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DATE : 362
6 APR 61

ROUTING

1		4
2		5
3		6

TO : DIRECTOR

FROM : BANGKOK

ACTION : C/FE 5 (TEMPO COPY ISSUED DCI, D/DCI, DD/1, DDP, COP,
C/FE AT 1210, 6 APR)

INFO : DCI, D/DCI, DDP, COP, ADDP/A, C/DPD 4, C/CA, C/CI, C/WPS 2,
C/FI 2, C/FI/INT, C/IW 2, DD/1, S/C 2

APR 6 1635Z 61

OPERATIONAL IMMEDIATE

IN 31649

OPIM DIR VETN HULA CITE BANG 5609

RYBAT

REF EMBTEL 1806 TO DEPT, 815 TO VETN, 577 TO CINCPAC

PHOUMI IN COMPANY WITH GENERAL WALLOP AND MR JANTZEN JOINED

REF MEETING AT APPROX 11 A.M.

1. PRIME MINISTER SARIT STATED THE HE DESIRED AMBASSADOR
JOHNSON TO MEET GENERAL PHOUMI AND RECEIVE A BRIEFING FROM HIM
PRIOR TO THE AMBASSADOR'S DEPARTURE FROM THAILAND. PHOUMI THEN
PROCEEDED TO GIVE A BRIEFING. HE SPOKE IN THAI WHICH WAS TRANSLATED
BY FOREIGN MINISTER THANAT. PHOUMI STATED HE BROUGHT GREETINGS
FROM PRIME MINISTER OF LAOS. BOTH HE AND THE PRIME MINISTER DESIRED
TO THANK THE USA FOR ITS COOPERATION.

2. THE SITUATION IN LAOS WAS UNTIL A SHORT TIME AGO AN INTERNAL
DISPUTE OF LAO VERSUS LAO. IT IS NO LONGER AN INTERNAL DISPUTE

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AND IT HAS NOW GONE BEYOND THE CAPABILITIES OF THE RLG TO COPE WITH THE SITUATION. WHILE THE RLG IS PLEASED WITH USA SUPPORT, THEY DO NOT FEEL IT IS SUFFICIENT ESPECIALLY AS COMPARED TO WHAT THE OTHER SIDE IS DOING FOR THE PL. THEY ARE AIDING THE PL WITH NOT ONLY TRAINING, MATERIEL AND ADVICE BUT HAVE ALSO BROUGHT IN ORGANIZED TROOP UNITS. WHILE VARIOUS OF THE WESTERN COUNTRIES ARE MAKING AN EFFORT TO SOLVE THE SITUATION IN LAOS ON THE POLITICAL SIDE, THE MILITARY SITUATION IS DETERIORATING DRASTICALLY.

3. THE COMMUNISTS HAVE INCREASED THEIR MILITARY AID TO THE PL AND HAVE IT ON A WARTIME BASIS. GENERAL PHOUMI REQUESTED THAT THE U.S. GIVE VERY SERIOUS CONSIDERATION TO LIKEWISE GIVING MILITARY AID ON A WARTIME BASIS, INSTEAD OF PRESENT PEACETIME BASIS. NOW, WHEN MILITARY MATERIEL IS REQUESTED FROM THE USA MANY LONG, TIME-CONSUMING PROCESSES MUST BE GONE THROUGH CAUSING LONG DELAYS IN THE ARRIVAL OF MATERIEL WHEREAS THE OTHER SIDE CAN SUPPLY THE PL IMMEDIATELY. IN ADDITION, THE COMMUNIST SIDE HAS COME INTO LAOS AND IS ASSISTING OPENLY IN THE MILITARY ENGAGEMENTS WITH

FORMED UNITS. GENERAL PHOUMI REQUESTED THAT USA GIVE THE LAOTIANS "REAL POSITIVE ASSISTANCE."

4. REGARDING THE MILITARY SITUATION, PHOUMI STATED THAT IT IS CRITICAL IN THE PHOU KHOUNE AREA WHERE THE COMMUNISTS ARE DIRECTING THEIR ACTION TOWARD LUANG PRABANG. IN THE SOUTH THEY ARE ENGAGED IN ACTIONS DIRECTED AGAINST SAVANNAKHET AND PAKSANE VIA THA THOM. THESE MILITARY MANEUVERS OF THE COMMUNISTS IN THE NORTH AND SOUTH ARE BELIEVED TO HAVE GREATER IMPLICATIONS THAN MERELY TAKING LAOS. PHOUMI IS OF THE OPINION THAT THEY MAY INTEND TO USE THESE MANEUVERS TO ENTER SOUTH VIETNAM AND/OR THAILAND. IF NOT ACTUALLY ENTER, AT LEAST MAKE PREPARATIONS FOR POSSIBLE ENTRY.

