government of Premier Souvanna Phouma.

—RICHARD HALLORAN

6 MAR 1970

Laos Raids Feed Flames of War, Soviet Press Says; Laird Derided

Moscow—(UPI)—The Soviet press warned yesterday that U. S. air raids in Laos "are feeding the flames of war in Southeast Asia."

There was no Moscow response to President Nixon's plea for Russian help in scaling down the fighting.

An article in the weekly newspaper of the Soviet Journalists Union, *Life Abroad*, derided Defense Secretary Melvin R. Laird for reportedly saying that U. S. air operations in Laos were necessary because of Laos' proximity to North and South Vietnam.

It said Laird "thus wants one crime directed against peace and security to justify others."

Expansion Charged

"Facts show that Washington's present course in southeast Asia as well as in the Far East and the Pacific is aimed at extending U. S. expansion in key locations of this wide region," the Moscow newspaper said.

It charged that the United States was "seeking to strangle the patriotic forces in

Laos" and said American policy "keeps a whole army of Pentagon and CIA advisers there in violation of the Geneva agreements."

"Since there is no end in sight to the Vietnam war, American military may turn the entire Southeast Asia region into an area of aggression," the newspaper said.

Pravda Plays Up Dissent

Pravda, the official newspaper of the Soviet Communist Party, gave prominent display to Washington reports citing criticism of U. S. moves in Laos by Sens. George McGovern (D-SD) and J. William Fulbright (D-Ark).

The Soviet Union has special diplomatic responsibility and authority in Laos in its capacity as co-chairman, with Britain, of the 1962 Geneva Conference which sought to establish Laos as a neutral state.

In his policy statement Friday President Nixon said he had asked both British Prime Minister Harold Wilson and Soviet Premier Alexei N. Kosygin to open diplomatic channels aimed at ending the war in Laos.

Diplomatic sources in London said yesterday that Wilson was studying the letter over the weekend.

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Laos And Vietnam: Neutralize Them Both

The statement on Laos President Nixon was forced by congressional pressure to issue was aimed at calming fears that while ostensibly winding down the war in Vietnam we may be sliding into an equally evil war in Laos. Regardless of Mr. Nixon's assurance that no ground troops will be sent into Laos—something that was said about Vietnam, too, at one time—the real issue is broader than that. The question is why we should be in Laos at all.

Clearly Americans don't want ground troops sent in. But why should they tolerate a policy which allows the CIA to run a secret war with mercenary troops, which calls upon U.S. bombers to fly as many missions as were once flown against North Vietnam, which enlists air power from Navy carriers, which depends upon American military "advisers" (just like the advisers who preceded combat troops into Vietnam) whether in or out of uniform? If it is a mistake to commit combat troops to Laos, it is also a mistake to commit all these other military resources, and it should be the goal of American policy to liquidate the commitment as rapidly as possible.

The reason this has not been done is that the war in Laos is indissolubly linked to the war in Vietnam, by geography if by nothing else. To end our involvement in Laos it is necessary to end our involvement in Vietnam, and the simple truth is that a decision to do this has never been made by the Nixon Administration.

On the contrary, the Administration's policy of Vietnamization is intended to achieve the same goals—that is, the military defeat of the Viet Cong and the imposition of the Thieu-Ky government on the people of South Vietnam—that we sought to achieve by direct engagement in warfare. Not until our policy-makers adopt different goals can a genuine disengagement be expected, and not until the Vietnam war is ended can the Laos war be ended.

What is going on in Laos, then, is a direct reflection of the Administration's failure to

achieve a settlement of the war in Vietnam. And it has failed to achieve a settlement, not because of Hanoi intransigence as we are constantly being told, but basically because the Administration has not tried for a settlement on any realistic terms.

For many months now the signals have been flying to indicate that Hanoi and the NLF would be receptive to a bargain which set up a temporary coalition government not controlled by the Communists, and which maintained the separation between South and North Vietnam for at least ten years, until the people themselves by election decided what to do about it.

This would be a reasonable compromise and one which attained our announced goal of self-determination, but the Nixon Administration will not even discuss it. Instead, the Paris talks have been consistently depreciated and sole reliance for winding down the war has been reposed in a Vietnamization program which is bound to mean maintaining the American presence for years to come, if not forever.

In the 1962 Geneva agreements on Laos, President Kennedy properly accepted neutralization as a proper goal of American policy there. The 1962 agreements did not stick because we did not go further and accept neutralization as the proper objective in Vietnam; instead, we escalated the war, and made the continued involvement of Laos in the war inevitable. Mr. Nixon's appeal to Russia and Britain to help restore peace in Laos is rather fatuous; neither the Russians nor the British have troops fighting in Southeast Asia. The Americans should first get out of Vietnam to make such an appeal credible.

Today there can be no doubt that the American people would support neutralization as the objective in Vietnam. If the Nixon Administration would support it, instead of demanding a continued U.S. military presence in Southeast Asia, the Vietnam war could be ended, and at that moment the Laos war would simply disappear.

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S - 531,591

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STATINTL

Administration Cites Anew Laos's Importance To U.S.

By RICHARD DUDMAN

Chief Washington Correspondent
of the Post-Dispatch

WASHINGTON, March 7

AFTER YEARS of explaining that Laos is unimportant, the United States Government has gone back to the line that what happens there is vital to U.S. interests.

Ever since the Geneva Agreement of 1962, which was intended to neutralize the tiny landlocked country and put it under a coalition government, Laos has lapsed into the relative obscurity of a third-class trouble spot.

Every year since then, the Communist side in the endemic civil war has pressed forward toward the Mekong River, which divides Laos and Thailand, in a dry-season offensive that always could have taken over the whole country but never did.

Every year, in the wet summer months, the Royal Lao Army and an auxiliary army of mercenaries operated by the Central Intelligence Agency have pushed the Communist forces back toward China and North Vietnam. These government offensives, likewise, usually could have gone farther than they did.

Casualties have been few in this perennial tidal movement across the jungles and plains of the Laotian Piedmont. Each side faded back before the other's offensives. Neither waited for the other side's troops to get close enough to see the whites of their eyes.

A nineteenth century gag about Vienna was reapplied to Laos: "The situation is hopeless, but it's not serious."

THE LAST TIME Laos was elevated to a first-class trouble spot was in 1961 when it was the first international crisis to confront the late President John F. Kennedy. Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower had discussed Laos at length and in grave terms in their preinaugural talk.

Barely a month after taking office, Mr. Kennedy stood before three maps at a press conference on March 23, 1961, and pointed out how the Red tide had flooded across much of the country.

President Kennedy called for an end of "the present armed attacks by externally supported Communists." If they did not

stop, he said, "those who support a truly neutral Laos will have to consider their response."

In the standard mix of deference to allies, prudence about American involvement and assertion of American power, he said:

"Our response will be made in close co-operation with our allies and the wishes of the Laotian government. We will not be provoked, trapped or drawn into this or any other situation; but I know that every American will want his country to honor its obligations to the point that freedom and security of the free world and ourselves may be achieved."

This time around, Government officials all over town are busy briefing members of Congress and reporters once more on the importance of Laos.

PRESIDENT Richard M. Nixon put some of their interpretation on the public record in a statement yesterday from the Florida White House and admitted for the first time that U.S. support forces have been flying combat support missions in northern Laos.

He added a note of diplomatic drama by appealing publicly to the British and Soviet cochairmen of the 1962 Geneva Conference to help restore the agreement on Laotian neutrality.

Privately, the official word already had been that the enemy advance in Laos presented "a very tough situation." And a high Administration official had told Senator J. William Fulbright (Dem.), Arkansas, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, that the situation in Laos now was more serious than that in Vietnam.

The consistent key of this orchestration was one of prudent concern, with emphasis on prudence.

Concern over the importance of the crisis was expressed in a peculiarly roundabout way. Government officials no longer want to talk about Vietnam as being important, because the announced plan is to withdraw gradually. Certainly, no one wants to call Laos important in itself. But

the line is that Laos is important because what's going on there is integrally related to the war in Vietnam.

AS FOR prudence, the Administration line is that the U.S. involvement is a modest one and that it has been increased only in response to escalation by the Communist side. The use of B-52 heavy bombers in the fighting for the Plain of Jars is described as very limited and symbolic, as contrasted with the saturation bombing of the Ho Chi Minh trail in southern Laos.

A notable omission in what amounted to a presidential white paper on Laos was any mention of the number of American military men assigned to the war there, but based across the Mekong in Thailand.

News dispatches from Laos suggest that there is an element of subterfuge in the repeated denials by the President that there are no U.S. combat ground troops in the country. Three reporters who walked about 10 miles to the secret U.S. base at Long Cheng last week reported that American military advisers and trainers there were mostly former Green Berets who had been transferred temporarily to the CIA as civilian contract employees.

Mr. Nixon's assertion that he has no intention of putting U.S. ground forces in Laos echoed what other officials had been saying for a week to reassure anxious Senators. Actually, the sending of U.S. ground combat troops to either Laos or Thailand is prohibited by an amendment to the Military Appropriations Act, which was adopted overwhelmingly and which Mr. Nixon said later he approved.

IF THE Communist offensive has run its course, the crisis is over. If it continues, the Administration's view is that the enemy objective may be to open a new front because of its supposed difficulties in carrying on the war in Vietnam.

An additional possibility, officials say, is that Hanoi seeks to blackjack the Laotian government into halting U.S. bombing attacks on the Ho Chi Minh trail. The Pentagon insists that these raids are extremely effective, although the infiltration of men and supplies continues.

Still another possible enemy objective acknowledged by Administration officials is to stir up a new surge of antiwar senti-

PARADE
8 Mar 1970

PARADE'S SPECIAL

EDITED by LLOYD SHEARER

INTELLIGENCE REPORT

BECAUSE OF VOLUME OF MAIL RECEIVED, PARADE REGRETS IT CANNOT ANSWER QUERIES ABOUT THIS COLUMN.

LAOS AND THE U.S. Few men in government, however high or exalted their positions, have the strength of character to admit publicly, "I goofed."

The result is almost always a coverup of their wrong decisions and a denial of access to information revealing the truth.

Their refusal to tell the truth is generally rationalized on the grounds of "national security."

It is possible that the American public has learned more about the war in Southeast Asia from the press and TV than from all the agencies of government combined.

For example, what has the Government told the people about the war in Laos? Very little, except that we have committed no ground troops there.

From the press, however, we learn that U.S. advisers are running the Laotian army. U.S. helicopters are ferrying Laotian troops. U.S. planes are providing air support for the Royal Laotian army which is fighting the Communists. U.S. bombers from Thailand and Okinawa are bombing the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Laos day after day. The U.S. Air Force has lost more than 100 flyers over Laos. The U.S. is paying the salaries of thousands of mercenaries fighting for us in

Laos. The U.S. is spending countless millions year after year to prevent the Pathet Lao, the Communist guerrilla movement, from winning in Laos. The involvement of our CIA in Laos is deep, wide, and intense.

In 1960 the late President Kennedy said of Laos that we should stay out, that it is "the wrong war at the wrong

place and at the wrong time."

Times have changed, and perhaps our intervention in Laos is necessary to protect our western flank in Vietnam.

If that is the case, certainly the war-paying public, despite the protests of the U.S. State Department, should be told at least some truth of the American fighting role in Laos. What it is, how much it costs, what is happening there, who put us in Laos, why, and for how long.

U.S. Stumble Into Laos Rivals Fiction

By Stanley Karnow

Washington Post Foreign Service

HONG KONG—Historians striving to understand America centuries hence may well be baffled by a nation that was able to land men on the moon with pinpoint precision yet could stumble myopically into a situation as obscure as the latest crisis in Laos.

The untidy tale of U.S. involvement in Laos over the past 15 years has been a story of illusory objectives and topsy-turvy tactics that should really be described in novel form to be believable. The origin of this commitment was the attempt by the Eisenhower administration to transform a delightfully primitive country into an "anti-Communist bastion."

The purpose was to set up a buffer between Red China and Thailand, the keystone of the U.S. defense system in Southeast Asia, but it failed to recognize that Laos, still slumbering in medieval happiness, was unprepared to participate in the Cold War. As a consequence, its pristine society was disrupted.

Moreover, with the escalation of the conflict in neighboring Vietnam, Laos became an adjacent battlefield—with one significant difference. The difference was that while the United States was openly engaged in Vietnam, successive administrations in Washington strenuously sought to camouflage U.S. military activities in Laos.

A Mutual Fiction

THE IDEA BEHIND this fiction has been to conceal the fact that the Americans have been as guilty as the Communists of violating the 1962 Geneva agreement which guaranteed Laotian neutrality. That Hanoi never withdrew its legions from Laos after signing the Geneva accord is common knowledge. An estimated 50,000 North Vietnamese troops comprise the main Communist force in the country, and there are three or four Red Chinese battalions in northern Laos to protect coolies building roads.

And since the Communists adamantly refuse to admit their presence, the United States has felt compelled to deny that Central Intelligence Agency specialists train, advise and sometimes command Lao guerrillas supplied by unmarked aircraft on

charter from Air America and Continental Air Services.

The United States has also denied that it equips and finances Thai troops, who handle artillery, communications and other assignments for which Laotian soldiers lack the skill, as well as Philippine and Chinese Nationalist technicians.

Shrouded in secrecy as well for a long time were the U.S. bombings of Communist infiltration routes along the Ho Chi Minh Trail in the Laotian panhandle, even though these "armed reconnaissance flights," as they were euphemistically termed, exceeded in intensity the American air raids on North Vietnam that were halted in late 1968.

Within recent weeks, a new dimension in dissimulation has been reached in the Nixon administration's insistence, in the face of reliable evidence, that B-52s are not being employed to support the Meos, who are fighting unsuccessfully to defend the Plain of Jars north of Vientiane, the Laotian capital.

Though the chances are probably remote that Laos will turn into "another Vietnam," as Sen. J. W. Fulbright and other administration critics predict, President Nixon is now confronted by two challenges that have arisen out of the Laotian mess. First, if he determines that Prince Souvanna Phouma's government is threatened by the present Communist offensive, the President may feel obliged to undertake some kind of action to preserve the status quo. His options appear to be limited, however.

On the one hand, he cannot easily enlist Soviet assistance in persuading Hanoi to exercise restraint, since the North Vietnamese regularly blackmail the Kremlin by leaning toward Peking whenever Russian advice displeases them. Nor can Mr. Nixon strike a menacing pose—as President Kennedy did when he sent U.S. Marines into northern Thailand in early 1961—without appearing to contradict his own doctrine of adopting a lower silhouette in world affairs.

His best move for the moment, therefore, may be simply to watch and wait and hope that the Communists intend to push no further than to occupy areas of Laos that they previously held. One indication that the Communists are not trying to take

over the entire country is that they have refrained from moving against Thakhek, Paksane and Attapeu, southern towns they could capture with ease.

In a statement on Friday, moreover, they issued a five-point proposal clearly indicating that their objective is a political rather than a military solution to the Laotian problem—based, of course, on their own terms.

A Medieval Anachronism

THE TEMPTATION to believe almost anything about Laos is comprehensible, since the little kingdom has remained a fairyland despite external pressures to bring it into the 20th century. Its population of about three million is composed of valley Laotians ethnically akin to the Thais and a crazy quilt of mountain tribes like the Meos, Yaos and Lolos. Until a generation ago, when a French official penciled in its national borders, the country was divided into separate, virtually feudal kingdoms.

The art of politics in Laos, therefore, is essentially a matter of deals and accommodations between regional clans and interlocking families, and the notion of ideology is as alien as a railroad train. The Prime Minister, Souvanna Phouma, is the half-brother of the Communist Pathet Lao leader, Prince Souphanouvong, and both are cousins of King Savang Vatthana. The mother of a former prime minister, Prince Somsanith, is Souvanna Phouma's half-sister. Somsanith is married to another of Souvanna's sisters—thus making him his own mother's brother-in-law.

So it is that any government in Laos is a collection of brothers, uncles, cousins and relations by marriage, and their primary function is less to govern than to preserve the internal balance of power.

In the late 1940s, rebuffed in their appeals for U.S. help against France, a few nationalist-minded Laotians like Souphanouvong gained the assistance of Ho Chi Minh's Vietminh in organizing the Pathet Lao. And in 1954, the North Vietnamese managed at the Geneva conference to acquire effective control of the northernmost Laotian provinces of Phongsaly and Samnuea.

ALBANY, GA.
HERALD

E - 30,276
S - 30,638

MAR 7 1970

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN LAOS?

Despite the protestations of the American Government to the contrary, it would appear that the United States is becoming deeply, perhaps inextricably, involved in the fighting in Laos. President Nixon, who once earlier in his Administration declared he did not think "the public interest would be served by any further discussion" of Laos, now has found it necessary to issue a lengthy position paper denying the presence of U. S. "ground combat" forces there.

Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird has pledged solemnly that the President of course will go to the Congress for authority if he contemplates any change in the military involvement of the United States in Laos, although that in itself is strictly limited. As Secretary Laird spelled it out just the other day, "The President has said that we are using United States air power as far as the interdiction of supplies and material coming into Vietnam are concerned.

"The mission of air power, as far as Laos is concerned, on the Ho Chi Minh trail, has been handled by the President of the United States and we have used it in connection with the war in Vietnam. We have of course flown reconnaissance missions over Laos on a continuing basis. These reconnaissance missions have been accomplished by armed escort. The President has made it clear the mission of our air power as far as the war in Vietnam, and that is all that I care to say on it at this time."

Yet, surely, the issue is not so much American air power in Laos, and its operational techniques, but American personnel power, in the form of "advisers" or whatever, or covertly-employed Green Beret forces or even Central Intelligence Agency professional soldiers or adventurers for hire. According to growing reports filtering back from the fastnesses of jungle and plain, more and more crew-cut types are being seen everywhere among the Laos and the

Maos who in turn must be distinguished from the North Vietnamese who are, beyond any disputation, running roughshod over much of the geography of Laos.

Perhaps some of the reports are fanciful, but others doubtless have a measure of validity. And what the situation sums to is something straight out of Terry and the Pirates, although we have not as yet detected the machinations of a slinky Dragon Lady who is wowing the boys back at the cañteen (provided this concept has survived the old Conrad novels.)

Yet Laos, like Vietnam, may not be an entity unto itself. It is all of a piece. The Geneva Agreements have been abrogated quite cynically by the Communists, and while that circumstance does not justify a compensating abrogation by the United States, at least it makes the American effort more understandable. With the enemy using Laos as a sanctuary and as a logistical lifeline, this country has every right to attack him, and most particularly since he attacks that ele-

which is not Communist-controlled in a highly-splintered political condition.

Even so, Laos, like Vietnam, may not prove ultimately to be a question of rights. Rather, it may hinge eventually on what the American people will support in the way of a foreign policy that continues to stick fingers into the leaking dikes of Southeast Asia. They do not, clearly, like the war in Vietnam. They voted for Richard M. Nixon chiefly because he proposed to end that war, and to do so on some honorable terms that he did not specify.

We are now withdrawing — slowly — from Vietnam. Are we now escalating swiftly in Laos? The President surely was well advised to deny such reports in speaking to his countrymen. Otherwise, he might soon have been peering across Lyndon Johnson's credibility gap that cost the Texan the Presidency.

7 MAR 1970

STATINTL

Cost of 'Secret' War in Laos Is Secret Well-Kept by Nixon

This is the second of two articles examining the growth of United States involvement in Laos.

BY JAMES YUENGER
AND FRED FARRAR
(Chicago Tribune Press Service)

Washington, March 6—By some estimates, the United States is 250 million dollars a year, or more, in Laos. Only a few men in the government know the exact figure, and they're not telling.

But a look at a few statistics that have emerged helps to clarify the extent of American involvement in the landlocked southeast Asian nation.

For instance, the United States spent 50 million dollars in Laos last year in economic aid. A portion of this amount—7 or 8 million—went for "refugee relief."

Means Population Moves

This meant moving the population out of areas threatened by North Vietnamese and Pathet Lao troops, providing them with food, clothing, and medicine, and resettling them in areas considered safe.

More specifically, it meant moving them from the strategic Plain of Jars, which the Communists recently recaptured. They had lost it last fall in a surprise offensive, heavily backed by American planes, that marked a sharp upsurge in United States military activity.

On the question of military aid, which constitutes by far the largest amount of American help, an army spokesman said it's getting more sophisticated all the time.

Ships M-16 Rifles

Once it went mainly for trucks, communications equipment, and support materials. Now the Nixon administration is shipping M-16 rifles there.

"And you can bet the first to get them will be Vang Pao's people," said the army source.

Pao is the doughty, charismatic leader of the 15,000 Meo tribesmen who

royal Laotian government's best fighting force. The way the United States is helping him illustrates the basic change in the nature of the Laotian conflict.

For many years the Meos fought a guerrilla conflict with communist troops in northeastern Laos. It was a see-saw war, with rainy-season military inactivity followed by dry-season offensives by Communists intent on expanding their network of supply lines along the Ho Chi Minh trail into South Viet Nam.

250 Sorties Daily

The guerrilla aspects remain, but for the last year or so, the Laotians have been assisted by American air sorties—estimated at around 250 a day now in the Plain of Jars alone—that have drawn outcries from congressmen who are worried about the prospects of "another Viet Nam."

The tactical strikes in northeast Laos were an open secret even before Nixon's admission in Florida today that "combat support missions" to aid Laotian forces were being flown. However, the President refrained from listing their full extent—an omission which may bring renewed congressional charges that the administration should reveal more details.

The Pentagon says that in October of 1968, the last month before bombing of North Viet Nam was halted, American planes dropped 122,000 tons of bombs in southeast Asia.

Bombs Fall on Laos

The bombing figure for January of this year was 117,000 tons. The assumption is that bombs once dropped on North Viet Nam, are now falling on Laos.

What this adds up to is that the grim reality of super-power politics no longer permits the romantic reference to Laos as "the land of the million elephants and the white parasol."

Rather, it has been put into a strategic perspective as a buf-

North Viet Nam and Red China, blocking communist access to Thailand on the south, Burma to the west, and the remainder of southeast Asia.

An Annual Event

Every spring in recent years the Communists have regained control over the Plain of Jars, with its command of the routes to Luang Prabang, the royal capital, and Vientiane, the Laotian administrative capital.

An administration official says the unknown factor today is whether the Communists, having lost the Plain of Jars once, will be content with regaining it, or if they will seek to push farther into Laos.

American officials guess that the North Vietnamese and Pathet Lao forces will remain where they are, with the possible exception of a few forays beyond their lines for propaganda purposes.

See Nothing to Gain

"For nine years they've been coming up to the spot where they are now," the official said. "They haven't gone farther yet, and they don't have anything to gain by taking all of Laos."

Informed sources say the Communists are reestablishing the supply lines to North Viet Nam that were broken last fall. It is believed they would find Laos a nuisance to administer because of its lack of national identity, and that a take-over there would divert communist energies from the main goal of maintaining pressure on South Viet Nam.

In any event, Sen. J. W. Fulbright (D., Ark.), who is among the most vociferous critics of United States involvement in Viet Nam, quotes "high administration officials" as having said that "Laos is even more important than Viet Nam."

Fulbright would not identify the officials, but his comment came shortly after testimony by Richard Helms, director of the central intelligence agency, before a subcommittee of the

Government officials maintain strenuously that no parallel can be drawn between involvement in Laos today and American activities in Viet Nam before the war in that area became a hot one.

They insist that the advisers, reportedly paid by the CIA, are simply advising. The advisers [now called attaches by the American government] in the early days in Viet Nam, they explain, were in on the actual fighting.

A Partisan Target

The Laos involvement is being made a partisan target by the same senators who were in the vanguard of congressional doves who opposed the Viet Nam war, it is said.

Fulbright said he is "scared to death." Sen. Mike Mansfield (D., Mont.) said the United States is in Laos "up to its neck." Sen. George McGovern (D., S. D.) called for a special closed Senate session to evaluate the Laotian involvement.

Matter of Credibility

The growing criticism on Capitol Hill suggests that Democrats want to make Laos the basis for a credibility gap in the Republican administration.

But McGovern has said that Congress—for failure to keep an eye on Laos—"doesn't have clean hands," either.

Congressmen report that so far they have not received a significant amount of mail from constituents who are worried about Laos.

Violation of Accords

Government officials do concede privately that to disclose the total amount the United States spends in Laos would be tantamount to an admission that this country—for whatever reason—has, like Hanoi, violated the 1962 accords establishing Laotian neutrality.

Statements about American aid by Nixon, Defense Secretary Melvin Laird, and other high officials always are carefully accompanied by reminders that the Communists have clearly violated the accords, and that the aid is in response to requests by the neutralist prime minister, Souvanna Phouma.

7 MAR 1970

STATINTL

Nixon's hands tied politically

U.S. 'put on spot' by Laos

By Joseph C. Harsch
Special correspondent of
The Christian Science Monitor

Washington

This capital was braced for a second "Tet offensive" in Vietnam in February, but instead it got an offensive in Laos in March—and the alternative is proving fully as troublesome and perhaps even more difficult to manage.

Indeed, Hanoi's strategy is providing another example of how a small country can maneuver around the bulk of a much larger country.

The general situation is as follows:

There was still ample American ground strength in Vietnam in February to cope with another Tet offensive, in spite of troop withdrawals to date. And there still is ample strength to handle any ground effort which Hanoi is liable to launch at any time during the spring in Vietnam itself.

There also may be enough strength in the Army of South Vietnam to deal with what

Principle of disengagement

may come after. True, this is a debatable proposition. However, official Washington increasingly believes that the armies of Saigon may make the grade after all.

But the capacity of Washington, and its clients, to cope with a new Hanoi initiative in Laos is quite another matter. The Laotians all along have exhibited a remarkable disinterest in fighting. And Washington is blocked by the existing political situation in the United States from doing very much to counter any new Hanoi initiative in Laos.

Last Nov. 3 in his nationwide address on Vietnam, President Nixon won the consent of his countrymen to pursue disengagement from the Vietnam war by gradual stages. But the tacit compact between President and people requires (A) that he deescalate the Vietnam war, and (B) avoid any new wars like Vietnam.

It is a clear part of this tacit compact, well understood by everyone in politics in this city, that Mr. Nixon must not get himself caught in another war deep in the jungles of Asia if he wants to enjoy the comparative freedom of maneuver which has been his since Nov. 3.

And last week the Democrats in the Senate were industrious at reminding him of this fact. Some Republicans were also involved.

Reds back Laos fight

Page 4

Thus when the North Vietnamese fielded a substantial force capable not only of taking the Plain of Jars but also of pushing well beyond if it chooses, they were moving against Mr. Nixon's weakness, not his strength.

He is hobbled by the political situation at home from answering the new threat with anything more than bombs; and bombing in Southeast Asia has never yet proved to be very effective.

The strategy of the Hanoi operation is obvious, and markedly effective. It is a clear and impressive answer to the Nixon strategy.

Mr. Nixon has been withdrawing from Vietnam at a pace which he hoped would give Saigon time to get ready to take over the main task of defending itself.

The chances that this strategy may work have been improving. As they have improved, the need for a compromise settlement at the Paris peace talks has declined.

The fact is that Washington is not now seeking a compromise settlement, because it now thinks it can get what it wants in Vietnam without paying a price at the Paris bargaining table.

What Mr. Nixon wants in Vietnam is the survival of a non-Communist regime in Vietnam at least through November of 1972. And of course if the Thieu regime can survive that long it has a respectable chance of surviving longer.

So as reports from Saigon to the President have grown more confident he has been under less need to seek a compromise in Paris. The only compromise which would interest Hanoi would be one which provided for a coalition government in Saigon.

Washington is not now interested in a coalition government in Saigon. Hence, there is nothing to talk about in Paris.

But this was a situation which was getting steadily worse for Hanoi. Now, we see the answer they have worked out.

moves

continued

CLEVELAND, OHIO
PLAIN DEALER

M - 409,414

S - 545,032

MAR 7 1970

Laos—the Bind Gets Tighter

President Nixon's appeal to the Soviet Union and Great Britain to help restore peace in Laos under terms of the 1962 Geneva accords is understandable.

The Vietnam conflict is spilling over. Laos provides a convenient corridor (the Ho Chi Minh Trail) for North Vietnam to send men and supplies southward. Laos itself is strife-torn. American intervention in Laos, planned or not, may be forced as self-protection.

In advance of that event, Mr. Nixon yesterday asked for other nations to intercede, to remove the appearance of unilateral action which has marked the United States presence in Southeast Asia.

But there were other reasons, more pressing, for the President's message from Key Biscayne.

Congress must be alert to the possibility it will have to determine soon its position on Laos. There have been indications of this. Defense Secretary Melvin Laird and Secretary of State William Rogers have appeared before select committees of Congress to brief them on Laos. Perhaps significantly, even such an affirmed pacifist as Senate Majority Leader Michael J. Mansfield expressed pleasure at the manner of these presentations if not the entire content.

If the administration, in the interest of national security, has not been able to "level" with the American people then possibly it has done so with the people's representatives.

Not the least of the headaches in Washington has been the credibility gap in recent

years, a gap between the White House and the public.

It was inherited largely by Mr. Nixon from the administration of President Johnson. In Mr. Johnson's presidential years the public developed a great distrust to reassuring words from high officials and military experts who predicted quick victory and swift withdrawal of American troops from Vietnam. Instead, there were escalation and more casualties.

Mr. Nixon, trying to buck this distrust, has set up timetables for gradual withdrawal of specific numbers of troops consistent with the safety of American forces, has pledged Vietnamization of the war as well as keeping Congress informed and seeking congressional help in future decisions.

The end run through Laos by the men of Hanoi now complicates the picture. It has been revealed that American intervention — "at the request of the Royal Laotian government," according to Mr. Nixon — at least has begun.

Whether the Americans involved there are civilians, soldiers or Green Berets working for the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the point is plain. The United States will have to make a decision soon. Congress better be prepared to get further involved in Laos to protect the phased withdrawal from Vietnam or to abandon what could become a losing game.

It's only a long chance that any other nations will help pull this nation's chestnuts out of the fire by agreeing with Mr. Nixon to guarantee the neutrality of Laos.

BEST COPY

Available

NEWS

M - 83,477

S - 101,081

MAR 7 1970

The Laotian tar baby

The American people, as has become routine in Asian matters, are being soothed with weasel words about Laos, the tiny country next door to Vietnam.

Secretary Laird assures us that there are no U. S. "ground combat troops" there, and no plans to send them without congressional consultation. It only remains for Mr. Nixon to tell us, as Lyndon Johnson told us in 1964, "I am not going to send American boys to do what Asian boys ought to do for themselves."

But these familiar reassurances are themselves frightening. They smack of the reassurances that heralded Vietnam, and it is no wonder that Senator Fulbright is "scared to death" when he hears them. So are we.

They always begin, these unconstitutional wars, when the brain trusters at State or Defense get it into their heads that even in the age of ICBM an inconsequential little Asian country is, as they say, "vital to American security." ("High officials," according to Mr. Fulbright, have confided to his committee that Laos is "even more important than Vietnam," which assumes that Vietnam was important in the first place.)

In Laos, a war that comes and goes with the seasons, it is the CIA's puppet army against the Pathet Lao, who are in turn backed by the North Vietnamese. Last year, the CIA's minions captured the Plain of Jars, but turn about is fair play, it seems, and this year the Pathet Lao has captured it — so that this year, for the first time in the history of the Laotian war, American B-52s are bombing supply lines in northern Laos as well as the Ho Chi Minh trail, which they have pounded to small effect for years.

It is neither confirmed nor denied in Washington, but the U. S. is suspected of paying for a 30,000 man "secret army" fighting for the Laotian government, and is it to be supposed that they are not well attended by U. S. "advisers"?

As far as world-wide military and diplomatic policy go, there may be plausible reasons for being thus involved in Laos, although as was the case in the early stages in Vietnam the government knows best and refuses to consult the people of which it is theoretically the servant.

For our part, we suggest that Laos is not worth the bones of a single American. We suggest that Laos is leading us unwillingly into another Vietnam. And we suggest, moreover, that an administration that

scenario. First come the "advisers"; then come the bombings to protect the "advisers" and their advisees; then, as at Pleiku barracks, comes a terroristic provocation. The President and his advisers respond, as Johnson and Bundy and McNamara responded to the Pleiku incident, by stepping up the bombing. Then you get a big incident like the Gulf of Tonkin which is seized as an excuse for sending the Marines. And then our fists are stuck in the tar baby for good; or as James Reston once put it, the fly has caught the flypaper.

This fateful spiral could be more bearable to contemplate if there were any sign that our expenditure of over \$100 billion and 40,000 American lives in Vietnam had bolstered a decent, democratic regime there (as opposed to Thieu and Ky, who jail their critics without trial and shut down critical newspapers), or had even stabilized the military-political situation so that the U. S. could withdraw with the sense of a job well done.

But the key point just now is the smiling evasions of Mr. Laird. We are being taken for a ride and have no way of getting to the brake. As Rep. Allard Lowenstein told a Guilford College audience the other night, this country does not relish wars about which it is not consulted and to which it does not consent. The Vietnam war, for that very reason, came close to tearing this country apart two years ago; it utterly destroyed Lyndon Johnson and a Laotian facsimile will destroy Richard Nixon in the same way.

Mr. Nixon's failure thus far to "end" the Vietnam war, as he solemnly pledged, needs only the added touch of a similar new war on the Asian mainland to touch off a major domestic explosion. Mr. Nixon asked for time; he has had a year and two months. He asked the war's critics to be patient and the patience is remarkable, although it has produced no evidence to support the Johnson-Nixon-Agnew theory that it is the critics, and not the warmakers, who prolong the war.

So we fully share the fears of Senator Fulbright about the secret maneuvers in Laos, not only dreading a second war on the Asian mainland but dreading what a second go-round of deceitful executive warmaking can do to this country. American patience with this kind of sly leadership is not inexhaustible, and the present silence should not be interpreted by Mr. Nixon as consent. When the reckoning comes, it is not the wrath of a people twice deceived.

E - 110,623
S - 149,331
MAR 1970

CRANSTON KEYNOTES CDC EVENT

Laos War Escalation

By BOB HOUSER
Political Editor

FRESNO — U.S. Sen. Alan Cranston charged here Friday night America is financing a secret and escalating war in Laos and that President Nixon is "copying the Communists" in violation of the Geneva accords.

Keynoting a three-day candidate endorsing convention of the California Democratic Council, Cranston said there are clear signs the Laos escalation parallels the Vietnam escalation of 1964, thus illustrating a Nixon Administration "double risk policy that could keep American troops in Southeast Asia for years."

THE AIR war over Laos has jumped from 4,500 American sorties per month during the time we were bombing North Vietnam to between 12,500 to 15,000 per month now, Cranston said. He did not reveal the source of the figures.

Mercenaries equipped, trained and paid by Americans are Meo tribesmen, commanded by Lao officers, according to Cranston. "The Administration has between 15,000 and 40,000 of them on the payroll," he said.

"Oddly, we are copying the Communists in this affair. They are violating the Geneva accords but they won't admit it. So we won't admit that we are violating the accords either. The last thing I expected to catch Richard Nixon doing was copying the Communists," said Cranston.

The "dirty work" of American-paid mercenaries and of civilian pilots hired by the CIA and AID to fly mercenaries and supplies around Laos is easily covered up, the senator said. Planes shot down are lost in "bad weather conditions"; whether friendly villages are hit "or whether women and children in unfriendly villages are burned to death, nobody who counts will ever see the results—and since nobody knows, nobody need care."

"Laos is, short, a convenient place for our minor league McInternicks to defend their own self-determined concepts of our national interests," Cranston said.

CRANSTON hit Laos Ambassador G. McMurtrie Godley for stifling and arresting newsmen who reported on American air operations out of Laos. "The secrecy of this dirty little war has probably given Ambassador Godley the illusion that he is a Roman proconsul. It's no wonder then that he speaks more like Pontius Pilate than an American official. That is the kind of mentality that got us into the Southeast Asian quagmire in the first place."

The Nixon Administration, Cranston charged, still mistakenly seeks victory in Vietnam. "My fear," he said, "is that 'Vietnamization' has become just another way of paying foreign troops to fight a war we want fought . . . King George used Hessians . . . Richard Nixon will use the Vietnamese."

He said Nixon's gradual withdrawal plan and the unprecedented attack on the mass media "are two devices the President is using to dampen criticism of the Vietnam war."

SENATOR Cranston urged getting all American troops out of Vietnam as rapidly as can be accomplished with their safety in mind, and by an announced timetable, not a secret one.

"A secret timetable is not a timetable at all. It is a device for an administration to claim credit for the things it does, and to hide from the public all that it isn't doing or could be doing faster."

The scenario, said Cranston, "is alarming. The war goes on in Vietnam and in Laos. The kind of thinking which caused it in one administration (President Johnson's) now permeates the new administration and the end is not in sight."

He said the Nixon Administration "is not telling it the way it is when it says no American military personnel have been engaged in combat on the ground in Laos."

CDC President John Burton, a San Francisco assemblyman, who made the convention an open one by inviting Democratic delegates whether or not they are CDC affiliated, wiped out any intimation that the group might be moderating in its posture.

IN A NEWS conference, he said CDC is not self-conscious over being called controversial because "CDC normally has been proven to be right."

Burton said "We've got to start thinking about the distribution of wealth. You won't solve violence until you solve economic inequities. We should take a hard look at possible nationalization of the oil industry. Oil is taken from the ground and the ground belongs to all of us, not just a few."

He said the route to Democratic Party success includes registration of the poor, the elderly and the disadvantaged plus convincing the middle class of the hoodwinking Gov. Ronald Reagan is giving them.

CONGRESSMAN John V. Tunney of Riverside, a self-styled moderate in this liberal den, told newsmen he seeks the CDC endorsement for his U.S. Senate candidacy because a candidate for statewide office must make an appeal to all factions of the Democratic Party "and I feel my candidacy represents the main stream."

Tunney acknowledged that the CDC, over the past few years, has demonstrated that it is more liberal than the party as a whole. He said that winning CDC endorsement would indicate the organization is interested in his program and platform and in having a winner against Republican incumbent George Murphy. His more liberal primary opponent, Rep. George Brown, of Monterey Park, is favored to win CDC support at Sunday's final session.

STATINTL

THE GREAT SOUTH ASIAN WAR

MICHAEL KLARE

Mr. Klare, a staff member of the North American Congress on Latin America, is completing a book on counterinsurgency planning in the United States.

To gain a world-historical perspective on the war in Vietnam, one must see it as but one episode in a Great South Asian War that began almost immediately after World War II, and can be expected to continue into the 1970s, if not well beyond them. The Great War has already encompassed the Indo-Chinese War of Independence (1946-54), the guerrilla war in Malaya (1948-60), intermittent warfare in Laos (continuing), guerrilla skirmishes in Thailand (continuing), and other armed struggles in Burma, Malaysia and Indonesia. Combatants in these conflicts have included, in addition to troops of the countries named, the armies of Great Britain, France, Australia, New Zealand, South Korea, Nationalist China and, of course, the United States.

These episodes constitute a common war not only because they occupy overlapping zones in a single theatre of war but also because they spring from a common cause: the determination of the advanced industrial nations of the West (led by the United States) to intensify their control over the destinies of the underdeveloped lands of Asia. The Western presence in South Asia is naturally a military and economic challenge to Communist China, whose real or imagined influence has been a factor in each of these struggles. But it is not the threat of Chinese bellicosity that lends unity to all these episodes; it is rather the determination of the region's indigenous peoples to secure a future that will be free of foreign control. Because the nations of South Asia are frozen in a state of underdevelopment, and because national boundaries (which, more often than not, were established by European powers) do not always conform to ethnic distribution, these conflicts often take the form of "insurgencies"—i.e., local struggles against centralized authority—and the response to them has been a succession of "counterinsurgencies." Although the doctrine of counterinsurgency was originally formulated to substitute a strategy of "limited warfare" for the obsolete strategies of "all-out" (i.e., nuclear) warfare, in South Asia counterinsurgency threatens to become *unlimited* in its duration.

At the end of World War II, the United States and its allies in Western Europe agreed to sanction the re-establishment of one another's spheres of influence in Asia. The United States, having conquered Japan, was to be dominant in the western Pacific (China, Japan, the Philippines, etc.); France would remain in Indo-China, and Britain in the Indian Ocean area (India, Burma, Malaya, Singapore, etc.). The Allies also apportioned responsibility for the maintenance of a defense perimeter, corresponding to their colonial holdings, which encircled the eastern half of Asia from Korea to Kashmir, and pledged to assist one another if any point on the perimeter came under heavy attack. This "gentleman's agreement" was soon put to the test, for the restoration of colonial regimes in South Asia (revoking wartime promises of independence) produced guerrilla warfare throughout the region. Several countries won their independence this way, where continued occupation would have been unprofitable (Burma) or beyond the capacity of the home economy (Indonesia). But in Southeast Asia proper, the colonialists were prepared to engage in protracted counterinsurgency struggles to maintain their control of the area's resources. In Malaya it took Britain (with the aid of Australia and Gurkha tribesmen) twelve years to force the last remnants of the Malayan Races Liberation Army across the border into Thailand. In Indo-China, France faced an even more formidable foe. In 1950, confronted with a deteriorating military situation in Vietnam and growing discontent at home, France appealed to the United States to honor its commitment and help prevent a breach of the Asian defense perimeter. Although the United States had already deployed its troops in South Korea to protect the northern flank of the perimeter, it nevertheless agreed to supply France with arms and badly needed funds (the total U.S. contributions to the French military struggle in Indo-China amounted to \$2.6 billion, or 80 per cent of the cost of the war).

