



# Intelligence Information Cable

STATE/INR NMCC/MC (DIA) CIA/NMCC NIC NSA  NSC/S SDO NIO CES PAGE 1 OF 12 PAG

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DIST 5 SEPTEMBER 1974

COUNTRY LAOS

DOI  SEPTEMBER 1974

SUBJECT DISCUSSION AT  SEPTEMBER FAR GENERAL  
 STAFF MEETING OF PRISONER EXCHANGE,  
 REDUCTION IN FAR FORCES, AND MEASURES  
 TO BE TAKEN TO COPE WITH UNREST AMONG FAR ENLISTED MEN

[Redacted Summary Section]

SUMMARY:

[Redacted Summary Content]

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APPROVED FOR RELEASE  
DATE: FEB 2001

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[Large Redacted Area]

END SUMMARY.

1. ON [Redacted] SEPTEMBER 1974 LAO ARMED FORCES [Redacted]

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PRESIDED OVER A GENERAL STAFF MEETING TO DISCUSS IMMINENT PRISONER OF WAR (POW) EXCHANGES, UNREST AMONG ENLISTED MEN IN FAR, FURTHER PERSONNEL REDUCTIONS AND RELATED PROBLEMS. DURING THE MORNING SESSION, MINISTER OF DEFENSE S I S O U K NA CHAMPASSAK, WHO REMAINED ONLY FOR A SHORT PERIOD, REQUESTED FACTUAL EVIDENCE OF THE CONTINUED PRESENCE OF NORTH VIETNAMESE ARMY (NVA) TROOPS IN EACH MILITARY REGION (MR) FOR A PRESENTATION BY HIM TO THE CABINET MEETING. FOLLOWING SISOUK'S REQUEST, EACH MR COMMANDER PROVIDED A RESUME OF THE NUMBERS AND LOCATIONS OF NVA IN HIS REGION.

MR II COMMANDER GENERAL V A N G PAO REPORTED THAT APPROXIMATELY 6,000 NVA TROOPS REMAIN IN MR II FOLLOWING THE WITHDRAWAL OF APPROXIMATELY TWO NVA DIVISIONS FROM THE REGION. IN MR I IT WAS REPORTED THAT APPROXIMATELY 6-8,000 NVA TROOPS REMAIN. THE MR III COMMANDER REPORTED THAT APPROXIMATELY 6,000 NVA TROOPS REMAIN IN MR III WHERE THE NVA HAVE SIMPLY ROTATED THEIR TROOPS BUT MADE NO WITHDRAWALS. THE MR IV COMMANDER REPORTED

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THAT 8,000 NVA TROOPS REMAIN IN THAT REGION WHILE THE MR V COMMANDER REPORTED THAT APPROXIMATELY ONE BATTALION OF NVA IS PRESENT IN THE REGION DIVIDED BETWEEN THE NAM TAN (UG 5822) AREA AND THE AREA NORTH OF PAKSANE.

2. FOLLOWING SISOUK'S DEPARTURE, GENERAL BOUNPONE REVIEWED THE RECENT RASH OF LABOR PROTESTS AND STRIKES IN VIENTIANE AND THE CONTINUED UNREST AMONG CIVIL SERVANTS IN EVERY MINISTRY AND IN THE POLICE FORCE. BOUNPONE STATED THAT THIS UNREST WAS ENGENDERED BY LEGITIMATE GRIEVANCES ON THE PART OF THE WORKERS INVOLVED BUT THAT THESE GRIEVANCES AND ISSUES ARE BEING EXPLOITED BY THE LAO PATRIOTIC FRONT (LPF). GENERAL BOUNPONE STATED EMPHATICALLY THAT SHOULD THIS UNREST SPREAD TO FAR ENLISTED MEN RESULTING IN A PROTEST STRIKE, FAR'S MILITARY POSTURE WILL BE CONSIDERABLY UNDERMINED AND THE OVERALL GENERAL SECURITY IN VIENTIANE WILL BE IMPERILED. GENERAL BOUNPONE SAID HE WAS AWARE OF THE DISSATISFACTION AMONG VETERANS WHO ARE CURRENTLY HAVING DIFFICULTY LIVING WITH MINIMAL