5. IN VIEW OF THE CRITICAL MILITARY SITUATION THE RLG REQUESTS THE RTG SEND THAI VOLUNTEER COMBAT UNITS TO JOIN THE LAO ARMY. ACCORDING TO GENERAL PHOUMI, THE LAO ARMY HAS EXHAUSTED ITS RESERVES AND IF THE SITUATION GETS ANY WORSE THEY WILL HAVE NO REINFORCEMENTS. ABOUT TWO MONTHS AGO THE RLG DECIDED TO CREATE

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FOUR NEW BATTALIONS, AND TRAIN THEM IN THAILAND. THE MILITARY SITUATION DETERIORATED AND THE RLG WAS FORCED TO USE THESE NEW RAW RECRUITS ON THE FRONT WITH NO TRAINING.

6. GENERAL PHOUMI REVEALED HE HAS GIVEN UP THE IDEA OF TRENCH WARFARE AND HAS DECIDED TO GO ON THE OFFENSIVE USING MOBILE TACTICS. HIS FIRST USE OF THESE TACTICS WAS AT MUONG KASSY 5 APRIL, TO STOP COMMIE ADVANCE ON L.P. USING TWIN ENGINE PLANES AND H-34 HELICOPTERS ENABLED HIS TROOPS TO JUMP INTO THE AREA. THIS ACTION WAS WORKED OUT WITH THE USA PEOPLE IN VIENTIANE. THE FIRST RESULTS APPEAR SATISFACTORY ALTHOUGH HE HAS NOT HAD ANY RECENT REPORT. PHOUMI CLAIMS HE NOW PLANS LAUNCH ANOTHER MOBILE OFFENSIVE IN THE SOUTH TO CHECK THE COMMUNIST ADVANCE ON THAKHEK AS WELL AS ANOTHER OPERATION TO CUT THEIR SUPPLY LINE ON ROUTE 7. WHILE PHOUMI BELIEVES HIS ACTION AT MUONG KASSY WILL BE SUCCESSFUL, HE EXPECTS THE ^{ENEMY} WILL LAUNCH ATTACKS ELSEWHERE AS THEY ARE STRONG IN MANY AREAS. HE CLAIMS ENEMY INTENDS GO VIA MUONG KASSY TO GET TO LUANG PRABANG BUT IF HE CUTS THEM OFF THEY MAY TRY GET TO TARGET VIA

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OTHER MORE DIFFICULT ROUTE.

7. PHOUMI CLAIMS THAT THE ENEMY HAS BROUGHT IN ORGANIZED VIET MINH TROOPS AND THAT IN THE THAKHEK AREA THE ENEMY IS MAKING USE OF ARMORED CARS (HALF TRACKS). HE SAYS HE IS HAVING A VERY DIFFICULT TIME CONVINCING THE OUTSIDE WORLD THAT THERE ARE ORGANIZED VIET ^{MINH} TROOPS ENGAGED IN LAOS. WHEN QUERIED BY AMBASSADOR RE THESE ORGANIZED VIET MINH UNITS HE CLAIMED THESE VIET MINH FORCES ARE INDEPENDENT BORDER SECURITY UNITS WHICH ARE NOT PART OF A BIG ARMY UNIT. ACCORDING TO PHOUMI AT PHOU KHOUNE THERE ARE 3 VIET MINH BORDER BATTALIONS; AT THA THOM THREE MIXED BATTALIONS AND JUST RECENTLY SIX VIET MINH BATTALIONS ARRIVED AS REINFORCEMENTS. ON PLAINE DES JARRES THERE ARE FIVE VIET MINH RESERVE BATTALION. PHOUMI CLAIMS HE LEARNED THIS FROM INTELLIGENCE BUT MOSTLY FROM CAPTURED VIET MINH PRISONERS.

8. GENERAL PHOUMI ADMITTED HE HAD ONLY THREE OR FOUR VIET MINH PRISONERS. HE POINTED OUT HOW DIFFICULT IT IS TO TAKE PRISONERS, ESPECIALLY SINCE THE VIET MINH MAKE SURE THEY LEAVE

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BEHIND NO INJURED MEN. IF THE INJURED MAN CANNOT MOVE OUT THEY WILL KILL HIM RATHER THAN TO HAVE HIM FALL INTO THE HANDS OF THE OTHER SIDE. IN ADDITION TO EVIDENCE FROM THE LIVE VIET MINH PRISONERS, THEY COLLECT CONSIDERABLE DATA FROM THE DEAD VIET MINH. PHOUMI MADE A BIG POINT OF CLAIMING THAT THE VIET MINH DO NOT GIVE THEIR TROOPS JUST SMALL ARMS BUT AUTOMATIC WEAPONS AS WELL.