Despite this help, the Viet Minh won at Dienbienphu, and the French army withdrew from Southeast Asia, leaving a substantial military vacuum at the mid-point of the Asian defense perimeter. The United States—which until this time had considered Southeast Asia to be of secondary importance to its Pacific territories—quickly moved in. The French colonial

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MAR 7 1970

An Unresponsive 'Clarification'

According to President Nixon, it is false to charge that the U. S. is escalating the war in Laos; North Vietnam is to blame. It is wrong to suggest that the Air Force operates independently over Laos; the bombers fly missions only on request of the Royal Laotian government.

These are among the assertions made by Mr. Nixon in his statement on Laos yesterday. They echo most of his public declarations on Vietnam. But they do not constitute, or even begin to describe, a practical policy for peace in either nation.

In some of its sections, the President's "explanation" relies more on legalistic language than on the whole

truth. The families of the U. S. air crewmen lost in the war, for example, will hardly be solaced by the report that "no American stationed in Laos has ever been killed in ground combat."

But perhaps more fundamentally, the President continues to maintain that the interests of the Royal Laotian government and the still more imperious South Vietnamese government are also those of the U. S. government.

And in that context, as American pilots and CIA "advisers" support the Laotian army, as the Thieu regime in Saigon ruthlessly jails its political foes, the President's expressed hope that "a genuine quest for peace in Indochina can now begin" has a futile, reminiscent sound.

Text of Statement Issued by President Nixon on U.S. Policy and Activity in Laos

KEY BISCAYNE, Fla., March 6 (UPI)—Following is the text of a statement by President Nixon today on the history and present nature of United States involvement in Laos:

In light of the increasingly massive presence of North Vietnamese troops and their recent offensive in Laos, I have written letters today to British Prime Minister Wilson and Soviet Premier Kosygin asking their helping in restoring the 1962 Geneva agreements for that country.

As co-chairmen of that conference, the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union have particular responsibilities for seeing that its provisions are honored. My letters note the persistent North Vietnamese violations of the accords and their current offensives; support the Laotian Prime Minister's own current appeal to the co-chairmen for consultations; urge the co-chairmen to work with other signatories of the Geneva accords; and pledge full United States cooperation.

Hanoi's most recent military build-up in Laos has been particularly escalatory. They have poured over 13,000 additional troops into Laos during the past few months, raising their total in Laos to over 67,000. Thirty North Vietnamese battalions from regular division units participated in the current campaign in the Plain of Jars with tanks, armored cars and long-range artillery. The indigenous Laotian Communists, the Pathet Lao, are playing an insignificant role.

North Vietnam's military escalation in Laos has intensified public discussion in this country. The purpose of this statement is to set forth the record of what we found in January, 1969, and the policy of this Administration since that time.

What We Found

A. The 1962 Accords

When we came into office, this Administration found a highly precarious situation in Laos. Its basic legal framework had been established by the 1962 accords entered into by the Kennedy Administration.

Laos has been a battleground for most of the past 20 years. In 1949 it became a semi-independent state within the French Union. The Pathet Lao Communists rebelled against the Government in the early Nineteen-fifties, and fighting continued until the 1954 Geneva settlements ended the Indochina war. Laos at that time became an independent neutral state. The indigenous Communists, the Pathet Lao, nevertheless retained control of the two northern provinces. Since then, this small country has been the victim of persistent subversion and finally invasion by the North Vietnamese.

In May, 1961, negotiations for a Laotian settlement opened in Geneva, with Governor Harriman as the chief American negotiator. During the course of those long negotiations fighting continued and the Communists made further advances. Faced with a potential threat to Thailand, President Kennedy ordered 5,000 marines to that country in May, 1962.

Finally, in July, 1962, after 14 months of negotiations, 14 nations signed the Geneva accords providing for the neutralization of Laos. Other signatories besides the United States included the Soviet Union, Communist China, North Vietnam, the United Kingdom, France, the Southeast Asian nations most directly involved and the members of the International Control Commission, Canada, India and Poland.

These accords came on month after the three contending forces within Laos announced agreement on the details of a coalition government composed of the three major political factions and headed by the neutralist, Prince Souvanna Phouma. North Vietnam claimed that it favored a coalition government. Both North Vietnam and the Soviet Union backed Prince Souvanna for his new post. The present Government of Laos thus has been the one originally pro-

posed by the Communists. In approving the 1962 arrangements, the Kennedy Administration in effect accepted the basic formulation which had been advanced by North Vietnam and the Soviet Union for a Laotian political settlement.

Before the ink was dry on the 1962 Geneva documents, and despite the fact that they embodied most of its own proposals, North Vietnam started violating them. In compliance with the accords, the 666 American who had been assisting the Royal Lao Government withdrew under I.C.C. supervision. In contrast, the North Vietnamese passed only a token 40 men through I.C.C. checkpoints and left over 6,000 troops in the country.

A steadily growing number of North Vietnamese troops have remained there ever since, in flagrant violation of the Geneva accords. They climbed to about 33,000 in mid-1967, 46,000 in mid-1968 and 55,000 in mid-1969. Today they are at an all-time high of some 67,000 men.

These are not advisors or technicians or attaches. They are line units of the North Vietnamese Army conducting open aggression against a neighbor that poses no threat to Hanoi.

In addition, since 1964, over a half-million North Vietnamese troops have crossed the "Ho Chi Minh Trail" in Laos to invade South Vietnam. This infiltration route provides the great bulk of men and supplies for the war in South Vietnam.

The political arrangements for a three-day government survived only until April, 1963, when the Pathet Lao Communist leaders departed from the capital and left their cabinet posts vacant. Fighting soon resumed and since then there have been cycles of Communist offensives and Royal Laotian Government counteroffensives. The enemy forces have been led and dominated throughout by the North Vietnamese. In recent years Hanoi has provided the great majority of Communist troops in Laos.

North Vietnam appears to have two aims in Laos. The first is to insure its ability to use Laos as a supply route for North Vietnamese forces in South Vietnam. The second is to weaken and subvert the Royal Lao Government —

7 MAR 1970

STATINTL

Nixon Expected to Fill State Department Post

By RICHARD HALLORAN

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, March 6 — Authoritative sources in the Administration report that President Nixon intends to name David M. Abshire as Assistant Secretary of State for Congressional relations.

Mr. Abshire, 43 years old, is now executive director of the Center for Strategic and International Studies at Georgetown University here.

The Congressional relations post is among the most sensitive in Washington. The Assistant secretary is among the key officials charged with obtaining Congressional support for the Administration's foreign policy.

At the Georgetown Center, Mr. Abshire has directed a wide range of research projects in foreign affairs over the last nine years. Earlier, he served on the staff of the House Republican Policy Committee. He also was a consultant on foreign policy at the last three Republican national conventions.

Rightist Label is Denied

Sources close to Mr. Abshire, whose appointment has been rumored for several weeks, took pains to describe him as a moderate conservative. He has been portrayed in some reports as a right-wing extremist.

The sources pointed to Mr. Abshire's speeches and writing as evidence of his political views. He has urged a gradual but not precipitate withdrawal from Vietnam and a reduction of American forces abroad in an orderly manner.

Mr. Abshire has also written a book, entitled "The South

Rejects a Prophet: The Life of Senator D. M. Key," about a Tennessee Senator who fought against racial politics in the South in the 1870's. The preface of the book was by the late Ralph McGill, editor of The Atlanta Constitution and widely regarded as a Southern liberal.

Mr. Abshire will succeed William B. Macomber Jr. who was promoted to Deputy Under Secretary of State for Administration in October.

Harlow Called Sponsor

Mr. Abshire, who met Mr. Nixon when Mr. Nixon was in Congress, was reported to have been recommended for the Congressional relations post by Bryce Harlow, Counselor to the President and generally considered the top man on the White House staff.

Mr. Abshire, who was born in Chattanooga, was graduated from the Military Academy at West Point in 1951. He served in the Korean war but resigned from the Army to take graduate work at Georgetown in 1955. He received his doctorate in history and government in 1959.

From 1958 to 1960, he was staff director of a study on American strategy and strength under Representative Gerald Ford, the Michigan Republican who is now the minority leader.

During 1961 and 1962, Mr. Abshire was director of special projects at the American Enterprise Institute. He then went to the Georgetown center, the chairman of which is Adm. Arleigh A. Burke, former Chief of Naval Operations.

Bulletin News Analysis

Future Laos Role Still Unclear

By LAWRENCE M. O'ROURKE
Of The Bulletin Staff

Miami—The picture of American presence in Laos sketched by President Nixon yesterday left unanswered a basic question: Where do we go from here?

Or put another way: Is Laos

Nixon Text on Page 2

going to turn into another Vietnam?

Neither the President nor White House officials who met with newsmen here would deal directly with those questions.

Small Involvement

The 4,000-word statement on Laos issued by Mr. Nixon from his winter White House at Key Biscayne will not likely quiet the critics of the Administration's policy toward Laos.

The statement was largely a

review of the last six years of U. S. involvement. Mr. Nixon stressed throughout that he is continuing policies first established by the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations.

Overall, as portrayed by Mr. Nixon, the extent of U. S. involvement now in Laos is small.

There are only 616 Americans directly employed by the U. S. Government in Laos. Some 320 Americans are military advisers or instructors to Royal Laotian units. Of the 320, there are 228 military personnel and 92 civilians, probably employes of the Central Intelligence Agency.

There are no U. S. ground combat troops in Laos, he said, there have been none there since the 1962 Geneva accords declaring Laos neutral, and there have been fewer than 300 Americans, all airmen, killed as part of the Laotian fighting in the past six years.

The statistics cover a period in which for the most part there was very little Communist activity in Laos. It was only in the past few months, as Mr. Nixon pointed out, that the North Vietnamese government began sending combat troops into battle in sizable numbers in Laos.

Some 30 North Vietnamese battalions from regular divisions joined in the current campaign in the Plain of Jars region, the critical military area of Laos. It was the fighting over the Plain of Jars which largely instigated the criticism and questioning in Congress which led to yesterday's presidential statement.

Effort to Widen Scope

Mr. Nixon's statement was unequivocally a call for a standstill by the Communists. His appeal to Russia and Great Britain, signatories to the Geneva accords, to work for the

peace and neutrality of Laos was an effort to broaden the participants and open the dialog beyond Laos, the United States and North Vietnam.

But the question remains: What if Hanoi continues to pump men and supplies into Laos, if the Communists continue to advance militarily, if Russia and Great Britain cannot—or will not—bring about progress toward peace and neutrality in Laos, what then?

A White House official said that under no circumstances would the United States use combat forces in Laos without asking first for Senate approval.

Open-Ended Commitment

The official was asked what the United States will do if Hanoi continues to escalate the war.

He replied that the Nixon Administration is very much aware of the concern that the United States might slide into a Vietnam-like situation.

The official said that the United States is not going to slide into an open-ended commitment, like the one in Vietnam, without carefully controlling and assessing each step along the way.

But it would not serve the national interest, the official said, for the Administration to give a flat description of what it would not do in circumstances that have not yet arisen.

The Administration believes it has been careful up to now and will continue to be so, the official said. But he also maintained that peace in Vietnam and Southeast Asia will be affected by developments.

Avoids Predictions

The President, avoiding predictions or threats of U. S. escalation to match Communist activities, nevertheless tied in this country's policies to those of the Communists.

He said that he authorized U. S. air combat missions against the North Vietnamese and Laotian Communists in Laos only after they stepped up their military offensive and at the request of Prince Souvanna Phouma, the Laotian prime minister.

U. S. air operations currently consist, the President said, of bombing the Ho Chi Minh Trail as it runs through Laos; bombing and strafing in support of Royal Laotian troops, and flying reconnaissance over northern Laos.

"The level of our air operations has been increased only as the number of North Vietnamese in Laos and the level of their aggression has increased," Mr. Nixon said.

Appeal to Communists

A White House official, asked if the Administration is not putting itself at the mercy of the Communists by allowing the Communists to set the extent of U. S. involvement, said that the fashionable answer is no.

But that is nonsense, the official went on. Of course, he said, the United States will be affected by what the Communists do, and to that extent, this country is at their mercy.

SAN ANTONIO, TEX.

M - 78,032
EXPRESS NEWS

S - 117,132

MAR 7 1970

Nixon on Laos: Room for Doubts

President Nixon finally made a public statement on America's involvement in Laos. His words contained some good news and some bad news.

The good news:

- We have no ground troops there and will not send any.
- He is asking Russia and Great Britain, the nations responsible for maintaining the 1962 accords on Laos, to help restore peace.

We are not escalating the war there.

The bad news:

- North Vietnam has sent 13,000 more ground combat troops into Laos, bringing the total to 67,000.
- Americans are flying combat support missions for Laotian forces.
- These missions are flown "only when requested by the Laotian government."
- This means that Americans are in combat, and on orders of Laotians. The President did not say if we have reserved the right to refuse such missions.

President Nixon said only 616 U.S. government employes are in Laos. A White House official added that only 228 of these are military men. Presumably most of the others are CIA men who train, direct and pay the Laotian army, but the President did not touch on that.

It is good that the President finally spoke up on Laos, even if it did take months of prodding by various senators. It is good to know that he has no intention of expanding our involvement. But he did say the level of U.S. air operation had increased in response to increased North Vietnamese aggression. That is one way to escalation if the Reds step up the pressure.

The President will have to make certain the line stays drawn. His belated candor is welcome, but we would like to hear more details, especially of our commitments.

The Truth About Laos

President Nixon's explicit description yesterday of the nature and scope of American involvement in Laos will do little to quiet his congressional critics. But that is because Fulbright, McGovern, Symington & Co. seemingly are more interested in the reassertion of Senate prerogatives in the field of foreign affairs than they are with the realities of the situation in Southeast Asia.

The extent of the American involvement in Laos has been one of the worst-kept "secrets" in the histories of war or diplomacy. On September 28 in these columns we noted that not "more than a couple of thousand U.S. government personnel—military, paramilitary or CIA—are involved" in that small but strategic mountain kingdom. Yesterday, the President said the precise number—including all contract personnel—is 1,040. In contrast, according to the President, the North Vietnamese now have 67,000 regular troops in Laos.

We stated on September 28 that "some 97 U.S. airmen have been lost over Laos," adding that it is doubtful if "more than 200 American lives have been lost" there "over the past decade." Yesterday, the President said that no American has been killed in ground combat operations in Laos.

The President's critics cannot have it both ways. They cannot protest bitterly because American ground troops are committed in large numbers in Vietnam and complain equally stridently when this is not so in Laos, which means that Laotian regulars and irregulars must receive air and logistical support. Unless

they propose that we do nothing at all in Laos, thus endangering the lives of thousands of Americans in Vietnam.

In short, we find no fault with present American policy in Laos, which the President rightly describes as requested, limited, supportive and defensive. We only wish he had made his statement sooner; and we await with extreme interest—although we are not holding our breath—a similarly detailed statement from Hanoi describing the extent of its involvement and goals in Laos.

Where do we go from here? The President said yesterday that he has "no plans for introducing ground combat troops into Laos," despite the deterioration of the situation there in recent days. That is sensible and right.

Yet it is clear that the North Vietnamese and their Pathet Lao auxiliaries must be kept clear of the Mekong Valley to preserve the remnants of Lao independence and territorial integrity (guaranteed by the U.S. in the Geneva accords of 1962), to prevent a serious deterioration in the situation in Vietnam, and to prevent a clash between the North Vietnamese and the Thais, to whom we have treaty commitments.

If that means more air and logistical support—even more advisers—we support such temporary measures. If all our wars cost as little American blood, we would be fortunate. And if the President's critics are concerned about the escalation of the "secret" war, they ought to "tell it to Hanoi": It is the North Vietnamese, ultimately, who will decide how much of a war it is to be.

7 MAR 1970

STATINTL

CROSBY S. NOYES

Nixon Facing 'Basic and Delicate' Choice in Laos

The current congressional uproar about our "secret war" in Laos is largely a reflection of the improved situation in our non-secret war in Vietnam.

In Vietnam, things are gradually coming under control. President Nixon's program of "Vietnamization" seems to be working better than even its architects dared hope. The fact that almost all of the news out of Saigon in recent days has centered on the trial of an accused Communist sympathizer is a promising indicator that the fighting is winding down.

In Laos, on the other hand, it is winding up, though on a far smaller scale. And so it is only natural that critics of our commitments in Asia who profess to believe that the President is anxious to get us involved in another war there should suddenly rediscover Laos as a cause of primary concern.

Still, with all due respect to Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield, it is not really true that we are already "up to our necks" in the war in Laos.

Compared to Vietnam, we are more like up to our necks.

And that also is the likely to stay. Despite the cries of alarm, it is almost unthinkable that there ever will be a massive American presence in Laos.

We shall continue, no doubt, to supply arms and equipment to the Royal Lao forces as long as there are any left. The CIA will continue to support and advise the dwindling number of Meo tribesmen who have been fighting a delaying guerrilla action against the advancing Communists. Bombing missions from Thailand and South Vietnam against North Vietnamese regulars in Laos may go on. Nixon in his policy talk yesterday said Hanoi had 67,000 combat troops in Laos.

There is some danger, however, that these efforts will not be enough. The possibility of a general collapse of resistance by forces loyal to the government in Vientiane certainly cannot be ruled out. If that should happen, the Communists might find themselves in control of the whole country, even if that is not their present intention.

The North Vietnamese have, in fact, some legal basis for coveting Laos. Ironically enough, the French, in the late 19th century, revived an old claim that all of the land east of the Mekong River belonged to Vietnam. The claim conceivably could be revived now to justify what would be, in reality, the military conquest of the country.

Diplomatic moves to save the situation are unlikely to be of much help. Souvanna Phouma, the Laotian premier, has been calling for a revival of the 1962 conference of 14 nations which "guaranteed" the neutrality of Laos and set up a coalition government of rightists, neutralists and Communists in Vientiane. Mansfield has suggested that the scope of the conference could be expanded to include all of Southeast Asia.

What was possible in 1962, however, seems improbable today. Among the 14 nations that met in Geneva that year were Russia and China, who no longer see eye to eye on most problems. Neither are North Vietnam and the United States likely to find them-

selves in agreement on the future of Laos.

Even if resistance in Laos should collapse, it is most improbable that Nixon would throw U.S. forces into the vacuum, as President John F. Kennedy came close to doing in 1962. The far stronger possibility is that Thailand would see a Communist takeover there as a direct threat to its security and take military action on its own.

What could then result would be an international war between Thailand and North Vietnam, with the unhappy Laos in the position of the ham in the sandwich. This, needless to say, hardly would represent an improvement in the situation from anyone's point of view.

Nixon, in short, is up against one of those "basic and delicate" choices that he spoke of in his recent foreign policy statement. "If we limit our own involvement in the interest of encouraging local self-reliance," he wrote, "and the threat turns out to have been more serious than we had judged, we will only have created still more dangerous choices."

And indeed, in the case of Laos, that's about the size of it. The United States has an interest in preventing a new international war in Southeast Asia that should be clear enough to all members of the Congress. If we can do this within the scope of the limited effort being made in Laos today, we can consider ourselves very fortunate indeed.

7 March 1970

Nixon Outlines Role in Laos, Defends Policy

By a Star Staff Writer

KEY BISCAYNE, Fla.—

Public pressure spurred by Senate critics has forced from President Nixon the first official description of what the United States has been doing for six years to help neutral Laos combat Communist aggression from North Vietnam.

A "precise description" in a presidential statement yesterday afternoon of what he termed limited, requested, supportive and defensive aid acknowledged that American warplanes "fly combat support missions for Laotian forces."

It also listed military advisory and training aid and logistics support, by a total of 643 American military and civilian personnel on the ground in Laos. Officials put the total of U.S. military personnel in Laos at 228.

Nixon said he had not considered it in the national interest to disclose details of the American role because it might hinder efforts to get North Vietnam to honor its pledge in the 1962 Geneva accords to respect the neutrality of Laos.

Change of Mind

He changed his mind because of intense public speculation and "grossly inaccurate" reports "to the effect that the United States involvement in Laos has substantially increased in violation of the Geneva accords, that American ground forces are engaged in combat in Laos and that our air activity has had the effect of escalating the conflict," he said.

Things got to the point, a key presidential aide said, where Nixon had to judge between the impact of continued official secrecy on the confidence of Americans in their government, and the international impact of telling more about what is going

Things got to the point, a key presidential aide said, where Nixon had to judge between the impact of continued official secrecy on the confidence of Americans in their government, and the international impact of telling more about what is going on in Laos.

The President said he concluded that "our national interest will be served by putting the subject into perspective through a precise description of our current activities in Laos."

He emphasized that all the United States has done and is doing in Laos is in response to "flagrant violations" of the Geneva accords by North Vietnam that began "before the ink was dry" on the 1962 neutrality agreements.

North Viet Troops

Instead of withdrawing all its armed forces from Laos in keeping with the accords, the North Vietnamese left more than 6,000 troops in the country, Nixon said, while all the 666 Americans who had been assisting the royal Lao government were pulled out.

Steadily growing over the years, the number of North Vietnamese armed forces in Laos climbed to about 33,000 in mid-1967, 46,000 in mid-1968 and 55,000 in mid-1969. More came in during the last months of 1969 and in January this year to bring the total now to an all-time high of some 67,000 men, the President related.

By contrast, he said, the total number of Americans directly employed by the U.S. government in Laos stands now at 616. In addition, there are 424 Americans employed on contract to the government or to government contractors.

Of these 1,040 Americans, Nixon said the total number, military and civilian, engaged in a military advisory or military training capacity is 320. Logistic personnel number 323. Officials said these 323 are almost entirely civilian contract personnel.

CIA Personnel

Neither the President nor his aide, who provided some additional facts in briefing newsmen, broke down the figures to show how many of the Americans helping the Laotian forces are employed by the Central Intelligence Agency.

The implication is that at least the difference between the total of 320 Americans engaged in military advising and training, and the total of 228 military personnel—or some 92—are CIA personnel.

The President reaffirmed that "there are no American ground combat troops in Laos," and there are no plans for sending any.

Indicating that the Americans engaged in advisory, training and logistic activities take no

part in combat operations, he said "no American stationed in Laos has ever been killed in ground combat operations."

His aide said that during the some six years of American air operations over Laos, a total of less than 400 airmen have been killed or reported missing in action.

Use of Bombers

This aide said presidential authority is necessary for the use of big B-52 American bombers in support of Laotian forces fighting the Communist invaders in the vicinity of the Plain of Jars — and has been granted only once. Other support missions are flown by fighter-bombers.

He emphasized that there has been just one B-52 raid in northern Laos — as distinct from bombing of the Ho Chi Minh Trail to interdict the flow of North Vietnamese men and supplies into South Vietnam.

During the Communist buildup for the recent offensive that swept over the Plain of Jars, he said, the President constantly rejected proposals to use the B-52s against tempting targets because he did not want to provide possible provocation for the attack on the Laotian defenders that came anyway.

Despite the "flagrant violations" of the Geneva accords cited by the President, he risked Communist charges that the United States is violating those accords by disclosing as much detail as he did in his statement yesterday. North Vietnam, with 67,000 troops in Laos, never has admitted having anybody there.

But he was not admitting violation.

U.S. Attitude

The presidential briefing aide was asked specifically if Nixon's statement was an admission that the United States also had violated the Geneva agreements in response to Communist violations.

The aide replied to this effect: There is no judicial process that determines what you are entitled to do after violation by the other side. Our position is that the Laotian government is entitled to ask help in self-defense. Our view is that the Geneva agreements are still valid. We want them restored. All our activities are at the request of the government headed by Prince Souvanna Phouma that was installed by North Vietnam and the Soviet Union. They have been in response to North Vietnamese violations, and at the request of the Laotian government.

Peace "Highest Priority"

Declaring that "peace remains the highest priority of this administration," the President said he hopes a "genuine quest for peace" in both Laos and South Vietnam can now begin.

For Laos, he said, the quest will require the efforts of the cochairman of the 1962 Geneva Conference — the Soviet Union and Great Britain — and the other signatory countries.

He said he sent letters yesterday to British Prime Minister Harold Wilson and Soviet Premier Alexei Kosygin "asking their help in restoring the 1962 Geneva agreements" for Laos' neutrality, independence and integrity.

The Geneva accords on Laos grew out of a concerted effort to resolve a 1961 crisis brought on by what Nixon called "open aggression" against Laos by North Vietnam.

Nixon recalled that the late President John F. Kennedy said in March 1961 that "the security of Southeast Asia will be endangered if Laos loses its independence."

Negotiations for a Laotian settlement opened in Geneva in May 1961. Fourteen months later, in July 1962, the agreements for the neutralization of Laos, under a coalition government headed by Souvanna Phouma, were reached. Both North Vietnam and the Soviet Union backed Souvanna Phouma at the time.

Record of Fighting

Reciting some history to make the point that Laos is an inherited problem for him, Nixon said fighting resumed in 1963 and has continued since, with forces opposing the government being led and dominated throughout by the North Vietnamese.

President Kennedy started providing American aid in the form of supplies and munitions at Laotian request in 1963.

In May 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson responded to requests to meet North Vietnamese escalation of the fighting by increasing U.S. training and logistic support. At the same time, the United States "began flying certain interdiction missions against invaders who were violating Lao neutrality."

Nixon's briefing aide made the point that the total number of U.S. personnel in Laos has remained constant since his administration came into office. He said there is no plan to increase it.

The aide said he did believe it would be in the national interest

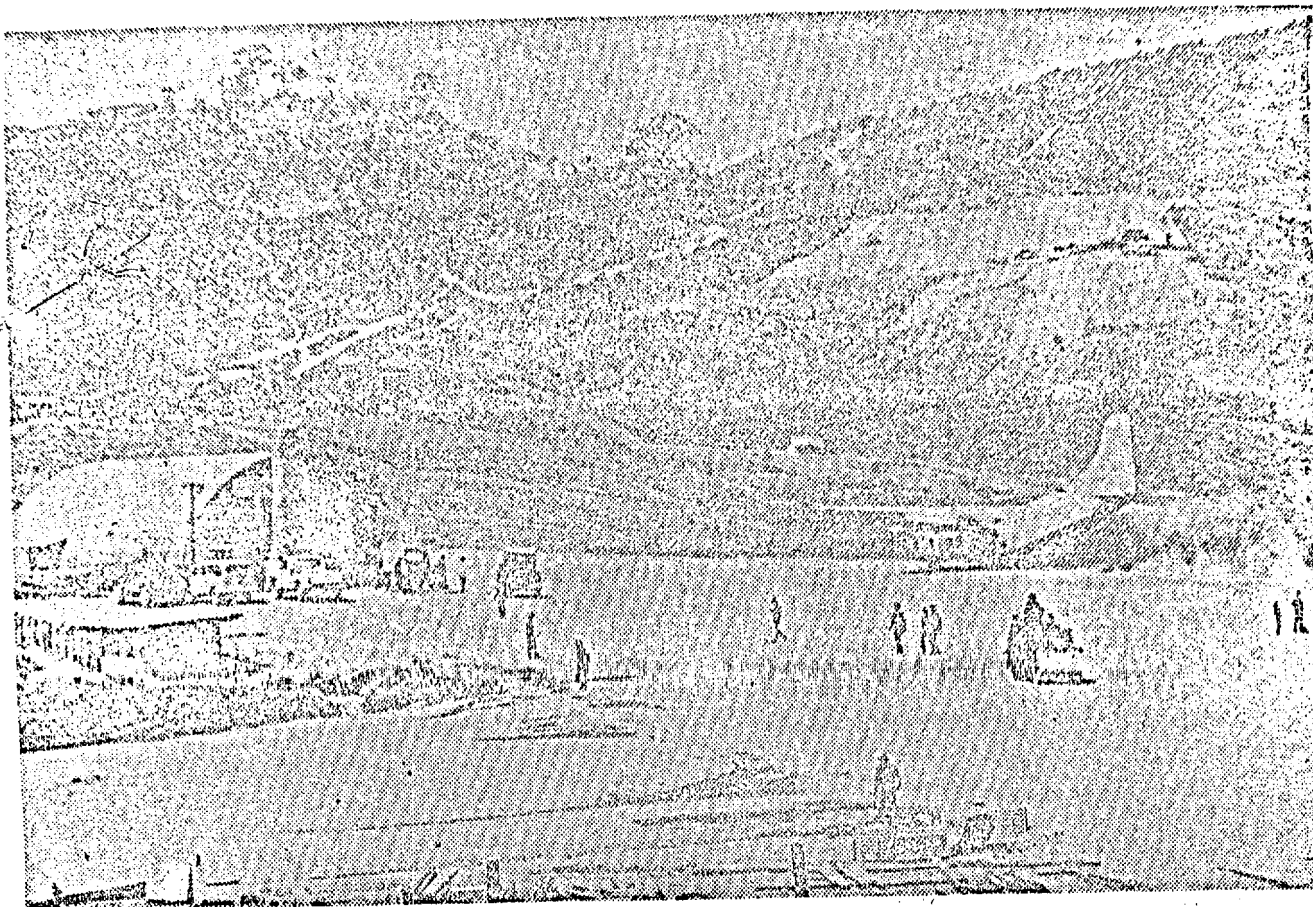
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to say categorically what the United States will or will not do in response to further escalation of the conflict by the North Vietnamese.

He emphasized, however, that under no circumstances will the President send ground combat troops into Laos without asking congressional approval first. And he said he does not believe this is likely.



—United Press International

Air America C-123 cargo planes land supplies at the Sam Thong air strip, 20 miles southwest

from the Plain of Jars in Laos, while work on the strip is still in progress.

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WAYCROSS, GA.
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MAR 7 1970

U. S. Involved In Laos?

Despite disclaimers by the Nixon administration, is the U. S. getting too deeply involved in the conflict in Laos?

Some members of Congress think so and there is, indeed, considerable evidence of a pattern similar to that of our Vietnam experience.

The Nixon administration says we are not going to get involved in the war other than to lend air support to non-Communist Laotians.

But U. S. television audiences have seen evidence of CIA and intelligence operations in Laos and there have been numerous recent incidents of U. S. aircraft apparently operating in support of Royal Laotian forces.

Laos, of course, is right next door to Vietnam and the country through which the Ho Chi Minh Trail, a major Communist supply line, passes.

It is not hard to see how two

wars could easily become mixed up. Indeed, a lot of hair-splitting is required by the U. S. command to determine whether our aircraft are pursuing Viet Cong forces or, in fact, are facing at times the Pathet Lao, the Reds who are hand in glove with the North Vietnamese.

Laos was a problem for the U. S. even before we became so deeply involved in Vietnam. Like Vietnam, it is a divided country and efforts to form a coalition government have not been notably successful.

The country has from two to three million inhabitants, no paved roads, no railroads and two-thirds of it is a mountainous jungle.

Our military involvement in such a land would, to put it mildly, be most distasteful.

The Nixon administration is aware of this fact and there is reason to believe every effort will be made to draw the line somewhere.

But the situation is fraught with danger.

6 MAR 1970

Insight

War in Laos-- strange conflict



By Raymond R. Coffey

Laotians call their country "The Kingdom of the Million Elephants and the Royal White Parasol."

And that unlikely name is no more unlikely than everything else about the mountainous, thickly jungled Southeast Asian land where the United States finds itself deeply involved in a long-running war that some fear may become another Vietnam.

To start with, Laos is not really a country; it is more the whimsical creation of old French colonial map makers.

It has two capitals, the royal capital at Luang Prabang, where the king resides in thorough obscurity, and the administrative capital at Vientiane. But the whole country has only one high school and the courses are taught in French.

THE PRINCIPAL INDUSTRIES are opium traffic, gold smuggling and official corruption, the last made possible and profitable mainly by the hundreds of millions of U.S. dollars poured into Laos in the last 12 years or so.

The native Communist Pathet Lao, along with the North Vietnamese, are one of the forces engaged in the war against the govern-

ment and watching movies made in Red China.

The head of government, the prime minister, is Prince Souvanna Phouma. The nominal head of the Pathet Lao is none other than his half-brother, Prince Souphanouvong.

But the man the United States is betting most of its chips on in the struggle for Laos is a major general named Vang Pao, a member of the minority Meo tribe, who has half a dozen wives, used to be a sergeant in the French colonial army, and has been treated by his American sponsors to a trip to Disneyland, and back.

Vang Pao heads a "clandestine" army of about 40,000 men, which is financed and trained by the Central Intelligence Agency and is now being supported by U.S. Air Force bombing raids.

BUT PERHAPS THE unlikeliest thing of all about the Laotians, who have been engaged in a nonstop war for well over a decade now, is that they are, surely, one of the world's least warlike people.

The idea of killing each other has absolutely no appeal to these incredibly easygoing, live-and-let-live people.

An American military adviser once remarked that being a company commander in the Royal Laotian Army was like being a scoutmaster in the United States, "except that the Boy Scouts are a lot more bloodthirsty."

And a Green Beret master sergeant in Vietnam, aimed high, deliberately missing, when they fired their carbines in combat. They expected, of course, that the enemy would return the courtesy.

BEFORE GOING INTO combat, the Green Beret said, the soldiers, who like all Laotians put great trust in assorted spirits, would make small clay figures of Buddha and then take potshots at them until they missed one.

They would then wear the one they missed around their neck as a good luck omen.

And that is the kind of place and kind of situation in which there is now fear that the United States may find itself with another Vietnam on its hands.

Insight



Coffey

Raymond R. Coffey, national correspondent of The Daily News, has covered the war in Vietnam and other major stories in Southeast Asia. This clear report on the Kingdom of the Million Elephants is an important primer on what may become a new Vietnam.

But these same Pathet Lao maintain a small headquarters compound in the capital at Vientiane where a small detachment of soldiers on guard spends much of its time growing sunflowers in the garden, playing vol-

Laos 'Secret War' Stirs Fear of Second Viet Nam for U. S.

This is the first of two articles on the extent and nature of our involvement in the war in Laos and how that involvement grew.

BY FRED FARRAR and JAMES YUENGER

Washington, March 5—As the Nixon administration proceeds with its announced policy of pulling the majority of American troops out of Viet Nam, there is increasing concern here that the United States is heading toward another Viet Nam in the strategic kingdom of Laos.

This concern is not only over whether the United States is getting into another Viet Nam in Laos, but also whether this administration—or any administration—can get the United States involved in a war without the expressed consent of the Congress.

Tribesmen Aided by U. S.

This concern began to mount last September when a pro-government force of about 15,000 Meo tribesmen, with the help of United States fighter-bombers based in Thailand, captured the strategic Plain of Jars in northern Laos for the first time in four years.

It continued to mount in the last few weeks when communist forces re-took the plain despite increased pressure from the American fighter-bombers plus the first use so far of giant B-52 bombers in northern Laos.

The B-52s reportedly were used for only two days and then called off when they failed to halt the enemy drive.

The result was a series of charges, many of them coming from members of the Senate foreign relations committee, that the administration is running and escalating a secret war in Laos without letting the people of this country know what is going on there and without consulting Congress.

There also were charges, based mainly on what the critics say are published reports from Laos, that the Meo force is paid, trained, advised, and supplied by the central intelligence agency.

And depending on what report is being quoted, the CIA is using special forces (or Green Beret) troops on detached duty and wearing civilian clothes from the army or former special forces men recruited especially for the job.

Answers Not Easy to Learn

Those are the charges, and charges are relatively easy to come by. But what actually does American involvement in Laos amount to?

The answer, in depth, is not easy to come by—mainly because of the refusal of the administration to go beyond generalities. President

Nixon has acknowledged American planes are bombing the Ho Chi Minh trail in southern Laos in an attempt to slow the pace of supplies and replacements from North Viet Nam into South Viet Nam. This was at a press conference last December 15. But he ended up by saying:

"I don't think the public interest would be served by any further discussion."

At a press conference last Sept. 15 he said the United States is "providing logistical support and some training" for the royal Laos government to keep it from falling under

communist domination. He added: "We do have aerial reconnaissance; we do perhaps have some other activities. I won't discuss those other activities at this time."

As pieced together from a variety of sources, this is a review of what the United States is doing in Laos.

It has been an open secret for years that American planes flying from Thailand and elsewhere have been making air strikes against North Vietnamese and Pathet Lao (the Laotian equivalent of the Viet Cong) troops and fortifications in the areas they hold in northern and northeastern Laos.

The cover story is that these are armed reconnaissance missions flown at the request of the royal Laotian government. But they are in effect tactical air strikes made in support of government forces.

193 Flyers Missing

These strikes, along with air strikes on the Ho Chi Minh trail in Laos, have not been made without losses. Since Jan. 1, 1961, a total of 193 air force, navy and marine flyers have been listed as missing in action over Laos.

In recent weeks, informed sources say, American aircraft have been flying from 450 to 500 sorties a day over Laos.

But these are approximately equally divided between sorties against the Ho Chi Minh trail—which therefore must be counted as part of the war in Viet Nam—and the rest of Laos.

Also the United States does have military men stationed in Laos who in effect function as advisers to the royal Laotian army and air force.

Forbidden by Accords

But the Geneva accords of 1962, which were supposed to make Laos a neutral buffer state between North Viet Nam and Red China on the north and Thailand on the south, forbids the introduction of outside military forces into Laos.

So these American servicemen are officially listed as attaches to the American embassy in Vientiane, the administrative capital of Laos.

The state department's foreign service list issued this month lists only eight military attaches as being attached to the embassy, but published reports from Laos say the figure is closer to 100.

The state department also says that the United States government has only about 500 Americans in Laos. But again, reports from Laos put the figure at approximately 1,000.

The cover story of listing advisers as military attaches is so transparent that in the Pentagon the so-called attaches says that the United States government has only about 500 Americans in Laos. But again, reports from Laos put the figure at approximately 1,000.

The cover story of listing advisers as military attaches is so transparent that in the Pentagon the so-called attaches are often openly referred to as advisers.

As late as last Feb. 26 Laird referred to "our advisors" in Laos while talking to newsmen. The department later explained that Laird really meant to say attaches.

The central intelligence agency responds with its usual "no comment" when asked about its reported support and direction of the Meo force and its employment of either former or current Green Berets to work with the Meos.

But as far as is known, it hasn't been assuring newsmen basis that it isn't doing so.

continued

March 6, 1970

House and Senate during which the differing views of both the majority and minority of the Task Force will be considered and I invite your attention again to the separate and opposing views which were included in the Task Force report.

Sincerely,

CLIFFORD P. HANSEN,
 U.S. Senator.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senate will now proceed to the transaction of routine morning business, with statements limited to 3 minutes.

Mr. SYMINGTON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I may proceed for 5 minutes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

G. McMURTRIE GODLEY—AMBASSADOR OR PROCONSUL IN LAOS

Mr. SYMINGTON. Mr. President, last month an Associated Press story with a Vientiane, Laos, dateline reported on the activities in Laos of three American newsmen; and also gave a statement, purportedly made by U.S. Ambassador to Laos, G. McMurtree Godley, that "the American mission has lost any interest in helping out the press whatsoever because of what happened this afternoon."

I ask unanimous consent that this newsstory of last February 24 be inserted at this point in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the news article was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

LAOTIANS ARREST THREE NEWSMEN

VIENTIANE, LAOS.—Laotian army troops today arrested three Western newsmen who made their way unannounced to the government base at Long Cheng. They were later released to a U.S. Embassy official.

G. McMurtree Godley, the U.S. ambassador to Vientiane, said in a statement that "the American mission has lost any interest in helping out the press whatsoever because of what happened this afternoon." He did not elaborate.

The newsmen arrested were John Saar of Life magazine, Max Colfait, of Agency France Press, and Timothy Allman, a part-time employe for the New York Times and Bangkok Post.

Newsmen attempting to cover the fast-breaking developments in Laos have been forced to rely largely on American mission sources for their information, and on the mission for transportation to battle areas.

The U.S. mission has been reluctant to intercede with the Laotian government to help newsmen visit areas where fighting is going on.

Saar, Colfait and Allman were among a group of newsmen who last week made a visit to Sam Thong, a supply and medical center southwest of the Plain of Jars. They had chartered an Air America transport plane with the consent of the U.S. Embassy and the Laotian government.

The three newsmen were last seen walking along a road leading to Long Cheng, headquarters for Gen. Vang Pao, 15 miles away.

Vang commands Laotian forces in the area.

Mr. SYMINGTON. Mr. President, yesterday the State Department released a summary of some correspondence that, as chairman of the Subcommittee on U.S. Security Agreements and

Commitments Abroad of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, I have had with the Secretary of State in connection with the desire of the subcommittee to hear Ambassador Godley. I ask unanimous consent that a letter from me of February 25 to the Secretary of State, also a letter from me to him a week later, March 2, plus the Secretary's reply of March 4, plus my reply of March 5 to that letter, be inserted at this point in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the letters were ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

SUBCOMMITTEE ON U.S. SECURITY AGREEMENT AND COMMITMENTS ABROAD

February 25, 1970.

HON. WILLIAM P. ROGERS,
 Secretary of State,
 Washington, D.C.

