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DJCS INFORMATION

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SECTION 1 OF 2  
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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

DIST: 12 OCTOBER 1988

EXCLUSIVE DISSEMINATION TO ADDRESSEES LISTED AT END OF REPORT

COUNTRY: LAOS

SUBJ: MIA/POW: COMMENTS BY A SENIOR LAO MINISTRY OF  
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OFFICIAL ON THE LAO GOVERNMENT'S  
HANDLING OF UNITED STATES MISSING IN ACTION AND  
PRISONER OF WAR ISSUE

DOI: EARLY OCTOBER 1988

SOURCE:

TEXT: 1. ACCORDING TO THE EARLY OCTOBER 1988 COMMENTS OF A SENIOR LAO MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS (MFA) OFFICIAL, THERE ARE NO LIVE U.S. PRISONERS OF WAR (POW) IN LAOS. THE OFFICIAL STATED THAT THE MISSING IN ACTION (MIA)/POW ISSUE WITHIN THE LAO GOVERNMENT IS THE SHARED RESPONSIBILITY OF THE MINISTRY OF NATIONAL DEFENSE (MND) AND MINISTRY OF INTERIOR (MOI), WITH THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS (MFA) BECOMING DIRECTLY INVOLVED ONLY WHEN REMAINS ARE FOUND AND ARE TURNED OVER TO THE U.S. EMBASSY IN VIENTIANE. ACCORDING TO THE OFFICIAL, BECAUSE OF THE GENERAL MAKE-UP AND OUTLOOK OF THE MND AND MOI, THE LAO GOVERNMENT APPEARS TO TAKE A RATHER INTRANSIGENT POSITION WITH THE UNITED STATES OVER SITE INSPECTIONS AND RECOVERING MIA REMAINS. THE MFA FAVORS A MORE ACCOMMODATING POSITION, BUT THE MINISTRY'S INFLUENCE IS LIMITED TO PERSUASION BROUGHT TO BEAR BY FOREIGN AFFAIRS MINISTER ((PHOUN)) SIPASEUT BY VIRTUE OF HIS POSITION IN THE POLITICAL BUREAU OF THE LAO PEOPLE'S REVOLUTIONARY PARTY.

2. ACCORDING TO THIS SENIOR MFA OFFICIAL, THE LAO CONDITION OF "COMPENSATION" IN RETURN FOR INCREASED COOPERATION WITH THE UNITED STATES IN SITE INSPECTIONS (EXCAVATIONS) AND RECOVERY OF MIA REMAINS CAN BE SATISFIED THROUGH INCREASED ASSISTANCE SIMILAR TO THAT CURRENTLY BEING GIVEN BY THE UNITED STATES IN THE FORM OF MEDICAL CLINICS BEING BUILT IN RURAL AREAS OF LAOS. INDEED, THE OFFICIAL STATED THESE CLINICS PROVIDE COMPENSATION TO THOSE LAO PEOPLE WHO SUFFERED MOST FROM U.S. AGGRESSION DURING THE WAR, AND THIS MEDICAL ASSISTANCE FROM THE UNITED STATES WAS INSTRUMENTAL IN THE LAO GOVERNMENT'S AGREEMENT TO ALLOW THE SITE INSPECTION TEAM TO COME TO LAOS IN EARLY OCTOBER 1988. IN ADDITION TO THE CLINICS, THE OFFICIAL STATED SUCH SUPPORT AS INCREASED AID DONATIONS TO LAOS FROM THE

ACTION DIA/SPEC(10)  
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UNITED STATES THROUGH SUCH INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AS THE UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (UNDP) AND THE UNITED NATIONS FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION (FAO) WOULD ALSO SERVE TO SATISFY THE LAO DEMAND FOR "COMPENSATION."

3. IN DISCUSSING THE DISPOSITION OF MIA REMAINS FOUND IN LAOS, THE OFFICIAL STATED HE KNEW OF NO LAO GOVERNMENT POLICY TO STORE REMAINS OR ANY INSTANCES WHERE THE LAO GOVERNMENT CURRENTLY, OR THE PATHET LAO PRIOR TO 1975, TURNED OVER MIA REMAINS TO THE NORTH VIETNAMESE.

4. COMMENT: THE LAO MND MAY BE THE CENTRAL REPOSITORY OF ALL POW/MIA DATA. THE MOI IS INVOLVED IN DECIDING WHEN, WHERE AND WHAT AREAS ARE TO BE SURVEYED AND/OR EXCAVATED. THE MFA NEGOTIATES AND COORDINATES WITH THE UNITED STATES EMBASSY IN VIENTIANE AND OTHER UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS PRIOR TO SURVEYS AND EXCAVATIONS, WITH AN MND REPRESENTATIVE USUALLY BEING PRESENT AT THESE NEGOTIATIONS. DURING AN ACTUAL SURVEY AND SUBSEQUENT EXCAVATION, MND, MFA AND PROBABLY MOI PERSONNEL ARE ALL REPRESENTED ON SITE. THESE MINISTRIES MUST GET PRIOR APPROVAL DIRECTLY FROM THE LAO POLITBURO ON THE POW/MIA ISSUE, AS WELL AS OTHER MATTERS INVOLVING THE UNITED STATES. SOME OF THE ABOVE INFORMATION REGARDING LAO POLICY ON THE POW/MIA ISSUE MAY BE SLIGHTLY DATED, FOR SINCE AUGUST 1987 BOTH SIDES HAVE REACHED A BETTER ACCORD AND PROGRESS HAS RESULTED. IN THE PAST THE LAO MAY HAVE BROUGHT UP "COMPENSATION" AS A STALLING TACTIC, PERHAPS TO GIVE THE LAO GOVERNMENT TIME TO GET APPROVAL FROM VIETNAM. DURING 1988 THE LAO SENT MFA OFFICIALS OUT ON THEIR OWN TO SEEK POW/MIA INFORMATION AND TO PREPARE LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND VILLAGERS FOR IMPENDING EFFORTS TO FIND SUCH INFORMATION. THE MND HAS ALSO CONDUCTED SOME UNILATERAL EXCAVATIONS OF CRASH SITES. AT PRESENT, THE LAO ARE REQUESTING "HUMANITARIAN AID" RATHER THAN WAR REPARATIONS OR "COMPENSATION", AND THEY WOULD PROBABLY WANT AN OFFICIAL AID PROGRAM ON THE ORDER OF ABOUT ONE MILLION U.S. DOLLARS PER YEAR AT THE OUTSET.)

ACQ: (EARLY OCTOBER 1988).

DISSEM: FIELD: NONE.

WASHINGTON DISSEM:

TO WHSTTRM: EXCLUSIVE FOR THE DIRECTOR, WHITE  
HOUSE SITUATION ROOMTO STATE: EXCLUSIVE FOR THE ASSISTANT  
SECRETARY, INRTO DIA: EXCLUSIVE FOR THE DIRECTOR, DIA  
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