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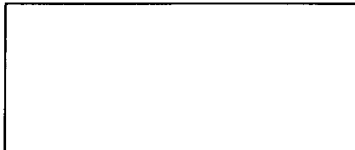
OR NO FAR SUPPORT AND WITH LITTLE PROSPECTS FOR EMPLOYMENT IN THE CIVIL GOVERNMENT. GENERAL BOUNPONE CALLED UPON ALL COMMANDERS, SERVICE CHIEFS AND GENERAL OFFICERS TO GIVE PRIORITY ATTENTION TO THIS DANGEROUS SITUATION AND POTENTIAL THREAT. HE URGED THOSE PRESENT TO MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO STIMULATE ENLISTED MEN TO UNDERSTAND THE CURRENT POOR ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL SITUATION OF THE GOVERNMENT AND TO MAKE THE SACRIFICES REQUIRED DURING THIS CRITICAL POSTWAR PERIOD IN ORDER TO MAKE THE COALITION GOVERNMENT WORK.

3. AFTER CONSIDERABLE DISCUSSION ABOUT THE CAUSES OF UNREST AMONG ENLISTED MEN AND VETERANS AND POSITIVE STEPS THAT FAR COULD TAKE TO RECTIFY THE SITUATION, IT WAS AGREED TO ACCEPT A PROPOSAL OF FAR DEPUTY COMMANDER IN CHIEF [REDACTED]

TO SUMMON A MEETING OF THE VIENTIANE GARRISON ON 5 SEPTEMBER TO DISCUSS WAYS TO MONITOR THE UNREST AND TO SEEK MEANS TO DEFUSE A POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS SITUATION.

[REDACTED] PROPOSED AND THE PARTICIPANTS AGREED THAT GENERAL E T A M SINGVONGSA, FAR DEPUTY

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CHIEF OF STAFF FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE, AT THE  
 5 SEPTEMBER MEETING WILL PROPOSE STEPS THAT CAN BE  
 TAKEN IN THE PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE FIELD TO ASSIST IN  
 INDOCTRINATING ENLISTED PERSONNEL. GENERAL ETAM  
 SUGGESTED AND IT WAS AGREED THAT K H A M C H O N E,  
 AN OFFICIAL OF THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND A  
 MEMBER OF THE YOUNG IDEAS PARTY WHO WAS EDUCATED IN  
 A COMMUNIST COUNTRY, WOULD BE ASKED TO ADDRESS THE  
 MEETING ON THIS SUBJECT ALSO. GENERAL (THAO) L Y,  
 CHIEF OF FAR G-2, AGREED TO PROVIDE A BRIEFING ON THE PRESENCE  
 OF NVA IN LAOS AND THE NECESSITY FOR INCREASING MILITARY

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DISCIPLINE AND ALERTNESS TO FACE ANY EVENTUALITY.  
 MR IV COMMANDER GENERAL T H O N G L I T H CHOKBENGBOUN  
 AGREED TO PROVIDE A BRIEFING ON THE CURRENT COLD WAR  
 POLITICS BEING CONDUCTED IN VIENTIANE BY THE LPF. IT  
 WAS AGREED THAT THE MEETING WILL BE ATTENDED BY APPROXIMATELY  
 50 FIELD GRADE AND GENERAL OFFICERS AT PHONE KENG CAMP.