DEAR MR. SECRETARY: In view of recent press reports of serious fighting in Laos, and the difficulties which have been reported by press representatives in Laos in ascertaining the facts, we request that Ambassador G. McMurtree Godley be directed to return to Washington as soon as possible to appear before the Subcommittee on United States Security Agreements and Commitments Abroad.

Sincerely yours,

STUART SYMINGTON,
 Chairman.

MARCH 2, 1970.

HON. WILLIAM P. ROGERS,
 Secretary of State, Department of State,
 Washington, D.C.

DEAR MR. SECRETARY: On February 25 we requested that Ambassador Godley appear at his earliest convenience before the Subcommittee on United States Security Agreements and Commitments Abroad of the Foreign Relations Committee.

Would you kindly let us know when we can expect his appearance.

Sincerely,

STUART SYMINGTON.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE,
 Washington, March 4, 1970.

HON. STUART SYMINGTON,
 Chairman, Subcommittee on U.S. Security Agreements and Commitments Abroad,
 Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate.

DEAR STU: I have received your letter of February 25th requesting that Ambassador Godley be brought back to appear before your Subcommittee on United States Security Agreements and Commitments Abroad.

I am sure you will understand that because of the serious situation presently existing in Laos, it is not possible to say at this time exactly when Ambassador Godley will be available. As soon as the situation makes it feasible for him to return to this country, we will arrange to have him do so and he will of course be prepared to appear before your Subcommittee at that time.

With best personal regards,

Sincerely,

WILLIAM P. ROGERS.

MARCH 5, 1970.

HON. WILLIAM P. ROGERS,
 Secretary of State, Department of State,
 Washington, D.C.

DEAR BILL: Acknowledging your note of March 4 re Ambassador Godley, could you let us know when we can expect him? We are anxious to have him as soon as possible.

Warm regards.

Sincerely,

STUART SYMINGTON.

Mr. SYMINGTON. Mr. President, I regret that apparently Ambassador God-

ley will not be available for some time, because it would seem that it is in the public interest for him to appear before the subcommittee as soon as possible.

If our fighting is to continue in Laos, however, I can understand why there is no desire to return the Ambassador, because when I was last in Laos, some 2½ years ago, the Ambassador at that time, in addition to his normal State Department functions, was not only directly supervising the extensive military and nonmilitary activities of the various U.S. intelligence agencies in that country, but was also directing the time, place, and nature of all other U.S. military activities against North Laos.

In passing, although traveling on official business as a member of both the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the Senate Armed Services Committee, even then I was not fully informed of some of our military activities, at the time of this visit or on previous visits; and only learned of these activities as a result of sworn testimony before the subcommittee in question during hearings held last October.

I did learn, however, that at that time the Ambassador was also acting as chief of staff of U.S. military efforts in the northern part of that country; and if that is what he is doing now, and because recently there has been heavy escalation of U.S. participation in this northern Laos war, I can understand why there is some resistance to bringing him back at this time.

I would hope, however, that as soon as possible we can find out more about just what is going on in that country; and Ambassador Godley—based on his duties, perhaps it would be better to call him Proconsul Godley—is obviously the best person to supply that information.

As background to the importance of this request is an article in the press this morning, which article says that Prince Souvanna Phouma of Laos is apparently now following the sanctuary policy of Prince Sihanouk of Cambodia; this in that he is now offering to the military forces of North Vietnam free access to the Ho Chi Minh trails that are supplying the enemy in South Vietnam; this offer provided the North Vietnamese desist in their offensive action against Northern Laos.

I ask unanimous consent that this article this morning in the Washington Post, entitled "Laos Offers Hanoi Trail Use if it Quits Rest of Country" be inserted at this point in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the article was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Washington Post, Mar. 6, 1970]

LAOS OFFERS HANOI TRAIL USE IF IT QUILTS REST OF COUNTRY

VIENTIANE, March 6.—Prime Minister Prince Souvanna Phouma reiterated today he would tolerate North Vietnamese use of the Ho Chi Minh trail through southern Laos if the North Vietnamese would withdraw from the rest of the country.

"I told the ambassador from North Vietnam last year that we will accept the use of the trail by North Vietnamese troops with the condition that those troops withdraw from the important regions of Laos," he told a news conference.

Souvanna's renewal of the offer comes al-

March 6, 1970

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD — SENATE

most on the eve of an expected White House announcement this week shedding new light on the U.S. role in Laos, where the main U.S. involvement is in blocking the North Vietnamese supply route to South Vietnam over the Ho Chi Minh Trail. The renewal offer also comes as the Laotian government is under increased military pressure from the North Vietnamese.

When he first made the offer, Hanoi rejected it because he would not invoke his authority to tell the Americans to stop bombing the trail. He said publicly that he had told the North Vietnamese that what went happened around the trail was between them and the Americans.

The Premier said: "The Ho Chi Minh Trail, after all, runs across the deserted part of our country. What we would like to see is that the North Vietnamese will not come to destroy our towns, villages and economy."

Prince Souvanna was asked if American air raids over Laos constituted a violation of the 1962 Geneva agreement. He replied, "No. You must distinguish between two things—cause and effect. The cause is the North Vietnamese interference in Laos.

"After 1962, there was no withdrawal of North Vietnamese troops, and I asked for American intervention only in May, 1964, after the North Vietnamese had attacked the neutralist forces in the Plain of Jars. Remove the cause and the effect will disappear, withdraw the North Vietnamese troops and the bombing will stop."

Asked if American planes would also stop bombing the Ho Chi Minh Trail, he said, "I cannot say. That is a matter for the Americans to decide."

Prince Souvanna said he did not consider the fall of the Plain of Jars dramatic because this was only a return to the situation of five years ago when the North Vietnamese first overran the plain.

He said, however, "This offensive is different by virtue of the use of tanks, of new model artillery . . ." But, he added, "no matter what will happen, we remain confident in facing the danger."

The Premier said he would not accept aid in the form of foreign troops to fight against the North Vietnamese. "We want to limit the invasion and we don't want other foreign troops other than the North Vietnamese who are already here," he said.

Mr. CHURCH. Mr. President, will the Senator yield?

Mr. SYMINGTON. I am glad to yield to my able and distinguished colleague from Idaho.

Mr. CHURCH. Mr. President, I want to commend the Senator from Missouri for his persistent efforts to get the facts concerning the nature and extent of the American involvement in Laos. During my lifetime, this country has fought two undeclared wars. This is the first time it has fought an undisclosed war.

The American people are entitled to have all of the facts, and to have them now. If the President does make a full disclosure this weekend, I think much of the credit will go to the Senator from Missouri and to other members of the Foreign Relations Committee who have been insisting that the cloak of secrecy be removed from our involvement in the combat in Laos, and that the American people have a complete and full statement given them concerning the facts.

I think the Senator renders a great service to the country, and I simply want to associate myself with his effort and commend him for what he is doing.

Mr. SYMINGTON. I thank the distinguished Senator from Idaho, one of the wisest of all members of the Foreign Relations Committee. He is much too kind in what he says with respect to my activities. I would say that he, as well as two distinguished Senators I see on the floor this morning, the able majority leader and the able senior Senator from Oregon (Mr. HATFIELD), have had at least as much to do with the bringing out this problem.

I have not necessarily criticized what was going on in Laos, from the standpoint of whether it is right, or whether it is wrong. I have my opinions, but I do not know. What I do know, however, as the able Senator from Idaho has so ably pointed out, is that this is the first undisclosed war, to the best of his or my knowledge, we have ever fought with the military forces of the United States; and our military forces are just as much air and sea as they are ground.

Therefore, the primary thrust of what I have been trying to do, and, what is more important, what the subcommittee which I have the honor to chair has been trying to do, is to get the facts before the people. In this connection, we are only following the recommendation of President Nixon presented in the first paragraph of his televised speech last November 3. I ask unanimous consent that the first paragraph of that address be inserted at this point in the Record.

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

I believe that one of the reasons for the deep division about Vietnam is that many Americans have lost confidence in what the Government has told them about our policy. The American people cannot and should not be asked to support a policy which involves the overriding issues of war and peace unless they know the truth about that policy.

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, I wish to associate myself with the remarks of the distinguished Senator from Missouri, who has been doing an outstanding job, in executive session, in trying to lay the facts before the committee, at least, and, hopefully, the Senate and the American people, in terms of just what our involvement is in the arc all the way from Thailand to Korea in the north, with a number of countries in between.

I am glad to note by press accounts that there is a good possibility that the administration will make a statement on Laos very shortly; and I am very hopeful that an accord can be reached between the distinguished chairman of the Symington subcommittee and the State Department, which will bring about a release of at least as much of the hearings—and without violating security—which have been held up by the State Department and which have been held in a state of limbo for 5 months up to this day.

Mr. SYMINGTON. Mr. President, will the Senator yield?

Mr. MANSFIELD. I yield.

Mr. SYMINGTON. I appreciate the remarks of the distinguished majority leader. It is universally recognized in

this body as well as in the other body where he served long and well that no one knows more about the history of what was Indochina and the Far East, than does he. I am grateful that he emphasizes the fact we are all trying not to criticize necessarily what is going on, but to find out what is going on, policies, programs, and actions that have to do with lives of young Americans and the treasure of all of us.

Mr. MANSFIELD. May I express my thanks to the distinguished Senator from Missouri and say that the suggestions which have been made should react, in my opinion, to the benefit of the administration. I am well aware of the fact that the President did not start this war. He inherited it and he is saddled with it. I am hopeful, when he has made his statement, and an accord can be reached between the State Department and the distinguished Senator from Missouri, that the fires which are rapidly spreading will at least be damped as a result.

Mr. HATFIELD. Mr. President, will the Senator yield?

Mr. MANSFIELD. I yield.

Mr. HATFIELD. Mr. President, I associate myself with the comments of the distinguished Senator from Missouri this morning. I would hope that out of these disclosures, or out of further contact with the Defense Department, among other things we might obtain any new definitions of what constitutes a "combatant" or a "military action."

There has been a great deal of discussion, both in the public press and otherwise, that we have people in civilian clothes operating in a military capacity.

If we have some new definitions as to what constitutes involvement, depending upon the kind of clothes that people wear, I think we ought to get that clearly understood as well.

So I hope the Senator will press forward as he has been doing, not only to obtain full disclosure of the facts, but for any new definitions being applied today that are not in the conventional or familiar form of the definitions as we have known them, as to what constitutes "military involvement," and what might constitute "CIA involvement."

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The time allotted to the Senator from Montana has expired.

Mr. MANSFIELD. I ask unanimous consent to proceed for 3 additional minutes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

DR. MENNINGER FAVORS LOWERING THE VOTING AGE TO 18

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, Dr. W. Walter Menninger is the youngest member and the only psychiatrist on the 13-member National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence. This Commission was appointed by President Johnson in June of 1968. Its report was made in December 1969.

Dr. Menninger is the third generation member of the famous Topeka psychiat-

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CONGRESSIONAL RECORD — Extensions of Remarks

about the structural changes in the economy and the barriers in the way of consumers and small businessmen who would contribute to moving us closer to a free enterprise economy.

We are caught up in the greatest merger wave in history. The result is that in 1968, the 100 largest corporations controlled assets equal to those of the 200 top companies in 1950—and of the top 1,000 companies in 1941. The top 200 companies now control 60 percent of all manufacturing assets. The distasteful democratic and social implications of this increasing concentration of economic power, to me, are self-evident. The impact on competition is still being examined and line-by-line, the book of experience is being written.

But one fact is clear: increasingly the competition which does exist centers on such things as product differentiation or the clever ad—rather than to delivering the best quality at the best price, the hallmark of a competitive system. In fact, I sometimes get the feeling in listening to testimony before the subcommittee that price competition has been moved over to the list of characteristics of "destructive competition" by many businessmen.

It is small wonder that the phenomena of the '60s—consumerism—came about.

Consumerism—like all revolutions—is merely the lava flowing from a volcano of frustration.

Consumers who sought to make the "best buy" in supermarkets, department stores, discount houses, and such were frustrated in not having the proper information to make a rational judgment. Consumers who made purchases were frustrated in attempts to get complaints adjusted. Consumers who bought warranted products were frustrated by the inadequacy of service. Consumers who responded to clever ads and bought the products were frustrated to find they didn't get what the ad had led them to believe they would.

And beneath it all, was the suspicion that when X-dollars were spent, X-dollars worth of product wasn't received.

In other words, consumers may have been the first to detect that this indeed is not a free enterprise economy. For instead of the buyer being king, he does not—and cannot—make his commands be acted on. At first this awareness was a personal—and a quiet—thing. For consumers, I suspect, were a bit embarrassed to admit that they were not able to cope with the challenge of spending their money wisely.

But gradually awareness grew that the experience was not unique—but universal. Further, introduction of such bills as Truth in Lending and Truth in Packaging gave birth to hope that it was, after all, possible for the little man to fight the big corporations. President Kennedy gave them new spirit when he declared that consumers had rights.

Congress—at least the Democratic portion—ever since has been trying to deliver protection for those rights John Kennedy spelled out. The progress has not been easy . . . nor has there been enough. But I think the ball is rolling and will continue to roll.

However, I'm concerned that we may become so busy with mopping up the lava and building fences to contain it, that we will not get to the more important job of tearing down the volcano of frustration.

It is to this demolition job that I call for dedication from the Democratic party today.

What is needed, I think, is an offensive and defensive team approach.

The defensive role is government's.

First, if we are to enjoy the free enterprise system in a form as close to perfection as humanly possible, government must use the antitrust laws to their fullest in guar-

anteeing a marketplace full of viable, and honestly competing competitors.

The concentration wave must be halted by prohibiting all mergers that may substantially lessen competition—be it in a market, the nation, or the world.

In 1968, there were 102 acquisitions of companies having assets of \$10 million or more—these would be the companies in the middle strata, which normally would be viable competitors with the promise of growth. Eighty-nine of those acquisitions were not even casually looked at by either the Federal Trade Commission or the Department of Justice. Yet they were the mergers most likely to hamper competition. In my book each merger involving companies of this size should be examined. To do so will require adequate funding for the antitrust agencies—something they have not had in the past.

Also, carefully study must be made of existing concentration to determine where it is hampering competition to the disadvantage of consumers.

Competitive impact must be considered not only when matters are being studied by the antitrust agencies but each time another government agency moves—be it the FCC, the ICC, the FDA or even the State Department. (The latter agency we learned during our investigation had a significant role in aiding the quinine cartel in cornering the world market in the drug.)

The offensive team would be made up of both government and the public—divided into consumers and competitors. When the antitrust laws were enacted as the best means of protecting a competitive system, Congress saw the importance of private enforcement, as a supplement to government actions. Recognizing that government neither could—nor should—be the policeman in every commercial outlet, it encouraged those citizens hurt by unfair or anticompetitive actions to sue for relief. Treble damage provisions were included in the antitrust laws as the carrot on the stick to encourage such suits as well as to provide a deterrent to would-be violators.

Unfortunately, private enforcement has been a disappointment.

This is partly because an antitrust suit is an expensive proposition—discovery costs alone can run \$100,000 in an average suit—and the burdens of proof are extremely hard for a private plaintiff to bear.

Obviously, government must ease the path somewhat if it expects assistance from the public bringing such suits.

Several bills which would do this are now pending in Congress—and I urge your dedication to their enactment.

Of most significant impact no doubt would be action to make it easier to bring class action suits—either on behalf of businessmen or consumers commonly injured.

My proposal in this area is to open up enforcement of section 5 of the Federal Trade Act—which flatly prohibits all unfair or deceptive acts in commerce—to private class action suits, by both businessmen and consumers.

Two other bills now before the Senate Antitrust and Monopoly Subcommittee represent the basic philosophy—that private actions are to be encouraged. These would make section 3 of the Robinson-Patman Act a part of the Clayton Act so businessmen could sue for sales at unreasonably low cost. The other could make a judge treat a nolo contendere plea in a government case the same as a guilty plea when considering an ensuing private action. This could alleviate the necessity for the private plaintiff repeating the expensive investigatory work already done by the government.

The other type of help government must give if consumers are to be able to help chip away at that volcano of frustration them-

selves is a permanent, independent consumer organization with branches in local communities.

My proposal in this area is to establish a federally chartered, independent corporation, the Independent Consumer Council.

The Council would have three functions: to represent consumers' economic interests before governmental agencies; to disseminate product information, and to act as the ombudsman for complaints against government and mediator for product and service complaints against business.

Mr. Chairman, we hear a lot today about the "silent majority." Maybe my mailpile contains different types of communications than the President's, but I think the silent majority has become quite vocal.

For example, in the past 18 months, the Antitrust Subcommittee has received some 6,000 letters of complaint on auto repair problems alone. One rule of thumb estimate is that those letters represent six million unhappy car owners.

If in fact there ever was a silent majority it was merely because they got tired of yelling into the wind. But the winds are changing—and they are carrying the voices of consumers loud and clear to Congress.

What those voices say is: We want a chance to get our money's worth.

It seems a reasonable request to me and one we should be committed to doing all in our power to answer.

REMARKS OF U.S. SENATOR HARRISON A. WILLIAMS, JR., FEBRUARY 25, 1970

I welcome this opportunity to testify before the Committee on National Priorities of the Democratic Policy Council and commend the Committee for its efforts to evaluate the pressing national problems.

At the outset let me suggest that any evaluation of our national problems and any recommendations that may flow from these hearings must be rooted in two simple, declarative sentences from our Nation's birth certificate:

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed."

As we all recall, the Declaration of Independence has two more structural segments. First, it discusses the need for revolution; and secondly, it recites the litany of abuses attributed to George III of Great Britain.

I do not advocate revolution and I believe that it is not in the Nation's interest to devote time and energy to the fixing of blame on the present administration. Nor do I believe we can afford merely to stake out sound political positions for 1970 and 1972. Rather, we must find workable solutions to the problems that exist now, whether they were created by the current administration, or whether they are the legacy of our Party's years in power.

And let us at least be candid with ourselves—the military-industrial complex was not created on January 20, 1960.

Our national problems are many and varied. They include:

- Vietnam;
- National Security;
- Pentagon spending;
- Domestic priorities and the domestic budget;

- The economy and taxes including burdensome state and local taxes;

- Urban problems, race relations and law and order; and

- Civil rights and civil liberties.

Read the newspapers for the last week; our national problems scream out at us.

March 6, 1970

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD—SENATE

S 3161

FUTILE FARM SUBSIDIES

American taxpayers pour \$4.5 billion annually into farm subsidies that do not work, and it's about time Congress sees the light and starts phasing out the program.

Over the weekend Senator Charles McC. Mathias called the five-year-old program a dismal failure and recommended that the billions poured into it be used instead for education, medical research, medical care and other pressing needs.

Many Washington County farmers disapprove of the program under which prices received on such commodities as wheat, corn, feed grains and cotton, have not provided adequate incomes.

The futility of the subsidy program is illustrated by the fact that the 60 per cent of agriculture not covered by government programs, such as production of cattle, hogs, eggs, fruit and vegetables, is better off as far as farm income is concerned.

There is no reason for the farmers or taxpayers to be happy with the costly subsidies. It seems ridiculous to pay farmers for not growing certain crops—or at least cut down on production—when there is so much hunger in many parts of the United States and elsewhere in the world.

THE LAOS CONFLICT

Mr. HARTKE, Mr. President, on February 6, 1965—2 days before the United States started bombing North Vietnam—I first spoke out against the deepening American involvement in Southeast Asia. At that time only 267 of our young men had been killed there; our total forces numbered only 21,000. And we had spent all of \$4 billion in military and economic aid to South Vietnam during the entire 10 years preceding my speech.

I said then that the American people were confused about our commitment. I observed that the Vietnamese people "wonder where we stand." I pointed out that the councils of our own Government were divided and uncertain.

Above all, I cautioned the President not to proceed by stealth and subterfuge along whatever path he had chosen for us in Vietnam. I pleaded with him, instead, to give a clear direction to our policy so that the American people and their elected representatives in Congress could make some judgment on the course we were asked to follow.

Today those words have a bitter and ominous ring. Five years and 1 month after they were uttered, I and a handful of my colleagues in the Senate feel compelled to say them again—this time substituting "Laos" for "Vietnam."

Five years and 1 month later the 267 young Americans have become almost 50,000, the \$4 billion have become \$110 billion, the troop commitment of 21,000 has gone over the half million mark and is now only slightly below it. The Nation stands divided, large numbers of our youth are bitterly alienated, and a potentially great President has been driven from office. And the terrible question that hangs over us now is—is a new set of leaders preparing to take us down yet another blood-soaked jungle path in our self-appointed role of world policeman?

On November 3 of last year, President Nixon said, "The American people cannot and should not be asked to support a policy which involves the overriding issues of war and peace unless they know the truth about the policy."

Yet war without policy, and policy without truth characterizes our activities in Laos today. President Nixon is, of course, not responsible for our initial involvement in Laos, but he must bear the responsibility for his administration's attempts to obscure and confuse the facts of our involvement.

More than 4 months ago, a subcommittee of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee conducted hearings on Laos, but the State Department has not allowed the hearing transcript to be released to the public. The State Department has, however, leaked favorable reports to preferred columnists.

The Pentagon has refused point blank to allow reporters to talk even off the record on the subject of either North Vietnamese or American involvement in the Laos war. In Laos, American officials have refused to cooperate with reporters or discuss our involvement there. In fact, three reporters were arrested for trying to investigate a secret American base in Laos. After their arrest, the Ambassador to Laos said the American mission had lost any interest in helping out the press whatsoever.

This is hardly the action of an administration that believes that the public should know the truth about its policy.

Members of the Senate are in the ludicrous position of hoping that some enterprising reporter will tell us what is going on.

I will attempt to describe the Laos situation as best I can. Laos is a sort of wine-bottle-shaped country sharing a long common boundary with Vietnam. It is about the size of the State of Oregon, with a population of that of the District of Columbia. Up to 1954, it was ruled by foreign powers and since then it has been beset by strife. The present Government is headed by Prince Souvanna Phouma and he is opposed by his half-brother Prince Souphanouvong. For many years the battle has raged back and forth, with neither side gaining a decisive advantage. Much of the fighting for the Government has been done by an independent army of Meo tribesmen, who are neither Laotian nor Vietnamese, commanded by a local warlord and paid for and equipped by the CIA. Because of the continuous fighting about a third of the population has been killed, wounded, or driven from their homes. Last summer the stalemate was suddenly broken when the Meo tribesmen, encouraged by their American advisers, staged a strong attack which swept the Pathet Lao from the Plain of Jars for the first time in 4 or 5 years. Everyone expected the Pathet Lao to recapture the Plain of Jars and in the last weeks, they have staged their successful counterattack. At this time no one knows if the Pathet Lao and their North Vietnamese allies will stop their offensive on the Plain of Jars, as they have in the past, or will push forward against the cities of Vientiane and Luang Prabang and on to the border of Thailand.

Over the years American involvement has steadily increased. We are now flying from 200 to 400 sorties against Laotian positions every day. We have dropped more bombs on Laos than on North Vietnam. Unknown numbers of American CIA operatives and Green Beret para-

military groups, probably less than 5,000, are presently in Laos. We are spending from \$200 to \$300 million annually in military aid for Laos. And almost 200 Americans, mostly flyers, have died in this conflict. From the known facts, it is clear that while the Vietnam struggle is allegedly being Vietnamized, the Laotian struggle is being "Americanized." It is clear that even after our experience in Vietnam, we are getting further involved in an Asian country without the knowledge of the public, without the consent of Congress, and indeed in direct violation of the expressed intent of Congress.

It is argued by high administration officials that to discuss our involvement in Laos would be to acknowledge our violation of the Geneva Accord of 1962. Our violation, however, responded to the clear and repeated violations of the Accord by the North Vietnamese.

Frankly, I worry more about the uninformed American opinion than unfavorable world opinion. What profits us if we win the propaganda war abroad but lose freedom at home? Let us stop worrying what foreigners think of us and start worrying what we think of ourselves. Frankly, I believe some high administration officials fear not adverse world opinion but critical American opinion. There is a creeping elitism in our Government, a feeling that only the bureaucrats are competent to make foreign policy decisions. They seem to believe that the American public is too uninformed, too uneducated, to appreciate and appraise the various considerations necessary in the formation of foreign policy. History has shown, however, that decisions made in secret by small groups, have little likelihood of success. I also believe that some bureaucrats think that Americans are unwilling to sacrifice. But Americans have made necessary sacrifices in the past, and they are willing to do so again in the future.

The question is not our willingness to sacrifice but our willingness to be deceived. The question is not support of our President—we all support the President in times of trouble—but faith in our Government.

The resemblance between the impending danger in Laos and our past predicament in Vietnam is unmistakable.

Are we going to allow ourselves to make the same mistakes again?

Are we going to again send young men to die without a clear idea of why?

I very much fear if the American people do not speak out, the Nation's fate will be decided without them.

Besides public awareness and public participation in whatever decision is made, I shall urge the U.S. Senate to take the following steps: First, we should demand the full disclosure of the recent hearings on the situation in Laos. As Senator Symington noted, most of this information has already been reported in the papers. With the release of the testimony, there should also be a full disclosure of our involvement and purposes in Laos. Second, if a full disclosure of our involvement and purposes in Laos is not possible, then the U.S. Senate should convene in secret session to determine what is the proper course for this

EUREKA, CAL.
 TIMES-STANDARD
 # - 12,122
 E - 17,701
 S - 16,107

MAR 6 1970

Debate Off, HSC Says CIA at Bay

ARCATA — Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) recruiters canceled employment interviews scheduled for yesterday at Humboldt State College.

But college officials said the cancellation had little or no connection with a previously-publicized "debate" supposed to take place yesterday between the recruiters and members of an anti-war group at the college.

A sparse audience was on hand at 1 p.m. when a spokesman for the debate's sponsor, the Student Mobilization Committee, (SMC) announced that the CIA had "chickened out." The event was supposed to take place in front of the Sequoia Theatre.

College officials said that neither they nor the CIA knew anything about the purported debate other than what they had seen on SMC posters.

Just Informal

Frank Onstine, a student who said he was a spokesman for the SMC, admitted that the CIA had not been formally invited to debate. "Our proclamations were the only invitation extended. We thought they were widely-enough distributed so that they got the word."

Dave Travis, HSC placement director, said that the impend-

ing "debate" first came to his attention when he saw a poster about it on Monday afternoon. He said that he called the CIA office in San Francisco that evening and the next morning to check on the matter. "They said they definitely had made no arrangements for a debate," Travis continued. "The recruiter called back later Tuesday and canceled," he went on.

"They have a standard procedure," Travis added. "They don't come whenever a demonstration is planned or if they hear of any chance of one."

According to Travis, the recruiter would have canceled his trip anyway, because of a limited number of sign-ups. He said that a CIA representative will contact the individual students who did sign up for interviews.

The interviews were to be with women interested in "secretarial" positions, Travis said.

A similar incident resulted in cancellation of CIA interviews at Humboldt State last year.

The SMC posters denounced the CIA as "the interlocking hidden machinery that carries out the policies of the United States in the Cold War."

"The CIA has been working overtime to panic the U.S. public into supporting a massive escalation of U.S. involvement in Laos," the flyer continued.

FORT WORTH, TEX.
PRESS

E - 48,759
S - 54,317
MAR 6 1970

Nixon to tell 'why' on Laos

By TED KNAP
Scraps-Howard Staff Writer

KEY BISCAYNE, Fla.—President Nixon, under increasing pressure to lift the veil of secrecy, put the finishing touches today on a statement explaining what the United States is doing in Laos and why.

Nixon flew to his vacation home here last night with Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, his chief foreign policy adviser, after the White House alerted several Washington news bureaus that a statement on Laos would be made this weekend, probably late today.

Sen. George S. McGovern, D., S.D., referring to press reports about B-52 bombings and the presence of U.S. personnel on the ground, said yesterday the United States is "engaged in a secret war" in Laos. Senate foreign relations committee chairman J. William Fulbright, D., Ark., also has been pressing for full disclosure of U.S. involvement in the kingdom bordering both North and South Vietnam.

U.S. PARAMILITARY personnel, reportedly operating under the Central Intelligence Agency, have been in Laos for several years. It has been Nixon administration policy—just as it was with former President Lyndon B. Johnson—not to acknowledge publicly that they were there.

These operations have been clandestine because Laos is defined as "neutral" by terms of the 1962 Geneva Accords, which forbid outside forces to intervene. But fear that Laos may become another Vietnam is forcing a more complete official explanation.

And Nixon Nov. 3 said the American people should not be asked to support a war about which they had not been fully informed.

NIXON WILL contend, as Johnson did, that the U.S. presence has been forced by the massive intervention of North Vietnamese troops. Nixon said earlier this year that 50,000 North Vietnamese troops were in Laos.

"Our activities there are solely for the purpose of seeing that the Laotian government (forces) . . . are not overwhelmed by the North Vietnamese and other Communist forces," he said at his Jan. 30 press conference. He added that these activities are "at their request," referring to the Laotian government.

The President has insisted that no American "ground combat troops" are involved in Laos and that B-52 bombings are aimed at interdicting North Vietnamese troop and supply movements down the Ho Chi Minh Trail, which crosses Laotian territory on its way into South Vietnam.

NEW YORK, N.Y.
POST

E - 708,180

MAR 6 1970

Today: Nixon On Laos

By WARREN HOGE
N.Y. Post Correspondent

KEY BISCAYNE, Fla.—The White House was preparing to break its silence today over U.S. involvement in Laos with an Administration statement outlining American activity in the area.

The declaration was expected to stress that the U. S. is not slipping into another Vietnam situation, a fear which has become widespread in recent weeks with reports of increasing American participation in the widening Laotian conflict.

Throughout the past month, the White House has refused to comment on the situation other than to reiterate President Nixon's claim during his press conference last month that no combat troops are engaged in Laos and that American air activity is confined to reconnaissance flights and bombing raids along the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

Accounts from the war zone indicate that the

U. S. is more heavily committed than the Administration has revealed, and the repeated White House refusals to elaborate on the earlier explanation have fed this suspicion.

Critics have noted that the President in his November address to the nation on Vietnam said that Americans could not and should not support a war effort that was not fully explained to them.

"We are flirting dangerously with a new Vietnam," Sen. McGovern (D-S. D.) charged on Capitol Hill yesterday while Sen. Fulbright said his Foreign Relations Committee was contemplating a searching new look at the U. S. role in Laos.

Said McGovern: "I contend that the Administration is covering up the facts of a bloody military operation in Laos that has already secretly cost the lives of scores of American bombing crews and American aircraft."

The Administration is facing a severe test of its credibility, and the upcoming explanation will be an effort to restore confidence in the government's word.

How much of the clandestine American military operation the Administration is prepared to admit is uncertain. The CIA operating two

airlines and providing other extensive support to Meo tribesmen battling the Communist Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese regulars in the land-locked Asian nation.

Complicating the Administration's task is its awareness that if it confesses everything it is doing in Laos it will be admitting violations of the Geneva accord of 1962 guaranteeing Laotian neutrality.

Other Signers

Other signatories to that document, including North Vietnam, Communist China and the Soviet Union, could exploit such a confession to justify formal intervention of their own into the Laotian war, the Administration fears.

In announcing the White House intention to give the public a fuller accounting of U. S. involvement in Laos, press secretary Ziegler said Nixon himself would not personally deliver the statement or participate in any briefing. He made it clear, however, that whatever was done carried the full authority of the Chief Executive.

The President flew here from Washington last night for a long weekend at his Bayside home. His departure was delayed for more than an hour when a firing pin in one of the Air Force One engines had to be replaced. The President stayed aboard while the repair was made.

RED FORCE IN LAOS IN STRONG POSITION

Has 3 Months Before Rain
Blocks Roads — White
House to Give Details

By HENRY KAMM
Special to The New York Times

VIENTIANE, Laos, March 5 — With about three months of dry weather ahead, the North Vietnamese were holding the same ground in Laos today that they occupied last year at the end of their annual dry-season offensive. This puts the Communist forces in a strong position.

The beginning of the rainy season, which makes the supply routes impassable, normally marks the retreat of Communist troops from some of the ground that they have gained.

[In Washington, the White House said that the Administration would disclose some information this weekend on the situation in Laos.]

The North Vietnamese and their Pathet Lao allies are pausing to allow their logistic support to be built up before exploiting their recent recapture of the Plaine des Jarres for further offensive actions. At the same time, Laotian and American officials try to anticipate where the Communists will strike and, more importantly, how far they intend to go.

However the excitement over the situation in Laos has not yet spread to Laos.

While the press of the world and the most respected liberal voices in the United States Senate predict imminent catastrophe, Vientiane, the administrative capital, and Luang Prabang, the royal capital, appear as drowsy as they did after the signal military successes of Government forces last September.

The North Vietnamese have about 25,000 troops in northern Laos, consisting of two infantry divisions, a number of unattached combat units and supporting troops. They have more rockets and bigger artillery than before. They are backed by about the same number of Pathet Lao troops, more

loosely organized and said by Government and American sources to be of lesser effectiveness.

Approximately the same number of enemy troops, similarly divided, are reported in the southern panhandle region, but the war there is not affected by the seasonal seesaw. The Communist objective in southern Laos is to safeguard the Ho Chi Minh trail, a complex of jungle and mountain paths along which North Vietnam moves men and supplies to the south in circumvention of the demilitarized zone astride the border of North Vietnam and South Vietnam.

The United States Air Force is making a maximum effort to prevent the enemy from marshaling men and supplies for a renewed offensive as speedily as its forces regained the Plaine des Jarres. The recapture, while fully expected, occurred against almost no effective opposition on the ground, which may account for some of the sense of panic felt abroad.

Hoped to Slow Advance

American officials had hoped that the advance would be slowed, without great sacrifices of Government troops, by delaying actions that would force the enemy to mass for attacks. This would have offered targets for the continuous raids by United States planes based in Thailand and on carriers and by the small but active Royal Laotian Air Force flying converted World War II trainers carrying bombs and rockets.

Maj. Gen. Van Pao, commander of Government forces on the Plaine des Jarres as well as of the clandestine army — guerrillas trained, equipped, supplied, advised, transported and paid by the United States through the Central Intelligence Agency — had been persuaded to adopt this strategy over his wishes to try to hold the plain.

The holding actions failed to develop, particularly at General Vang Pao's forward headquarters, at an old French airport code named Lima Lima. His perimeter forces of regular troops broke and fled under fire of 122-mm. rockets and the sight of two to four Soviet-built tanks, and spread their panic to the clandestine army defenders. Similarly, Muong Soui, the westernmost point of the Communists' advance last year, was abandoned in quick order.

United States planes are concentrating bombs and rockets on the major supply routes. The hope is to thus delay the enemy offensive for two to four weeks.

However, there is no hope of defeating the Communists from the air and little faith in the power of the Laotian forces to withstand a major attack. The initiative is conceded to Hanoi, and the question is how far Hanoi wants to push.

Optimists in the present context say that Hanoi's goals have not changed. The goals are, in this view, to take all the territory that the Communists and neutralists held at the time of the Geneva accord of 1962, which proclaimed a neutral Laos under a coalition government.

The neutralists have split since then, and the Communists have left the Government. In the optimistic view, the Communists would halt on the 1962 line, declare that the true neutralists are on their side and demand a new three-sided government under Communist domination.

The pessimists — they include sectors of the American establishment — contend that Hanoi has the power to go further and may use it for the sake of turning the war in Laos and in Vietnam in their favor.

They believe that the Communists may push their military advantage to the point of presenting Premier Souvanna Phouma with an ultimatum to order the Americans to halt bombing in Laos — carried out clandestinely since 1964 under the guise of armed reconnaissance with the right to return fire if attacked — or face the advance of Communist troops beyond the old neutralist line into the Vientiane Plain to the Mekong River.

A bombing halt would allow the North Vietnamese the unimpeded use of the Ho Chi Minh trail, on which they now lose perhaps as much as a quarter of the supplies they move southward. This would make it possible for them to divert to aggressive use the troops that now guard the trail.

The result would be international embarrassment to the United States and a serious blow to the American negotiating position at the Paris peace talks.

Whatever the eventual political goals, military sources expect the Communists to strike a determined blow at General Vang Pao's irregulars. These troops are the best fighting force on the Government side.

With the help of the United

States Air Force, they achieved the surprise victory last year on the Plaine des Jarres which had been held for five years by the Communists.

The most painful blow that could be dealt to the general, the chief of the Meo mountain tribe, would be the capture of Long Cheng, his headquarters and the Meo capital southwest of the plain.

The loss of this secret, partly American-staffed base, in the view of knowledgeable American officials, might be fatal to the effectiveness of the most able general and fighters on the Government side.

Other likely Communist objectives are thought to be a drive westward from Muong Soui along Route 7, which leads from North Vietnam through the Plaine des Jarres to a junction with Route 13, the north-south highway linking Vientiane and Luang Prabang.

The capture of the hill position of Sala Phoukhoun, where the roads meet 30 miles west of Muong Soui, would place the Communists in a position to threaten either capital. Another likely objective is Vangvieng, the headquarters of the pro-Government neutralists.

Communist forays in the region of Paksane in recent days have raised the threat of a drive on the city on the Mekong border with Thailand, severing northern Laos from the panhandle region.

In the absence of solid indications of Hanoi's aims and in a possible effort to discourage North Vietnam from setting its sights higher than in the past, United States officials here and in Saigon have left unchallenged a report that on at least one occasion B-52's, the biggest American bombers, have been used in northern Laos.

6 MAR 1970

'Secret' U.S.-Run Base Deep in Laos Seems Placid

By T. D. ALLMAN

Special to The New York Times

VIENTIANE, Laos, March 5—Despite Government setbacks in recent fighting, the big base at Long Cheng run by the United States for the clandestine army in Laos appears placid except for a buzz of American activity around the landing field.

Long Cheng is just southwest of the Plaine des Jarres from which Laotian Government troops were driven last month, and it is the center of operations of the United States military and the Central Intelligence Agency in northeastern Laos.

With 40,000 people, it is one of the largest Laotian settlements. But its existence is supposed to be secret, so it appears on few maps, and no regular airlines stop there.

No journalist has been allowed to visit Long Cheng. Last week, however, three journalists—Max Coiffait of Agence France-Presse, John Saar of Life magazine and this correspondent—walked to Long Cheng to report on the United States air, logistic and intelligence activities there.

The hill costumes of the Meo tribesmen contrasted with the civilian clothes of United States military men, riding in open

jeeps and carrying M-16 rifles and pistols. These young Americans are mostly ex-Green Berets, hired on C.I.A. contract to advise and train Laotian troops.

The fact that they are temporarily C.I.A. personnel and no longer connected with their Army units allows the United States Government to say that it has no soldiers fighting in Laos.

The town of Long Cheng is almost brand new and everything there has been flown in by United States aircraft. The most permanent-looking buildings were a glassed-in Laotian officers club and the scores of C.I.A. buildings, identifiable by their windowless walls with projecting air conditioners and roof aerials.

The center is home for about 50 Americans who supply, plan, finance, direct and sometimes even participate in the fighting against the Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese around the plain.

Since the United States activities violate the 1962 Geneva accords on Laos, which forbid foreign military intervention, Long Cheng is off limits to all but United States and Laotian officials who have special permission from the C.I.A. and from Maj. Gen. Vang Pao, the

Laotian military commander in Northeastern Laos.

The three journalists' visit to Long Cheng was neither authorized nor anticipated. But they were able to reach it by walking about 15 miles from Samthong through a number of Government checkpoints and then wandered freely about the town for nearly two hours before being discovered and compelled to leave.

Well-Equipped Airfield

The airfield at Long Cheng is small but very well equipped, with a paved all-weather runway about 3,000 feet long complete with landing lights.

Sheltered in a parking area carved out of the hillside were half a dozen United States transport planes, including 33-passenger Caribous, although the Longcheng field can accommodate larger transports. Also in the parking area were 10 Short Take-off and Landing (STOL) aircraft, the lifeline for dozens of isolated Government enclaves in northeastern Laos. Their American pilots—mostly civilian employees of Air America and Continental Air services—ferry soldiers, arms and supplies to battle zones.

Farther down the runway were a dozen or more unmarked T-28 single-engine propeller bombers that are flown on bombing missions by Meo tribesmen and Laotian pilots. But everything else regarding the T-28's is done by Americans. We saw members of the United States Air Force repairing engines, loading bombs and

rockets, instructing Laotian pilots and taxiing the planes up and down the runway.

Near the T-28's were three American reconnaissance planes, flown by United States pilots from Long Cheng and used to mark targets for the United States jet bombers.

Rescue Helicopters Stand-By

At the end of the paved runway were three Jolly Green Giant rescue helicopters. Their presence is believed to be one of the reasons the United States tries to keep Long Cheng secret. The Jolly Green Giants are regarded as proof that the United States bombs not just the Ho Chi Minh Trail but northeastern Laos as well. Their crews are always on stand-by to rescue downed United States bomber pilots, of which about a dozen are presumed killed in Laos each month. The Jolly Green Giants were largely unarmed, though their crews wore United States Air Force flight uniforms.

The three journalists watched the traffic at Long Cheng's airfield for about an hour, and calculated that a United States plane landed or took off every minute. United States helicopters and airplanes were in holding pattern above the valley, waiting to land.