9. AMBASSADOR JOHNSON QUERIED PHOUMI AS TO THE STRENGTH OF THE FAL. PHOUMI CLAIMS HE PRESENTLY HAS 62,000 TROOPS. IN ANSWER TO AMBASSADOR'S QUERY REGARDING THE STRENGTH OF THE VIET MINH, PHOUMI STATED THEY HAVE APPROXIMATELY THE SAME NUMBER. THEY HAVE IN THE FRONT LINE 24 BATTALIONS (500 MEN EACH) OF WHICH 14 ARE PATHET LAO AND 10 VIET MINH. IN ADDITION TO THESE FRONT LINE TROOPS THE ENEMY HAS PLENTY OF RESERVES IN THE REAR AREAS. IN ADDITION HAVE THE POPULATION WHOM THEY HAVE ARMED.

10. IN RESPONSE TO AMBASSADOR'S QUERY REGARDING KONG LE, PHOUMI CLAIMS KONG LE HAS NO MEANING ANY LONGER. THE STRENGTH OF HIS GROUP IS ONLY BETWEEN 70 AND 80 MEN. KONG LE DOES NOT LIKE THE

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IDEA OF VIET MINH TROOPS IN LAOS BUT HE IS NOT IN A POSITION TO
STOP IT. KONG LE IS CURRENTLY UNDER CONSTANT
PHOUMI DOES NOT BELIEVE THAT KONG LE IS UNDER
ARREST. THE COMMUNISTS INTEND TO USE HIM AS LONG AS HE SERVES
A USEFUL PURPOSE.

11. REGARDING VIET MINH UNITS IN LAOS, PHOUMI CLAIMS HE IS WORKING
HARD TO GET ALL THE FACTS IN COOPERATION WITH THE AMERICANS.
PHOUMI CAUTIONED THE AMBASSADOR NOT TO MAKE THE SAME MISTAKE THE
FRENCH DID IN NOT BELIEVING THE ESTIMATED STRENGTH OF THE ENEMY.
THIS EVENTUALLY BROUGHT ABOUT FRENCH DEFEAT. THE LOCALS HAD INFORMED
THE FRENCH THAT THERE WERE ABOUT 8,000 ENEMY IN THE AREA WHEREAS
THE FRENCH SAID THERE WERE ONLY SEVEN OR EIGHT HUNDRED. WHEN ASKED
IF THE LAOTIANS COULD TELL A VIET MINH FROM PL ON THE BATTLE FIELD,
PHOUMI STATED THE LAOTIANS CAN EASILY TELL. IF ANYONE WANTS TO
KNOW THAT THE VIET
MINH ARE OPERATING IN LAOS ALL THEY HAVE TO DO
IS LISTEN TO THE RADIO IN VIENTIANE. VIET MINH GIVE ORDERS IN
VIETNAMESE. THE VIET MINH DO NOT SPEAK LAO BUT ONLY VIETNAMESE.

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THEY WEAR THE SAME UNIFORMS AS THE PL.

12. REGARDING AIR RECONNAISSANCE, ESPECIALLY OF THE ROADS, PHOUMI STATED THE T-6S WERE PHOTOGRAPHING DAILY BUT AFTER ALL HE HAD ONLY FIVE T-6S LEFT. AIR CHIEF MARSHAL BOONCHOO STATED THAT THE THAIS ARE STILL FLYING THE T-33 ON PHOTOGRAPHIC MISSIONS. BOONCHOO CLAIMS INSPECTION OF THE PHOTOS SHOWED THAT THERE WERE ARMORED CARS ON THE ROADS. HE CLAIMS THAT ON THE KHAM KEUT ROAD ON APRIL 5 THERE WERE 8 TRUCKS AND 3 ARMORED VEHICLES.

13. THE PRIME MINISTER STATED THAT WHILE IT WAS OKAY TO TRY TO REACH A POLITICAL SETTLEMENT, ON THE MILITARY SIDE PREPARATIONS SHOULD CONTINUE TO BE MADE, ESPECIALLY IN REGARD TO GROUND TROOPS AS PHOUMI NEEDS REINFORCEMENTS. THE PRIME MINISTER BELIEVES PREPARATIONS SHOULD BE MADE SOONEST AND THAT THE THAIS SHOULD NOT BE LEFT TO GO IT ALONE BUT IT SHOULD BE A JOINT EFFORT WITH THE U.S. THE PRIME MINISTER AGREES THAT VOLUNTEERS SHOULD BE USED BECAUSE HE DOES NOT WANT TO OPENLY PUT IN HIS ARMED FORCES AT THE PRESENT TIME.