4. FOLLOWING THE FOREGOING DISCUSSION, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] BRIEFED THE PARTICIPANTS ON THE IMMINENT  
 EXCHANGE OF POW'S AS AGREED TO BY THE TWO SIDES IN  
 THE JOINT COMMISSION TO IMPLEMENT THE AGREEMENT [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] REGARDING THE RETURN OF THE APPROXIMATELY  
 125 NVA PRISONERS HELD AT SAM KHE PRISON, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] SAID THAT THESE PRISONERS WILL BE TRANSPORTED  
 IMMEDIATELY TO PHOU KHAO KWEI WHERE THEY WILL BE  
 INTERVIEWED TO DETERMINE WHETHER THE POW'S WISH TO  
 RETURN TO HANOI OR LIVE IN LAOS OR SOUTH VIETNAM.  
 THOSE WHO DESIRE TO RETURN TO NORTH VIETNAM WILL THEN  
 BE TRANSFERRED TO THE POINTS OF EXCHANGE AS FOLLOWS:  
 THOSE PRISONERS WHO WERE CAPTURED IN MRS II AND V WILL

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BE TRANSPORTED TO PHONSAVANH (UG 1351) IN THE PLAIN OF JARS; THOSE CAPTURED IN MR I WILL BE TRANSPORTED TO PAK U (TH 0919); WHILE THOSE CAPTURED IN MR'S III AND IV WILL BE TRANSPORTED TO A POINT NEAR PALANE KILOMETER 42, RESPECTIVELY.

SAID THAT ON 17 SEPTEMBER THE TWO SIDES WILL EXCHANGE LISTS OF PRISONERS AND THAT THE FIRST EXCHANGE WILL TAKE PLACE ON 19 SEPTEMBER AT PHONSAVANH.

SAID AT THIS EXCHANGE POINT 600 THAI PRISONERS AND THE AMERICAN PRISONER WILL BE RELEASED ALSO. NOTED THAT THE THAI PRISONERS WILL THEN BE TRANSPORTED IMMEDIATELY AND DIRECTLY TO NAM PHONG (QA 0238) WHERE THE THAI GOVERNMENT HAS ARRANGED A RECEPTION CENTER TO PROVIDE MEDICAL TREATMENT, CLOTHING, FUNDS AND OTHER FACILITIES FOR THESE MEN. AMONG OTHER THINGS, SAID THAT THE THAI GOVERNMENT HAS APPROPRIATED 25 MILLION BAHT TO PROVIDE EACH MAN 200,000 BAHT RESETTLEMENT MONEY. THESE MEN WILL ALSO HAVE THE CHOICE OF REMAINING IN THE ARMY OR SEEKING CIVILIAN EMPLOYMENT.

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5. [REDACTED] NOTED THAT NO SUCH PREPARATIONS HAVE BEEN MADE BY FAR OR BY THE VIENTIANE SIDE OR THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL UNION (PGNU) TO ASSIST FAR PRISONERS RELEASED BY LPF/NVA. [REDACTED] SAID THAT FAR HAS LISTED 4,314 MEN AS HAVING BEEN CAPTURED BY THE ENEMY BUT THAT IT IS NOT CURRENTLY KNOWN HOW MANY PRISONERS WILL ACTUALLY BE RELEASED SINCE MANY OF THEM HAVE SINCE COOPERATED WITH AND JOINED THE LPF SIDE. [REDACTED] SAID THAT FAR DOES NOT HAVE THE FUNDS TO PROVIDE EACH RELEASED MAN A SIZEABLE AMOUNT OF MONEY FOR RESETTLEMENT BUT THAT CLEARLY SOMETHING MUST BE DONE TO PREPARE FOR THEIR RETURN. [REDACTED] SUGGESTED AND THE PARTICIPANTS AGREED THAT A SPECIAL COMMITTEE WOULD BE SET UP TO DISCUSS THIS MATTER AND MAKE SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PGNU APPROVAL TO ASSIST THE RETURNED SOLDIERS. FOLLOWING SOME DISCUSSION OF THIS MATTER, IT WAS AGREED THAT DIRECTOR OF THE MINISTRY OF NATIONAL DEFENSE GENERAL OUDONE SANANIKONE WILL HEAD THIS COMMITTEE. GENERAL OUDONE WILL BE ASSISTED BY GENERALS SORITH W. SASORITH,

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DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF FOR LOGISTICS, ETAM, P H O E Y  
MISAIPHON, DEPUTY DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE MINISTRY  
OF NATIONAL DEFENSE, (THAO) LY, R A T T Y A B A N L A N G  
CHOUNRAMANY, CHIEF OF THE MILITARY SECURITY SERVICE,  
SEVERAL OFFICIALS FROM THE MINISTRIES OF HEALTH, INTERIOR  
AND FINANCE. IT WAS AGREED THAT THIS COMMITTEE WOULD  
MEET DURING THE WEEK AND DRAFT THEIR PROPOSALS FOR  
DISCUSSION WITH SISOUK PRIOR TO THE NEXT CABINET MEETING.