There appear to be more radio antennas in Long Cheng than trees. The radio network connects Long Cheng with agents all over northeast Laos, many of them Meo forward air guides who direct United States bombers to their targets.

Bulletin News Analysis

Nixon's Laos Problem: Whether to Be Frank

By RICHARD FRANK

Bulletin Washington Bureau

Washington—The White House, under increasingly critical congressional pressure, has decided to break its long silence and tell the public about the American role in the not-so-secret war in Laos.

A statement by President Nixon is expected in the next few days. It will, for the first time, give the Official Administration position on the war in the tiny, landlocked Southeast Asian kingdom which shares a border with both North and South Vietnam.

The President's decision to discuss the U. S. involvement in Laos indicates that he has resolved the dilemma he inherited when he took office and which he has perpetuated during the past thirteen months.

The evidence, from newsmen in Laos and from congressional sources with access to unpublished data on the war, is that the United States and North Vietnam have each been in clear violation of the 1962 Geneva accords which established the official neutrality of Laos.

The Choices

Thus Mr. Nixon has two basic choices:

—He can admit to the world

that his country has violated an international agreement to which it is one of the parties.

—Or he can withhold some of the most damaging facts and find that his Administration's credibility has been placed in serious doubt.

A less-than-frank statement by the President might also seem to signify that the U. S. is far more deeply involved in Laos than the evidence which so far has been revealed would indicate.

What Is Known

What is known, officially or unofficially, about the American role in Laos is this:

—The U. S. is spending more than \$200 million a year to support the royal Laotian army,

supplying it with equipment, training and combat advisory missions staffed by military men now on civilian status and reportedly assigned and financed by the Central Intelligence Agency.

—American bombers, openly engaged in bombing the Ho Chi Minh Trail along the southeastern edge of Laos, have also been used against North Vietnamese troops operating in north central Laos against Laotian government troops.

—American fighter-bombers manned by American pilots have been flying in close support of Laotian troops in the Plain of Jars, in the north-central sector of the kingdom, an active battleground seven hundred miles away from the routes used by North Vietnamese infiltrators into South Vietnam.

—An estimated 150 American civilian airmen are missing, captured or dead in Laos since the Geneva accords of July, 1962, established the official neutrality of Laos.

Under the Geneva accords, both the bombing and the military assistance offered by the U. S. is illegal. All that the American Government has officially admitted is the massive bombing of the Ho Chi Minh trail, intended to "interdict" the infiltration from North Vietnam through the southeast corner of Laos and into South Vietnam.

The Pressures

The President has been under particular pressure from congressional doves and some hawks to speak out on Laos and dispel the growing feeling that the war there could engulf his Administration as the Vietnam war overwhelmed the regime of Lyndon B. Johnson.

Secretary of State William P. Rogers spent more than two hours with members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee earlier this week, but apparently failed to eliminate all the fears that the U. S. involvement in Laos might be a re-

petition of the Vietnam experience.

Many congressmen—especially members of the Senate—are also disturbed at what they view as the unwillingness of the Administration to let the Legislative Branch participate in decisions which commit the United States to international courses of action.

One Dispute

A particular irritant is the unpublished transcript of several days of closed-door hearings on Laos before a foreign relations subcommittee studying U. S. commitments abroad.

Those hearings were held last October, and the transcript was routinely submitted to the State Department for the "sanitizing" process performed to eliminate testimony whose publication would be damaging to national security.

Committee members say the transcript was returned with so many deletions that to publish it in that form would mislead the public.

Four months of negotiations between committee staff employees and the State Department have narrowed down the disputed parts of the hearings transcript, but the differences remain so substantial that the committee refuses to print the transcript in its present censored version.

The Issue

Some who have had access to the hearing record say there is very little in it which has not already appeared in the press, either in the form of public statements by members of Congress or the Administration or through news reports from Laos and Washington.

Others who have read it say it offers evidence that the U. S. involvement in the Laotian war has secretly and significantly escalated.

There is no necessary contradiction in these two views, since those who say America has become more deeply involved also acknowledge that much of the evidence has previously been published.

Their primary concern, they say, is that Congress is being left out of important foreign policy decisions in this area.

Nixon's Comments

At his last three televised press conferences, the President

responded to questions about Laos, but declined to go into detail on U. S. involvement there. On Sept. 28, he said the U. S. was providing logistical support and training for the neutralist government of Prince Souvanna Phouma "in order to avoid Laos falling under Communist domination."

He said that the U. S. also flew reconnaissance flights over Laos and engaged in "some other activities" which he would not discuss.

Mr. Nixon denied that there were any American combat troops in Laos, and there is no evidence that this is the case, except for the reports that CIA advisers are active in the field.

On Dec. 8, the President said the people of this country "are entitled to know everything that they possibly can with regard to any involvement of the United States abroad."

A Refusal

But then, after confirming that the United States was "interdicting" the Ho Chi Minh Trail through Laos, he said, "beyond that, I don't think the public interest would be served by any further discussion."

At his most recent press conference on Jan. 30, the President noted that North Vietnam has some 50,000 troops in Laos, "by threatening the survival of Laos," and said American activities in that country were "solely for the purpose of seeing that the Laotian government (was) not overwhelmed by the North Vietnamese and other Communist forces."

In his 40,000-word, book-length foreign policy report to Congress last month, Mr. Nixon devoted only part of one sentence to Laos, linking it to the war in Vietnam.

He said the U. S. was seeking, through negotiations with the North Vietnamese, to achieve "a compromise settlement which would assure the self-determination of the South Vietnamese people and would also ensure the continued neutrality of Laos."

Created in 1949

Laos, which did not exist as a separate country until 1949, when France gave it its independence, is clearly a part of the over-all Indochina battlefield.

Its less than three million people live in a mountainous

RIVERSIDE, CAL.
ENTERPRISE

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MAR 6 1970

And now Laos

Rep. L. Mendel Rivers, head of the House Armed Services Committee and confidant of the military, has denied the U.S. is getting into a Vietnam-like commitment in Laos: "Anyone who says we are just doesn't know the facts."

Perhaps. But what, then, are the facts? That is the essence of the complaint, for the information which the public gets comes in dribbles.

The worst kept secret of the little war is the heavy participation of the CIA and military advisers. The air war has been busier, and by extrapolating U.S. Command figures, it is a safe bet that 300 planes and 100 airmen were lost in neighboring Laos last year.

As fears have mounted, more and more officials have stepped forward to defend the U.S. role, without saying what that role is. Theirs is an unspoken plea to "trust us," a particular Southeast Asia road that has been gone down before to everlasting regret.

Secretary of State William Rogers has been more effective by talking to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and promising that it will be consulted in advance of any increased U.S. involvement. This may still criticism for a time, as the persuasive Mr. Rogers has done before.

But the total Administration effort thus far has been to try to improve its public-relations image on Laos. No one has come up with a satisfactory way of doing that short of telling all, which is viewed in some quarters as a horrendous idea.

James Reston reminded us the other day that Mr. Nixon, in his notable November speech on Vietnam, said: "The American people cannot and should not be asked to support a policy which involves the overriding issues of war and peace unless they know the truth about that policy."

True in Vietnam, true in Laos.

ST. LOUIS, MO.
GLOBE-DEMOCRAT

MORNING - 506,526
WEEKEND - 342,001

MARG 1970

PUMPED-UP LAOS ISSUE

The fighting in tiny Laos, where North Vietnam is thrusting sporadic attacks on the weak Laotians, has undoubtedly been stepped up. And United States air bombing, mainly upon Communist forces and supplies traveling the Ho Chi Minh trail toward South Vietnam, has been increased.

But the fright-mongering charges that the President and the Pentagon are escalating Laos warfare into "another Vietnam" have about as much foundation as a straw man in a hurricane.

Richard Nixon has made it clear he intends to shrink commitments involving United States arms. Why would he be withdrawing American troops from Vietnam if he sought, or would tolerate, "another Vietnam" in Southeast Asia?

Neither the President nor his Administration is about to invite a new Indo-China conflict surreptitiously. The idea that Washington may be sneaking the American people into another Asian war has all the look of a pumped-up poltergeist.

Defense Secretary Melvin Laird has said unequivocally the United States has no ground forces in Laos. The tenor of his statement indicates there is no intention whatever of sending troops into that little state.

If the situation should change drastically, he said the President and defense establishment would consult with Congress before making any further decision.

Why then has a furor, largely inspired by Senate foes of virtually every Viet policy, suddenly been raised in Congress over the usual winter offensive of Red Vietnamese in Laos? And over reports some CIA agents and Green Berets are tutoring Laotian soldiers in defense — incidentally with miniscule results?

One reason is because Viet watchers in the capital are understandably suspicious of any military operations in the Vietnam theater, after the credibility gap during the Johnson

Administration. Some Senators are honestly fearful we are under hazard of having our military feet burned again.

Besides sincerity among some Congressmen, there is the political possibility that compulsively partisan Democrats resent the fact Mr. Nixon has relegated the Viet issue to limbo by his Vietnamization program and gradual troop pullout.

Every year at this time the North Vietnamese have loosed offensives in Laos, taking the Plain of Jars and beefing up protection of the Ho Chi Minh highway into South Vietnam. As regularly as clockwork, the Laotians have won back the plain. Whether they can this year or whether Reds now intend to take over all Laos by force has caused some worry in Washington — not a great deal.

* * *

Laos is a plot of real estate no bigger than Oregon and with a population of about 3 million. Its only strategic value is the Ho highway for Hanoi troops and supplies. Because the United States has been heavily bombing this reinforcement route, cries of "escalation" have been raised. Americans have, however, been bombing the Ho Chi Minh supply road steadily for years. The only real hazard that might be raised by a Red grab of Laos would be the Communist armed threat to Thailand. This is not immediate and could likely be staved off.

* * *

A roundup of opinion among Washington analysts by the Wall Street Journal concludes the Laos problem is not at all likely to mushroom into another Vietnam, even threaten such a bog.

New war over Laos is not wanted by the Administration, nor apparently by the Viet Communists.

The thoracic uproar over a Laotian military crisis, involving us and Reds in Southeast Asia, appears no more than a jittery bubble in a brief surge of headlines.

6 MAR 1970

Laos 'explanation' readied

By Scripps-Howard Newspapers

KEY BISCAIYNE, Fla., March 6 — President Nixon, under increasing pressure to lift the veil of secrecy, put the finishing touches today on a statement explaining what the U.S. is doing in Laos and why.

Mr. Nixon flew to his vacation home here last night with Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, his chief foreign policy adviser, after the White House alerted several Washington news bureaus that a statement on Laos would be made this weekend, probably late today.

Sen. George S. McGovern, D-S.D., referring to press reports about B52 bombings and the presence of U.S. personnel on the ground, said yesterday the U.S. is "engaged in a secret war" in Laos. Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman J. William Fulbright, D-Ark., also has been pressing for full disclosure of U.S. involvement in the kingdom bordering Vietnam.

U.S. paramilitary personnel, reportedly operating under the CIA have been in Laos for several years. It has been Nixon Administration policy — just as it was with former President Lyndon B. Johnson — not to acknowledge publicly that they were there.

These operations have been clandestine because Laos is defined as "neutral" by terms of the 1962 Geneva accords, which forbid outside forces to intervene. But fear that Laos may become another Vietnam is forcing a more complete official explanation.

Mr. Nixon Nov. 3 said the American people should not be asked to support a war about which they had not been fully informed.

Mr. Nixon will contend, as Mr. Johnson did, that the U.S. presence has been forced by the massive intervention of North Vietnamese troops. Mr. Nixon said earlier this year that 50,000 North Vietnamese troops were in Laos.

"Our activities there are solely for the purpose of seeing that the Laotian government (forces) . . . are not overwhelmed by North Vietnamese and other communist forces," he said at his Jan. 30 press conference. He added that these activities are "at their request," referring to the Laotian government.

Mr. Nixon has insisted, however, in response to criticism, that U.S. involvement in Laos has not increased since he became President 13 months ago.

White House Statement Due on Laos

By Murrey Marder
Washington Post Staff Writer

The White House is expected to issue a statement, probably today, on American involvement in the semi-secret war in Laos in an attempt to quell domestic alarm about escalating warfare in Southeast Asia.

There is open concern inside the administration that suspicions about clandestine warfare in Laos can shatter the relative American calm about U.S. strategy in adjoining South Vietnam. Generalized denials that there is any current administration intention to send American ground troops into Laos have failed to head off congressional apprehensions.

White House Press Secretary Ronald L. Ziegler said yesterday that "we have been considering this matter and there is a very good possibility that we will have some additional information to give you this weekend."

President Nixon left Washington last night by jet for a three-day weekend at Key Biscayne, Fla. He was accompanied by his principal aides, including Henry A. Kissinger, his national security adviser.

What is expected is a White House statement on Laos with a press briefing for newsmen.

The Nixon administration is expected to tell only part of the facts about the full U.S. role in the Laotian war because the conflict directly involves the Central Intelligence Agency, whose detailed activities in such a situation never are officially disclosed.

President Nixon, as Presidents Johnson and Kennedy before him, is operating on the principle that any one-sided disclosure of covert activities in Laos would put the United States at a major diplomatic disadvantage and also damage the prospects for halting the Laotian conflict.

The internal argument has been that North Vietnam never admitted that it failed to comply with the 1962 Geneva agreement to pull its troops out of Laos, but instead greatly increased them. U.S. military support, training, and air power was then requested clandestinely by Laotian Premier Souvanna Phouma to preserve his neutral regime.

This has put both sides, for some years, in actual violation of the Geneva neutrality accords. But whoever admitted it officially would put himself on the spot. President Nixon publicly tried to hold that line as recently as his Jan. 30 press conference. Since then, however, a rolling North Vietnamese-led offensive in Laos, reportedly with 15,000 new troops added to the 40,000 to 50,000 Hanoi soldiers there, has escalated U.S. alarm about "another Vietnam," putting pressure on the White House to speak out.

President Nixon in the recent past has acknowledged that U.S. air power has been engaged in "interdicting" the flow of North Vietnamese infiltrators across Laos into South Vietnam. The United States has said very little officially, however, about its role in the other war in Laos, for control of Laos itself.

Now, U.S. strategists themselves are wondering whether the Communists plan either to intensify the level of warfare in Laos to checkmate U.S. strategy in Vietnam, or to try to gain enough control in Laos to force the United States to halt the bombing of the so-called Ho Chi Minh infiltration trails. The latter has been a longtime Hanoi objective.

On Tuesday in a private

meeting with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Secretary of State William P. Rogers sought to ease senatorial fears that the United States is contemplating sending ground troops into Laos if the situation worsens.

Administration and congressional sources yesterday both denied published reports that Rogers gave the committee a binding assurance that the Nixon administration never will do so.

It is impossible to give any such absolute guarantee, administration sources said. What Rogers did tell the committee, sources in both branches of government said, was that the administration has no current plans to send any ground combat troops into Laos and would consult with Congress in advance if such an emergency should arise.

Rogers also notified Sen. Stuart Symington (D-Mo.), chairman of a Foreign Relations subcommittee that has investigated U.S. involvement in Laos, that the "serious situation presently existing in Laos" makes it impractical for Ambassador G. McMurtie Godley to return to Washington to testify. When feasible, said Rogers, that will be arranged.

The Symington subcommittee has clashed with the administration for months over security censorship and release of the record of its closed hearings on Laos.

Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield (D-Mont.) told newsmen yesterday that he believes President Nixon is con-

sidering a report to the American people that will be "helpful" on this count, too.

Mansfield said he is encouraged to hope that more facts about U.S. activities in Laos will be released. Otherwise, he said, "The people will become more and more suspicious and the situation will become more difficult." Mansfield said, "We are up to our neck in Laos and over our head in Vietnam."

Sen. George McGovern (D-S.D.) renewed his charges yesterday that in Laos "we are flirting dangerously with a new Vietnam."

"The administration is violating the Geneva settlement of 1962 by interfering militarily in Laos," McGovern told the National Newspaper Association in the Senate auditorium. McGovern said, "I firmly believe we are at war in Laos on a dangerous scale," and "the Nixon administration is guilty of deliberate deceit" in its explanations about that war.

Sen. Harry F. Byrd (D-W.Va.) told the Senate, "Under no foreseeable circumstances must we become involved in another ground war in Asia." Byrd said a statement this week by Premier Souvanna Phouma suggests "that he may be becoming desperate and is seeking wider and more comprehensive support from the United States."

White House Plans Statement on Laos

Senate Pressure Stirs Nixon Action

By GARNETT D. HORNER
Star Staff Writer

KEY BISCAYNE, Fla.— President Nixon is ready to make public now some information he has tried to keep secret about how deeply the United States is involved in helping Laos combat Communist invaders from North Vietnam.

The new information was expected to be released by the winter White House soon, probably some time today.

Indications were that the information made public would be substantially that which has been provided to congressional committees in executive session during recent weeks by Secretary of State William P. Rogers and Defense Secretary Melvin R. Laird.

The whole Laotian issue—what the United States should do there and how much should be told the American people and the world about it—is an inherited one for Nixon.

The problem of what to do about Laos dates back to at least 1962 when the late President John F. Kennedy tried to put it on the shelf with the accords reached at Geneva for a neutralist Laos.

Nixon does not see the present issue as one of "admitting" this or that regarding U.S. activity. Rather, he sees it as a question of meeting U.S. obligations concerning preservation of the neutrality of Laos, with the minimum possible risk of American involvement in another ground war in Southeast Asia.

All Nixon has admitted officially so far is that U.S. bombers are attempting to interdict North Vietnamese reinforcements and supplies moving along the Ho Chi Minh trail through Laos to South Vietnam.

Maintains Silence

The U.S. government has remained silent about news reports of B52 bombing missions in the vicinity of the Plain of Jars, recently overrun by North Vietnamese ground combat troops, and of Americans out of uniform working with the Royal Laotian forces on the ground.

The Nixon administration has been under pressure, primarily

from members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, to make public more detailed information about the extent of U.S. involvement. Democrats kept up that pressure in the Senate yesterday.

There is good reason for saying, officially, as little as possible about the U.S. role in Laos. The little Southeast Asian country is officially neutral. The 1962 Geneva accords, signed by the United States, North Vietnam, Communist China and the Soviet Union guarantee the neutrality of Laos and forbid foreign troop intervention.

Requested by Premier

Whatever the United States is doing has been requested by Laotian Premier Souvanna Phouma, who said a few days ago American air support was the only thing keeping his country from falling to North Vietnamese aggression.

No evidence has developed to dispute statements by Nixon and others that no U.S. ground combat military forces are in Laos. But reports of ground activity there of nonuniformed Americans, presumably CIA personnel, coupled with demands from senators that the full story be told, have tended to stir suspicion.

Critics of the Administration

policy in Laos have said nothing, however, about violations of the accords by North Vietnam or its two divisions in Laos. There has been considerable soul-searching within the administration about the risk of saying anything more publicly about U.S. activity in Laos.

Daily Questioning

The issue apparently was resolved within the last 36 hours or so. Until yesterday, White House Press Secretary Ronald L. Ziegler would say under almost daily questioning, that he could add nothing to what Nixon had said in his press conferences about Laos.

But yesterday Ziegler told newsmen there was a "good possibility" of "additional information" about U.S. involvement in Laos being provided them here this weekend.

Nixon flew to his winter home beside Biscayne Bay last night for a long weekend of work and relaxation.

After Ziegler's advice yesterday afternoon, a dozen or so reporters who had not planned to make the trip hastily signed up for the White House press plane.

Ziegler made clear that the expected new information on U.S. activity in Laos would not come from the President personally.

5 MAR 1970

Charges Laos Black Market Money Deals

BY FRED FARRAR

(Chicago Tribune Press Service)

Washington, March 4—Sen. Abraham Ribicoff (D., Conn.), charged today that black market currency manipulations have spread from Viet Nam to Laos and American pilots are involved.

Ribicoff made the charge as his Senate permanent investigations subcommittee reopened hearings into the misuse of noncommissioned officers club funds and black market currency dealings in Viet Nam.

Ribicoff did not elaborate on the currency black market in Laos, except to say that the kip, the basic Laotian unit of currency, is involved and profits from the transactions have been funneled into bank accounts in the United States.

Operated by CIA

He also did not specify whether he was talking about military or civilian pilots. Two private air lines operated by the central intelligence agency use civilian pilots to fly supply and other missions thruout much of Laos.

Ribicoff's allegations came after Secretary of the Army Stanley Resor disclosed in a statement to the subcommittee that the army's continuing investigation of club fund irregularities have uncovered "a few additional incidents of possible misconduct apparently unrelated to the incidents highlighted in your hearings."

Declines to Tell Details

Subcommittee investigators were the first to uncover evidence of irregularities in the use of club funds. Last fall the subcommittee held extensive public hearings on that matter and on black market currency manipulations in Viet Nam by



Sen. Abraham Ribicoff

American military men and civilians there.

Resor declined to give details of the new cases in today's public session because, he said, of "the possibility of criminal actions in these cases."

Resor also said that two army use by various police retired Maj. Gen. Carl Turner, former army provost marshal, have been completed and "in accordance with an agreement with the department of justice, copies have been made available to the internal revenue service."

Turner allegedly sold firearms he had been given for army use by various police departments, including Chicago's.

Could Mean Single Trial

Resor said that information turned over to the justice department about five present and former army sergeants who formed a company to sell supplies to service clubs "could result in a single trial of all five individuals."

STATINTL

U.S. AIDS RATE LAOS ABOVE VIET: SENATOR

[Reprinted from yesterday's late editions]
Washington, March 3 (AP) — Sen. J. William Fulbright (D., Ark.) said today that "high officials of the administration" have told members of his Senate foreign relations committee that "Laos is even more important than Viet Nam."

"The fact that high officials of the administration think this scares me to death," Fulbright told the Senate. "It suggests an ominous and dangerous future for the United States in that remote country."

His comments came in the middle of a speech he placed in the Congressional Record after delivering only the first and last paragraphs because of time limitations.

He Joins McGovern

It came after he joined in a call by Sen. George McGovern (D., S. D.) for a secret Senate session on Laos.

The Senate's senior Republican, George D. Aiken (Vt.), said he does not share the concern of many senators that Laos could turn into another Viet Nam.

Fulbright asked: "If Viet Nam was important enough to justify the commitment of half a million American troops, then in this view how many more could justifiably be committed to Laos, which is one of the few worse places than Viet Nam to fight a war?"

May Have to Decide

He said the United States "may soon have to decide whether to go all the way in Laos—that is, to make it another Viet Nam—or to get out."

Aiken was asked after a committee hearing on United States military aid program in Viet Nam if he thought Laos might become a new Viet Nam. His reply: "No."

"If it did," Aiken told reporters, "it would create such an upheaval in this country" that any good resulting from a firm United States stand would be undermined.

Invited Red Offensive

"It also seems clear," he said, "that we invited the recent Communist offensive in the Plain of Jars by encouraging an American trained, equipped, and directed Laotian army to seize this area last September, thus unsettling a more or less stable military line that had existed for several years."

"There is growing evidence that the CIA [central intelligence agency] and American military personnel—apparently in civilian garb—are directing Laotian military operations," he said.

Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird, talking to reporters, said there has been no buildup of United States manpower—either civilian or military—in Laos.

Laird was asked about McGovern's statement that there "has been more and more American airpower, American advisers, and CIA operatives" in Laos.

"I can categorically state there has been no buildup of individuals whether civilians or military on the ground in Laos or within the country," he said.

Tone Is Critical

On the Senate floor, the tone continued to be critical of the Nixon administration, with three Democratic senators — McGovern, Fulbright, and Stuart Symington of Missouri—on the attack.

"In spite of the painful lessons of Viet Nam, we are going down the same road in Laos, and we are doing it in secret," McGovern said.

McGovern, one of the earliest Senate critics of the Viet Nam war, said United States B-52 and tactical bombing raids over Laos "are comparable to or greater than the raids over North Viet Nam at their heaviest."

March 5, 1970

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forces for peace in Vietnam "will enter into talks to set up a provisional coalition government. . . ." Seemingly Hanoi expects the latter to happen; it does not have to be negotiated at Paris.

What might all this mean?

1. For the first time Hanoi has told us how to meet the "total and unconditional withdrawal" requirement—by announcing it publicly.

2. The key to the announcement is the certainty that by a specified date all of our troops will be withdrawn.

3. While Hanoi says six months, this could be read as a bargaining gambit. Xuan Thuy said that the U.S. "must accept the principle of withdrawal, then put it into practice," and that some U.S. forces could remain in South Vietnam even as late as the elections to be conducted by the provisional coalition government.

4. Hanoi's "total and unconditional" phrase remains, raising the question as to what we might get in return for our withdrawal announcement. Hanoi backed away from this same phrase in October, 1968. When we stopped the bombing, Hanoi accepted the condition that the Government of South Vietnam be seated in Paris along with the National Liberation Front as part of a your-side-our-side arrangement. We also assumed and had reason to believe that Hanoi understood that it should "not take advantage" of our bombing cessation by shelling major cities and by abusing the DMZ. To a degree, Hanoi has lived up to our assumption of "no advantage."

This past experience is suggestive of what we could ask from Hanoi now. Politically, we might extract the condition that Hanoi and the N.L.F. agree to talk with the Government of Vietnam about political settlement. Militarily, we could give Hanoi to understand that we expect its forces in the South to be reduced accordingly, the level of military activity to decline, and require the return of all American POW's.

This proposal is not inconsistent with President Nixon's speech of May: "Peace on paper is not as important as peace in fact."

We should not consider the Paris peace talks a forgotten chapter of the war. President Nixon's objective of free self-determination and Hanoi's objective of full U.S. withdrawal are not mutually exclusive.

LESLIE H. GELB.

ALEXANDRIA, VA., January 22, 1970.

(NOTE.—The writer, former Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Policy Planning and Arms Control, worked on the Paris negotiations.)

[From the New York Times, Feb. 1, 1970]

PARIS PEACE OPENING

A high Pentagon official of the Johnson and early Nixon Administrations, who worked on the secret Paris negotiations on Vietnam, believes the North Vietnamese may now be trying to tell the United States how to break the deadlock in the peace talks.

The shift in Hanoi's position described in today's letter to the editor from Leslie H. Gelb, former Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Policy Planning and Arms Control, seems to provide an opportunity for the United States to employ again a device similar to that used in 1968 to get the negotiations going in the first place. Mr. Gelb's suggestion is that the United States inform Hanoi and Moscow privately that it will publicly announce a terminal date for withdrawal of all its troops if it can also announce that it assumes and has reason to believe the other side will comply with two conditions. These are: first that Hanoi and the National Liberation Front will promptly enter into negotiations with the Saigon Government for a political settlement and second, that North Vietnam will withdraw its forces from the South at the same rate as

the U.S., further reduce the level of military activity and return all American POW's.

President Nixon last May said: "If North Vietnam wants to insist that it has no forces in South Vietnam, we will no longer debate the point—provided that its forces cease to be there, and that we have reliable assurance that they will not return."

But, while asking questions about some of Hanoi's shifts of position, the Nixon Administration has refused to make any new proposals. It insists that it has already made so many concessions that the next offer must come from the other side.

If Mr. Gelb is right, North Vietnam has now conceded several points. The return of Poltburu member Le Duc Tho to Paris from Hanoi Friday makes this a strategic moment to attempt to revitalize the negotiations. Hanoi's reaction to the Gelb proposal, if it were now advanced in Paris, would quickly reveal whether this can be done.

THE INVOLVEMENT OF THE UNITED STATES IN LAOS

Mr. PELL, Mr. President, the time for candor about the deepening involvement of the United States in Laos has obviously arrived. The American people have a right to a public accounting from the administration. They have a right to an official explanation of what we are doing there and why. They have a right to know what the intentions of the administration are. They have a right to know what the actual military situation in Laos is.

Certainly there have been some alarming reports in the press. We are told that hundreds of American warplanes are providing direct air support to a guerrilla army raised and financed by the CIA. This is all taking place in and around the Plain of Jars, scores of miles from the so-called Ho Chi Minh Trail where our bombing raids are said to be necessary to hinder North Vietnamese infiltration in South Vietnam.

I need not remind the Senate that our present tragic and seemingly endless involvement in South Vietnam began with intervention on a somewhat smaller scale than now seems to be the case in Laos. One clear lesson we should have drawn from Vietnam is that an increase in our own involvement leads inevitably to a similar increase by the other side. What will we do then?

We must ask ourselves just how vital are our interests in Laos and how much in lives and money we are willing to pay to preserve them. But we cannot answer these questions so long as the pertinent facts are kept behind a shield of official secrecy.

In short, Mr. President, the public and the Senate badly need a public statement of administration policy.

ROLE OF AGRICULTURE IN IMPROVING THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. MILLER, Mr. President, Secretary of Agriculture Clifford M. Hardin, addressing the National Farm Institute in Des Moines on February 13, described the important role of agriculture in improving our environment.

The Secretary's significant address was particularly timely in that it fol-

lowed by only 2 days the far-reaching message of President Nixon on the entire subject of the environment. Secretary Hardin's response to the President's challenge to all of us to summon "our energy, our ingenuity, and our conscience in a cause as fundamental as life itself" was directly to the point.

Both the American farmer and the U.S. Department of Agriculture have been engaged for decades in practices which enrich and protect our environment.

Since the dust bowl days of the 1930's, Secretary Hardin pointed out, more than two million individual farmers, ranchers, communities, and other land users have voluntarily signed cooperative agreements to put conservation plans into effect—plans that involve three-quarters of a billion acres of land.

Yet, as the Secretary correctly observed, new technology has presented new problems affecting environmental quality. He cited the Department's determination to help solve these problems and outlined the policy objectives it is following to reach early solutions.

I believe the Secretary's speech merits the attention of all who are concerned with the agricultural aspects of environmental quality and I ask unanimous consent that it be placed in the Record.

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

ADDRESS BY SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE
CLIFFORD M. HARDIN

It may be coincidence that we are meeting on Abraham Lincoln's birthday—but it is altogether fitting and proper. The Administration of our sixteenth President left significant marks on agriculture—for it was during those years that three lasting pieces of legislation came into being—the Morrill Act providing for the Land-Grant Colleges and Universities, the Act creating the United States Department of Agriculture, and the Homestead Act. Together they set the pattern for American agriculture. The Homestead Act resulted in the settling of half a continent and placed the management of our basic soil and water resources in the hands of independent free-hold farmers.

The 19th century brought progress and it brought exploitation. The century began with a patent for the first cast iron plow; it ended with the invention of the gasoline engine and the automobile.

Today we are very much aware that our technological advances which have done so much for us and for the world also are seriously offending and polluting our environment. The alarm has been sounded, and just the day before yesterday, President Nixon sent to the Congress a comprehensive 37-point program, embracing 23 major legislative proposals and 14 new measures being taken by administrative action or Executive Order.

In view of the rising public concern and against the backdrop of the President's new initiatives, it is imperative that those of us with agricultural responsibilities re-think and re-assess the special role of agriculture.

As the President said in his message, "The fight against pollution, however, is not a search for villains. For the most part, the damage done to our environment has not been the work of evil men, nor has it been the inevitable by-product either of advancing technology or of growing population. It results not so much from choices made, as from choices neglected; not from malign in-

Ed Pulliam, a retiree, who hasn't "stepped out of the house" since his only son, Eddie, was killed Jan. 11, during a night sweep by the Viet Cong, mourns the "extra sorrow in this little community."

The dead soldier's mother was near collapse Monday.

"We just got the last letter from my son today," she said in a quivering voice.

They were pleased that Rep. V. H. Odom, a Democrat from Wagener, is calling heavy war losses from Coweta to the attention of Oklahoma's congressional delegation "to see if something can be done" about the disproportionate number of Vietnam casualties from the town.

Seven young Cowetans have been killed there—three from the high school class of 1967. Two members of that class were killed in the past 60 days.

The dead are Frankie Faught, Dallas Perryman, Billy Carver, Grover Boston, Phillip Sanders, Donald Sloat and Pulliam.

Jerry Zachary, junior high principal and high school counselor, said there were 37 boys in the class of '67. Fourteen members of the class went to Vietnam, 11 of them survive.

In writing to Senators Fred Harris and Henry Bellmon and Rep. Ed Edmondson, Odom said:

"Surely this small community has already given more than its share of these fine young men in this conflict. The people there think these men should be scattered out in some other branch of service with the possibility of losing fewer in the future."

Odom became interested in Coweta's casualty price, Zachary said when Bob Hatfield, father of one of the boys still in Vietnam, called on him to see if something couldn't be done.

"He came to school and wanted a list of those still there to see if they couldn't be scattered out because they were all in a bunch," Zachary said.

It is possible that Broken Arrow may want to make a similar request. In December Broken Arrow unveiled a memorial to seven native sons lost in Vietnam. Its population is 12,200.

Honored by a granite marker in Broken Arrow are Sammy Jones Jr., Walter C. Black, Jr., James W. Pendergrass, John Robert (Bud) Galner, Paul David Lucas, Gary Keith Barnett, and Kenneth Dean Rankin.

"I suppose we've paid no higher price than many others have—40,000 other U.S. homes have been invaded," Pulliam said, "and yet we hope it is possible to do something about the wanton loss of life."

"I guess it (Coweta) has one of the highest casualty lists. It is terrible in one small town. I know it is terrible when you lose an only son—one you've built your world around," Pulliam said.

"Every time we turn around we become more aware of it (the war loss)," Zachary said. About a week after Pulliam was killed word came of the death of Donald Sloat. Several weeks before Pulliam died in the VC attack Cowetans learned of the death of Sgt. Phillip B. Sanders. All three young men had been in the class of '67.

Sloat stepped on a land mine. Sanders, first reported missing in action in May, died without ever seeing his 6-month-old daughter.

LAOS

Mr. McGOVERN, Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that a statement I made today before the National Newspaper Association be printed at this point in the Record followed by an editorial, "And Now Laos," which appeared in the March 7, 1970, issue of the New Republican.

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

THE SECRET WAR IN LAOS

(Statement by Senator GEORGE McGOVERN)

I charge again today that the Nixon Administration is misleading the American people in waging a secret war in Laos.

We are flirting dangerously with a new Vietnam.

The Administration is violating the Geneva settlement of 1962 by interfering militarily in Laos.

In addition to providing military and CIA ground personnel, we are sending American bombers against Laos at a rate of 500 missions a day. I was on dally operations as a pilot in World War II over some of the most strategic targets in Europe with bomb loads that did not approach what we are now dropping on little Laos.

Secretary of Defense Laird speaking for the Nixon Administration has replied to my basic contention by cleverly denying that we have increased the number of military and CIA personnel on the ground.

The Nixon Administration is guilty of deliberate deceit in that reply. It ignores the fact that we are using B-52s and tactical bombers to blast not only the trails in eastern Laos but the Northeastern section of Laos around the Plain des Jarres.

Furthermore, the Administration should explain why we have ground personnel operating in conjunction with the Laotian army. They should explain why we are violating the Geneva commitment of 1962. They should explain why we are participating in another Vietnam-type involvement.

I was astounded to learn from the Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that Administration witnesses have told his committee that our policymakers are now more concerned about holding the line in Laos than in Vietnam.

Are we about to sacrifice more young Americans in another war in Southeast Asia? Have we learned nothing from the long years of bloodshed and blunders in Vietnam?

I contend that the Administration is covering up the facts of a bloody military operation in Laos that has already secretly cost the lives of scores of American bombing crews and American aircraft.

The Administration is violating Article I, Section 8 of the Constitution which places in the Congress the power to declare war.

The Administration is deceiving the American people and their elected representatives in the Congress. The Administration is betraying our international commitment in waging a secret war after pledging with other nations in 1962 that we would not intervene militarily in Laos.

I demand as a citizen and as a Senator of the United States that the President inform the Congress and the Nation what we are doing in Laos.

I am convinced that any kind of American military involvement in Laos, as in Vietnam, is a dreadful mistake.

But the primary questions are these:

To what extent are we involved militarily in Laos? What is the reason for our involvement and why have the Congress and the American people not had this information given to them? For seven years I have done my best to stop the war in Vietnam. I am terribly distressed that that war drags on. But what I cannot tolerate and will not tolerate is the thought that we would even consider going down this same bloody path again in still another Southeast Asian nation.

I refuse to accept this prospect, and I want the Administration to know that I will continue to protest with all my strength until the President either fully and satisfactorily explains the war in Laos or fully ends it.

That explanation should have come long ago. I demand it now. Given an honest statement of what we are doing, I believe the American people will demand that we stop wasting the blood and treasure of this great country in another hopeless military operation in the jungles of Asia.

I firmly believe we are at war in Laos on a dangerous scale. Let the President tell us that and tell us why and then let the Congress and the American people make a judgment as to whether we want to declare war in Laos or call it off, but for God's sake and for the sake of our children and our troubled nation let us not drift into another Vietnam without even knowing what we are doing.

[From the New Republic, Mar. 7, 1970]

AND NOW LAOS

The funeral urns that give the Plain of Jars its name is a somber reminder that American military entrapment in Laos is just what we don't need, especially when the Administration is patently falling to disengage at reasonable speed from Vietnam. For months now, US planes including B-52s have been laying thick carpets of explosives on eastern Laos. In September, very heavy American bombing of the Plain of Jars enabled Laotian government forces to capture areas the Pathet Lao had held for six or seven years. On February 18, unnamed officials in Washington were assuring reporters that the intensive bombing—the current rate is over 16,000 tons monthly—had "substantially improved" the military situation of the Laotian government. Almost immediately, the Laotian government troops had to fall back and the Plain seems to have been lost again to the Pathet Lao and their North Vietnamese allies.

This country has lost at least 100 aircraft and their air crews apparently for nothing. Laotian government troops are unable to prevent the Pathet Lao and the North Vietnamese from recapturing the Plain of Jars; they lost control of it in September only because the sudden American air assault took them off guard. Since at least 1964, the two sides in the Laotian civil war have annually gained a little ground on the Plain and lost a little ground, see-saw fashion, without the overall position changing. (The civil war itself has been going on for 20 years.) But there was never any doubt that if they wished, the 40,000 North Vietnamese who are illegally in Laos could proceed on from the Plain to conquer the whole country. They did not choose to, for their real interest and the reason for their presence is not to overrun the country and toss out the royal Laotian government, it is to protect the network of trails in eastern Laos by which North Vietnam supplies and replenishes its forces in South Vietnam. The ill-fated American attempt to make the Laotian government a present of the Plain has no relevance to the Ho Chi Minh trails, which enter Laos from North Vietnam southeast of it. Our forces have nevertheless jumped into the thick of the Laotian fighting. American military "instructors" in command of American-armed Meo tribesmen have been thrown in on the side of the Laotian government troops, against the Pathet Lao and the North Vietnamese. All this is taking place under a thick cloud of official silence or disclaimers. In an anguished letter to Senator Frank Church, an air force pilot in Laos wrote: "Why is it, Senator, that the American public is not permitted to know what's going on in Laos, and the extent of American sacrifice there? American planes are lost every day [and] dozens of our airmen are killed or missing each week. Yet not a word to our people." The young man protested that his comrades were dying in "a futile, hopeless and nameless contest." Last week, American correspondents in Laos attempted to break through the secrecy. They managed

Is Secret War Role Feasible?

Public Wary of 'No-Viet' Claim

By William McGaffin
(Des Moines Tribune-Chicago Daily News Service)

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The administration is deeply troubled over the credibility problem that has arisen from its clandestine military operations in Laos.

It is now wrestling with a dilemma, a key element of which is whether it is feasible, after the American public's painful memories of the Bay of Pigs and Vietnam, to conduct a war in secret.

Officials insist privately that the policy being followed in Laos will not produce "another Vietnam." They say the administration is so determined this will not happen that it would not send U.S. combat troops into Laos even if Communist forces were about to overrun the country.

But it's difficult to convince the American public of this in view of some of the things now going on there.

Officials do not deny, in private, that the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) oper-

News Analysis

ates two air lines in Laos. These are used to supply an army of Meo tribesmen organized, financed and directed by CIA agents.

They contend, however, that U.S. Ambassador George M. Godley is in firm control of the situation. The State Department is kept fully informed, they say, and there is no danger of the CIA blundering into another Bay of Pigs fiasco.

B-52 Bombings

The officials also admit, in private, that U.S. B-52 bombers have been attacking North Vietnamese and Pathet Lao forces on the Plain of Jars. There also have been repeated bombing sorties carried out by smaller planes in support of the CIA "army" and the Royal Laotian forces.

Administration officials are well aware that press dispatches from Laos reporting the stepped-up bombing raids and the CIA activities have heightened the American public's fears and suspicions.

Officially, however, Defense Secretary Melvin R. Laird and others have given evasive answers in public. The reason is that if the administration admitted what it was doing, it would be an admission that it was violating the 1962 Geneva accord.

It could point out that it was only doing this because the Communists also are doing it and, in fact, had been the first to violate the accord. It has avoided any such admissions, however, for fear it might result in a very difficult diplomatic situation.

It could, conceivably, force the Soviet Union to intervene and also open the way for Hanoi and other countries, who signed the Geneva accord, to bring pressures.

Red Offensive

The United States has stepped up the bombing of enemy forces on the Plain of Jars because, officials say, the North Vietnamese are conducting an offensive with 50,000 troops and some heavy equipment. This is 15,000 more troops than they had in the country before.

