

Office of the Secretary of Defense
Chief, RDD, ESD, WHS
Date: 01 JAN 2012 Authority: EO 13526
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MDR: 12-M-0424

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THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301

25 SEP 1969

(15)

MEMORANDUM FOR: Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs

SUBJECT: Laos Support and Operations

^{2nd Sep}
The attached cable from CINCPAC to the JCS illustrates in my judgment many of the uncertainties and contradictions in the Laos situation and, in particular, U.S. policy with respect to that situation. On the one hand, the cable contains some candid and astute observations. On the other hand, the cable also contains some inconsistent conclusions. With all due respect to the CINCPAC staff, the inconsistencies undoubtedly reflect a combination of CINCPAC's desire to be forthcoming, but in a situation fraught with all manner of uncertainties and complexities.

The message I get from CINCPAC's views is that we should proceed in matters pertinent to Laos with caution and the utmost deliberation. Note, for example, that CINCPAC maintains:

1. Our objectives in Laos are not well defined, and by inference, are limited. The U.S. has no commitment, in any event, to employ its own forces to prevent a Communist takeover in Laos.

At the same time, CINCPAC recommends (a) resident U.S. military representation in Laos (at the Colonel level) to direct the combat effort; (b) the provision of more than \$140M of hardware and assistance to RLG forces in FY 1970; and (c) continued air support, both actual and on a contingency basis, by U.S. forces for RLG forces.

2. The RLG should be provided with extensive amounts of new military hardware.

But CINCPAC also notes the need for reorganization and retraining of RLG forces before the regular forces could be assumed to be able to use the hardware effectively.

3. The Thais should be encouraged to put troops and equipment in Laos.

But despite the desirability of "Asianizing" the conflict, CINCPAC wants the U.S. involvement (people, control, hardware and air activity) to increase.

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Re: 12-1000
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Date: 04 APR 2011
Chief, Declassification Division, WHS

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Authority: EO 13526
Chief, Records & Declass Div, WHS
Date: **JAN 10 2012**

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- 4. All of the above recommendations, CINCPAC feels, constitute urgent U.S. actions.

Yet CINCPAC says "Our best estimates for some time have conceded the PL/NVA forces in Laos the capability of taking complete control of Laos at any time they decide to do so." CINCPAC does not indicate how, if at all, the actions he recommends would alter that ominous conclusion.

- 5. For the present, it appears that, with the advent of the dry season, the situation may again revert to the normal dry-wet season of ebb and flow.

CINCPAC, as indicated above, does not make the case for a military resolution of the Laos conflict through the added U.S. involvement recommended. One wonders, then, what we might stand to gain. I thought you might like to reflect on this problem, and I want to discuss it with you further.



Attachment

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