

EXHIBIT NUMBER 100-100000-100000

2a

March 20, 1960

TO: Director

FROM; Vientiane

IN 21854

For Plybon and Dainold from Erkelens:

The following paper, submitted to Ambassador Brown today, embodies my thoughts at this juncture. For your information, the Ambassador seemed favorably impressed and will probably use considerable portions of it. CH/PEO's only disagreement, after hasty reading, is with paragraph 6A, the effort to divide the use of B-26's into two phases. The paper would appear to fit Sarit's view (expressed in Bangkok TS Embtel 1684 to the Department) that coordinated and fairly long-range program is the only way to rebuild the FAL effectively. I prefer that no reference to this paper be made in Department communications:

"1. To assume that either direct (i. e. with Russians) or international negotiations will produce any Communist withdrawal from present political or military positions in Laos seems to me quite unrealistic. Therefore, we should not negotiate at this point unless we are prepared to accept arrangements which, at best, will only partially guarantee a divided Laos and, at worst, will certainly facilitate Communist takeover. Willingness to negotiate at this juncture will probably have the following additional disadvantages:

Stepped-up enemy pressure and possible further deterioration of the military situation,

Substantial reduction of U.S. prestige in Southeast Asia, and

In general, weakening of free world confidence in our strength to take positions independent of Russian or ChiCom desires.

Benefits of negotiations at the present time are temporary avoidance of any risk of war, whether limited or general, and temporary plaudits of our allies for reasons that have little to do with merits of the situation in Laos, and likewise praise of such neutrals as India.

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"2. I do not venture here to assess the effect of U.S. willingness to negotiate on our overall relationships with Russia and China, but find it hard to believe that "sweet reasonableness" now will make either the Russians or the Chinese any easier to deal with later. In fact, my judgment is that it will have the opposite effect.

"3. Accordingly, if negotiations are expected to serve any other purpose than a face-saving device to cover or gloss over the result in any improvement in our position in Laos, or in our general standing as leaders of the free world against the Russian Bloc, negotiations should only commence at a time when the present ratio of military power between the enemy and ourselves is either reversed or is in process of being reversed. Incidentally, only by such reversal can we hope to effect any substantial change in the present position of the neutrals, including, in the instance of our allies, on the subject of Laos.

"4. While I am arguing immediately above for the necessity of some military action to restore the situation sufficiently to permit useful negotiations, I also recognize that the U.S. does not wish to cause total war by its actions in Laos. If this premise is accepted, then at maximum we are talking about some form of limited war when we talk about re-dressing the situation. It seems to me that at the very minimum what we need militarily is whatever action will prevent any further enemy breakthrough at present and for immediate future, thus preserving the FAL, and will later facilitate slow but steady roll-back of enemy forces. I am talking about a deliberate selection of weapons or methods which, while not inviting the enemy to retaliate in nuclear fashion, will give us reasonable chance of achieving the above limited war objectives, and the ultimate objective of negotiated settlement on Laos that will not be interpreted as evidence of U.S. weakness or U.S. betrayal of Laos.

"5. Before proceeding to list possible weapons and methods, I would like to comment on what appear to be the two greatest dangers in trying to fight a limited war successfully. First is in ourselves, i.e. will U.S. military leadership and will the U.S. people accept the long, slow, bloody, grinding and costly type of limited war which Laos terrain and this enemy will require if they are to be rolled back at all? Second, weakness is in the Lao, both political and military leadership. I know of no way to guarantee that the Lao will

stand up to or under this test, just as I know no way to insure that our own people will not weaken. I suspect, however, that if Laotians do stand up to the test, it will be because of the U.S., Thai and GVN assurances of support, to include commitment of troops and aircraft to the defense of Laos; an accelerated program of U.S. economic and military aid to strengthen the government, including its ties with its neighbors; the slow emergence of resolute military and political leadership under us and Thai tutelage and under the gruelling pressures of limited war; great U.S. patience and understanding in dealing with Lao leadership at all echelons; and most important, daily evidence of U.S. determination and confidence in rightness, wisdom and success of Lao cause. In short, our own decisions and conduct of the war are the crucial factor, even more crucial than Lao temper^ument, Lao military shortcomings, etc.

"6. Some specific suggestions for military actions which would seem to fit within "limited war" concept but not run the risk of precipitating nuclear or total war follow:

"a. Initial use of B-26's against front-line enemy positions; against convoys moving from DRV border to PDJ; and provision of air "CAP" over PDJ. Later use, if enemy fighters intervene, against enemy aircraft or against PDJ installations, and locations, etc.

"b. Employment of helicopters for rapid movement of friendly troops, hunter-killer teams, guerrillas, artillery and mortar teams throughout enemy rear or against PL bands operating in friendly rear areas.

"c. (no para. c indicated)

"d. Provision of LTAG and PARU teams to work with BV's, CV's, ADO's, ADC's for purpose of developing hunter-killer teams within such units and to effect general improvement in overall effectiveness of these units for internal security missions in friendly rear areas.

"e. Use of South Vietnamese and RTA units, at invitation of the LAO government and with SEATO approval, in South Laos to counter Viet-Minh and Pathet Lao there. This is to be done in conjunction with FAL forces.

"f. Rapid increase of road, trail, and airfield building program, including beacons, for all weather use throughout RLG-controlled Laos.

"g. Continue to expand Meo guerrilla warfare units in Xieng Khouang and Sam Neua, and start similar programs with the Black Thais and Kha Mu in Phong Saly, etc.

"h. Endeavor to persuade these guerrilla units to step up trouble among fellow tribes in DRV -- trouble to include sabotage of army transport and communication facilities to which they have access.

"i. PEO to develop, as training device, aggressor-type unit (garble) FAL to simulate Pathet Lao enemy.

"j. More armor and fire power for FAL.

"k. Training of Lao Air Force in the U.S. Knock off French program completely.

"l. Develop additional FAL airborne units.

"m. Reinforce FAL engineers with RTA, SVN and/or Filipino army units and equip for such purposes as road building, bridge building, etc. This is a SEATO affair.

"n. Weed out unfit officers and punish them so that some sense of responsibility begins to develop in officer and NCO corps.

"o. With a combination of B-26's, commandos or hunger-killers, guerrillas and minimum of troops, attempt to hold the present front through rainy season, in the meantime, commencing a program of regrouping and retraining old and new FAL units, including heavy use of Thai training facilities.

"p. Movement of U.S. troops to Thailand and South Viet-Nam; likewise, movement of USAF units to Thailand and U.S. Naval units off Haiphong and Hanoi. This should be a SEATO affair.

"q. Make no secret of the above item, nor of the deployment of Thai and SVN army units to South Laos.

"r. Commence immediate improvement of the quality of Thai and SVN Air Force, including the type of aircraft made available to them.

"s. Intensify psychological warfare and intelligence training of the FAL and operations of these types against the enemy at the front and in the friendly rear.

"t. U.S. acceptance of the fact that the FAL will want more units as well as better trained units, and that the U.S. must live with and help both requirements.

"u. Resumption of police program, including rapid development of rural security forces for the purpose noted in Vientiane Embtel 1659."