The officials note that the United States is active in Laos only because of its importance in relation to South Vietnam. The North Vietnam-

ese use the Ho Chi Minh Trail through Laos as a main route for sending troops and supplies to South Vietnam.

The United States publicly admits it has been bombing the trail to slow up the infiltration. It also has been secretly providing military help to the Royal Laotian forces to try to make sure that a government friendly to the United States remains in power.

The officials insist, however, that the Americans killed in action — mainly Air Force pilots — and the number of Americans involved in leadership positions, as military advisers and CIA agents, is very small.

Political Storm

The officials appear to feel that some of the critical senators are only raising a storm about Laos for political purposes. They credit others, however, with a sincere intent to keep the United States out of another Vietnam-type war.

The officials say that if a clean breast could be made of the U.S. operation in Laos, the public would be impressed by the small number of personnel involved.

A debate in the administration now is whether it would not be possible to tell the public more of what is going on rather than risk a deepening of the credibility gap with all the political implications it involves.

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NEWS

MAR 5 1970

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Secrecy In Laos

Having intervened in Vietnam at a terrible cost of their young men's blood, the American people watch uneasily as part of the secrecy that conceals the American role in nearby Laos is torn away.

Only glimpses of the American commitment in Laos have reached the public, just enough to create widespread wariness and suspicion about what is happening there.

The few American correspondents who have been able to get near the combat areas of Laos have sent back reports of activities by the Central Intelligence Agency that go beyond the role in which most people envisage the CIA.

The CIA is running a civilian airline in Laos called Air America, with which it supports an army of Laotian irregulars. According to eyewitness reports, the line uses C-123 and Caribou transport planes "borrowed" from the U.S. Air Force. Their Air Force markings have been painted over.

Correspondents have been forbidden to visit secret bases, but have sent back reports that Americans in civilian clothes, including former Green Berets, seem to be sharing in the fighting.

Military and other governmental spokesmen in Washington sidestep questions about these reports. President Nixon, like Presidents Johnson and Kennedy before him, is saying as little as possible about Laos.

The Laotian fighting is tied to the Vietnam war, because the North Vietnamese in complete disregard for Laotian sovereignty bring supplies to the Vietnamese front down the Ho Chi Minh trail. American air power attacks that supply line, as a protection for U.S. and South Vietnamese troops. That role is openly admitted and easily justified.

But how much more are we doing? How far is our government ready to go in support of the Laotian government? A commitment to use American forces in defense of Laos if the North Vietnamese chose to attempt conquest of that country would draw bitter opposition here.

The American people are entitled to a frank report. Until they receive it, they understandably look upon news from Laos with distrust.

5 MAR 1970

Senators to Be Advised of Any U.S. Buildup in Laos--Fulbright

Rogers Gives This Assurance During Secret Session of Foreign Relations Committee, Chairman Reports

BY DON IRWIN
Times Staff Writer

WASHINGTON — Secretary of State William P. Rogers has promised the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that it will be consulted in advance about any increase in U.S. involvement in Laos, Sen. J. William Fulbright (D-Ark.) said Wednesday.

Fulbright, the committee chairman, said Rogers gave the assurance at a two-hour secret session on the Laotian situation Tuesday.

Fulbright termed the meeting satisfactory. He now feels the Senate will not be asked to affirm any grave new decision on Laos—which some senators have warned can become "another Vietnam"—under hasty pressure like that in which it passed the 1964 Tonkin Gulf Resolution enabling the unchecked escalation of the Vietnam war.

Opportunity for Discussion

"The main thrust of the secretary's testimony," Fulbright said, "was that before anything is done in the way of escalation of our involvement, we in the Senate will be advised and have an opportunity to discuss it."

The session grew out of mounting concern in the committee and elsewhere in Congress about the scope and implications of the still-secret U.S. involvement in the war against North Vietnamese troops that have invaded Laos and occupied the strategic Plain of Jars.

Both the White House and the State Department were noncommittal Wednesday when asked for comment on widespread reports that a top-level Administration statement on Laotian policy is in the making and will be issued shortly. The official answer in both places was that no confirmation was available "at this time."

The question of what can be said officially on Laos is known to be

under urgent review. The Administration appeared to be caught in a squeeze between the mounting pressure for an authoritative statement on U.S. involvement in Laos and a desire to retain freedom of maneuver in a fluid situation that is

inextricably linked with the U.S. effort in neighboring Vietnam.

There are strong indications in Washington that the Administration has linked the fate of Laos to the outcome of the war in South Vietnam. The Ho Chi Minh Trail which the North Vietnamese use to supply their forces in the south runs through eastern Laos and the United States has been bombing that area for years.

Now, officials fear, the collapse of the American-backed neutralist government in Laos might seriously endanger American operations against the trail.

Laos is considered so closely tied with South Vietnam that the so-called "Nixon Doctrine" through which Asians are supposed to take primary responsibility for defending themselves may not be applied, according to some sources. That could leave the way open for an escalated American involvement in Laos although officials are working hard to find some other solution to the problem.

An immediate factor affecting a decision to speak

out is the lack of clear intelligence in Washington on the intentions of the North Vietnamese forces in Laos, officials say. The degree of U.S. involvement would be affected if the estimated 50,000 North Vietnamese troops in Laos were to attempt to advance their present lines.

Beyond general confirmation of reports of intensive bombing operations in support of Royal Laotian forces and bombing of supply lines along the Ho Chi Minh Trail the Administration has followed the policy of secrecy about American activities in Laos which it inherited from its predecessors.

Used by Critics

It is argued that official admission of U.S. involvement would be used by critics abroad to charge U.S. violations of the 1962 accords on the neutralization of Laos.

U.S. officials are sensitive to the possibility that U.S. activities could be construed as violations of the 1962 accords, even though they insist there are no U.S. combat forces on the ground in Laos and that North Vietnamese violations of the accords

were earlier and more blatant. It is generally recognized that the Royal Laotian army is advised and supported clandestinely by the Central Intelligence Agency.

Restoration of the Geneva accords to insure the actual neutralization of

territory which North Vietnam has used freely is seen by U.S. officials as an important step toward achievement of peace in Vietnam. To achieve this end, the Administration feels it must support the Royal Laotian government as the alternative to a Communist takeover.

Rogers apparently discussed that involvement in sufficient detail to ease some of the concern of

Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield (D-Mont.), a Foreign Relations Committee member.

"I was very pleased with the free-wheeling discussion," Mansfield said. "The secretary was quite responsive, made a very good impression and I think the meeting was very worthwhile."

Rogers was invited to the Capitol, Fulbright said, as the result of

conversations among Foreign Relations Committee members last Saturday. Fulbright said he relayed their concern about Laos to Rogers at a meeting on Monday and that the secretary agreed

then to appear at Tuesday's informal session. It was kept secret at Rogers' request—until the fact of the meeting was disclosed Wednesday at a State Department press briefing.

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Some Chilly Forebodings About 'Important Laos'

SEN. J. W. Fulbright's assertion that "high officials of the administration" have told members of his Senate committee that "Laos is even more important than Vietnam," is something that carries chilly foreboding.

The little war next door to the big one in Vietnam has been going on for years, but for the most part it has been an exchange of skirmishes between the troops of the Royal Lao government and the Communist-led Pathet Lao.

* * *

Former Secretary of State Dean Rusk once referred to the Laotian conflict as "spooky," and it has been that, involving as it does Centrists, fragmented neutralists, rightists, Communist guerrillas, Meo tribesmen, North Vietnamese and mercenaries paid by the Americans—or the CIA, if one must be precise.

Laos is a landlocked country, stretching along the two Vietnams and bordering also Red China, Burma, Thailand and touching Cambodia. In that sense it is strategic, especially since it opens the way southward for infiltration by North Vietnam. In fact, the famed Ho Chi Minh trail runs down through Laos and into South Vietnam.

But the idea of involving U.S. troops in a land war there, and keeping them supplied, was so nightmarish that the late President Kennedy, who briefly considered it, dismissed it as impossible.

Now, and once again, though, Laos has become a hot box with North Vietnamese evidently using it in Laos as a kind of flanking maneuver to increase pressure on South Vietnam. The U.S. has been hitting back with almost endless missiles of air power.

Even so, the North Vietnamese

and Pathet Lao forces have been making substantial gains and the reaction of military strategists in Saigon has been predictable. But with Washington officialdom testifying that Laos is even more important than Vietnam, Senator Fulbright doesn't seem too far off the mark when he foresees an ominous and dangerous time ahead.

Secretary Laird vowed that President Nixon would go to the Congress if there was any change contemplated in the U.S. role in Laos. That role obviously has been changed already in recent weeks, and Mr. Nixon is still not speaking about Laos.

The whole thing sounds suspiciously like the series of events that led this country deep into the quicksand of Vietnam almost before the public was aware of what was happening.

Surely the Nixon administration, which by now is all too familiar with the methods, the errors and the evasions of the Johnson administration in wading waist deep into Vietnam, has learned something from the past.

* * *

This country is already too deeply involved in the Laotian war, and the American people do not really know the extent of the involvement as of today, much less what the thinking in Washington is about the days ahead.

There are still some weeks of the dry season in that part of the world before the rains turn the terrain into rivers of mud. Perhaps with the rainy season, the war in Laos will sink back into stalemate. That prospect, however, hardly justifies a policy of silence on the part of the Nixon administration about the present and possible future involvement in the far-off, landlocked country.

NEW YORK, N.Y.
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MAR 5 1970

THE INFO GAP ON LAOS

By WILLIAM MCGAFFIN
WASHINGTON (CDN) —

The Administration is deeply troubled over the credibility problem that has arisen from the clandestine military operations it is conducting in Laos.

It is now wrestling with a dilemma. A key element is whether it is feasible, after the American public's painful memories of the Bay of Pigs and Vietnam, to conduct a war in secret.

Officials insist privately that the policy being followed in Laos will not produce "another Vietnam." They say that the Administration is so determined this will not happen that it would not send U. S. combat troops into Laos even if the Communist forces were about to overrun the country. It's difficult to convince the American public of this in view of some of the things now going on there.

They do not deny, in private, that the CIA operates two air lines in Laos. These are used to supply an army of Meo tribesmen organized, financed and directed by CIA agents.

They contend, however, that U. S. Ambassador G. McMurtrie Godley is in firm control of the situation. The State Dept. is kept fully informed, they say, and there is no danger of the CIA blundering into another Bay of Pigs fiasco.

But they know it is hard to convince the American public of this.

They also admit, in private, that our B-52 bombers have been attacking North Vietnamese and Pathet Lao forces on the Plain of Jars. There also have been repeated bombing sorties carried out by smaller planes in support of the CIA "army" and the Royal Laotian forces.

They are well aware that press dispatches from Laos reporting the stepped-up bombing raids and the CIA activities have heightened the American public's fears and suspicions.

Officially, however, Defense Secretary Laird and others have given evasive answers in public. The reason is that if the Administration admitted what it was doing, it would be an admission that it was violating the 1962 Geneva accord.

It could point out that it was only doing this because the Communists were also doing it and, in fact, had been the first to violate the accord. It has avoided any such admissions, however, for fear it might result in a very difficult diplomatic situation.

In The Nation: Waist-Deep in the Little Muddy

By TOM WICKER

WASHINGTON, March 4—While watching the television film from Laos, if you sense that this is where you came in back about 1961, you may be right. The Nixon Administration appears to be involved in the same old game of lethal leapfrog that carried first the Kennedy and then the Johnson Administrations inexorably into war in Vietnam.

Following the 1962 Geneva accords on Laos, there was a long period of relative equilibrium in that remote and mountainous kingdom, although both the United States and North Vietnam were in constant violation of the accords by keeping clandestine military forces (in the American case, mostly mercenaries supplied and organized by the C.I.A.) on the scene. Until last summer, they mostly countered one another; but then the North Vietnamese began what seemed to the Nixon Administration an ominous buildup.

Now in this world one ominous buildup begets another, because the faith of statesmen is always placed, no matter how mindlessly, in what they inevitably call "positions of strength." In this instance, the C.I.A.-organized mercenary army of Gen. Vang Pao struck

back, scored surprising successes, and in what now can be seen as an excess of zeal occupied the Plaine des Jarres.

Given the differences in the American and North Vietnamese positions in Laos—theirs is relatively open, at the end of short supply lines, well-supplied with manpower in familiar country—and since Laos has a direct geographical relationship to North Vietnamese security, it was only a matter of time before Hanoi struck back, which its forces now have done. But if that were all, nobody here would be greatly exercised.

A Further Threat

In fact, however, when Gen. Vang Pao stuck his neck out last year, it was Mr. Nixon's chin that was left exposed. Not only was Hanoi almost certain to recapture the plain; with combat activity reduced to a low level in South Vietnam and Mr. Nixon's domestic position improved by his troop-withdrawal policy, Hanoi was given a splendid chance to counter. What its Laotian offensive threatens as a result, it is feared here, is a move beyond the Plaine des Jarres, perhaps even to the border of Thailand.

If that proves to be the case, the uneasy equilibrium prevailing in Laos for most of a dec-

ade will be completely upset, and the net effect in Southeast Asia and the United States will be approximately the same as if Hanoi were to launch in South Vietnam another offensive of the magnitude and effect of the 1968 Tet campaign.

There is no good place to stop playing lethal leapfrog, once the game is begun, but Mr. Nixon's ability to strike back in Laos is limited. He is already using B-52 raids without much success, and he would be inhibited from putting in American ground forces both by specific Congressional enactments and by public opinion. He might well feel he had to maintain his "position of strength" by striking back in South Vietnam—or, if he succumbs to the deceptive charms of air power, directly against North Vietnam.

In either case, there would be considerable risk of arousing the quiescent American antiwar movement, which Mr. Nixon succeeded so well in damping last Nov. 3. What would follow such an arousal? As inevitably as the night the day, another strong appeal to the patriotic tendency of Americans to support the President and the flag, together with dire warnings that protest and dissent play into the hands of

Hanoi by encouraging "the enemy" to fight on.

Mr. Nixon did not create this situation; he inherited the Laos position from previous Administrations, and it is entirely possible that Gen. Vang Pao's unwise offensive last year went beyond what Washington intended. But that only tends to show the extent to which serious matters in an over-extended foreign policy can slip out of the control even of the President, both in the long run and in immediate tactical matters.

Lethal Leapfrog

The whole history of the American involvement in Southeast Asia, moreover, suggests the futility of lethal leapfrog, played at such long range, on such disadvantageous ground, with such tenuous political support; anything we can do, they can do better, or at least match.

And how many more times can a President appeal to Americans to support him blindly so he can take unspecified action in pursuit of unstated interests? Indeed, the most "aid and comfort to the enemy" may be given by those who resist a negotiated settlement of give-and-take in Southeast Asia and rely instead on positions of strength and recurrent rounds of lethal leapfrog.

5 MAR 1970

PLEDGE BY ROGERS ON LAOS REPORTED

STATINTL

He Is Said to Assure Senate
Panel U.S. Will Not Send
Ground Forces There

By RICHARD HALLORAN
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, March 4 — Secretary of State William P. Rogers has met with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and reportedly assured it that no American ground forces would be sent to Laos.

The meeting, two hours long, took place yesterday and was disclosed today by the State Department. The department's spokesman said in response to questions that the session was devoted almost exclusively to Laos. He declined to give details.

Other sources disclosed the assurance on troops and said Mr. Rogers had also pledged that the United States would not become involved in a major war in Laos. He conceded, however, that American air activity over Laos had been increased as the Communist-led Pathet Lao rebels and their North Vietnamese allies moved forward on the ground, the sources added.

Yesterday, Senator J. W. Fulbright, the committee chairman, said that he had been "scared to death" by a senior Administration official's contention that Laos was more important to the United States than South Vietnam.

The Senator declined to name the official. State Department sources said that it was not Mr. Rogers. Senator Mike Mansfield, the majority leader, said today that he was pleased with the free-wheeling discussion on Laos with Mr. Rogers yesterday.

Mr. Mansfield said that "the Secretary was quite responsive, made a very good impression and I think the meeting was worthwhile." The Senator has been a critic of the Administration's policy on Laos.

Yesterday's meeting, hastily arranged by Mr. Fulbright and Mr. Rogers on Monday, reflected an increasing concern with the Laotian problem here. The director of Central Intelligence, Richard Helms, testified before the committee earlier this week.

Administration sources said today that the Administration recognizes that President Nixon could lose much of the public support he has gained from his plans to withdraw from South Vietnam if the situation in Laos became critical. They indicated that the Administration was considering moves to publicize some of the American involvement there to head off charges of misleading the public.

The sources said, however, that the Administration was restrained by diplomatic considerations. Any official admission of the American role in Laos, they said, would jeopardize efforts to return to the Geneva Accords of 1962, which provide for the neutrality and independence of Laos.

At the White House, Ronald L. Ziegler, the press secretary, again declined to answer a series of questions on Laos.

Meanwhile, Congressional sources indicated that some of the criticism over Laos had been politically motivated, even though there has been genuine fear of a wider war in southeast Asia.

The sources said that members had been demanding that the Administration disclose more of the American involvement in Laos on the principle that such action should not be undertaken without the consent of Congress. This was seen as part of a growing effort by Congress to assert itself in the making of foreign policy.

In addition, several of the Senators who have been outspoken will be up for re-election next fall. These include Senators Mansfield, Democrat of Montana, Albert Gore, Democrat of Tennessee, and Stuart Symington, Democrat of Missouri.

STATINTL

RIVERSIDE, CAL.

PRESS

E - 34,764

PRESS-ENTERPRISE

S - 78,343

MAR 5 1970

And now Laos

Rep. L. Mendel Rivers, head of the House Armed Services Committee and confidant of the military, has denied the U.S. is getting into a Vietnam-like commitment in Laos: "Anyone who says we are just doesn't know the facts."

Perhaps. But what, then, are the facts? That is the essence of the complaint, for the information which the public gets comes in dribbles.

The worst kept secret of the little war is the heavy participation of the CIA and military advisers. The air war has been busier, and by extrapolating U.S. Command figures, it is a safe bet that 300 planes and 100 airmen were lost in neighboring Laos last year.

As fears have mounted, more and more officials have stepped forward to defend the U.S. role, without saying what that role is. There is an unspoken plea to "trust us," a particular Southeast Asia road that has been gone down before to everlasting regret.

Secretary of State William Rogers has been more effective by talking to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and promising that it will be consulted in advance of any increased U.S. involvement. This may still criticize for a time, as the persuasive Mr. Rogers has done before.

But the total Administration effort thus far has been to try to improve its public-relations image on Laos. No one has come up with a satisfactory way of doing that short of telling all, which is viewed in some quarters as a horrendous idea.

James Reston reminded us the other day that Mr. Nixon, in his notable November speech on Vietnam, said: "The American people cannot and should not be asked to support a policy which involves the overriding issues of war and peace unless they know the truth about that policy."

True in Vietnam, true in Laos.

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SAN FRANCISCO, CAL.
CHRONICLEM - 480,233
MAR 5 1970

AP Wirephoto

SOUVANNA PHOUMA
A "duty to protect Laos"

Air Strikes Vital, Laos Premier Says

Vientiane

Laos would be taken over by North Vietnam if United States air strikes were halted, says Prince Souvanna Phouma, the Laotian premier.

"It is the duty of the United States to protect us because, like other nations which signed the Geneva accords, it must assure the independence, territorial integrity and neutrality of Laos," he said.

Souvanna made the comment in an interview with the Columbia Broadcasting System, a transcript of which was released by the Laos government Tuesday.

Souvanna denied any knowledge of U.S. B-52 raids in Laos and refused to comment on the activities of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency in Laos.

Asked about the extent of U.S. military involvement in Laos, Souvanna said: "When the need is felt, we ask for supplies. We also ask for American air intervention to watch the infiltration routes and bomb the invaders."

He said that without U.S. air support "the entire country will become Communist — the entire country will be taken over by the North Vietnamese."

He said he has asked for more American aid, mainly rifles, to replace obsolete ones now used by the Laotian army.

Asked what aid he would like from the United States, Souvanna replied: "I hope Washington . . . will finally take into consideration the proposal I made to President Nixon last October."

This proposal concerned the application of Article Four of the 1962 Geneva accords on Laos which banned foreign troops from the country.

Associated Press

UTICA, N.Y.
PRESS

M - 28,782

MAR 5 1970

It's Time to Clarify Our Laos Stand, And It's Doubtful We Want More War

"Laos is not worth the life of a single Kansas farm boy," Secretary of State Dean Rusk said in 1961.

The Laotian turmoil, which had been going on for years, was also summed up by another Washington official, who said: "The situation there is disastrous but not serious."

• • •
IN OTHER WORDS, our government used to look on Laos as an impossible country to defend, partly because its provincial leaders were interested only in their own state's welfare and not the country's.

Now, all that has changed. The Central Intelligence Agency has been helping the Laotians fend off the Communists in the north, but the North Vietnamese's latest thrust has brought our uniformed men into the conflict, as our bombers plaster northern Laos with bombs.

Loud outcries are heard from the Senate, stemming partly from political opposition of the Nixon administration and partly from the fear that we will drift into another Vietnam.

• • •
THE NORTH VIETNAMESE have apparently decided to divert our attention from

South Vietnam, where their efforts have largely been stymied, and either draw us into a new war or show the world that we are incapable of stopping their armies.

Defense Secretary Laird tells congressional critics that we do not have ground combat troops in Laos and do not plan to send any.

Nevertheless, we have put ourselves in a very cloudy and difficult position, allowing the CIA to engage us in a civilian war, and now our sending bombers to strike North Vietnamese troops.

It would seem we have to step back and clarify our position. We must either follow our withdrawal plan from Vietnam without deviation, or decide we are going to expand the effort to defend Laos.

• • •
IT IS DOUBTFUL that anyone in the Nixon Administration or many in the country would be willing to take on the defense of Laos. In that case, we should not be fighting there under the secrecy of the CIA or with our officially secret bombing raids beyond the Ho Chi Minh trail.

Our present Laotian position is either going to lead us into a new war or embarrass us through our failure to defeat the Reds. We don't want either.

WASHINGTON

DAILY NEWS

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5 MAR 1970

Deepening Laotian crisis heightens dove pressures

By R. H. SHACKFORD

Scripps-Howard Staff Writer

The Nixon Administration is increasingly uneasy as its first potential foreign crisis — in Laos — draws fresh criticism almost daily at home and heightens uncertainty in Southeast Asia.

Old anti-Vietnam war pressures in the United States, which President Nixon successfully dampened at the end of last year, are being revived as a result of the war in Laos.

Uncertainty about Communist objectives in Laos is creating nervousness thruout Southeast Asia, especially in Thailand, and inhibiting the Nixon Administration's ability to point with assurance at its program of phased withdrawal from Vietnam.

The Administration's unwillingness to say anything publicly about the American military role in Laos exacerbates Mr. Nixon's problems and creates the possibility of a credibility gap.

This is most distressing to the Administration, which daily reminds the public that it

didn't create the Laotian situation — that, like Vietnam, it is one of the unpleasant legacies from previous Administrations.

(The UPI reports these developments:

- The Nixon Administration, feeling the pinch of the growing credibility gap over Laos, is seriously considering making some frank disclosures about the situation.

- Congressmen who received a two-day briefing from Defense Secretary Melvin Laird say they are convinced President Nixon will not send regular ground troops into Laos — even if that is the only way to save that nation from the Reds.)

TOUGHEST PROBLEM

The link between the situations in Laos and Vietnam and the fear that Hanoi's game in Laos is to try to undermine the Nixon policy of "Vietnamization" puts the President in the toughest spot he has occupied while in the White House.

Daily denials that the United States plans any formal com-

bat role in Laos — despite many years of an American clandestine role thru the Central Intelligence Agency — have had no visible effect on the mounting criticism.

The almost daily warnings of Senate Democratic Leader Mike Mansfield, Mont., about the dangers in Laos and the statement of Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman J. William Fulbright, D-Ark., that a high Administration official's comments on Laos "scares me to death" are merely the latest complications for the Administration since the Communist offensive recaptured the Plain of Jars.

The Administration claims it is unfairly handicapped in the debate at home because it considers it would be unwise to reveal American activities in Laos.

To do so, U.S. officials maintain, would make bad matters even worse by upsetting what is at best a precarious balance in Laos. The Administration denies that it has any intention of sliding into "another Vietnam" in Laos even tho it admits the war in Laos and the Vietnam war really are parts of the same problem.

An admission that the United States is violating the 1962 Geneva accords — even tho North Vietnam violated them first, or rather never honored them — would in the eyes of the Administration destroy whatever fragile hope there is for a reasonable Laotian settlement.

The Administration's policy in Laos is described this way:

- To preserve for some future use the badly battered and, in practice, almost unrecognizable 1962 Geneva accords that were intended to make Laos a neutral nation. Each side claims it is willing to go back to them and someday that may be the only answer.

- A willingness to give Hanoi within reason a guarantee that Laos will not be used as a military base for operations against North Vietnam.

- An understandable desire, in view of the difficulty of getting out of Vietnam, to avoid any expansion of the war in Laos. But this is qualified by the fact that Hanoi uses a

large area of Laos — thru which the Ho Chi Minh Trail runs — as a transmission belt for supplying its forces in South Vietnam.

The Administration argument that it would be irrational for it to seek to slide wittingly or unwittingly into another Vietnam is clear. But it is complicated by the fact that the United States does not really know what Hanoi — which introduced 15,000 more troops into Laos this year — is planning.

The American view still is that Hanoi probably does not seek conquest of all of Laos because of the probable international consequences. But this is not considered as certain as it was a few months ago.

STATINTL

Laos Disclosures Stir Policy Rift

By GEORGE SHERMAN
Star Staff Writer

The Nixon administration is deep in an internal dispute over how much more to make public on American involvement in Laos.

The State Department revealed yesterday that Secretary of State William P. Rogers sought to soothe Senate fears in a secret "informal" meeting Tuesday afternoon with the Foreign Relations Committee. He and Sen. J. William Fulbright, D-Ark., had arranged the meeting—which lasted two hours—in a private talk in Fulbright's office the day before.

But yesterday Fulbright indicated he was not satisfied with Rogers' explanation on Laos. After the State Department announced the meeting—which Senate sources said Rogers previously had insisted be kept secret—Fulbright said, "You don't settle something in just one meeting."

As chairman, he said he would have the Foreign Relations Committee press more deeply into American involvement in the Laos war.

Troop Assurance Given

Majority Leader Mike Mansfield, D-Mont., said, however, that Rogers had been "quite responsive, made a very good impression, and I think the meeting was very worthwhile."

Mansfield indicated Rogers had given new administration assurances that Nixon's commitment not to put U.S. ground troops

into Laos without congressional approval would be honored. Rogers tried hard, other sources said, to counter the growing impression that the United States is expanding the war in Southeast Asia.

According to congressmen, Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird repeatedly made the same points during his testimony yesterday and Tuesday before the House Armed Services Committee.

"Don't Know Facts"

Afterwards, with Laird at his side, committee Chairman L. Mendel Rivers, D-S.C., said those who say the United States is getting over-involved in Laos "just don't know the facts."

But competent sources admit that the administration is caught in an agonizing trap over how many of those facts to make public. They realize the enormous danger of a "credibility gap" growing over Laos like that which undermined former President Lyndon B. Johnson's Vietnam policy.

For instance, the administration has not denied press reports both here and from on the spot about the increase in American air activity in Laos during the current North Vietnamese offensive there in the North.

Daily Sorties Disclosed

On Sunday The Star revealed that U.S. Air Force planes are now flying between 400 and 500 sorties daily—half in the northern contest, and half farther south over the Ho Chi Minh trail, and that Nixon had approved two ineffectual B52 raids—Feb. 17 and 18—against advancing North Vietnamese troops on the Plain of Jars.

The fear in official quarters is that these reports, which also detail unofficial American advisory efforts on the ground in Laos, are exaggerating the American involvement. The administration privately contends that the war in Laos is really an offshoot of the war in Vietnam,

and that the United States is trying to restrict both.

Inside the administration it is argued that fuller public exposure of American Laotian operations could play right into Communist hands. Therein lies the trap.

Geneva Accords in Peril

If the Nixon administration formally admits deep military involvement, the argument goes, it effectively undermines the 1962 Geneva accords establishing a neutral Laos. Other signatories, including North Vietnam, Communist China and the Soviet Union, would then have a formal excuse for open intervention on their own.

Furthermore, the argument continues, Hanoi would have the added lever to question the legitimacy of the current Laotian government, which allows American military intervention. The United States wants to maintain that government—which, ironically, officials point out, was originally a virtual creation of the Communist side.

The unresolved question here is how to restore the Geneva accords.

The administration has hinted that it is willing to give North Vietnam any guarantees neces-

sary that Laos will not become an American base for attacking North Vietnam.

It is hoped that Hanoi will not push its military advantage to oust the government of Laotian Premier Souvanna Phouma, since North Vietnam is currently proposing the same kind of coalition government for South Vietnam. Hanoi, therefore, is fighting a credibility battle of its own.

BOSTON, MASS.
 RECORD-AMERICAN
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 ADVERTISER
 S - 432,963
 MAR 4 1970

U.S. Officials Concede CIA Aides Are Operating in Laos

By JOHN P. WALLACH
 Record American Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — Administration officials privately conceded Tuesday that the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) is involved in military operations in Laos against the Communist Pathet Lao.

But the officials denied reports that perhaps as many as a thousand civilian agents were helping to train the irregular army of anti-Communist Meo-tribesmen. They said that — at most — there are a hundred intelligence agents in the beleaguered Asian kingdom.

This disclosure was prompted by a Pentagon admission Monday that two civilians were among the regular U. S. military personnel feared dead or missing in Laos.

A Pentagon spokesman refused to confirm whether the two civilians, later identified as intelligence agents, were originally included in the 193 airmen acknowledged last week as missing.

But the spokesman disclosed that one of the civilians was seen being captured and presumably is still alive. Defense Dept. sources said that

they would release the names of the two men in the next few days.

The acknowledgement of the CIA role in Laos, an open secret for several years, is evidence of the difficulty that the U. S. government is having keeping confidential the nature and extent of American involvement.

In the apparent absence of a uniform White House directive on what is public and what is private, State Dept. and Defense Dept. spokesmen are citing conflicting versions of what they assert is the situation.

Last week, the Pentagon said the U. S. had lost 100 servicemen since 1961. Monday a Defense Dept. spokesman corrected the record to reflect that loss since 1964—a three year mistake in somebody's figuring.

State Dept. officials are so concerned about figures leaking out that the Laotian desk officer refuses to confirm a figure used by a senior department official in public testimony before a congressional subcommittee.

According to the American embassy in Vientiane, there are 2350 Americans in Laos—833 U. S. government employees and the rest dependents. This does not include

American personnel assigned for three-to-six months tours of duty, or CIA men who commute back and forth from a border village in Thailand.

The U. S. has attempted to cloak its activities in Laos because the 1962 Geneva accords, which provided for Laotian neutrality, prohibited the introduction of foreign troops in any capacity.

The U. S. began to train the clandestine army of Maj. Gen. Vang-Pao and to provide tactical air support for Laotian government troops when it became evident that North Vietnam was training rebel Pathet Lao tribesmen to overthrow the neutralist government.

When the Communist trained Pathet Lao recently stepped up their attacks, the U. S. increased its military operations, reportedly including the diversion of B-52 bombers from attacks on the strategic Ho Chi Minh trail to Communist strongholds in northern Laos.

This has brought a barrage of criticism from Congress that the U. S. is falling into the same kind of bottomless "Vietnam pit" that will take years of fighting and countless casualties to get out of.

CHATTANOOGA, TENN.
TIMES

M - 59,391

S - 69,238

MAR 4 1970

A Growing Involvement?

Sen. Gore and Fulbright report increasing concern over Laos after a briefing by CIA Director Richard Helms, and there has been general apprehension that the currently successful Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese forces might strike south from the Plaine des Jarres.

Sen. Mansfield, a student of Laotian affairs, says the Communists "may stop short of the cities of Vientiane and Luang Prabang; that would be in the pattern of previous operations. Then again, they may push forward against these two capitals and press to the border of Thailand. However, we are both in it—North Vietnamese and Americans—and we are in it up to our necks."

On the ground in Luang Prabang, *New York Times* Correspondent Henry Kamm, reported nevertheless on Monday that "the sense of security is rooted in an implicit belief that the Communists would never attack the royal capital. The optimism is not considered naive. The Pathet Lao and the North Vietnamese have never challenged the authority of King Savang Vatthana, and well-informed Laotians believe that as long as they seek to maintain an appearance of legitimacy the Communists will continue to spare this town of 30,000."

In any case, many Americans deservedly want to know whether, in Sen. Gore's words, Laos is becoming an exception to the Nixon policy of lessened military involvement in Southeast Asia. Limited extensions of air support may be necessary to protect our position in Vietnam. But any substantial increase of our involvement on the ground—whether it is training Meo guerrillas, flying helicopter assistance missions or otherwise servicing the spotty performance of Laotian troops does not, in our judgment have the support of the American people.

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Pentagon refuses to talk

U.S. role in Laos

undefined

By George W. Ashworth

Staff correspondent of The Christian Science Monitor

Washington

of the Plain of Jars, if that was its intention'

Amid a rising furor, the Nixon administration must come to grips with the question of whether it can afford continued reticence on the difficult issue of Laos.

Officials have stepped forward to defend the United States role in Laos, but they have steadfastly refused to say precisely what that role is.

The result is an unspoken plea to "trust us," but there may have been too many difficulties over Southeast Asia in the past decade to make that agreeable to Congress or the public at this point.

The administration is busily trying now to figure out ways to improve its public-relations image on the Laos issue. But no one as yet has come up with a satisfactory answer as to how precisely to do that short of telling all, which is viewed in some quarters as a horrendous idea.

Suggestions are being bandied back and forth in officialdom, but there is nothing final yet.

In the Pentagon, the solution so far has been a rather simple one: Don't discuss Laos at all. In answer to a specific query, the Pentagon refused point-blank to allow a reporter to talk either on or off the record with any official on the subject of either American or North Vietnamese involvement in the war in Laos.

Knowledgeable officials have been directed not to discuss any aspect of the situation with any member of the press.

Danger point watched?

It is known that the Central Intelligence Agency and U.S. military advisers are substantially involved in Laos. U.S. fighter-bombers conduct about 90 percent of the air-support missions being flown in battles between the North Vietnamese and Pathet Lao on one hand and Lao irregulars and Army forces on the other.

There are a number of reasons why the U.S. does not wish to discuss at this point the situation in Laos. Perhaps the primary one is that full disclosure would make it rather clear that the U.S. is violating the 1962 Geneva accord.

The North Vietnamese, of course, were the initial violators, as they have pursued their course of attacks against the officially neutralist government of Prince Souvanna Phouma, the Lao Premier.

The North Vietnamese, sources believe, could at some point or other have taken over the country and overthrown the government, had they wished, but there have been no indications that they wanted to carry the fighting beyond a certain danger point.

Sources here are agreed that that danger point would be one at which the U.S. felt it necessary to do something substantially more than heretofore. Past U.S. policy has been to increase U.S. help in an attempt to

keep the Lao Government viable and its position tenable in the face of North Vietnamese and Pathet Lao incursions.

Beyond North Vietnamese concern over the U.S., however, sources say, is a suspected North Vietnamese desire to keep the Royal Thai Army from a general commitment to the war. It is one of the generally accepted beliefs here that the Thais would not allow North Vietnamese troops to endanger the border area at the Mekong River.

It is considered likely that Thai forces would cross the Mekong if there were a strong possibility the North Vietnamese were close enough to endanger it.

One of the confusing points at this stage of U.S. involvement in Laos is why the B-52 strike was ordered recently in the midst of the fighting for the Plain of Jars.

The one-time strike was ordered in a small valley containing North Vietnamese headquarters and supply facilities. The strike, which was urged by U.S. Ambassador to Laos G. McMurtrie Godley, did not stop North Viet occupation of the Plain of Jars, if that was its intention.

There has been speculation that the strike—the first use of B-52's in northern Laos fighting—was intended as a signal to the North Vietnamese that the U.S. and the Laotians could not be pushed too far.

Senate pressure

Sources here say that if the bombing was a signal to the North Vietnamese not to take the Plain of Jars, the bluff was called. If it was a signal not to continue on to the Mekong, sources say it was of dubious merit in that the North Vietnamese were already undoubtedly aware of the dangers of advancing to the Mekong.

The reasons, whatever they may be, are not generally known throughout the government in that the decision was made in the White House after consultation with highest administration officials.

But the B-52 bombing is really just another one of a long series of developments that have caused a growing concern in Congress. Sen. Charles McC. Mathias Jr. (R) of Maryland argued, "Laos has become an arena for the repetition of the mistakes of our Vietnamese involvement."

There has been considerable Senate pressure upon the administration to agree to the release of secret testimony taken last October by a Senate foreign relations subcommittee on American involvement in Laos. Sen. Mike Mansfield (D) of Montana said failure to release the report "can only raise additional questions as to what we are doing in Laos."

'The B-52 strike . . . did not

stop North Viet occupation

04 : CIA-RDP80-01601R000700050001-2

continued

versity connection should make it a lively place to live.

The U.D.C.'s major projects in New York City—the New Town on Welfare Island and the Harlem River Park (which will provide, when completed, a combined total of 6,500 housing units—will displace no present housing. That, according to Logue, is the essence of sensible renewal in a city where land and housing are scarce. The theory is that first you build the new housing, then you move people into it and then and only then do you destroy or renovate the places where they previously lived.

All over the state that is what U.D.C. is doing—looking for vacant and, hopefully, publicly owned land on which to build New Towns. The 6,500 new units of housing will not cure the city's ills. Nor will the 4,770 other, smaller developments that the U.D.C. is planning to add to this total. But it could be "the beginning of a chain" of developments, stretching over the next two decades, that might substantially relieve the pressure here. Logue does most firmly believe that U.D.C. "can create a new pattern for development" with New Towns and New-Towns-in-Town like Welfare Island. "The magic thing about Tapiola [a New Town outside Helsinki, Finland] is that it works."

But the New Towns will not work here unless they can attract the middle class. Logue is convinced that no one will be able to resist their obvious advantages. But Logue himself, who lived in the Yale Club for a year while selecting a place for his family to live in New York City, lives at One East End Avenue. He does not live on the West Side, where he could easily enjoy rubbing shoulders with members of another class. (Similarly, he believes the flight to the suburbs could be halted if the middle class would stay in the cities and fight for good public schools there. But he sends his two children to Dalton, excusing this abandonment of principle on the grounds that his kids have "made plenty of sacrifices because their father is a public servant, and they are entitled to compensations.")

One does not criticize Logue for this behavior. He is a man who has worked devilishly for success and is, perhaps, entitled to its rewards. The writer of this piece is an East Sider and a Dalton Daddy, after all. Still, if Logue will not do what he asks others to do, the New Towns are in trouble—unless, as someone has suggested, George Plimpton can be persuaded to move to Welfare Island to give it some chic.

These points, raised late in the day as his limo threads its way through the rush-hour traffic, do not ruffle Logue. He is a tough man who knows what he thinks he knows. ("How do you like Ed Logue?" a lady journalist who profiled him once was asked. "About 80 per cent," was the reply—and there is a hard warmth-resistant, protective core to the man.)

On the other hand, his impatience, his anger at inefficiency, his no-nonsense ability to speak plainly, in the vernacular, about what he's for and what he's against (consider his unfashionable admiration for another doer, Robert Moses), his really amazing sense of urgency about the job at hand in the cities, are in refreshing contrast to standard official style these days. Just at the moment, no matter what his critics say, it may be more important to do something—anything—in the cities that is quickly visible than it is to study the problem to death. It may even be that plain old-fashioned action is more to the point than community action, which is often merely obstructionist, sometimes irrational. The efficacy of this new political style cannot, at this point, be considered objectively proved. It is, in short, an attractive academic theory that has made a scandalous amount of trouble in the streets.

In any case, asked about his relationship to Governor Rockefeller, Logue reveals a good

deal of his own beat self when he happily replies: "The Guy is tough when he leans on somebody." He pauses to muse for a moment and adds: "He's an enthusiast, and I'm in favor of that. What this — country needs is more enthusiasts."

With which the car pulls up in front of his building and he bounces enthusiastically out to face the night's homework. Watching him go one recalls a statement of his long-time associate, Allan Talbot, who lists his assets as "a sense of drama and urgency, a huge capacity for work and a great love for cities," plus his greatest gift—"making a picture of a puzzle."

There is also a statement by Arthur Drexler, curator of architecture and design at the Museum of Modern Art, to weigh in the balance: "I'd be inclined to give him the benefit of the doubt. Sure, without a real Federal commitment to the cities, something like U.D.C. is just a great big Band-Aid. And I suppose it's all very well for you and me to sit back and take a historical point of view about it and about men like Logue. But that doesn't mean everyone should sit back and wait for someone else to do the job. People like Logue have to keep trying—if only for humanitarian reasons."

LITHUANIAN INDEPENDENCE

Mr. PERCY. Mr. President, on February 15, 1970, the Honorable Petras P. Dauzvardis, Consul General of Lithuania, addressed the Lithuanian Independence Day commemoration meeting at the Maria High School auditorium, Lithuanian Plaza, Chicago. He expressed the pride of Americans of Lithuanian descent and of Lithuanians everywhere in the accomplishments of the years of Lithuanian independence between 1918 and 1940. He also expressed the determination of all free peoples that Lithuania shall one day regain her freedom, a sentiment which I heartily share.