6. DURING THE AFTERNOON SESSION GENERAL SOURITH PROVIDED A  
BRIEFING ON THE REQUIRED ADDITIONAL REDUCTION OF MILITARY PERSONNEL  
FROM CIRCA 60,000 TO 46,000 MEN BY JULY 1975. SOURITH SAID THAT EACH  
MR WILL HAVE TO REDUCE ITS STRENGTH AND REPORT TO THE GENERAL STAFF ON  
A QUARTERLY BASIS. EACH QUARTER FAR MUST REDUCE ITS STRENGTH BY  
APPROXIMATELY 2,000 PERSONNEL. SOURITH SAID THAT NOT ONLY WILL  
ACUTAL FUNDS BE REDUCED ON A QUARTERLY BASIS BUT ALL COMMODITY ASSIS-  
TANCE SUCH AS RICE, FUEL AND FOOD STUFFS WILL BE REDUCED ACCORDINGLY.  
FOLLOWING SOURITH'S BRIEFING, A GENERAL DISCUSSION TOOK PLACE AND  
A GREAT NUMBER OF QUESTIONS, COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS WERE RAISED BY  
THE MILITARY COMMANDERS. MR II COMMANDER GENERAL VANG PAO, WHO WAS ONE  
OF THE MORE VOCAL SPEAKERS, NOTED THAT HE IS OBLIGED TO REDUCE HIS

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STRENGTH FROM 8,000 TO 4,000 MEN. HE SAID THAT IF THIS REDUCTION IS EFFECTED HE WILL NOT BE ABLE TO DEFEND THE AREA UNDER HIS COMMAND. HE ASKED WHETHER SOMETHING COULD BE DONE TO OBTAIN THE FUNDS AND SUPPORT REQUIRED TO MAINTAIN CURRENT TROOPS LEVELS. HE ADDED THAT IN ADDITION TO THE FACT THAT FURTHER TROOPS REDUCTIONS WILL UNDERMINE BASIC AND VITAL SECURITY IN HIS REGION, THE ADDITIONAL RELEASED SOLDIERS WILL PROVIDE INCREASED ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS BECAUSE THERE SIMPLY ARE NO EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE DISCHARGED MEN. GENERAL BOUNPONE REPLIED THAT HE UNDERSTOOD VANG PAO'S POSITION, BUT THAT THE PGNU HAS NO FUNDS TO PROVIDE FAR. FAR IS NOW TOTALLY DEPENDENT ON THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT WHICH MUST ADJUST ITS MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO LAOS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PROSPECTS FOR PERMANENT PEACE IN THIS COUNTRY. GENERAL BOUNPONE SAID THAT THE ADDITIONAL REDUCTIONS WILL BE GRADUALLY MADE ON A QUARTERLY BASIS. SHOULD AN EMERGENCY SITUATION OCCUR IN THE MEANTIME, THE FAR COMMANDERS WILL HAVE TO REVIEW THE SITUATION AT THAT TIME. HOWEVER, FOR THE PRESENT, FAR MUST GO ALONG WITH THE AMERICAN PROPOSALS.

7. IN DISCUSSING THE SECURITY SITUATION IN MR II, THE PARTICIPANTS AGREED TO PROVIDE ASSISTANCE TO GENERAL VANG PAO THROUGH MAKING AVAILABLE THREE BATTALIONS FROM MR II FOR GUARD DUTY IN THE SALA PHOU

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KOUN AREA. GENERAL VANG PAO AGREED TO TRANSFER THE TROOPS CURRENTLY  
POSED IN THAT AREA TO BOLSTER THE OVERALL SECURITY OF MR II.

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