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14. PHOUMI REQUESTED AMBASSADOR JOHNSON'S ASSISTANCE IN EXPEDITING ARRIVAL OF 105S SO THAT HE COULD USE THEM IN THE THAKHEK AREA. PHOUMI STATES THAT HE DESIRES EIGHT 105S AND THAT HE HAD TALKED TO ADMIRAL FELT REGARDING THESE WEAPONS AND ADMIRAL FELT HAD AGREED. PHOUMI ADMITS HE HAS NO LAO CREWS. AMBASSADOR JOHNSON STATED HE HAD NOT HEARD ABOUT SUCH A REQUEST BUT DESIRED TO KNOW THAT IF SUCH WEAPONS WERE FORTHCOMING WOULD THE THAIS BE WILLING TO MAKE AVAILABLE THAI ARMY CREWS. BOTH THANAT AND THE PRIME MINISTER STATED, "WHY NOT AMERICAN CREWS, OR MIXED THAI-AMERICAN CREWS?" NO DEFINITIVE ANSWER WAS RECEIVED ON THIS MATTER. THE AMBASSADOR STATED IF SOMETHING MUST BE DONE IMMEDIATELY WOULD THE THAIS AGREE TO PROVIDE THE EIGHT 105S AND THE CREWS IF THE UNITED STATES PROMISED TO SEND REPLACEMENTS SOONEST. NO ANSWER WAS RECEIVED AND IT WAS QUITE APPARENT THAT SARIT WAS NOT GOING TO MAKE ANY COMMITMENTS IN FRONT OF PHOUMI.

15. SARIT WAS MOANING ABOUT THAIS HAVING TO DO ALL THE WORK AND NO AMERICANS. HE STATED THERE WERE 400 THAIS IN LAOS ALREADY.

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AMBASSADOR MADE KNOWN THE FACT THAT THERE WERE THAT MANY OR MORE AMERICANS PRESENTLY IN LAOS, MANY OF THEM WITH FRONT LINE TROOPS. ALSO THERE WERE THE PILOTS OF THE PLANES AND HELICOPTERS, IN CIVILIAN CLOTHES WITH NO PROTECTION. AMB ALSO POINTED OUT THAT WE HAD LOST A NUMBER OF USA PERSONNEL IN LAOS.

16. SARIT APPEARED TO BE UNHAPPY WITH TIME MAGAZINE WHOM HE CLAIMS IS GIVING OUT DETAILS REGARDING THAIS AND AMERICANS BEING IN LAOS. "IT'S ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO KEEP THINGS SECRET WHEN AMERICAN PERIODICALS ARE ALWAYS WRITING THEM UP."

17. DURING THE CONVERSATION THE AMBASSADOR ASKED PHOUMI IF HE HAD TALKED TO THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE AUTHORITIES REGARDING COOPERATION IN SOUTHERN LAOS. HE ADMITTED HE HAD HAD TALKS WITH SOUTH VIETNAMESE AUTHORITIES BUT DID NOT REVEAL THE RESULTS OF THESE TALKS.

18. SARIT DESIRED KNOW IF THE PRESS WAS RIGHT IN STATING THAT KENNEDY AND MACMILLAN WOULD BE MEETING SOON FOR THE SECOND TIME. WHEN INFORMED THIS WAS CORRECT SARIT STATED HE WAS THINKING OF

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SENDING A LETTER TO PRESIDENT KENNEDY TO SHOW THAT HE AND HIS GOVERNMENT WERE VERY MUCH CONCERNED WITH AND INTERESTED IN THE PRESENT CRISIS IN LAOS. AMBASSADOR ENCOURAGED SARIT TO WRITE ASSURING THAT THE PRESIDENT WOULD BE HAPPY TO HEAR FROM HIM. SARIT STATED THAT HE PLANS TO INCLUDE IN THE LETTER THE FACT THAT HE AGREES WITH EFFORTS TO SOLVE THE LAO SITUATION BY PEACEFUL MEANS, THAT HE HOPES THIS WILL NOT LEAD TO THE LOSS OF TERRITORY IN LAOS AND THERE WILL BE NO DIVISION WITHIN LAOS. FURTHER, IF LAOS IS TO BE NEUTRAL THEN IT MUST REALLY BE NEUTRAL WITH NO COMMUNIST ELEMENTS IN THE GOVERNMENT. IF MILITARY MEANS ARE NEEDED THAILAND WILL BE READY TO JOIN WITH USA AND WOULD DEPEND UPON USA FOR SUPPORT AND ASSISTANCE. SARIT ASKED THE AMBASSADOR IF THERE WOULD BE ANY OBJECTION IF HE ALSO WROTE PERSONAL LETTERS TO OTHERS IN WASHINGTON. WHEN HE ESPECIALLY MENTIONED MR DULLES THE AMBASSADOR INSTEAD SUGGESTED SECRETARY RUSK.

END OF MESSAGE

CS COMMENT: *NON-CIA CABLE BRANCH INFORMED OF REFERENCE.

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