I commend the Consul General's remarks to my colleagues and ask that they be included in the Record.

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

ADDRESS OF PETRAS P. DOUZVARDIS

On February 16th, Lithuania's Independence Day, we rejoice that Lithuania had regained her independence and had taken her rightful place among other independent, sovereign states. We express our gratitude and respect to those who were instrumental in restoring independence of Lithuania.

We take joy and pride in the organization, performance and accomplishments of the State of Lithuania, in her rapid progress and her commendable representation of herself in the world. This is confirmed by the reaction of the free world to Lithuania's misfortune; by the non-recognition of the Soviet Union's seizure of Lithuania.

For this great and significant legal-political support of Lithuania's rights, Lithuanians express their profound and sincere thanks to the United States of America and to all freedom-loving and law-respecting states.

As we reiterate our appreciation to Lithuania's friends and respecters of law and justice, we denounce the enslavers of Lithuania, the violators of agreements and international law and disseminators of falsehoods, and demand restoration of freedom to Lithuania.

President Nixon (October 24, 1968) characterized the conduct of Lithuania's enemy and occupant as follows:

"In committing aggression against the Baltic countries—Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia—the Soviet Union violated not only the spirit and letter of international law, but

offended the standards of common human decency."

Bearing in mind that aggression is an international crime, and that the Soviet Union committed this crime for which it is condemned by its victims and the just world, as actual victims of Soviet aggression and oppression, it is up to the Lithuanians and others of the same fate to speak out more loudly and forcefully and to demand a righting of the wrongs inflicted by the Soviets—to free Lithuania and its people.

This demand is made in accord with the United Nations Charter and the Soviet Union's own demands upon others. Here is the latest (September 19, 1969) Soviet proposal to the United Nations:

"All States-members of the United Nations have assumed under the Charter the obligation to settle their disputes by peaceful means, to refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial or political independence of any state . . . It is necessary above all, to insure, without delay, the withdrawal of troops from foreign territories occupied as a result of action by the armed forces of some states and against other states and the people defending their independence and territorial integrity, and to abide in international relations by the principles of sovereignty, equality, territorial inviolability of each State—non-interference in internal affairs and respect for the rights of all people freely to choose their social system."

Shortly before that, on July 10, 1969, Foreign Minister of the Soviet Union Andrei Gromyko had stated:

"It is impossible to keep foreign areas seized as a result of aggression . . . they should be returned . . . to whom they belong."

We are in agreement with the above-stated principles and expressed ideas. Guided by these ideas and by international law, we demand that the Soviet Union abide by its avowedly noble principles, solemn statements and obligations, that the Soviet Union restore Lithuania's territory to the Lithuanians with all the rights set forth in the Lithuania-Soviet Peace Treaty. As long as the Soviet Union does not do so, it will remain a hypocrite, an imperialist, the enslaver of Lithuania and other states, an enemy of freedom and justice.

SENATOR WILLIAMS URGES PRESIDENT TO PREVENT A REPETITION OF THE TRAGEDY OF VIETNAM IN LAOS

Mr. WILLIAMS of New Jersey. Mr. President, last year the Congress clearly and unequivocally declared America's intention not to allow the war in Vietnam to spill over into Laos. Congress barred the use of American ground troops in Laos and Thailand. This action, of course, was consistent with the Geneva accord of 1962.

It is now apparent that both North Vietnam and the United States are violating the 1962 accord.

Furthermore, it is now reported, in every day's newspapers, that the congressional intent is being violated and frustrated. It is reported that hundreds of former U.S. special forces have joined the CIA forces in Laos. Daily, B-52 sorties are now being flown over Laos, not just to interdict shipments over the Ho Chi Minh Trail, but to fight the battle for the Plain of Jars, to participate in what is apparently a civil war in northern Laos. We are spending over a quarter of a billion dollars yearly there. Some 200 American airmen have re-

DALLAS, TEX.
TIMES HERALD

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MAR 4 1970

Felix R. McKnight

The Nixon Dilemma: How Far in Laos?

PRESIDENT NIXON'S rigid stance of silence on involvement in Laos has brought him nose-to-nose with the first serious "credibility gap" charges that tarnished his predecessors.

The people of the United States and a mounting number of members of Congress want to know if we are standing on Laotian quicksand that could sink us into another war.

Involved in withdrawal from Vietnam—and getting general public support on his orderly procedure—Mr. Nixon now finds himself in a precarious position as Laotian fighting accelerates into what the U.S. Pacific commander-in-chief describes as "a deteriorating situation that is of serious concern to us . . ."



McKNIGHT

The hard-to-accept fact is that the United States has been involved in Laos for years—in the same "advisory" capacity that drew us into Vietnam. But the "advisory" status is getting to look more like plain warfare.

Infuriated members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee are pushing pressure on the Nixon administration to "tell the people what is going on over there."

Senators McGovern, Mansfield, Symington, Fulbright and Gore are screwing the vise on the President; moving closer to a full Senate debate. McGovern warned his colleagues Tuesday that "in spite of the painful lessons of Vietnam, we are going down the same road in Laos—and we are doing it in secret . . ."

But one highly placed public figure, who has been an eyeball witness to the developing crisis in Laos, observed:

"When you are playing with robbers, thieves, murderers and political crooks, you don't play under the Marquis of Queensbury rules. They don't observe them, or any rules of war. They're not honest . . ."

It follows, said the source, that with the North Vietnamese being stunned, militarily, in Vietnam, they would turn to the easier picking of Laos. It has been expected for years.

"So, what do you do? Sit there with white gloves on and let them pour through and then get in position to devour Thailand?"

The man then suggested that "too much talking" is being done about the extremely sensitive Laotian dilemma; that "those folks" should remain silent and let the President herd us through the crisis. And then he admitted that "it is a critical predicament."

Military men in sizable numbers have shifted over to civilian and CIA duties in Laos after service in Vietnam has been completed. In "advisory" capacities they have directed sabotage, target detection and designations and contributed greatly to tremendous relief jobs for the harassed little nation.

But even with the hard, indisputable fact that much of the U.S. involvement in Laos is geared to security for American forces in Vietnam and the halting of communism's spread, there is still public uneasiness over more actual military participation in Asia.

★ ★ ★

Senate critics keep reminding President Nixon of his Nov. 3 speech to the nation when he said:

"I believe that one of the reasons for the deep division about Vietnam is that many Americans have lost confidence in what the government has told them about our policy.

"The American people cannot and should not be asked to support a policy which involves the overriding issues of war and peace unless they know the truth about that policy . . ."

Those words have brought President Nixon to his credibility crisis. The average citizen, and more members of Congress, fearful that the United States has become too deeply enmeshed in Laos, are asking why his words on Vietnam do not now apply to policy in Laos.

In press conferences and other public statements, the President declines to discuss what is going on in Laos other than acknowledging frequent bombings of the Ho Chi Minh trail—the North Vietnamese supply line that splits the beleaguered country.

President Nixon may soon have to be more definitive with the nation. What is the eventual U.S. course in Laos?

—THE EDITOR

E - 427,270

MAR 4 1970

Fulbright Feels U.S. Role in Laos

Combined News Services

Washington—Sen. J. William Fulbright said yesterday that an assessment given him by high Nixon administration officials that Laos is even more important than Vietnam "scares me to death."

Fulbright asked: "If Vietnam was important enough to justify the commitment of half a million American troops, then in this view how many more could justifiably be committed to Laos, which is one of the few worse places than Vietnam to fight a war?" He said that the U.S. "may soon have to decide whether to go all the way in Laos—that is, to make it another Vietnam—or to get out."

"The fact that high officials of the administration think this scares me to death," Fulbright told the Senate. "It suggests an ominous and dangerous future for the United States in that remote country."

The Arkansas Democrat, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, declined to identify the officials. It was learned, however, that he referred to a high State Department official who twice in recent weeks made the argument in conversation with committee members. Richard Helms, director of the Central Intelligence Agency, was before the committee Monday, but Fulbright gave no indication that Helms was the man.

Fulbright's comments were in the middle of a speech he placed in the Congressional Record after delivering only the first and last paragraphs because of time limitations. It came after he joined in a call by Sen. George S. McGovern (D-S.D.) for a secret Senate session on Laos.

The Senate held a secret session in December in considering a proposal—later adopted—to bar American ground combat troops from being used in either Laos or Thailand. That was before the new wave of concern over U.S. involvement in Laos—concern triggered by a North Vietnamese offensive, reports of stepped-up U.S. bombing there, and a clash between the administration and Fulbright's

committee on release of prisoners on U.S. activities in Laos. The administration's apparent reasoning, Fulbright said, is that if Laos falls, Thailand will be next. He said officials also were concerned that Hanoi might threaten to wipe out the government of Souvanna Phouma unless he orders Americans to halt bombing of the Ho Chi Minh Trail that runs through Laos, connecting the two Vietnams.

Fulbright's statement came after Secretary of Defense Laird categorically denied there has been a U.S. buildup in Laos in either civilian or military men. He made that statement before the House Armed Services Committee.

Laird also told newsmen that U.S. policy toward military support of the Laotian government is under continuing review. "Whether there will be a change of policy, I would not make any prediction," he said.

Sen. George D. Aiken of Vermont, the Senate's senior Republican and high-ranking member of Fulbright's committee, said that he doesn't share the fear of many senators that Laos could become another Vietnam.

In Vientiane, informed Laotian sources said that Premier Souvanna Phouma has told top military com-

manders that North Vietnamese troops appear to be staging a major offensive to win back territory held at the time of the 1962 cease-fire.

There were no reports of war action in Laos, but the U.S. Embassy in Vientiane released the official obituary of the first American known to have been killed in the current North Vietnamese offensive in northeast Laos. It told of the death of Air America Capt. J. C. Merkel as he was lifting off from Xieng Khouang Feb. 19 in an H-34 supply helicopter. "At an altitude of 400 feet, a single sniper round hit him and killed him instantly. The controls were taken over by Capt. John Ford who brought the plane back to a government-held landing strip," the report said.

Merkel's body was shipped in a plain casket to Udorn, Thailand, where

his wife lives. Merkel was from Fort Worth, Tex. The plane departed without ceremony. Last Friday a Laotian army lieutenant, Daeng Senanikone, 25, was killed when his spotter plane crashed near Pakxane. The Laotian pilot was given an elaborate funeral procession. The contrast underscores a point about the war in Laos. The young Laotian was fighting for his country and received a warrior's funeral. The American was doing a job just as dangerous but got no recognition. There are at least 229 Americans like Merkel who have died or are missing in Laos.

In Saigon, meanwhile, South Vietnam mercenaries led by U.S. Green Berets killed 49 guerrillas and seized an arms cache in the Seven Sisters Mountain area along the Cambodian border in fighting reported yesterday.

HUNTINGTON, W. VA.
HERALD-DISPATCH

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Editorials

Only Cloak-And-Dagger Men Are On The Ground In Laos

WE THINK it is likely that what is taking place in Laos is neither as dangerous as the peace bloc in the Senate would have us believe, nor as insignificant as the Pentagon continues to insist that it is.

Except for the bombing of supply routes and strategic targets, the American operation in Laos proper is the baby of the Central Intelligence Agency — and “baby” is not, from all reports, too far-fetched a descriptive term to fit the case.

The CIA has been helping to train Laotian irregulars under the command of General Vang Poo, widely respected as one of the few honest military leaders in Southeast Asia. Unquestionably the CIA is paying the wages of the young men, recruited from the tough Mao hill tribes, who compose Poo's “army.”

THE REGULAR Laotian army is supposed to be neutral, while General Poo's army is not. But the facts seem to be that neither the regulars nor the irregulars are the kind of soldiers who see desperation in every battle. They tend to take the view that there will be another day and that there is no sense in getting killed over a little real estate.

The Communist forces which continue to upset the balance of political and military power in Laos are, of course, breaking the Geneva accords of 1962 under which Laos was supposed to have a neutral government representing both the Communists of the north and the non-Communists of the south.

BUT—aside from what the CIA is doing and has been doing for a long time — we would very likely have no

that so much resemble skirmishes if it were not for the fact that the North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong make free use of Laotian territory.

Laos, stretching alongside the two Vietnams, is wedged in between Red China, Burma and Thailand and thus its strategic menace to American troops in Vietnam is very great. If our enemies would respect the integrity of Laos, perhaps we would too, although the CIA might wish to continue to train and subsidize troops who could one day be a formidable barrier against Communist expansion.

THOSE ARE the basic facts about Laos insofar as they are known to American correspondents on the scene and to the press corps in Washington. It is apparently true that we have no combat troops in Laos. President Nixon has assured Congress that he will not send ground troops to fight in Laos without Congressional consent, and not even the peace bloc in the Senate doubts that he will keep his word.

But it is impossible not to doubt that the responses being made by Defense Secretary Melvin Laird to questions about the American presence in Laos are at best evasive and at worst half-truths.

These would be more palatable if the help we are trying to give the non-Communist Laotians were more effective. But complete U.S. command of the skies in Laos has not been enough to prevent steady incursions of Communists from the north. It is really the relative impotence of our intervention, rather than the intervention itself, that makes the situ-

NEW BRITAIN, CONN.
HERALD

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MAR 4 1970

What of Laos?

The news from Laos is grimly depressing, and it isn't just because an enemy offensive there has wrecked the last pretense of "neutrality" under Geneva accords. More urgently, the question of America's depth of involvement there, and the cloak of secrecy surrounding that involvement, is causing consternation at high levels.

The official administration position is that our role is limited to "military assistance." But equally persistent in recent days, from newsmen who have gotten close to Laos, from Congressmen who are unconvinced, come stories that our involvement runs to considerably more than "assistance." There are tales of CIA-led operations involving plain-clothes American military personnel in

advisory capacities. There are allegations that the bombing levels are higher than at any time during the bombing of North Vietnam. Two newsmen have reported watching American planes take off on bombing runs from a Laotian airport at the rate of one a minute for a two-hour period.

Enemy activity in Laos has reached dramatic new levels in recent weeks. Simultaneously, the persistent clamor for more knowledge about what this country is doing has reached such a pitch that probably only President Nixon, personally, could speak authoritatively about the situation. We add our small voice to those who are now urging the President to address the nation on the scope of American activity in this undeclared war.

NEW YORK, N.Y.
POST

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MAR 4 1970



Pete Hamill

THE FALLEN DOMINO

So now we are bombing Laos to protect South Vietnam, and tomorrow we can bomb Malaysia to protect Laos, and the day after that we can bomb Formosa to protect Malaysia, and then maybe we can lay one on Hiroshima for old times' sake, to protect Japan from itself, and after that we can go right on in and demolish China and get it over with once and for all, gang. We call it the domino theory. Except it's not those bad old slant-eyed little Commie devils who are pushing over the dominoes. It is us.

To be an American these days, you really must wake up in a state somewhere between wonder and lunacy. It is happening all over again. No more Vietnams, the President said, and there we are in Laos, with all those crew-cut overgrown boys in the CIA playing Sean Connery, and all those brave pilots dropping explosives from on high, and there doesn't seem to be anything at all we can do about it. We now have a Laos/Vietnam War, and there is no way to disguise that by announcing that you are bringing home 70,000 men while you are simultaneously spreading death across the Plain of Jars.

* * *

And the spread of the war into Laos raises some crucial questions. One: who in the United States government asked our permission to spread that filthy war into still another country? Two: who in the Congress is voting in favor of appropriations for use in Laos? Three: who gave us the right to go into Laos in the first place? Four: how much is it costing? Five: What military gen-

ius, after the lessons of Vietnam, convinced Nixon that bombing can win *anything*, or that fighting in a landlocked country in Southeast Asia makes any logistical sense at all?

The questions are crucial because the lessons of Vietnam seem not yet to have been learned by the people who run this government. To begin with, we know by now that we should not be in Southeast Asia at all. We certainly should not be bullying our way into conflicts in which we have no real stake. John F. Kennedy did not think Laos was worth the concern of a great power; it is still not worth our concern. There is no possible threat to the United States from the Communist forces in the Pathet Lao. There is no way that Laotians can come storming ashore in Southern California. There isn't even a good old-fashioned imperialist reason to be there: after all, how many tubes of toothpaste can we sell in that ninth-rate country?

And yet we are going in there because a group of self-serving American careerists want us to go in. Laos is the great country where the CIA and the Pentagon invested \$300,000,000 to create a right-wing government which was later overthrown by a 26-year old Laotian captain, without firing a shot. Laos is the great country whose major crop is opium (but even the Mafia wouldn't fight for squatter's rights there). Its people, after 15 years of American meddling, are 85 per cent illiterate. The money that has been poured into this dump of a coun-

try could have rebuilt Brownsville, Bed-Stuy and Newark.

I suppose Agnew the First will soon begin the counter-offensive. After all, the CIA and the Pentagon were having a nice little war in Laos until the reporters started blowing the whistle. What the hell: what's 100 planes and 300 pilots from a country that believes in teamwork?

But even now, when the questions are being asked, answers are not available. We can't find out how many troops we have there, if any. We can't find out whether we have any agreements for the commitment of troops to the Laotian government. We can't find out who orders the raids.

* * *

I would suggest that every Congressman who votes funds for Laos be required to serve in combat in that country. I would suggest that the great pilots who make a living bombing those people be bought home and put to work with their hands in the slums. I would suggest that it is a little late in the day for Nixon and Co. to get away with still another dose of the Asian infection. The Laotian Army is not interested in fighting against the Communists; in their last full-scale battle in the early 60s, the Communists smashed them, and the two leading Laotian generals commandeered a jeep and beat it to Thailand. But the implications are clear: if we think enough of Laos to drop bombs in its defense, then we must think enough of Laos to send American troops to its defense. The soldiers coming home could find themselves in a revolving door. They might be in it now.

The Laos/Vietnam war is not going away, and if you buy the Nixon public relations job, you can be sure that the son you have in the first grade this year will end up eventually in the slums of Asia.

The High Stakes in Laos

U.S. Worries That Hanoi Is in Position To Decide Effect of Fighting on Vietnam

By MAX FRANKEL
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, March 3— For almost a decade, the official though private judgment here has been that the defense of Laos, the Asian kingdom of two and a half million people, is not in itself a vital interest of the United States.

Even Dean Rusk, when he was Secretary of State and before he was cast

as a superhawk, used to tell visitors in 1961, during crises in old Indo-

china, that "Laos is not worth the life of a single Kansas farm boy." Then, as now, Washington admired the leisurely Laotians and wanted them left to their interminable strife. The diplomats saw no need to rush to their defense with American troops. More persuasively, the generals here wanted no part of an assignment in Laos.

Having meddled throughout the nineteen fifties in their internal affairs, Washington finally decided in the nineteen sixties to let the Laotian princes live in fragile coalition and pulled away with a quip: "The situation there is disastrous, but not serious."

It Is Now a Hope

That remark can still be heard among the top men of the Nixon Administration, but it is uttered only in hope, no longer in jest. For the North Vietnamese did not pull away from Laos. They have kept their troops there as insurance in the war in South Vietnam, and the fear among United States officials here now is that Hanoi may decide to send them in.

So the Pentagon is flying hundreds of bombing raids against the North Vietnamese in Laos, risking the lives of Kansas and other boys. The Central Intelligence Agency manages a sturdy but outnumbered little defense force there. President Nixon weaves and ducks whenever the subject of American involvement arises at his news conferences. And even calm men such as Mike Mansfield, the majority leader, are provoked into amber declarations of alarm on the floor of the Senate.

The reason for the anxiety is not the fear that Laos may become another Vietnam, but that Hanoi is now in position

to decide to make Laos a significant battleground in the struggle for Vietnam. The Nixon Administration does not regard itself as committed to defend the self-determination or territorial integrity of Laos as such. But it does feel itself vulnerable to political and psychological pressures that North Vietnam can generate by way of Laos.

Campaign Has Begun

In the view of some knowledgeable Asian diplomats and informed members of Congress, such pressure has already begun. Though military in form, it is believed to be political in purpose: to persuade the United States Government (and or the American people) that peace in Southeast Asia can be obtained only through further American compromise at the bargaining table.

By threatening advance in Laos, these observers agree; Hanoi intends to frighten Laos's neighbors in South Vietnam and Thailand, to dramatize the diminishing strength of the retreating United States forces in Southeast Asia, to rekindle antiwar agitation inside the United States and thus to drive home the point, that negotiation rather than "Vietnamization" is the only way out of the conflict.

Just as President Nixon is claiming progress for "Vietnamization" — the process for turning all aspects of the war over to Saigon forces — Hanoi is thought to be executing a grand diversion in Laos to prove that its forces will never be contained by South Vietnamese troops and American air power alone, and that United States withdrawal, without negotiation, will never bring peace to the region.

Choice Is Hanoi's

American officials have urgently re-examined the situation and concede that such a turn of events is now possible. They are not sure that the campaign has actually begun, but they recognize the choice to be entirely Hanoi's and they are more worried than ever before.

Elements of the more than 40,000 North Vietnamese troops believed to be in Laos are said to have moved farther

— and sooner in the dry season — than ever before. They could, by risking a further extension of their supply lines against heavy bombing, cut the already partitioned Laos in half yet again.

If they move on, they will no doubt be subjected to an even harder pounding by B-52's and stiffer resistance by the C.I.A.-run ground forces. But military planners doubt that they could be stopped with the available force and no one in authority here believes that Congress or the American people would sanction the use of American ground troops to repel the challenge.

So the Administration has been forced to consider other counter-measures, ranging from diplomatic protest to the Soviet Union to the resumption of some bombing of North Vietnam. President Nixon has repeatedly warned that he would take strong action if North Vietnam attempted to take advantage of the American withdrawal from the war zone. With the accelerated bombing of Hanoi's forces in Laos, he has already served notice that he regards the fighting there as an extension of the conflict itself.

Possibilities Are Few

Some officials think that the North Vietnamese want to trade off restraint in Laos for cancellation of the B-52 raids in South Vietnam. But either way, the stakes are high and the measures available to Washington are few.

Thus the first point of appeal is once again Moscow. That is where President Kennedy found a sympathetic hearing in 1961 from Premier Nikita S. Khrushchev, who also did not wish to become more deeply involved in Laos.

Between them, they arranged the 1962 Geneva accord on coalition and neutrality for Laos, but the agreement could not withstand the strains of major war in Vietnam. The war has changed everything, including the opportunities for Soviet-American collaboration.

In stating his minimum peace terms, President Nixon has already firmly linked neutrality for Laos with self-determination for the South Vietnamese. Two weeks ago, in his address on foreign policy, he said the only alternative for Hanoi to a bargain that meets those terms would be continued "Vietnamization," meaning "costly sacrifices while its bargaining power diminishes."

Hanoi, with Moscow's blessing, is obviously determined to prove the opposite. A few more weeks will show whether the maneuvering in Laos is a central feature of the exercise.

STATINTL

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Laos Propped Up by Secret Army Of U.S. Civilians and Servicemen

This correspondent, a paratroop veteran, has covered both the Vietnam war and the "Secret War" in Laos. Here he examines the role of U. S. advisers in Laos.

By ROBERT KAYLOR

Vientiane, Laos — (UPI) — It was early morning. A sandy-haired young man in faded blue jeans and a sports shirt sat on a bench in the Air America terminal, waiting for his flight.

He looked almost like the guy next door back in the United States. The only giveaway were his short haircut and his green and black jungle boots like the ones worn by U.S. combat troops in Vietnam.

He said he was headed for the airfield at Long Cheng, forward headquarters of the "Clandestine Army" of Maj. Gen. Vang Pao, and from there back to his job in the hills of northern Laos.

The American declined to say just what that job was. When his plane was ready to leave he said good-by, picked up a military suitcase, and left.

Still the Same

That encounter took place some months before the current Communist offensive in Laos. Lao military sources say that nothing has changed in the intervening months, and that there are other Americans like the one at the terminal.

They are part of a complicated infrastructure that has been built to prop up a Laotian

defense establishment that Lao and American officials agree would long ago have collapsed without their help.

Part of the infrastructure is visible on the surface in the capital of Vientiane. Part of it, like the American in blue jeans and jungle boots, normally is not visible in a country that is technically neutral and where U.S. military involvement is not openly admitted.

Of a total of about 830 persons the U.S. mission acknowledges are employed by the U.S. Government in Laos, about 80 or so are military personnel, working for the U.S. Army and Air Force attache offices at the American Embassy here.

But military sources in the Thailand-Laos region say there is an American advisory, training and support system going far beyond these numbers. It cuts across the border between Thailand and Laos. Some of its members have civilian status and some are military men on tours of temporary duty in Laos.

Hub of System

In Laos, the hub of the system is at Long Cheng, where Vang Pao's army of Lao and Thai mountain tribesmen is known to be administered and supervised by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, an organization with a passion for secrecy.

In Thailand, the system works out of several centers. Among them are the U.S. air base at Udorn, about 50 miles from Vientiane; an air base at Nakorn Phanom just across the

Mekong River from Laos, and a military complex north of Bangkok at Lopburi, headquarters for the Green Berets of the U.S. Special Forces in Thailand.

Military sources say the U.S. advisers are in a support and training role that meets the Nixon Administration's guideline of no ground troops in Laos, but that sometimes it can come close to combat conditions.

Army Man in Copter

For example, a U.S. Army warrant officer flies an H-34 military helicopter based at Udorn and belonging to Air America, a civilian company under contract to the U.S. Government.

His official job is training Laotians to fly their own helicopters. But when the tricky job of evacuating artillery pieces from a Laotian base in danger of being overrun by the Communists came along, it was the warrant officer and an American crewman who did the flying rather than Laotians or Air America's pilots.

According to military sources, most of the ground advisory functions are run out of Long Cheng, with only scattered groups of advisers working with volunteer units in the southern part of the country.

Estimated at 300

It has never been disclosed how many such advisers there are. An estimate of about 300 was once published. Lao military sources described this figure as exaggerated.

When the U.S. Special Forces

moved into South Vietnam in 1961 to take over a somewhat similar program from the CIA, they did it with about 400 men.

Military sources say that some of the men who work with the clandestine army have Green Beret backgrounds.

In addition to the ground advisory efforts, military sources say there is also a sizable U.S. Air Force contingent operating in northern Laos on temporary duty status from Thailand.

These airmen support the U.S. air war in Laos, manning radar stations which pick out targets and run surveillance on North Vietnam and providing liaison between the Lao and U.S. air support.

"Jolly Green Giant" helicopters and their big brothers, the "Buffs," operate on rescue and support missions in northern Laos and have harboring sites there, military sources say.

In addition, there are the officially acknowledged civilian contract airlines, Air America, Inc., and Continental Air Services, which support Lao military forces. Air America flies unmarked H-34 helicopters which haul troops and ammunition and pick up wounded.

Air America has about 210 American employees working in Laos and more based at Udorn, from where the helicopters fly. It has Americans working at forward communications sites in Laos and is known to have Thai pilots flying choppers.

Continental Air Service, newer and smaller, acknowledges about 70 U.S. employees in Laos. Many of the contract pilots have military backgrounds.

STATINTL



M - 505,173
S - 913,045

MAR 4 1970

Senators Ask Secret Session On Laos Policy

WASHINGTON, March 3 (AP).—Sen. George S. McGovern (D., S. D.), backed by chairman J. W. Fulbright (D., Ark.), of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, called Tuesday for a secret Senate session on U. S. operations in Laos.

But Sen. George D. Aiken of Vermont, the Senate's senior Republican, said he does not share the concern of many senators that Laos could turn into another Vietnam.

CREATE UPHEAVAL

"If it did," Aiken told reporters, "it would create such an upheaval in this country" that any good resulting from a firm U. S. stand would be undetermined.

Aiken said that, in some respects, the shift in the focus of the Southeast Asian war from Vietnam to Laos is "a good sign." He said it means "North Vietnam is getting a little discouraged in the South and is devoting more attention to Laos for bargaining purposes."

On the Senate floor the tone continued to be critical of the Nixon Administration, with three Democratic senators—McGovern, Fulbright and Stuart Symington of Missouri—on the attack.

LESSON OF VIETNAM

"In spite of the painful lessons of Vietnam," McGovern asserted, "we are going down the same road in Laos, and we are doing it in secret."

The South Dakotan, one of the earliest Senate critics of the Vietnam War and a likely contender for his party's 1972 Presidential nomination, said

U. S. B-52 and tactical bombing raids over Laos "are comparable to or greater than the raids over North Vietnam at their heaviest.

"It also seems clear," he said, "that we invited the recent Communist offensive in the Plain of Jars by encouraging an American-strained, equipped and directed Laotian army to seize this area last September, thus upsetting a more or less stable military line that had existed for several years.

CIA PERSONNEL

"There is growing evidence that the CIA and American military personnel—apparently in civilian garb—are directing Laotian military operations," he said.

Defense Secretary Melvin R. Laird, talking to reporters, said there has been no buildup of U. S. manpower—either civilian or military—in Laos.

The secretary was asked about McGovern's statement that there "has been more and more American airpower, American advisers and CIA operatives" in Laos.

"I can categorically state there has been no buildup of individuals whether civilians

or military on the ground in Laos or within the country," he said.

POLICY REVIEW

Laird also said U. S. policy toward military support of the Laotian government is under continuing review but "whether there will be a change of policy, I would not make any prediction."

Fulbright, noting the Administration's refusal to permit publication of the transcript of Senate hearings on U. S. involvement in Laos, said "unless it is made public, I don't see any alternative" to the kind of secret session urged by McGovern.

Symington, chairman of the Foreign Relations subcommittee that conducted the closed

hearings, has tried unsuccessfully to obtain State Department clearance for publication of the transcript.

FULL DISCUSSION

Fulbright, recalling the way the United States became involved in Vietnam, said he is determined that "this time, whatever the result will be, that it is discussed in full.

"If then they made a decision to go down that road, that's their privilege," the ~~Atlantic Democrat~~ added.

4 MAR 1970

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The Hidden War

Analysts Doubt Conflict In Laos Will Escalate Into Another Vietnam

They Say Neither Side Plans Expansion; Debate Is Seen Aimed at Pressuring Nixon But U.S. Involvement Is Wide

By ROBERT KEATLEY

Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

WASHINGTON—"Once again, we seem to be heading down the same tragic road of escalation. . . . Once again, the American Government seems to be trying to hide from the American people the extent of our involvement there."

The speaker is Sen. Frank Moss, not normally outspoken on foreign affairs, and the subject is Laos—more a geographic whim than a nation—whose fragile neutrality has been marred by gunfire ever since the 1962 Geneva conference supposedly established peace. The Utah Democrat, like many of his Capitol Hill colleagues these days, fears the Nixon Administration may sneak this country into another frustrating Asian war (much as critics charge the Johnson Administration did in Vietnam) while pretending that nothing much is really happening.

Quite a bit, in fact, is happening in Laos. But chances of Laos becoming "another Vietnam"—with U.S. ground troops slogging after an elusive enemy—seem extremely remote to most analysts here, despite considerable and continuing U.S. involvement there.

No Big Battles

Officials who worry about Laos flatly reject predictions that big battles involving Americans are coming in that odd mountainous Kingdom of the Million Elephants and the Royal White Parasol (its official title). Talks with informed sources lead to these conclusions:

—The Communists, who have just recaptured the Plaine des Jarres (usually labeled "strategic") and restored battle lines roughly to 1962 positions, have about halted their southwestward offensive, though some small-scale attacks continue nearby. Instead of moving on, most units are resting, regrouping and trying to mend their overextended supply lines, which are being blasted by U.S. and Laotian planes.

—More important, according to U.S. analysts, Communist troops don't seem interested in pushing much further. For political and military reasons, Hanoi apparently has no plans to use its 50,000 or so soldiers in Laos to overthrow the official government or to grab additional chunks of real estate, even though the ill-led troops of Laos' opium-trading, tennis-playing generals probably couldn't stop them if they tried.

—Secret American support, essential to those mountain tribesmen (the "clandestine

army" of Gen. Vang Pao) who do fight the Communists effectively, will probably continue but not increase. Some Pentagon aides, in fact, would like to trim U.S. bombing raids in Laos if only for budgetary reasons. Despite occasional pressures to "do something more" about the Reds in Laos, the White House (with much help from Defense Secretary Melvin Laird) seems determined to keep American foot soldiers out of that country.

—And some distraught Senators and Congressmen, though sincerely concerned about



the possibility of an escalating Laotian war, may have other motives for speaking out. By complaining about Laos, critics of the Vietnam war can revive public concern about Asian conflicts, perhaps hoping to speed troop withdrawals from Vietnam or at least to deter the Nixon team from suddenly seeking some illusory "victory" over Saigon's foes.

All this indicates that big-time war in Laos isn't likely. The Communists aren't seeking it, the Americans want to avoid it and many critics here don't really expect it. The current uproar, for most parties concerned, is largely a complex political and propaganda exercise directed toward the Vietnam war and an eventual settlement there.

This doesn't mean there is no bloody fighting in Laos; many bedraggled Laotian troops, who would rather be back home at village fairs pursuing food and girls, are being killed daily without any clear idea what the shooting is all about. And yesterday the U.S. Embassy in Laos confirmed that the first American known to have died during the Plaines des Jarres campaign was J. C. Maerki, a civilian helicopter pilot from Fort Worth, Texas, was killed by a sniper while flying a supply mission there.

Moreover, the Nixon Administration, like the Johnson, Kennedy and Eisenhower regimes before it, has been deliberately misleading about the extent of U.S. involvement in Laos. It's known that the Central Intelligence Agency finances a "secret war" of sorts there. Ex-Green Berets in mufti train and sometimes command anti-Communist Laotian forces. American planes move everything from rice to

bullets (and probably some opium) for these troops, while massive U.S. air strikes, sometimes by B-52s, blast the jungle in hopes of disrupting North Vietnamese supply lines. Little of this is ever acknowledged publicly.

That's not all. American helicopters move Gen. Vang Pao between battles and press conferences, Thailand-based U.S. jets blast Hanoi's troops as they try to overrun his mountain outposts (he has lost nearly 200 in the past couple of years) and American-imported Thais, Nationalist Chinese and Filipinos perform assorted technical and military tasks in Laos.

Guessing at the Cost

There are no official statistics worth the name about how much manpower and money the U.S. participation costs. Some guesses claim that roughly 200 U.S. airmen have been lost in Laos in recent years, and that the war effort costs Washington some \$250 million annually; the official aid figure is currently \$48 million.

However, the apparent objectives of all parties concerned still seem to be limited, despite the current furor about alleged "escalation." Consider the Communist side.

Officially, the Red troops are Pathet Lao, or Laotian Communists nominally headed by Prince Souphanouvong, a half-brother of Premier Souvanna Phouma. Actually, most of the combat forces are North Vietnamese, and Hanoi exercises tight control over all Pathet Lao actions. Of the 14,000 troops who recently captured the Plaine des Jarres (named for ancient burial urns found there), some 70% are said to be North Vietnamese; Hanoi's men comprise the fighting units while the Pathet Lao natives serve largely as coolies.

Hanoi was obviously upset by Gen. Vang Pao's unexpected seizure of the plain last fall; huge Red arms caches were uncovered, including aging Russian tanks and trucks. Thus, simple revenge was one motive for the recent counterattack. But rather sophisticated political reasons seem more important to most analysts here.

The plain is traditionally the stronghold of "neutralist" forces who form one part of the official tripartite government established in 1962. Rightists and Communists are the other factions. However, the neutral forces have split into "our" neutralists and "their" neutralists, with the Plaine des Jarres campaign having put "their" neutralists firmly in charge.

Thus, if and when another peace conference is held for Laos, the new government could be composed of American-backed Premier Souvanna's men, Hanoi-dominated Communists and Hanoi-controlled "neutral" representatives. This would insure that a future government would be subservient to North Vietnam, and would make much easier a possible total take-over by the Reds some day.

Creating a Dilemma

Other motives also seem to guide the Communists. The Americans must "first of all, stop using the U.S. Air Force to bomb Laotian territory," demanded an official North Vietnamese foreign ministry statement last week. But many in Washington believe Hanoi isn't weeping for its Laotian allies; it really wants a bombing halt along the Ho Chi Minh trail, which funnels men and material into South Vietnam.

This theory holds that the Plaine des Jarres campaign, plus other Red pressures, is an effort to blacken Premier Souvanna into call-

ing off American bombs. It would buy him for an end of the bombing raids would create a dilemma for the Nixon Administration. It could agree, making Red resupply in South Vietnam infinitely easier, or it could reject the appeal and bomb a friendly nation whose government wants a halt.

Propaganda considerations are also important to the Communists. Hanoi has renewed war fear in the U.S. by demonstrating that its forces can go anywhere in Laos they desire despite American-backed efforts to thwart them. One goal is probably to pressure Mr. Nixon into making new concessions in search of Vietnam peace.

However, all these stop short of any Communist attempt to take over Laos. North Vietnam still pays lip service to the Geneva accords that established the tripartite government and declared it neutral. Presumably, Hanoi's leaders feel this oft-violated agreement may still prove useful some day when peace treaties are written for both Laos and South Vietnam.

Unpredictable Americans

In addition, an element of fear probably retards the North Vietnamese advance in Laos; they just don't know what the unpredictable Americans will do next. Analysts here doubt that Hanoi expected U.S. bombing raids following the Gulf of Tonkin incident of 1964 or American troop deployments in the south a year later. A big push in Laos could trigger yet another "irrational" American response, in their view, even including bombing of Hanoi itself.

Also, the Communists may be worried about continuation of aid from Russia. The Soviet Union recognizes the Souvanna government and, with the Americans, occasionally exerts pressure to settle internal political disputes. For Moscow, this is a rather comfortable status quo that diminishes Communist Chinese influence. The Russians probably wouldn't cut off their considerable arms aid if Hanoi upset the balance in Laos, but the North Vietnamese may not be entirely sure, say analysts here.

If this leaves North Vietnamese objectives somewhat limited, the same is even more true for the Americans.

The U.S. hope is that Laos can somehow return to obscurity, serving mainly as a rugged buffer between Communist North Vietnam and China on one side and the U.S. ally of Thailand on the other. The country is largely a product of whimsical French colonial mapmakers; it has few claims to nationhood such as ethnic or linguistic unity, or a viable economy. Smuggled gold and opium are the main exports; the Laotian finance minister some time ago told a visitor things had improved because his colleagues were only stealing enough state funds to eat and not enough to get rich (if that doubtful claim was ever true, there has been a relapse since then, according to all reports).

Military Credibility

Thus, the U.S. will continue to bankroll Prince Souvanna and his government, and Gen. Vang Pao's tribal army will continue to get American air support and arms, by all accounts. The justification is that this prevents a rout by Hanoi and gives the Laotian regime some military credibility.

But it's claimed that senior officials here ask hard questions whenever worried hawks demand "action" against the Reds in Laos. What will it accomplish, and where will it lead us? the skeptics demand. Hence the U.S. passes up or abandons moves that might have

trouble, analysts say.

One example of a tactic abandoned: Thai artillery units financed by the Americans fought last year as Laotian troops, in clear violation of the Geneva accords. However, they have been removed. If Thai troops had been captured by the Communists, a major political uproar could have ensued. Hanoi's allies would surely display such prisoners and give maximum publicity to such an obvious infraction of the Geneva agreements--giving the U.S. a major headache.

However, some Thais still fly Royal Laotian Air Force planes, it is claimed, and others perform technical tasks. For this and other reasons, covert U.S. involvement is likely to continue. And if the Communists do make some unexpected push in Laos, a reflex reaction by the Nixon Administration could at least temporarily enlarge the American role there.

But such a move by the Administration isn't considered likely, partly because Congress has grown so aroused about Laos. Says GOP Sen. Charles Mathias of Maryland: "I was a member of Congress as we slid into Vietnam, and I didn't ask the questions then that I should have, and I can tell you that I am going to ask them now."

Such hard questioning will make it difficult for the White House to escalate in Laos even if it wants to. The Senate yesterday afternoon devoted considerable time to dire warnings about the consequences of U.S. actions in Laos. In a National Press Club speech tomorrow, Democratic Sen. Edmund Muskie of Maine is expected to attack Nixon policy on both Vietnam and Laos.

Fulbright quotes 'high administration aide'

Laos more vital than Viet?

STATINTL

J. William Fulbright, D-Ark., says a high official in the Nixon Administration has told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Laos is even more important to the United States than Vietnam.

In a senate speech yesterday, Sen. Fulbright, committee chairman, said it "scares me to death. It suggests an ominous and dangerous future for us in that remote country."

Sen. Fulbright declined to identify the officials. Richard Helms, CIA director, was before the committee Monday but Sen. Fulbright gave no indication Mr. Helms was the man.

In other developments involving Laos:

- Defense Secretary Melvin R. Laird, testifying before the House Armed Services Committee, said "I can categorically state that there has been no buildup of individuals, whether civilians or military, on the ground or within the country."

- Sen. Stephen W. Young, D-Ohio, told the Senate that U.S. defense contractors and generals "seemed to be leading us into another ground and air war in Southeast Asia." Sen. Young said Laos is "certainly not worth the life of one American soldier."

- The State Department gave a "no comment" to reports Laotian Premier Prince Souvanna Phouma has asked for increased U.S. air support against North Vietnamese forces in Laos.

