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30 December 1971

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: SAVA Black Book Contribution

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1. Laos Air Support. As you know, the NVA offensive in northeast Laos (Military Region II) was launched on the night of 17/18 December. As reported in Director 213933, we spent much of the weekend of 18-19 December working in conjunction with Chief, FE, FE/[redacted] and the Laos Operations Center to lobby for more air support. This involved calls to Laird's office, Admiral Moorer's and several conversations with the Duty General at the NMCC. On Sunday, 19 December, we set up a direct teletype conversation with [redacted] Vientiane to get the somewhat confused facts in the case sorted out. Several factors (beside the inevitable confusion of battlefield reporting) complicated the problem, including the diversion of assets to Search and Rescue (SAR) missions and the nervousness of MACV and the 7th Air Force about the increased aggressiveness of North Vietnamese MIG activity. The latter had internal political overtones since MACV and 7th Air Force were holding back their support sorties partly to force a Presidential decision (ultimately granted) authorizing them to strike MIG bases in North Vietnam. Our efforts may or may not have played much of a role, but the level of air support furnished friendly forces in MR II did start improving appreciably on 20 December.

2. General Haig. There have been no further conversations with General Haig since our 20 December session reported in Director 213933. Our explicit agreement, however, was that silence on his part could correctly be construed as satisfaction with Agency reporting and coverage. Subsequent conversations with other members of the NSC Staff indicated that the White House was indeed pleased with the way events in Laos were being covered.

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3. Laird's Query. On Christmas night (25 December), General Pursley called me at Secretary Laird's behest regarding a proposed use of CH-53 helicopters to evacuate around 10,000 civilian, non-combatant refugees from Bouam Long (Site 32) -- the one north of the PDJ commanded by Vang Pao's father-in-law. Pursley said Laird had to rule on this matter by noon on 26 December and did not want to make a decision until he had received my advice. I did some telephonic checking with FE colleagues, a cable was sent to Vientiane, and I met at the office on 26 December with [redacted] and the [redacted] brethren. The project was a Godley/USAID proposal in which we were not directly involved. After a bidding review with my colleagues, I called Pursley, explained that the Agency was not directly involved, outlined the military and political factors involved, and noted that if the 7/13th AF feasibility and risk analysis was valid (and the 7/13th was in the best position to judge), the political arguments for the operation advanced by Ambassador Godley were very persuasive. Pursley professed himself most grateful for our views and relayed the Secretary's thanks. Subsequently, the evacuation was cancelled following a request from Vang Pao to do so.

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5. The above paragraphs cover activities during the first ten days after your departure. Fortunately nothing occurred on [redacted] watch while I was on leave and SAVA was very quiet.

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[redacted]

George A. Carver, Jr. ↓
Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs

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