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December 23, 1970

MORI/CDF C05075374

MEMORANDUM FOR:

DR. KISSINGER

FROM:

NSA, OSD reviews
completed

JOHN H. HOLDRIDGE

SUBJECT:

Chinese Road Building in Northern
Laos

Pursuant to your request at the December 11 WSAG Meeting, CIA has sent you a background and options paper concerning the Chinese road-building operations in Laos. (Tab A). Its main points are as follows:

- The Chinese activity in Laos has progressed steadily, and a motorable road from Dien Bien Phu in the DRV to Yunnan in China and almost to the Mekong is nearly completed.

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- In July 1970 Ambassador Godley proposed an alternative operation to consist of putting in a small blocking force south of Muong Houn, and possible probes north of Muong Houn where the road had already been completed. No U.S. air support would have been used.

- Both of these proposals depended on our receiving assurances from Souvanna Phouma or other authoritative Lao that the Lao Government had not in the past requested the Chinese to construct the road. No such assurances were received, and no action was taken on either proposal. Godley was so informed.

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-- Souvanna Phouma's reluctance to make a public statement that there is no valid Lao Government request for the Chinese roadbuilding effort in Laos suggests that Souvanna might personally have reached such an agreement with the Chinese.

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the RLG and possibly ourselves via our support for the RLG in a confrontation with the Chinese. On the other hand, it is conceivable that the Chinese would stop short of forcing the issue, since Peking's policy so far has been to avoid direct confrontations. (Peking could, however, employ Pathet Lao troops -- or possibly NVA units -- to clear the way to Pak Beng, and thus remain on the sidelines.

On the basis of the foregoing, it would appear that action against Pak Beng could run into many pitfalls, but inaction would not leave us much if any better off if the Chinese should continue construction of the Muong Houn - Pak Beng road link.

The political alternative put forward by CIA depends greatly on Souvanna's willingness to be more forthcoming now than he has been in the past with respect to facing up to the issue politically. The CIA memorandum itself doubts that he would, in fact, undertake the vigorous political effort necessary to implement this option. Clearly, further study of the situation and its implications for U.S. policy and actions is in order.

Also attached for your information (Tab B) is a State INR note describing the Muong Houn radar station, which is the southern most Communist radar station in Laos. It is believed to serve both as a forward station in China's early radar warning defense system and as an information gatherer for the Chinese anti-aircraft units guarding the road in north Laos. It provides eight minutes more warning time than a similar radar in the southernmost tip of Yunnan Province against planes flying from Thailand at 600 miles per hour. However, State believes it unlikely that achieving this additional warning time was a primary motive of the roadbuilding exercise. The emplacement of the radar would not have required the construction of so elaborate and solid a road network.

EYES ONLY

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

18 December 1970

WSAG PAPER

MEMORANDUM FOR:

The Honorable Henry A. Kissinger
Assistant to the President for
National Security Affairs

The Honorable U. Alexis Johnson
Under Secretary of State for
Political Affairs

The Honorable David Packard
Deputy Secretary of Defense

Admiral Thomas H. Moorer
Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff

SUBJECT:

Background and Options Paper for
the Chinese Communist Road in
Laos

Pursuant to a request by Dr. Kissinger at the 11 December WSAG meeting, a background and options paper for the Chinese Communist road in Laos is attached for consideration. Two options are presented therein. Detailed operational planning has not been provided pending the results of a policy review.

R. E. Cushman, Jr.

R. E. Cushman, Jr.
Lieutenant General, USMC
Acting Director of Central Intelligence

Attachment

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