The State Department said Sept. 24 there were about 2,100 Americans in Laos, including 500 U.S. Government personnel; 1,300 dependants; 11 Fulbright scholars, businessmen and newsmen; some missionaries, and a few members of two foundations.

The administration's apparent reasoning, Sen. Fulbright said, is that if Laos falls, Thailand will be next. He said officials also were concerned Hanoi might threaten to wipe out the government of Souvanna Phouma unless he orders Americans to halt bombing of the Ho Chi Minh trail that runs thru Laos, connecting the two Vietnams.

If this happens, the administration was said to fear, Hanoi would be free to infiltrate as many men and supplies as needed into South Vietnam and severely retard U.S. troop withdrawals.

Sen. Fulbright said all this demonstrates the "fragility" of the administration's vietnamiza-

tion program to end gradually American participation in the war.

The real U.S. concern, Sen. Fulbright said, "is the power of mainland China, or more accurately the extension of that power beyond China's borders." He said it was in the national interest to deal with Chinese "hostility" toward the U.S. but "fighting wars in peripheral, insignificant countries is certainly not the best way to do this." (UPD)

U.S. Raids the Key, Souvanna Asserts

VIENTIANE, Laos (AP)—Laos would be taken over by North Vietnam if U.S. air strikes were halted, says Laotian Premier Souvanna Phouma.

"It is the duty of the United States to protect us because, like other nations which signed the Geneva accords, it must assure the independence, territorial integrity and neutrality of Laos," he said.

Souvanna made the comment in an interview with the Columbia Broadcasting System, a transcript of which was released by the Lao government yesterday.

Souvanna denied any knowledge of U.S. B52 raids in Laos and refused to comment on the activities of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency in Laos.

Asked about the extent of U.S. military involvement in Laos, Souvanna said: "When the need is felt, we ask for supplies. We also ask for American air intervention to watch the infiltration routes and bomb the invaders."

He said that without U.S. air support "the entire country will become Communist—the entire country will be taken over by the North Vietnamese."

He said he had asked for more American aid, mainly rifles, to replace obsolete ones now used by the Lao army.

"We still have World War II carbines, Garand rifles and so on. Yet the enemy has terrible fire power with its AK47s," he said.

Souvanna said he would ask for still more aid "if necessary."

"I think the United States should agree to increase the aid we have received and which we need," he asserted.

Souvanna said North Vietnam had always "wanted to dominate us." He said he was not afraid that Laos would become another Vietnam.

"That's why I opposed the introduction of foreign troops into our country," he said.

Government informants said, meantime, that Souvanna told his military commanders yesterday he thought the Communist aim was to recapture all the land they held when the 1962 Geneva convention declared Laos neutral, United Press International reported.

Vang Pao Doesn't Attend

Souvanna and his military commanders were said to have agreed to press more noncombatant soldiers into service in the front lines to alleviate a manpower shortage.

Gen. Vang Pao, whose American-supported clandestine army has done most of the fighting against the North Vietnamese around the Plain of Jars, did not attend the session as is his habit with such high-level talks.

Van Pao's army is now composed of about 6,000 people — many youths about 15 years of age.

The general was reported to be too busy with tactical duties to fly to Vientiane yesterday. There was no word on his recovery from what were described as minor head injuries suffered in a plane crash Saturday.

Lao Outposts Fall

Since the North Vietnamese took the Plain of Jars and Muong Soui, there has been a relative lull in the area of the plain, although the Reds are continuing to build up their supplies of food and ammunition.

In southern Laos, however, Laotian military officials said two government outposts were captured by the Reds—one Monday, the other early today.

One high-ranking official called the increase of military activity in the panhandle "of very great concern," perhaps a diversion from the Plain of Jars.

The camp captured this morning was situated 15 miles south of Thakkek on the border with Thailand. Three Laotian army trucks were reported destroyed, but there were no accounts of casualties.

A delayed report said North Vietnamese troops had seized the second camp, at Pak Song,

Monday in the far southern reaches of Laos near the border with South Vietnam and Cambodia. The attackers, officials said, used a flame thrower and bazookas and knocked out the post's communications shack in the first salvo.

A report from Saigon said, meanwhile, that waves of carrier-based U.S. Navy jets bombed the Ho Chi Minh Trail last night and today in continuing strikes in southern Laos.

U.S. communiques said the Navy jets from carriers on Yankee Station flew no missions in Vietnam for the second time in three days. Official sources reported they were all busy bombing instead in Laos.

The Navy jets have teamed with Air Force B52s in pounding the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

Fulbright 'Scared' by Laos Talk

Sen. J. William Fulbright, D-Ark., says that high-ranking Nixon administration officials have indicated that they consider Laos even more important than Vietnam.

"The fact that high officials of the administration thinks this scares me to death," Fulbright, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said yesterday. "It suggests an ominous and dangerous future for us in that remote country."

Fulbright declined to identify what officials he meant, but The Associated Press reported he was referring to a high State Department official who twice in recent weeks made the argument in conversation with committee members.

"The government of the United States may soon have to decide whether to go all the way in Laos — that is, to make it another Vietnam — or to get out," Fulbright said.

Asks 'Close Hard Look'

"If Vietnam was important enough to justify the commitment of half a million American troops, then in their view, how many more could justifiably be committed in Laos, which is one of the few worse places the Vietnam to fight a war?" he said.

Calling it "wildly absurd" to say that Laos and Vietnam, singly or together, have the capability of harming the United States, Fulbright said that the time has come to take "a close hard look" at the American interest in Laos.

The Senator referred to an article by George Sherman which appeared in The Sunday Star,

calling it "most illuminating." Fulbright, who placed his statements and The Star article in the Congressional Record, indicated he believed the story presented insights into administration views of Laos.

"For the first time, American bombing of the Plain of Jars is explicitly related to American bombing of the Ho Chi Minh Trail, but in a most curious way," he said.

Cites "A Suspicion"

"On the one hand, we are told that bombing in the north—which, be it noted, did not prevent a Communist takeover of the Plain of Jars—has already diverted planes from attacks on the Ho Chi Minh trail," Fulbright said.

"On the other hand" he said, "we are told that if we do not prevent a Communist victory in the north—presumably by more bombing—then we will have to stop bombing the trail anyway."

Further, Fulbright said, the administration view appears to be that if American air strikes against the Ho Chi Minh Trail are stopped, then hopes for Vietnamization will be destroyed.

"This confirms a suspicion many of us have had about the fragility of the policy of Vietnamization," he said.

Editorials—

There Must Be No Delay In Clearing Up Laos Role

West Virginia's Sen. Robert C. Byrd, the No. 3 man in the Senate's majority leadership, was absolutely right in calling on the government to reveal the full extent of this country's involvement in Laos—a situation that could well lead to another Vietnam in Southeast Asia.

Byrd, whose stature and conservative viewpoint should add to the effectiveness of his petition, thus joins a growing group of senators—mainly liberals but including both Republicans and Democrats—in demanding that the Nixon administration disclose what Sen. Frank Church, D-Idaho, described as a need for "the truth and the whole truth" on U.S. activities in Laos.

So far, the administration has been so secretive, evasive and misleading about what we're doing in Laos that Sen. Albert Gore, D-Tenn., has suggested we may be in violation of the 1962 Geneva Agreement guaranteeing Laos' neutrality and a big power hands-off.

Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird, for example, has assured Congress that President Nixon would not send ground troops to fight in Laos without the consent of Congress.

Yet, CIA agents, former Green Berets, and military "advisers" are falling over themselves in Laos, causing Sen. Charles Mathias Jr., R-Md., to charge that "dubious disguises" are being used in Laos and "each one subverts the constitutional powers of the Congress."

"Can the reservation of warpowers to the Congress be circumvented by redesignating soldiers as agents of the Central Intelligence Agency or as military advisers?" Mathias asked—and it is pertinent to point out that this is precisely how we got so deeply involved in the mess in Vietnam.

Carrying the pretense still farther, President Nixon takes comfort in charging that a big difficulty in Vietnam is the credibility gap of prior Democratic administrations. The President is correct in accusing his Democratic predecessors of a credibility gap—but never has there been such a credibility gap as now exists in Laos.

One thing about Vietnam is that it always has been given full news coverage—by newspapers, press associations, television, radio and the news magazines—but newsmen in Laos have been subjected to all kinds of obstacles.

Indeed, when three Western newsmen made their way to the government base at Long Cheng—where they reported American-made planes being shot off the rate of one a minute—they were arrested by Laotian army troops, and the U.S. ambassador to Vientiane issued a state-

ment saying "the American mission has lost any interest in helping out the press whatsoever because of what happened this afternoon."

While influential members of the Senate—including Majority Leader Mike Mansfield, Stuart Symington, Frank Church and Albert Gore, as well as Republicans Charles Percy, John Sherman Cooper and Charles Mathias—have been unable to break the veil of secrecy imposed by the White House, the Pentagon and the State Department, there is growing evidence we are getting more and more deeply involved.

In the growing military activity, CIA agents directed Gen. Vang Pao's operations and U.S. fighter-bombers based in Thailand bombed North Vietnamese and Pathet Lao forces. And on Feb. 18, for the first time in the history of the Laotian war, U.S. B52s flying from Guam and Okinawa were reported bombing Communist forces in the Plain of Jars. The American and French newsmen who got to the Long Cheng base reported seeing more than 50 armed U.S. personnel, U.S. Air Force helicopters and U.S.-made planes during a two-hour stay in the camp.

As Mathias pointed out, these activities would appear to "clearly violate the spirit" of two congressional actions last year: the "National Commitments Resolution" requiring specific Congressional approval for every new engagement of American troops abroad, and the Cooper-Church amendment to the Defense Appropriations Act, which prohibits funding of any U.S. ground combat troops in either Laos or Thailand. Also, since the U.S. has no treaty commitments in Laos, this also appears to be in conflict with the "Nixon doctrine," which calls for a reduced role for U. S. forces in Asia consistent with the keeping of our treaty commitments.

In the face of our sad experience in Vietnam—and the signs of a parallel adventure in Laos—the Nixon administration, as Sen. Byrd suggests, owes a full explanation. We also should act promptly on Sen. Mathias' call, supported by Sen. Mansfield, for a reconvening of the 1962 Geneva Convention on Laos, which produced the "neutralization" of the country, to settle the situation. And, as Sen. Cooper proposes, the congressional prohibition against funding of any U.S. ground combat troops in either Laos or Thailand should be extended to air, naval and civilian forces.

There can be no delay in preventing a repetition of the mistakes of our Vietnamese involvement.

E - 427,270

MAR 3 1970

Up to Our Necks in Laos

Dem's

Combined News Services

Washington—Senate Democratic Leader Mike Mansfield (D-Mont.) charged yesterday that America is "up to our necks" in Laos and the presence there of U.S. forces "cannot be camouflaged any longer."

"The time is short; the time is now to face up to the implications of this worsening situation in Laos," Mansfield said in the Senate after CIA Director Richard Helms testified before a closed session of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Mansfield's fears were echoed today by Sen. George S. McGovern (D-S.D.), who said in a prepared Senate speech, "In spite of the painful lessons Vietnam, we are going down the same road in Laos, and we are doing it in secret."

McGovern challenged the administration to disclose its policy in Southeast Asia, called for a full-scale Senate debate, and said that the public should be told the nature and scope of the U.S. involvement.

Others who expressed fears about Laos after listening to Helms were Sen. Albert Gore (D-Tenn.), who

answered yes when asked if the situation is becoming more critical in Laos, and Sen. J. W. Fulbright (D-Ark.), said that he was "extremely apprehensive." "I am going to do everything I can to try to persuade the administration of the dangers of increased involvement," Fulbright said.

Fulbright said he did not believe that President Nixon wants any greater involvement. But there is a danger, Fulbright said, that the U.S. will be drawn into greater fighting.

Mansfield said, "The danger of our overextended commitment in Southeast Asia needs to be considered frankly and without delay. We are both in it—North Vietnamese and Americans—and we are in it up to our necks. The involvement is so transparent on both sides as to make less than useless the effort to maintain the fiction of the (Geneva) accord or even to exchange charge and counter-charge of violations."

Mansfield said that a close U.S. connection with Laotian government forces had resulted in "a further 'Americanization' of the war in Laos . . . which seems to be matching the effort to 'Vietnamize' the situation in South Vietnam. If the military seesaw goes down in Vietnam only to rise in Laos, our situation will not have improved; it will have worsened," he said. Mansfield called for a new conference of parties to the 1962 Geneva accord and suggested that the scope be widened.

McGovern, in his speech today, said, "We not only do not know the truth about our heavy involvement in Laos, but we are increasingly in the dark about what is really going on in Vietnam. It is absolutely

incredible that a great nation such as ours could be waging a major military operation in a foreign country without the knowledge of either its citizens or its Congress."

He charged that there has been an increasing buildup of American airpower, advisers and CIA operatives. "Our government—and the Laotian government—has a deliberate policy designed to prevent either the press or the Congress from learning the nature and extent of American involvement in Laos," he said.

But at least one Laotian official reportedly feels that the U.S. involvement is too restricted. The New York Times said today that Laotian Maj. Gen. Tiao Sayavong has complained that U.S. aerial support has been denied his forces in northern Laos because the U.S. has put the area off limits to its bombers.

Sayavong and the four other commanding generals of the military regions in Laos have been summoned to an emergency meeting today in Vientiane by Premier Prince Souvanna Phouma, informed government sources said last night.

Across the border in South Vietnam, American B-52 bombers rained tons of explosives yesterday on the Mekong Delta's Seven Mountains region. The jets pounded staging and storage enclaves in four missions, about eight miles from the Cambodian border. Damage assessments were not disclosed.

Elsewhere, three more American helicopters were lost. One American pilot was killed when a helicopter ferrying Korean troops developed engine trouble and crashed. The two other helicopters were shot down, but all of the crewmen were rescued, a U.S. spokesman said.

On the political front, a Vietnamese military court recessed until tomorrow the trial of National Assemblyman Tran Ngoc Chau on charges of pro-Communist activity after his three attorneys boycotted the proceedings and two other lawyers refused to take the case.

MIAMI, FLA.
HERALD

MAR 3 1970
M - 375,469
S - 468,167

'Up to Our Necks' In Laos--Mansfield

Miami Herald-Washington Post Wire.

WASHINGTON — Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield (D., Mont.) said Monday that the United States is involved militarily in Laos "up to our necks" and that the presence there of American forces "cannot be camouflaged any longer."



Sen. Mansfield
... 'corral involvement'

Mansfield and other critics of the U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia spoke after CIA Director Richard Helms testified in a closed session of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

ALTHOUGH HELMS was called to testify on the need for expansion of the Safeguard anti-ballistic missile system, many of the questions dealt with the scope of U.S. activities in Laos, according to senators who were present. "There was some considerable discussion on it," one said.

Sen. Albert Gore (D., Tenn.) said that after hearing Helms he was "more concerned now than I was before the meeting." Committee Chairman J. William Fulbright (D., Ark.) said he was "very afraid we are gradually being sucked into a new Vietnam-type war."

Mansfield, in his strongest statement on the shadowy U.S. presence in Laos, urged the President and Congress to "corral" the "open-ended military involvement in a part of the world which is not directly vital to our security."

In a speech on the Senate floor, Mansfield said:

"Notwithstanding the Geneva accord of 1962, the North Vietnamese are deeply involved in this military situation. So, too, is the United States. Press reports indicate that the Thais may also be engaged.

"THE INVOLVEMENT is so transparent on both sides as to make less than useless the effort to maintain the fiction of the accord or even to exchange charge and counter-charge of violations. We are both in it — North Vietnamese and Americans — and we are in it up to our necks."

SAN FRANCISCO, CAL.

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E - 208,023

EXAMINER & CHRONICLE

S - 648,231

MAR 3 1970

CIA Agents in Laos, Officials Now Admit

By John Wallach

Examiner Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — Administration officials privately conceded today the Central Intelligence Agency is involved in military operations in Laos against the Communist Pathet Lao.

But the officials denied reports that perhaps as many as a thousand civilian agents were helping to train the irregular army of anti-Communist Meo tribesmen. They said that at the most there are a hundred intelligence agents in the beleaguered Asian kingdom.

This disclosure was prompted by a Pentagon admission yesterday that two civilians were among the regular U.S. military personnel feared dead or missing in Laos.

2 Civilians

A Pentagon spokesman refused to confirm whether the two civilians, later identified as intelligence agents, were originally included in the 193 airmen acknowledged last week as missing.

But the spokesman disclosed that one of the civilians was seen being captured and presumably is still alive. Defense Department sources said they will release the names of the two men in the next few days.

The acknowledgement of the CIA role in Laos, an open secret for several years, is evidence of the difficulty the U.S. government is having keeping confidential the nature and extent of American involvement.

Conflicting Versions

In the apparent absence of a uniform White House directive on what is public and what private, State and Defense officials are citing conflicting ver-

sions of what they assert is the situation.

Last week, the Pentagon disclosed the United States had lost 193 servicemen since 1961. Yesterday, a Defense Department spokesman corrected the record to reflect that loss since 1964 — a three-year mistake in somebody's figuring.

State Department officials are so concerned about figures leaking out that the Laotian desk officer refused to confirm a figure used by a senior department official in public testimony before a congressional subcommittee.

2350 Americans

According to the American Embassy in Vientiane, there are 2350 Americans in Laos — 833 U.S. government employees and the rest dependents. This does not include American personnel assigned

for three to six-month tours of duty, or CIA men who commute back and forth from a border village in Thailand.

The United States has attempted to cloak its activities in Laos because the 1962 Geneva Accords, which provided for Laotian neutrality, prohibited the introduction of foreign troops in any capacity.

STATINTL

Mansfield On Laos: 'Up To Our Necks'

By Richard Homan
Washington Post Staff Writer

Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield (D-Mont.) said yesterday that the United States is involved militarily in Laos "up to our necks" and that the presence there of American forces "cannot be camouflaged any longer."

President Nixon has said that American planes bomb the Ho Chi Minh Trail in southern Laos but neither he nor any other administration official has revealed the U.S. role in northern Laos beyond saying there are no American combat forces in the country.

From other sources, however, it is known that U.S. military advisers have been with the Laos forces and that American aircraft have provided those forces with tactical support.

Mansfield and other critics of the U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia spoke after CIA Director Richard Helms testified in a closed session of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Although Helms was called to testify on the need for expansion of the Safeguard anti-ballistic missile system, many of the questions dealt with the scope of U.S. activities in Laos, according to senators who were present. "There was some considerable discussion on it," one said.

Sen. Albert Gore (D-Tenn.) said that after hearing Helms he was "more concerned now than I was before the meeting." Committee Chairman J. William Fulbright (D-Ark.) said he was "very afraid we are gradually being sucked into a new Vietnam-type war."

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In a speech on the Senate floor, Mansfield said:

"Notwithstanding the Geneva Accord of 1962, the North Vietnamese are deeply involved in this military situation.

"So, too, is the United States. Press reports indicate that the Thais may also be engaged.

"The involvement is, so transparent on both sides as to make less than useless the effort to maintain the fiction of the accord or even to exchange charge and counter-charge of violations. We are both in it—North Vietnamese and Americans—and we are in it up to our necks."

Mansfield said that "what disturbs me is not only that both nations are forbidden by the agreement to use forces in Laos but that the President has also made clear that he does not desire to see U.S. forces used in Laos."

Mansfield said he has "every confidence in the President's intentions. Yet the presence of American military ad-

visers' and others in Laos cannot be camouflaged any longer."

There are indications, he said, that U.S. bombing in Laos is heavier than it was in North Vietnam "and that there could now be as many as 20,000 sorties a month."

He urged that the United States "face up to the implications of this worsening situation in Laos" and said the "danger of our over-extended commitment in Southeast Asia needs to be considered frankly and without delay."

Mansfield commended the proposal by Laotian Prince Souvanna Phouma that a meeting be called of the signatories to the Geneva Accord to work out a way to bring stability to Laos.

State Department spokesman Robert McCloskey said yesterday that the United States would welcome informal consultations among the 14 member nations of the Geneva Conference.

McCloskey made it clear that, rather than a formal conference at this time, the

United States had in mind informal consultations which are provided for by the agreement and which the various signatories have used in the past to discuss Laos.

Sen. Frank E. Moss (D-Utah) told the Senate he endorsed Mansfield's remarks and Sen. Stephen M. Young (D-Ohio) said, "Laos is not worth the life of one American soldier... yet the fact is that our involvement in recent weeks seems to be growing."

Mansfield Deplores Laos Role

Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield, deploying increasing military conflict in Laos, has warned against extending U.S. involvement.

"If the military seasaw goes down in Vietnam only to rise in Laos, our situation will not have improved. It will have worsened," Mansfield said on the Senate floor yesterday.

One of a number of senators expressing increasing concern over the situation in Laos, Mansfield said that both the North Vietnamese and Americans already are involved "up to our necks" in the Laotian conflict.

Meanwhile, Sen. J. W. Fulbright, D-Ark., chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said that he was "very afraid we are gradually being sucked into a new Vietnam-type war in Laos."

Fulbright called use of U.S. B52 bombers in Laos "certainly an escalation of our role. He said he plans to invite Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird and Secretary of State William P. Rogers to testify on Laos and the deepening situation there.

Sen. George S. McGovern, D-S.D., called for a full-scale Senate debate on the situation, and said the public should be told the nature and scope of the U.S. involvement.

Mansfield made his statement Helms testified before a closed-door session of the Foreign Relations Committee.

After listening to Helms, Sen. Albert Gore, D-Tenn., answered

yes when asked if the situation is becoming more critical in Laos.

Mansfield, in his comments on the Senate floor, urged support for reconvening the 1962 Geneva Conference that sought to guarantee neutrality for Laos.

Prince Souvanna Phouma of Laos has requested that Britain and the Soviet Union call the 1962 conference back into session. The two nations co-chaired the conference, which lead to agreement by 14 nations, including the United States and North Vietnam, on stabilizing Laos.

Mansfield said that the scope of such a new meeting might be enlarged to include the situation in all of Southeast Asia, with the participation of other nations, such as Cambodia and Thailand.

"The time is short; the time is now to face up to the implications of this worsening situation in Laos," Mansfield said. He asserted that United States bombing in Laos is reported to be heavier than it was in North Vietnam.

Mansfield said both North Vietnam and the United States are forbidden to use forces in Laos. But, he said, the war "seems to be pouring out of South Vietnam" into Laos and the rest of Indochina.

Mansfield questioned how deepening United States involvement in Laos accorded with this country's "vital interest," with the "Nixon Doctrine," which calls for a reduction of U.S. foreign military involvement, and

with competing domestic priorities.

"It needs to be recalled at this time . . . that the full scale U.S. (involvement) evolved from much smaller beginnings," Mansfield said. "I am sure the President does not want that sequence to be repeated."

Sen. Harry F. Byrd Jr., D-Va., agreed with Mansfield that "more tons of bombs" have been dropped on Laos than on North Vietnam. Byrd said the American public should have "all possible facts on the situation."

Despite efforts by senators to secure release of a censored transcript of hearings on Laos

the administration so far has refused to permit disclosure of this information.

I further Senate floor comment, Sen. Stephen M. Young, D-Ohio, called Laos "just about the most underdeveloped country in the world."

"That country is certainly not worth the life of one American soldier," Young said, adding that the Central Intelligence Agency, reported to be heavily involved in Laos, is "a watchdog that needs a master."

Young asserted that some of the places bombed by B52s have been up to 200 miles away from the Ho Chi Minh trail, where bombing has been directed to squeeze the flow of supplies to the enemy in Vietnam.

STATINTL

FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS STAFF

PROGRAM Capitol Hill Report

STATION WRC Radio

DATE March 2, 1970

6:30 PM

CITY Washington, DC

SENATE BRIEFING ON LAOS

WILLIAM LITTAUER: Central Intelligence Agency Director, Richard Helms, held a secret meeting with members of the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee. Participants in the meeting later expressed extreme concern over the Laotian involvement.

Committee Chairman, William Fulbright, said he is very afraid the United States is gradually being sucked into a new Vietnam type war.

SENATOR WILLIAM FULBRIGHT: If we are determined to disengage in Vietnam, then of course that leads to a similar resolution in Laos. If the Vietnamization program is not designed to disengage in Vietnam, then we become more deeply involved in Laos in protecting the involvement in Vietnam.

Subcommittee Chairman, Albert Gore, commented after the meeting with Helms, he is now more concerned; and added Laos is apparently outside the Nixon Doctrine.

Republican Representative Bradford Morse declared his recent tour of Vietnam convinced him that the Vietnamization

M - 545,570
S - 712,175

MAR 2 1970

Laos truth seemingly not all truth

By Morton Kondracke
Sun-Times Bureau

WASHINGTON — "The United States has a small 'army' of armed Americans on the ground in Laos at Long Chien, 15 miles south of the Communist-held Plain of Jars . . .

"Long Chien is an L-shaped canyon tucked away in the brush. One leg of the L holds an airstrip. The other leg holds a U.S. military headquarters . . . (with) American military barracks, all air conditioned . . .

"More than 50 Americans" were seen "some riding in Jeeps. All were armed with M16 rifles and pistols, but dressed in civilian clothes. . .

"On the 5,000 foot-long t a r m a c airstrip (were) . . . aircraft bearing U.S. Air Force markings. There also were three U.S. Air Force Jolly Green Giants, the large helicopters used for rescuing U.S. pilots downed over Laos."

Phase of secret war in Laos

This is the best information now available to the U.S. public about one phase of the secret war in Laos. It certainly does not come from the U.S. government.

It does not even come from persons who visited Long Chien, but from a reporter, Tammy Arbuckle, who writes for the Washington Star out of Vientiane.

Arbuckle got the information from three other reporters who violated U.S.-Laotian security rules, walked 12 miles to the camp and were arrested for their pains. Their own reports have not yet been published in the United States.

That is how it is with this war. Information about it comes second or third hand, for example, from "well-informed sources" who told Arbuckle that there are between 200 and 300 armed Americans in Laos.

No U.S. confirmation

This information cannot be confirmed from official U.S. government sources. Nor can it be confirmed by members of Sen. Stuart Symington's (D-Mo.) subcommittee on U.S. commitments abroad. The Nixon administration will not let Symington release his panel's information.

Nothing can be released on Long Chien or armed Americans because the administration's policy, in Defense Sec. Melvin R. Laird's words, is that "there are no ground combat troops of the U.S. military in Laos at this time."

So far as is known, Laird is telling the truth. He is not telling the whole truth, but it is far from the whole truth.

If reports from other "informed sources" are correct, the armed Americans in Laos are not "combat troops of the U.S. military," but former Army Green Berets employed by the Central Intelligence Agency. They are in Laos to "advise" Royal Laotian forces in the war against the Communist Pathet Lao and invaders from North Vietnam.

Then there is the matter of B-52 raids. For a long time, the United States did not admit that it was bombing the Ho Chi Minh Trail, the Communist supply route running through the southeast section of Laos from North to South Vietnam.

Now these raids are admitted, but bombing

tian government forces from overextending themselves, largely went by the board."

Allman wrote in September that "few non-Laotian Vientiane observers expect these major and unexpected victories to last" — a prediction apparently in the process of confirmation now with Communist victories and the retaking of the Plain.

The Manchester Guardian reported this week that the war might escalate still further with the United States turning the plain into a "freefire zone" — an area of unrestricted bombing by B-52s or planes of the CIA's Air America and Continental Air services.

An aide to one senator on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee said he feared what might happen if Communist troops approached the Thai border, less than 100 miles from the Plain of Jars. If Thai territory were violated, the United States might have to intervene under the Southeast Asia Treaty.

Sen. Robert Byrd (D-W. Va.) reported last week that 25 Americans have been killed on the ground in Laos and 100 airmen, shot down on bombing runs, are dead or missing.

"Before these casualty figures rise further," he said, "the American people should be told the extent of our country's involvement in Laos."

Foreign Relations Committee sources suspect that the Nixon administration is trying to test out "solutions" to "mistakes" it feels were made in Vietnam — namely, that "sanitary" air power should be relied upon rather than large numbers of ground troops and that the public should not be told what is happening for fear of arousing a controversy.

"What they seem to be saying," said a committee source, "is, 'the public be damned, we professionals have things under control.' The problem is, is it really under control? Does he even know what's going on on the ground? Once you start this secrecy business, you never know where it ends."

all truth

change our electoral voting system so that the electoral votes in a given State, which are based on the number of Representatives in Congress that a State has, be determined by congressional districts rather than at large. The electoral votes which represent the two Senators that each State has must continue to be determined by the total vote of a State.

At the present time a candidate for President must get a majority of the vote in a populous State or lose its entire electoral vote. This might place a temptation before candidates and political parties to declare for plans and programs not in the best interests of the entire United States, but necessary in order to reach a radical swing vote deemed necessary to carry the State. If, on the other hand, a populous State elects 30 or 40 or more electors by districts, the party and the candidate can strive to carry as many districts as possible and obtain a substantial number of electoral votes even though they do not carry the entire State. Such a procedure would not place the temptation before the candidate to make unwise or unrealistic promises for fear of losing the total electoral vote in a heavily populated States.

The election of presidential electors by districts would also encourage the two-party system. A candidate or a political party could realistically make a drive to carry a few congressional districts in a State where they had little chance of carrying the entire State because of past one-party control. It could well be an incentive for the building of a real two-party system for every State in the Union.

Mr. President, Mr. White's statement that direct election of the President of the United States is an invitation to national chaos is not an exaggeration. Why should we make such a revolutionary change when our present system has worked so well and so long? Why should we not be content with correcting our electoral voting system rather than junking it?

Already some people have advocated a direct primary as a means for the parties to choose their candidates for President. If such a thing would happen, will an unlimited number of candidates be allowed to place their name on a nationwide primary ballot? Or should the number be limited to five, 50, or 100? If there is a limitation, who will decide what names go on the ballot? Will the nominations go to the candidates with the greatest amount of money who can mount the most massive high-powered advertising campaign?

It is true that the nomination of candidates for President by direct primary is not before us. It will be before us if we make the tragic step of abolishing our electoral voting system and turn to the direct election of the President. We should oppose the direct election of the President because our present system gives the greater protection to individual citizens and to their liberties and in reality gives the greater weight to their expressed desire to whom should become President.

Mr. ALLEN. Mr. President, will the Senator yield?

Mr. CURTIS. I am happy to yield to the Senator from Alabama.

Mr. ALLEN. Mr. President, I would like to congratulate the distinguished Senator from Nebraska on this excellent analysis of the problems having to do with possible reform of our electoral college and reform of the method of choosing the President of the United States. Certainly I agree with the distinguished Senator in his conclusion that the direct election is not the proper route to go. I am impressed very much with his statement that the route of direct election of the President would be the beginning of the destruction of our Federal system, which has worked so well for this country for almost 200 years.

Has the distinguished Senator given thought to the provision in the proposal that will soon be before the Senate that permits a President by the direct election method to be chosen by a 40-percent plurality. Does the Senator think that provision is in the public interest?

Mr. CURTIS. Mr. President, I thank the distinguished Senator for his comment about my remarks.

As to the answer to the Senator's question, I do not like that 40-percent provision. I believe, however, it tends to obscure the real danger, which is the direct election of the President. It is my hope that those who advocate direct election of the President will recall their proposal, because if they insist on that proposal there will be no reform in electoral voting. That would be unfortunate because we should make at least two reforms: First, to provide that we do not have a system under which an elector could substitute his judgment for that of the people who voted a certain way and who are entitled to have the elector vote that way; and second, the matter of deciding ties. I think at the present time this cannot be justified. We should make some corrections there, but if there is an insistence upon an amendment to provide for the direct election of the President going to the States there will be no reform whatever.

I agree with the distinguished Senator on the 40-percent minimum. I have changed some of my own thinking on that point in recent months because I felt we must concentrate on the larger problem of the direct election system.

Mr. ALLEN. Is it not true that if there be fraud or corruption in the conduct of any election in any State, under the present system that fraud or corruption would be sealed off into the particular State involved, whereas, under the direct election system any fraud or corruption would apply to the whole body or pool of votes of the entire country?

Mr. CURTIS. Counting the votes by States, any corruption is quarantined, so to speak, and its effect limited to the wrong that might come in that particular State. If it is all put into one pool there would be corruption in that pool.

Mr. ALLEN. Mr. President, the Senator has made a great contribution to the debate on this subject. The fact that the Senator is opposed to the direct system but would favor some other type of reform, I believe, foretells the defeat of the amendment providing for

the direct election because I believe that fully one-half of the Members of the Senate are opposed to the direct system but they would be unable to agree on any substitute plan.

For that reason, it seems likely to the junior Senator from Alabama that there will be no reform at this point. Does the Senator feel that that is a likelihood?

Mr. CURTIS. I do. There are 34 of the 50 States that would be adversely affected if we changed to the direct election of the President. I do not believe they have any such mandate from the people back home to lessen the power of their sovereign States in choosing the President.

Mr. ALLEN. The Senator's argument is that the voter in Nebraska wants to go to the polls feeling he is going to be a part of the Nebraska vote, and when the Nebraska vote is counted it will count for something because it will be represented in the electoral vote of the State of Nebraska. It will not be commingled with 75 million other votes, and will be identified with that single State.

Mr. CURTIS. When I cast my vote in Nebraska, it will not be buried under a tombstone in Chicago.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HART in the chair). Under the previous order, the Senator from Montana is recognized for 15 minutes.

LAOS

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, I take the floor of the Senate at this time because of the serious situation in Laos. I do so not to criticize, but, if possible, to be constructive, to be helpful, and to wave a warning flag about this area which might perhaps be helpful in preventing our becoming involved too deeply and in too costly a manner. When I speak of costly, I do not mean money alone, but total cost, including manpower.

Perhaps, the Pathet Lao and their North Vietnamese allies may stop the offensive on the Plain of Jars, south of the cities of Vientiane and Luang Prabang; that would be in the pattern of previous operations. Then again, they may push forward against these two capitals and press to the border of Thailand. Only time will indicate what plans and objectives may be involved. In any event, the question of the "nonwar" or the "secret-war" or "interlude war" in Laos cannot be avoided any longer.

Notwithstanding the Geneva accord of 1962, the North Vietnamese are deeply involved in this military situation. So, too, is the United States. Press reports indicate that the Thais may also be engaged. The involvement is so transparent on both sides as to make less than useless the effort to maintain the fiction of the accord or even to exchange charge and countercharge of violations. We are both in it—North Vietnamese and Americans—and we are in it up to our necks.

What disturbs me is that it is not only that both nations are forbidden by the Geneva agreement to use forces in Laos

ever before. And finally, we're willing to be judged by the results of our efforts.

Today I get special pleasure in discussing this subject before a meeting of the Urban League. That pleasure springs from knowledge of the special, almost unique, role of the League.

You will recall that I have dwelt on two features that mark our approach to today's problems. The first is *moderation in style*. No florid rhetoric, no illusory promises, no claim of heroics. The second is to point our efforts toward *results*. Not to accentuate and polarize differences, not to promote confrontations but rather to get things done—useful, constructive things.

Now as I reflect on these approaches I become aware they are in marked harmony with approaches used by the League over the years. The League has always been a "doing" organization. The League maintains referral and placement units. The League provides special counselling and community services. And now the League operates dozens of training programs, many like LEAP and Outreach under the Department of Labor sponsorship. So the League itself is highly "results-oriented."

Through the years we have seen the League employ a reasoned, rather than a raucous, voice. It has been strong and firm in its views where others were merely strident. The League knows that furor and frenzy can never replace constructive action if real gains are to be won.

So I take special pleasure and extend special thanks to you for letting me discuss these critical matters with you.

This morning I have often spoken in terms of "problems." There is now occurring a switch in phrasing deserving a high favor. People increasingly refer to "problems" as "opportunities." I like this. It has a positive ring to it. A problem is something you try to get out of the way. An opportunity is something you work at with zeal and inspiration. Certainly that is how the matters I have discussed here this morning should be attacked. I believe that is the way the Urban League is attacking their opportunities. I know that is the basis for our approach to them in the Labor Department. As this concept spreads among men of good will everywhere, the end result can only be real progress. And real progress has become a tangible and achievable objective. Let's all work at it.

Thank you.

LAOS AND VIETNAM

Mr. McGEE. Mr. President, Columnist Richard Wilson, writing in today's Washington Evening Star, details what he calls "an important distinction" between U.S. military operations in Laos and in Vietnam. That difference or distinction is that in Laos, while we are training, equipping, and advising a native army, and probably giving it air support, there is no direct involvement of American ground troops in combat. Indeed, the President has assured Congress that none will be sent to fight in Laos without its consent.

This is an important distinction which does not preclude our Government's acting to protect the integrity of Laos or other threatened nations in Southeast Asia.

The point which Mr. Wilson drives home is that this policy is not news—certainly not to the critics in Washington. It is under attack, however, because, to some, it appears to be a good time to undermine the President's policy and forge a new policy of total disengagement.

I ask unanimous consent that Richard Wilson's column, entitled "Criticism Unlikely To Sway Nixon on Laos Policy," be printed in the Record.

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

CRITICISM UNLIKELY TO SWAY NIXON ON LAOS POLICY

(By Richard Wilson)

Another Vietnam in Laos? Well, hardly yet. There is an important distinction between the military operations of the Nixon administration in Laos and those in Vietnam.

If this distinction is not recognized then it may as well be said that the President of the United States is now and hereafter precluded from effectively supporting the nations of Southeast Asia in resisting external aggression.

This is evidently the basic objective of those in the United States Senate who now are accusing the President of escalating the war in Laos into another Vietnam.

This distinction between Vietnam and Laos, however, is a working demonstration of the kind of policy called for by the Nixon Doctrine in lieu of the massive direct intervention of U.S. forces in Vietnam. In Laos we are training, equipping and advising a clandestine native army and probably giving it air support without the direct involvement in combat of American ground troops. That pattern undoubtedly would be followed in Thailand if the northern insurgency required it. It is the developing pattern also in Vietnam, where it is called Vietnamization.

Implicit in the gathering storm over Laos is the basic question of the President's using these methods to preserve the political integrity of independent governments in Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia and Thailand.

This is well understood in Congress. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee knows what the Nixon administration is doing in Laos and why it is doing it. The present outburst arises mainly because a few newspapermen have observed first hand what the Foreign Relations Committee has known all along was being done in Laos.

A visitor to Vientiane as long ago as three years could readily see that the United States was giving military support to the government of Laos. There was no secret about it. The CIA was there. American military advisers were there. They also traveled back and forth between the American airfields in the north of Thailand to Vientiane.

Investigators for the Foreign Relations Committee have been supplied with a great deal of information by State Department personnel on the operation in Laos, so much in fact that there has been concern at the White House over the leakage of military information that would be of benefit to the North Vietnamese invaders.

Then why all the fuss? It arises because this is considered the right time to undermine and reverse President Nixon's policy in Southeast Asia. It finally is coming to be realized that Nixon meant it when he said the United States was not about to "bug out" and that he intended to preserve the independent political integrity of the nations of Southeast Asia.

That is not sufficient for the peace group in the Senate. Some of them had thought that Nixon was moving toward a total pull-out, regardless of the consequences, as a political necessity. Now they see that this is not so and they observe that in both Thailand and Laos the President has committed the United States to military support of existing governments.

Nixon also is being accused of duplicity and of failing to hold the confidence of the American public by being little franker about his objectives than President Johnson.

This only means that in a brief time President Nixon will take to the air waves again to give a fuller explanation, but no fuller than is already known to the Foreign Relations Committee, about what we are doing in Laos, why it is in support of an independent government, why it protects our troops in Vietnam and making it doubly clear, as Secretary of Defense Laird already has, that he has no intention of committing ground combat forces.

If the President does not do this he will merely play into the hands of those who say he is hiding his actions in the same deceptive way as Johnson.

It is of even more substance that if the President is driven off his policy in Laos then he will have retreated from the aims and objectives he has so often stated in the Nixon Doctrine.

But there is no present prospect that Nixon will be driven off his policy, certainly as long as the North Vietnamese infiltration through Laos to Vietnam continues.

One other aspect of this matter is important. The President has assured Congress he will not send ground troops to fight in Laos without Congressional consent. If this assurance is to be taken literally the President has gone a step farther than his predecessors in recognizing congressional participation in decisions on future military interventions.

ON CRIME IN THE STREETS

Mr. SYMINGTON. Mr. President, in a recent interview, an outstanding trial lawyer, Edward Bennett Williams, addressed himself to the problem of crime and the avenues for solution.

Although his remarks were made in the context of the critical situation in the District of Columbia, they are pertinent and applicable to cities across the Nation and of interest to all those concerned with this national problem.

Mr. Williams states that our system is broken down in three places.

First, he asserts that the greatest deterrent to crime in the street is a visible policeman and calls for more and better paid policemen. For the quality and quantity needed, a massive Federal subsidy to the cities is required.

Second, if punishment is to work as a deterrent, it does not have to be severe but it does have to be swift. When those apprehended do get to court, the average lawyer can keep his clients at liberty for from 18 months to 2 years before a final decision.

The whole criminal justice system must be speeded up if it is going to work effectively. This too will take more funds.

Finally, the prisons, instead of rehabilitating, have become breeding grounds for crime.

I ask unanimous consent that the complete article appearing in the Washington Post of February 28 be printed at this point in the Record.

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

[From the Washington Post, Feb. 28, 1970]
AN ATTORNEY'S VIEW OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA CRIME SITUATION

(NOTE.—Trial attorney Edward Bennett Williams, one of a number of civic leaders who have recently met together in search of new solutions to the problem of crime in Washington, was asked about some of his conclusions in a recent interview with Joseph

LINCOLN, NEBR.
STAR

M - 26,553

MAR 2 1970

What About Laos?

Surely nothing could be more important at this stage of events in Southeast Asia than a disclosure by President Nixon of U.S. involvement in Laos. If for any reason, immediate disclosure to the public would be harmful to national security, then at least the truth could be told in closed congressional hearings. There is precedent for that.

Senators of both parties are understandably distressed that most information — presumably reliable, but nevertheless unofficial — coming out of Laos is from the news media and that American officials concerned with U.S. activities in the countries neighboring Vietnam are attempting censorship.

Nothing less than potential for another Vietnam is the fear and the unofficial reports substantiate that fear. CIA agents and military advisors — supposedly in greater numbers proportionately than those in Vietnam under the Kennedy commitment — swarming

throughout the country, secretive U.S. troop incursions across the Vietnam border, massive B-52 raids admitted officially only recently all point to the growing involvement.

Republican Sen. Charles Mathias charges that even now "U.S. military activities in that country (Laos) clearly violate the spirit of both the national commitments resolution — requiring specific approval for every new engagement of American troops abroad — and the amendment to the defense appropriations act prohibiting use of funds for American ground combat troops in Laos or Thailand."

An airing of those activities is in order. Congressional acts shouldn't be violated, let alone the possibility of the American people being hoodwinked into another Vietnam. Even the most ardent advocate of the U.S. military mission in Vietnam should not want a similar bloodletting next door.

MONTGOMERY, ALA.
ADVERTISER

M - 61,769

S - 80,831

MAR 2 1970

The CIA's War In Laos

THE UNITED STATES is so deeply committed in Laos it will suffer loss of prestige, money and men regardless of the path taken now.

There is also the possibility that current policy in Laos will lead to increased involvement in inverse ratio to decreased activity in Vietnam. Senator Mathias of Maryland pointed this out the other day. He said that Laos was turning into "an arena for the repetition of mistakes of our Vietnamese involvement."

Mathias cited the character of U.S. Laotian commitment as one of "dubious disguises." The villain behind the disguises is the Central Intelligence Agency, with a supporting role played by the Defense Department. For example, Mathias quoted a number of news reports that hundreds of former Green Berets have been recruited by the CIA to assist irregular groups supporting the Laotian government.

The Laotian war has been going on for 20 years, with CIA interference for about half of that time. At least once, it has switched sides. Prior to 1967, the CIA supported the right-wing Prince, Boun Oum, in his efforts to oust neutralist Prince Souvanna Phouma. It succeeded for a short while in 1964. In 1967, it was decided that maybe Souvanna Phouma was the better choice after all.

The dollar-green carpet of the CIA was jerked out from under Boun Oum and laid beneath the feet of Souvanna Phouma, where it has been ever since. U.S. B-52s stationed in Thailand regularly bomb North Vietnamese and communist Pathet Lao positions in Laos. U.S. supplied and maintained T-28 jets stationed

in Laos wage war against the communists.

U.S. advisers train and assist the Clandestine Army, the only viable friendly fighting force in Laos. U.S. funds pay for the Clandestine Army, made up primarily of Meo tribesmen and mercenary Thais, and for the Royal Laotian Army, which functions only as a palace guard.

The U.S., in short, pays for everything, to the tune of almost \$300,000,000 annually. Everything to fight the war is furnished by us except troops, and there is creeping doubt about that.

This sordid, sub rosa mess perpetrated by the CIA with the apparent blessings of the Defense Department and the Nixon Administration places the U.S. in an untenable position. No matter what the future policy is, it will be damaging.

Should the U.S. decide abruptly to pull out, prestige will be lost. Should the decision be made to stay and fight it out, the nation might be bogged up to its neck in another Vietnam War. Past experience shows that, in this kind of thing, the U.S. does not remain static, ruling out maintaining the status quo.

There is a double tragedy in the Laotian morass. The most obvious is that secret agencies of the U.S. have been allowed to lead the power and prestige of the nation into a Hobson's Choice. The other is that it makes as little sense to take a stand in Laos as it would in, say, Madagascar.

Left alone, Laos would lapse into the insignificance that is its natural state. It is no place for the U.S. or Americans to be making a fight.

2 MAR 1970

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Another War: In the Skies Over Indochina

By HERBERT MITGANG

WASHINGTON—Fifteen years ago Graham Greene's English correspondent in "The Quiet American" strolled down Rue Catinat toward the Saigon waterfront and observed, "I could see lamps burning where they had disembarked the new American planes."

There has been one slight change since that time, shortly after the French made a dying effort to hang onto their colonial empire in Southeast Asia. Rue Catinat has been renamed Tu Do. It celebrates no famous victory by the ARVN, nor the success of the new American policy of Vietnamization, but only a vain touch of independence by the Republic of South Vietnam.

The role of American planes in Greene's novel—which took place during the years of official Washington brinkmanship in the 1950's—is recalled again because of the stepped-up air action over Vietnam in the weeks since Vice President Agnew's visit. And for a more important reason now: the reconnaissance, strafing by gunships and high-altitude bombing, added together, amount not to de-escalation but deeper involvement in all the shaky nations that once made up French Indochina.

Although President Nixon's foreign affairs report to Congress last month said that "our tactical air and B-52 operations have been reduced by 25 per cent," the half-hidden air war beyond the borders of South Vietnam has actually widened. United States Air Force, Army, Marine and Navy warplanes are on operations from the Gulf of Siam to the Gulf of Tonkin.

Overt and Covert War

Last month there was an admitted average of between 250 and 300 sorties (one aircraft over one target) every day. Not discussed openly, however, were the sorties originating within Laos against the North Vietnamese there. The B-52 bombings on the Plaine des Jarres are acknowledged but the lesser-known activities of transports and helicopters belonging to Air America and Continental Air Services, for the Agency for International Development and the Central Intelligence Agency, also entangle the United States in this twilight war.

Despite the announced bombing cutback, about 100,000 tons of bombs are dropped in an average month. B-52's take off from Thailand or make the long round-trip flight of over ten hours from Guam. The mean-

ing of this heavy bombing can be put in perspective by comparing it with the 500,000 tons dropped in the Pacific Theatre during all of the Second World War. When the total tonnage dropped in the Pacific theater Vietnam alone is added up, it exceeds by far the weight of all the bombing on every front against Japan and Germany.

Neither strafing by helicopter gunships nor attacks by fighter-bombers have been milk runs; more than 1,300 fixed-wing planes and nearly 1,500 helicopters have been lost over North and South Vietnam. Accidents and losses on the ground due to enemy action have accounted for another 1,600 planes and 1,900 helicopters. More important than the billions of dollars are the thousands of casualties involved.

At the Pentagon, the phrase often heard for the use of greater aerial firepower is "pre-emptive attack." Troop concentrations have been hit along the hundreds of miles of the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Laos and on the infiltration routes within Cambodia. To an extent, reconnaissance and bombing in these "neutral" countries and deep across the border of North Vietnam have helped to prevent major of-

fensives against American and ARVN positions.

But the aerial incursions have heightened the military dangers. This has happened recently in North Vietnam—despite the so-called bombing halt in the Hanoi area. Reconnaissance plane losses have led, inevitably, to fighter escorts. How much combat is taking place in surface-to-air missile and MIG country is not mentioned in official communiqués.

Subject to Interpretation

Another phrase—Secretary of Defense Laird's "protective reaction"—is subject to a variety of interpretations at the Pentagon. "If you find out what it means," smiled a veteran pilot of the Vietnam skies, "let us know." He and others surmised that it could be stretched to mean retaliatory strafing and bombing almost anywhere in North Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos.

The familiar scenario of the Vietnam war calls up lines by another Englishman, Lord Byron, who wrote: "This is the patent age of new inventions/For killing bodies and for saving souls,/All propagated with the best intentions."

HERBERT MITGANG is a member of the editorial board of The New York Times.

SOUTH BEND, IND.
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E - 120,288
S - 126,433
MAR 2 1970

Secrecy in Laos

Having intervened in Vietnam at a terrible cost of their young men's blood, the American people watch uneasily as part of the secrecy that conceals the American role in nearby Laos is torn away.

Only glimpses of the American commitment in Laos have reached the public, just enough to create widespread wariness and suspicion about what is happening there.

The few American correspondents who have been able to get near the combat areas of Laos have sent back reports of activities by the Central Intelligence Agency that go beyond the role in which most people envisage the CIA.

The CIA is running a civilian airline in Laos called Air America, with which it supports an army of Laotian irregulars. According to eyewitness reports, the line uses C-123 and Caribou transport planes "borrowed" from the U.S. Air Force. Their Air Force markings have been painted over.

Correspondents have been forbidden to visit secret bases, but have sent back reports that Americans in civilian clothes, including former Green Berets, seem to be sharing in the fighting.

Military and other governmental spokesmen in Washington sidestep questions about these reports. President Nixon, like Presidents Johnson and Kennedy before him, is saying as little as possible about Laos. The statements being made in Washington are equivocal, full of semantic evasions.

The Laotian fighting is tied to the Vietnam war, because the North Vietnamese in complete disregard for Laotian sovereignty bring supplies to the Vietnamese front down the Ho Chi Minh trail. American air power attacks that supply line, as a protection for U.S. and South Vietnamese troops. That role is openly admitted and easily justified.

But how much more are we doing? How far is the government ready to go in support of the Laotian government led by Premier Souvanna Phouma? A commitment to use American forces in defense of Laos if the North Vietnamese chose to attempt a full-out conquest of that country would draw bitter opposition here.

The American people are entitled to a frank report. Until they receive it, they understandably look upon news about Laos with distrust.

2 MAR 1970

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Laos: The Same Old Shell Game

Even the best dispatches from Laos read like some combination of Terry and the Pirates, Graham Greene and Art Buchwald. Our Man of the Hour is General Vang Pao who is rated by American officials just behind Alexander the Great, in large part because by Asian military standards he is honest, which is to say that when we pay him the money for his men, the men get paid. But his men are mostly teenaged kids recruited from the tough Meo hill tribes and built into an irregular army, financed, trained, supported, and largely directed by the Americans (which is another way of saying the CIA). This supposedly secret operation is a secret to nobody in Laos. It was conceived as a substitute for the regular armed forces of the Laotian Government which is supposed to be neutral, and whose army doesn't fight much, and as a counterweight to Communist forces, both imported and homegrown. Van Pao's army does fight, but lately it has been doing badly in what pass for battles in the Laotian war but are really rather eccentric skirmishes for places like the Plain of Jars or Lima Lima or Muong Suoi. These are called *strongholds* or *key towns* or *vital road junctions* until they change hands, which they do more or less regularly, at which time they turn out to be more like tennis trophies, temporarily held, until the next tournament.

All this is played out against the backdrop of a psychedelic political power struggle between fractured Centrists and splintered Neutralists, Rightists and crypto-Communists, which might tell you a great deal about the significance of the military byplay if you could somehow wrap your mind around it, and having done that, take it seriously.

That's the thing about Laos—it is hard to take it seriously until suddenly something or somebody threatens to upset the delicate equilibrium and the whole thing ceases to be a giant put-on and becomes, or is made to become, a critical element in the Vietnam equation or a test of strength and will between us and the Russians, or perhaps us and Hanoi. This is what is happening now, as it happened in 1961 and in 1964 and again last year, and it happens, of course, because we are in Vietnam and because Laos is next door. Wedged in between Red China, Burma, Thailand, and stretching alongside the two Vietnams, it is *strategic*, as an infiltration from North Vietnam to the South, and as an opening Southward for the Communist Chinese. It is also a *domino*, if you accept that image, ready to fall if Vietnam isn't held upright—although as of now you could argue that it might fall even if South Vietnam is held up, which could reverse the theory, and make South Vietnam the next to go. In any case, we care about Laos for the same reason we care about Vietnam, and that is at least understandable.

What is neither understandable nor defensible, in our view, is the way we give expression to our care—furtively, in clandestine support of a proxy

army, and without the slightest concern for Congressional prerogatives or for the possible consequences of systematically deceiving the American public about an expanding American military intervention which could all too easily fail.

You might have thought that, having seen the results of the great Vietnam shell game as conducted by the last Administration, the present one might have learned something about the effect this can have on public understanding and support. But no, President Nixon has decreed that he doesn't think "the public interest would be served by any further discussion" of Laos and that apparently is that. The President will go to Congress if there is any change contemplated in our military involvement in Laos, Secretary Laird has promised, and this would be somewhat reassuring were it not for the fact that our military involvement *has* changed, significantly, and the President *hasn't* gone to Congress about it, at least publicly.

It is all too familiar, including the rationale. We are bound by the 1962 Geneva accords which set up a neutral Laotian government, the Administration argues privately, and since these accords called for the removal of all outside military forces we cannot discuss what we are now doing in Laos without acknowledging publicly and officially that we are violating the accords. The theory is that this would then make it incumbent on the Russians to do something in response, as a matter of pride or prestige or simple geopolitics—and never mind that the Communists broke the Geneva agreement from the day that it was signed. Even assuming that there is something to this theory, at best it would only justify a policy of silence; it can not justify the sort of calculated dissembling engaged in by Secretary Laird when he was asked the other day on Meet the Press whether American B-52's were used to provide close-in support of Laotian troops in the Plain of Jars. "This is quite far from the Ho Chi Minh trail which the President said we were bombing to interdict supplies into South Vietnam," the questioner continued, "Does this mean we have decided to take a role in the Laotian war?" This is the nub of it, of course—whether we are bombing in Southern Laos as part of the Vietnam interdiction effort, or intervening increasingly in the quite separate Laotian civil war in the North, and Mr. Laird's answer deserves to be set down in full:

First, I would like to say it is not possible to use B-52's for close-in support. Any close-in support would have to be provided by tactical air and of course the Royal Laotian forces have tactical air of their own. The President has said that we are using United States air power as far as the interdiction of supplies and material coming into Vietnam are concerned. The mission of air power, as far as Laos is concerned, on the Ho Chi Minh trail, has been handled by the President of the United States and we have used it in connection with the war in Vietnam. We have of course flown reconnaissance missions over Laos on a continuing basis.

STATINTL

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continued

These reconnaissance missions have been accomplished by armed escort. The President has made it clear the mission of our air power as far as the war in Vietnam, and that is all that I care to say on it at this time.

While it would be too much to characterize this as a pack of lies, it is at least a pack of evasions, irrelevancies, semantics and half-truths. B-52's have regularly been used in Vietnam for what could reasonably be called "close-in" support—as witness their vaunted effectiveness at Khe Sanh. More important, there is compelling evidence that they were used in the recent unsuccessful defense of the Plain of Jars, and this marked a significant step-up in our combat role in Laos. Leaving all that aside, it is nonsense to talk about reconnaissance flights with armed escorts when everybody in Laos who cares knows that we are flying about as many pure-and-simple bombing missions in support of our proxy army in the North as we are flying interdiction missions in the South.

The simple fact is that we are deeply involved in the Northern war, such as it is, no matter what arm of the government pays for it, or provides the military advisers—or what if any uniform they wear. And while it is easy to laugh about that war, because it never seems to get anywhere, it is just as easy to make the case that our forces dangerously disturbed a five-year equilibrium by reoccupying the Plain of Jars last fall, and thus inviting its recapture in the last few weeks.

Perhaps it will stop at that. Or perhaps Hanoi has hit upon Laos as a new way of squeezing us in Vietnam, by raising new anxieties and fresh outcries in this country over our whole inter-locking Asian policy. In any case, with at least two months of dry season ahead, none of the experts in this town are prepared to say categorically that the Communist forces will not now press on in Northern Laos towards the Mekong or the administrative capital of Luang Prabang, or to predict what kind of crisis this would provoke, militarily out there, or politically here at home. And that in itself is argument enough for something better than the same old shell game.

2 MAR 1970

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RICHARD WILSON

Criticism Unlikely to Sway Nixon on Laos Policy

Another Vietnam in Laos? Well, hardly yet. There is an important distinction between the military operations of the Nixon administration in Laos and those in Vietnam.

If this distinction is not recognized then it may as well be said that the President of the United States is now and hereafter precluded from effectively supporting the nations of Southeast Asia in resisting external aggression.

This is evidently the basic objective of those in the United States Senate who now are accusing the President of escalating the war in Laos into another Vietnam.

The distinction between Vietnam and Laos, however, is a working demonstration of the kind of policy called for by the Nixon Doctrine in lieu of the massive direct intervention of U.S. forces as in Vietnam. In Laos we are training, equipping and advising a clandestine native army and probably giving it air support without the direct involvement in combat of American ground troops. That pattern undoubtedly will be followed in

Thailand if the northern insurgency required it. It is the developing pattern also in Vietnam, where it is called Vietnamization.

Implicit in the gathering storm over Laos is the basic question of the President's using these methods to preserve the political integrity of independent governments in Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia and Thailand.

This is well understood in Congress. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee knows what the Nixon administration is doing in Laos and why it is doing it. The present outburst arises mainly because a few newspapermen have observed first hand what the Foreign Relations Committee has known all along was being done in Laos.

A visitor to Vientiane as long ago as three years could readily see that the United States was giving military support to the government of Laos. There was no secret about it. The CIA was there. American military advisers were there. They also traveled back and forth between the

American airfields in the north of Thailand to Vientiane.

Investigators for the Foreign Relations Committee have been supplied with a great deal of information by State Department personnel on the operation in Laos, so much in fact that there has been concern at the White House over the leakage of military information that would be of benefit to the North Vietnamese invaders.

Then why all the fuss? It arises because this is considered the right time to undermine and reverse President Nixon's policy in Southeast Asia. It finally is coming to be realized that Nixon meant it when he said the United States was not about to "bug out" and that he intended to preserve the independent political integrity of the nations of Southeast Asia.

That is not sufficient for the peace group in the Senate. Some of them had thought that Nixon was moving toward a total pull-out, regardless of the consequences, as a political necessity. Now they see that this is not so and they observe that in both Thailand and Laos

the President has committed the United States to military support of existing governments.

Nixon also is being accused of duplicity and of failing to hold the confidence of the American public by being little franker about his objectives than President Johnson.

This only means that in a brief time President Nixon will take to the air waves again to give a fuller explanation, but no fuller than is already known to the Foreign Relations Committee, about what we are doing in Laos, why it is in support of an independent government, why it protects our troops in Vietnam and making it doubly clear, as Secretary of Defense Laird already has, that he has no intention of committing ground combat forces.

If the President does not do this he will merely play into the hands of those who say he is hiding his actions in the same deceptive way as Johnson.

It is of even more substance that if the President is driven off his policy in Laos then he will have retreated from the aims and objectives he has so often stated in the Nixon Doctrine.

But there is no present prospect that Nixon will be driven off his policy, certainly as long as the North Vietnamese infiltration through Laos to Vietnam continues.

One other aspect of this matter is important. The President has assured Congress he will not send ground troops to fight in Laos without Congressional consent. If this assurance is to be taken literally the President has gone a step farther than his predecessors in recognizing congressional participation in decisions on future military interventions.

1 MAR 1970

LAOS Approved For Release 2001/03/04 : CIA-RDP80-0

Who's Fighting 'Secret War'?

The Plain of Jars in northeastern Laos derives its name from large prehistoric stone pottery found on the plateau. Last week, several U.S. senators were asking if American combat troops couldn't be found in the area as well.

The Nixon Administration answered no. "We have no military forces engaged in ground combat in Laos," Defense Secretary Melvin R. Laird stated as the fighting heated up next door to South Vietnam. "There has been no basic change of U.S. policy in Laos over the past three years."

Sen. Charles McC. Mathias Jr. (R-Md.), for one, was not convinced. "Laos has become an area for the repetition of the mistakes of our Vietnamese involvement," he said.

Mathias cited news accounts of armed Americans in civilian clothes advising Laotian officers, as well as earlier reports which "indicate the presence of hundreds of ex-Green Berets, described as having joined the Central Intelligence Agency in Laos because they are 'fed up with having their hands tied in Vietnam.'"

Sens. Stuart Symington (D-Mo.), Mike Mansfield (D-Mont.), Charles H. Percy (R-Ill.), Albert Gore (D-Tenn.), John Sherman Cooper (R-Ky.) and J. William Fulbright (D-Ark.) also criticized the Nixon Administration's reluctance to discuss the war in Laos.

And not all the dissenters were Doves. Sen. Robert C. Byrd (D-W. Va.) questioned the wisdom of "laying American lives on the line" in a secret war. He said there are reports "that American advisers are all but running the Laotian forces."

No Further Discussion

When asked to discuss the U.S. role in Laos in detail, Defense and State Department officials referred to President Nixon's statement of Dec. 8, when he said, "I don't think the public interest would be served by any further discussion."

According to U.S. command figures, 36 Americans have been killed in the ground war in Laos since 1962. An American Embassy report lists 184 American bomber crewmen missing, an increase of almost 30 since the last report in December, 1969.

The reports of armed American civilians in Laos were made by three reporters, who left a U.S. guided tour of an area on the plain and hitchhiked 18 miles to the long-secret base.

The World



Times map by Harlan Kirby

For two hours they observed American-made planes taking off at the rate of one a minute, presumably to support Royal Laotian troops. Then they were spotted and hustled off.

Despite the U.S. support, Pathet Lao guerrillas and North Vietnamese troops captured both the Plain of Jars and the key airfield-outpost of Muong Soui about 25 miles to the west.

Jars, which has changed hands several times during the struggle in Laos, is considered important because it is the hub of the major routes in the country and affords a ready approach both to the administrative capital at Vientiane (135 miles south) and to the royal capital and religious center at Luang Prabang.

Laotian neutralist Premier Souvanna Phouma called the loss of the

Plain of Jars "a North Vietnamese escalation."

N. Viet Strength

The North Vietnamese are believed to have about 20,000 men in northern Laos. Another 30,000 are reportedly deployed in the area of the Ho Chi Minh trail, which is in the southeastern "leg" of the country bordering North and South Vietnam.

One U.S. expert pointed out that there are actually two wars in progress in Laos.

First there is the battle over the Ho Chi Minh trail, which is vital to the North Vietnamese for the infiltration of men and supplies—a battle therefore related to the struggle between the United States and South Vietnam and North Vietnam.

The second war, which is being fought in northern Laos, has a different and older history, in an area once described by a diplomat as "hopeless but not critical."

Today, a growing number of senators are, however, concerned that "Vietnamization" of the war might some day be replaced by "Laosization."

1 MAR 1970

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Senate Showdown With Nixon Over Laos Nears

Foreign Relations Committee Wants to Turn Spotlight on Not-So-Secret War

BY JOHN H. AVERILL

Times Staff Writer

WASHINGTON — After five months of quiet skirmishing, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee is approaching a confrontation with the Nixon Administration over the secret U.S. involvement in the not-so-secret war in Laos.

The issue is simple: How much should the American public be permitted to know about U.S. activities in the little Southeast Asia kingdom that borders on Vietnam?

Essentially nothing, in the view of the Administration. Essentially everything, in the view of a majority of the committee.

The committee, through its subcommittee on U.S. security agreements and commitments abroad, feels it has a fairly accurate and comprehensive account of just what the United States is doing in Laos.

But the Administration is trying to keep the account suppressed.

Closed-Door Hearings

The subcommittee, headed by Sen. Stuart Symington (D-Mo.), conducted closed-door hearings on Laos last October, questioning U.S. diplomats, military men and others who have an intimate knowledge of what is going on.

Ever since then, the subcommittee has been trying to get State Department clearance of the hearing transcript so it can be made public. Thus far, the department has cleared only what the subcommittee regards as relatively inconsequential aspects of the transcript. The department has refused to clear the rest on grounds of national security.

Recently, however, it began increasing pressure

on the Administration. Taking note of the stepped-up warfare in Laos, Symington told the Senate that his subcommittee had the "full story . . . and the whole history of fighting in Laos."

Other Demands

Demands for an Administration accounting on Laos were expressed by other subcommittee members, including Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield (D-Mont.) and Sen. J. William Fulbright (D-Ark.), chairman of the parent Foreign Relations Committee.

While there may be some question as to how much effect Senate speeches have on the Administration, several senators feel President Nixon can't ignore them without a risk to his credibility.

For instance a statement by the President in his televised talk to the nation on Vietnam last Nov. 3 has been repeatedly recalled in recent days.

"I believe," Mr. Nixon said then, "that one of the reasons for the deep division about Vietnam is that many Americans have lost confidence in what the government has told them about our policy. The American people cannot and should not be asked to support a policy which involves the overriding issues of war and peace unless they know the truth about that policy."

Thus far, the President has refused to discuss what this country is doing in Laos beyond acknowledging there has been bombing of that portion of North Vietnam's Ho Chi Minh Trail that passes through Laos.

Aerial Assistance

Yet there have been U.S. aerial assistance to Laotian government forces

opposing the Communist Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese forces now on the offensive in Laos.

Although the Administration insists there are no U.S. ground combat forces in Laos, there have been press reports of former Green Berets of the U.S. Army's Special Forces and of American CIA agents working as civilian advisers to the Laotian army.

By week's end there were some indications that the Senate pressure was having an impact on the Administration.

"This matter is being taken very seriously throughout the executive branch," a high Administration source said in reference to the dispute over clearance of the Symington subcommittee Laotian transcript. "There is a possibility that there will be some give by the Administration."

Although Symington continues to profess optimism that a satisfactory accord can be reached over the transcript, his subcommittee has discussed options open to it if the present impasse continues.

Fulbright, in an interview, said one alternative would be for the subcommittee to publish the transcript without clearance, a course recently threatened by Mansfield.

However, both Fulbright and Mansfield said they would be extremely reluctant to take such a step because the subcommittee needs Administration cooperation on its upcoming inquiry into U.S. commitments in Europe.

A more likely alternative would be for the subcommittee to conduct

using subcommittee investigators as witnesses. This device, through careful questioning, could bring most of the information in the still-secret transcript out into the open.

However, the subcommittee's most potent weapon is the Administration's awareness of the growing unhappiness in Congress, particularly in the Senate, over U.S. military involvement in Asia.

STATINTL

Laos 2: Fear Test Of the Nixon Doctrine

WASHINGTON — A flash of anxiety over the possibility of a crisis in Laos streaked through Washington last week as the Administration feared an early test of the new Nixon Doctrine. Members of Congress expressed concern that the United States would be engaged in a wider war in Southeast Asia. And intelligence analysts were puzzled by North Vietnamese intentions.

The apprehension spread almost in direct proportion to the speed with which the North Vietnamese swept across the Plaine des Jarres in central Laos. But there were varying degrees of tension here. A skeptic, who admitted he was more nervous than a few weeks ago, nonetheless argued: "Laos has been going down the drain for eight or nine years. This is nothing different." Others took a wait and see attitude, hoping that the North Vietnamese didn't really want an escalation in Laos. Still others were alarmed. They pointed to the build-up of North Vietnamese forces, which were larger than ever before, the more belligerent tone of Hanoi's propaganda, and the extensive use of American air power. Said an official who called himself an informed bystander: "I'm sick about the whole thing."

An assessment by Admiral John S. McCain, American commander in the Pacific, was one with which a State Department spokesman said he could not

quarrel. Admiral McCain was quoted in Saigon as having said that the enemy "continues to conduct the most determined aggressive campaign in Laos since the 1962 Geneva accords. The present deteriorating situation is of serious concern to us."

Several Senators, led by Charles McC. Mathias Jr., Republican of Maryland, were outspokenly critical last week of the Administration's policy in Laos. Senator Mathias charged that the Administration was turning Laos into "an arena for the repetition of the mistakes of our Vietnamese involvement." Senator Mike Mansfield, the Democratic majority leader from Montana, asserted that if the Laotian conflict intensified, "all the plans for Vietnamization and all else will go down the drain, and we will find ourselves in a most difficult and dangerous situation."

Over the years, the North Vietnamese have evolved three objectives in Laos. The first and most pressing has been to protect the Ho Chi Minh trail in eastern Laos, down which men and supplies move to the war in South Vietnam. Some officials here contended that the North Vietnamese offensive was limited to forcing the clandestine, American-backed army of Maj. Gen Vang Pao in the Plaine des Jarres region back to where it started before last summer's thrust across the plain toward the Ho Chi Minh trail.

The second and longer-range objective has been to overthrow the Government of Premier Sou-

**"We cannot let
Laos fall to the
Communists even if
we have to fight."**

*Dwight D. Eisenhower,
Dec. 31, 1960*

vanna Phouma and to put into power a regime subject to Hanoi's will. Other officials here were increasingly inclined to the belief that the North Vietnam-

**"Laos is far away
from America, but
the world is small . . .
The security of all
Southeast Asia will
be endangered if
Laos loses its neutral
independence."**

*John F. Kennedy,
March 23, 1961*

ese now intend to destroy the clandestine army, which has been reportedly trained and financed by the Central Intelligence Agency. The loss of the clandestine army would put the North Vietnamese in a position to overrun all of Laos.

The third and ultimate North Vietnamese objective, in the view of many officials here, has been to establish in Laos a base for infiltration and subversion into Thailand.

By the end of the week, sources with access to intelligence estimates said they did not know whether the North Vietnamese would be satisfied to stop where they were now, or strike on. But most analysts agreed that the next few weeks—or even days—would produce a better indication of the North Vietnamese intentions.

In the offing is the question of whether the Administration will adhere to the Nixon Doctrine of not allowing the United States to become entangled in a wider land war in Asia, or to act to prevent the fall of Laos on the ground that it is vital to the security of American interests in South Vietnam and Thailand.

1 MAR 1970

STATINTL

U.S. Officials Study Remarks About Laos

By Murrey Marder
Washington Post Staff Writer

North Vietnamese Foreign Minister Nguyen Duy Trinh charged the United States with intensifying the war in Laos in a rare interview with a visiting American newsmen that was released yesterday.

Apart from the special emphasis on Laos, there were no immediately apparent new ingredients in the interview reported by Daniel DeLuce of the Associated Press. To diplomatic observers what Trinh said looked like a very familiar restatement of Hanoi's terms for ending the war that have been repeated for months in the stalemated Paris peace talks.

U.S. officials will be scrutinizing the interview, however, to determine if there are any other shadings of significance in it.

Trinh, by his charge that the United States has intensified the war in Laos with the use of "massive B52 bombings," added to a newly expanding Hanoi theme which is raising questions in Washington about Communist intentions in Laos. It suggests that Hanoi is implying that its capacity to keep the Laotian conflict going can frustrate U.S. attempts to disengage from the area-wide struggle by "viet-

namizing" the war in South Vietnam.

Newsman DeLuce reported that Trinh spent a considerable time discussing the reporter's question about the possibility of a standstill cease-fire in South Vietnam. But DeLuce's account did not show that Trinh himself ever used the term "cease-fire."

Instead, as reported, Trinh was quoted as replying elliptically to the cease-fire question by saying that the Communist side's standard 10-point peace plan provides for reaching agreement "on relevant questions," the most important being "the withdrawal of all troops."

The American-South Vietnamese position calls for the withdrawal of all non-South Vietnamese forces, meaning the recall of North Vietnamese as well as American and other allied troops.

Corruption In Laos Aid Reported

ST. LOUIS, Feb. 28 (AP)—Reports that corruption is siphoning off rice and American money in Laos have been reaching senators investigating U.S. involvement in Laos, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch said in its Sunday editions.

An article by contributing editor Marquis W. Childs said one report indicate Central Intelligence Agency pay for mercenaries in Laos was being diverted to the pockets of recruiters.

Another involved reports, the newspaper said, about rice—intended for Laotian forces, their families and Meo tribesmen—which may have ended up on the South Vietnamese black market.

"Information provided by a foreign intelligence network . . . indicates that only a fraction of the Laotian soldiers organized by the CIA took part in the defense of the Plain of Jars in a recent attack by the North Vietnamese," the newspaper article said.

"Because these were mercenaries whose pay went to village chiefs, the conclusion of the intelligence source was that fairly large sums were pocketed by the Laotian recruiters rather than paid to individuals to fight."

The article said an American officer responsible for supplying rice to government troops told Sen. J. William Fulbright (D-Ark.), "he was convinced that a large part of the thousands of tons of rice for the Lao forces, their families and for the Meo tribesmen who also are part of the fighting force, was going into the black market in South Vietnam," the newspaper said.

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U.S., LAOS HINDER REPORTERS

Policy Blocks News of War

STATINTL

By TAMMY ARBUCKLE
Star Special Writer

VIENTIANE — A policy aimed at preventing press coverage of the war in Laos, presumably in order to hide American involvement, is being followed by Laotian and U.S. officials.

Under the policy, reporters are prevented from reaching the area in Laos where most of the American involvement is occurring, Northeastern Military Region II.

It is fairly easy to keep reporters out because of the nature of the terrain in Laos and the lack of any transportation not under the control of the American Embassy.

Most of Laos consists of jungle-covered mountains with few roads. What roads exist are rudimentary and virtually impassable during the monsoon season between May and October. At other times of the year, the roads are subject to ambush and harassment by pro-Communist Pathet Lao.

Fly or Walk

A reporter either can fly or walk in the jungle. To fly, he needs a plane or helicopter, and planes and helicopters are under U. S. control even though ostensibly belonging to private airlines.

It is possible to walk, but it's a big country. And a reporter who starts out walking is often picked up by either Laotian troops or armed American civilians.

Almost all planes going to the combat areas are light aircraft or transports belonging to Air America or Continental Airways, private companies under simultaneous charter to the Central Intelligence Agency and the Agency for International Development.

Before one can board a plane, combat area clearance is needed from the U. S. Embassy, and this clearance is not given.

Other Charters

A private American company, Bird & Son, also operates helicopters for charter, but also says it requires "clearance from the United States Embassy" before taking reporters anywhere.

Again, clearance is not given, although embassy officials never flatly refuse clearance. But by not granting clearance, they assure the helicopters won't fly with reporters in them.

Similarly, a reporter rarely receives an outright "no" from the embassy when he requests permission to board a plane. Embassy tactics include saying that aircraft are "not available" or "not going to that area" or "overloaded." The excuses are seldom found to be true.

Another embassy tactic is to pass the buck to the Lao defense ministry. The ministry, headed by Premier Souvanna Phouma, seldom grants permission. It says, quite accurately, that the Laotians lack transport facilities.

Disappearing Americans

Central Intelligence Agency employees and American military are warned that if a correspondent does show up in their area, they are to disappear.

"You should have seen this place empty when they heard the press was coming," an American said while relating one such incident.

Lao Gen. Bounphone Mahaparak, South Laos tactical zone commander, said "if we let you go somewhere, the Americans will stop their operations till you leave. Militarily we cannot afford to let that happen."

A favorite embassy gambit when press or U.S. domestic political pressure becomes too great is to organize a trip for all the press corps, permitting only one day in the field.

During a press trip of this nature last week to Sam Thong, close to Long Chien, U.S. headquarters in Military Region II, an American official candidly admitted, "Somebody in Vietiane asked if I wanted to close up my operation for the day because you guys were around."

He wouldn't divulge who "somebody in Vientiane" was.

During the brief stay in Sam Thong, a voice over the intercom system asked if "our visitors are gone yet?"

Jets Rerouted

Whenever press trips are arranged, U.S. jets are rerouted, ground advisers take a day off and Air America carries innocent passengers.

sheeting, Americans disgusted with the whole system said during interviews.

The alternative to a journalist covering the Lao war is to walk in the forest, but this poses problems of dodging hostile tribesmen, booby traps, mines, friendly bombing and ambushes.

On one such occasion, after narrowly missing a Communist ambush which killed four Laotians and walking three days, I was detained for three days in open arrest and released only on an order from Premier Souvanna Phouma.

Travel is not the only problem for reporters covering the Lao war. Even in background briefings, U.S. officials and military will not discuss American bombing or ground activities.

"Enemy Number 1"

These CIA people consider the American public as enemy number one, I think even worse than Hanoi," an American staffer here said.

The U.S. is thought by many Americans here to have a good case for what is a very small U.S. involvement compared to the large-scale intervention by Hanoi.

Secrecy, some officials here fear, can only cause the U.S. public, unaware of the facts, to call for total U.S. disengagement.

High-ranking Lao officials are aware of this and fear it could be the death knell of their 16-year-old nation. They privately say they hope Souvanna Phouma will change information policies.

Meanwhile, a war goes on. According to the lists of pensions being paid by the Laotian government, it is a war that is taking Laotian lives at a rate of 300 a month.

ATLAS
March 1970

'WE SEEK NO WIDER WAR IN LAOS'

Does that sound familiar?

From FAR EASTERN ECONOMIC REVIEW, Hong Kong

The continuing conflict in Laos sporadically produces a rash of headlines in the U.S. press which are quickly forgotten. Some time ago, for instance, Senator J. W. Fulbright questioned America's ten-year involvement in Laos, but after some fulmination the issue faded. Arnold Abrams, a seasoned correspondent now writing for Hong Kong's highly respected *Far Eastern Economic Review*, raises the question anew with a sweeping and ominous examination of the unpublicized battles now taking place in the Laotian underbrush. No, U.S. officials assured Abrams, America seeks no wider war in Laos . . . and the writer was reminded of other words in other places . . .

DESPITE BLITHE denials and bland interpretations by Vientiane officials, the war in Laos may be entering a decisive phase. U.S. Embassy officials insist—in private—that the decade-long struggle here is still an American "holding operation," a lowkey effort with limited objectives. But intensified fighting in the last six months may have triggered an escalatory cycle leading to another face-off between Washington and Hanoi. Government forces now wait anxiously to learn what post-dated price tag will be put on their late-summer offensive which pushed the enemy off the Plain of Jars for the first time in five years. However, thrusts by communist forces in other areas have to some extent dampened the government's success.

The expected enemy thrust could force a crucial decision on Washington: whether or not to increase American involvement in Laos when standing fast might be tantamount to backing off. An American plunge into another Asian quagmire is almost unthinkable at present, but Richard Nixon's willingness to concede control of a contested country to communist forces is equally hard to envision. U.S. policymakers had been hoping to avoid such a decision by keeping this conflict stalemated until a Vietnam settlement, involving Laos, could be

reached. They managed that until last June, when a turnabout in enemy tactics drastically changed the course of this war. Now, with no Vietnam settlement in sight, time may be running out on American hopes in Laos.

Last June's enemy assault involved an estimated seven North Vietnamese battalions in a successful four-day siege against the government outpost of Muong Soui, straddling the Plain of Jars' western edge.

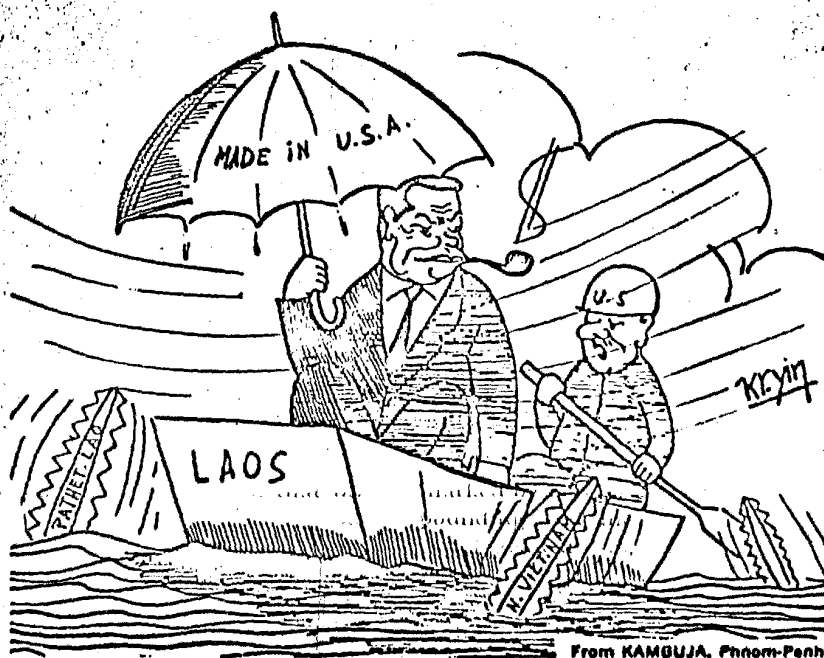
Moreover, the North Vietnamese didn't stop at Muong Soui.

They pushed south and west, severing road links to the royal capital and probing at Long Cheng, northern nerve center of the CIA and operations base for General Vang Pao's so-called secret army.

The enemy's steamrolling drive shattered the morale of government forces and brought U.S. and Laotian officials to the verge of despair. In late summer the shaken officials decided to hit back hard. A secrecy-shrouded counter-offensive was launched, marked by fierce American aerial pounding and increased American logistical support. The government won back Muong Soui, regained the Plain of Jars.

Vientiane officials now try to play down the late-summer action, particularly the Americans' role. They talk of government troops "waltzing in" to the Plain of Jars, finding that the North Vietnamese had abandoned it, leaving behind large amounts of supplies.

These officials have no evidence to support that theory. Moreover, when pressed in a pri-



From KAMBUJA, Phnom-Penh