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By *haz* Date *01/21/07*

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20506

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September 17, 1969

National Security Study Memorandum 74

TO: The Secretary of State
The Secretary of Defense
The Director of Central Intelligence
The Director, U.S. Information Agency

SUBJECT: Planning for Laos

The President has noted that the next crisis in Laos may come during or before the next dry season starting about November. If the Communists push hard militarily or bring pressure on Souvanna Phouma, they may endanger the political balance in Vientiane or force Souvanna into a compromise which leaves our interests unprotected. In order to forestall that eventuality in so far as possible, and to meet it promptly if it arises, he has requested that the following three inter-related studies be carried out:

A. Prepare a paper as to what our behavior will be if the Communists upset the present fragile stability in Laos. Among others, the following questions should be addressed:

- (1) At what point do we decide that we no longer have an interest in preservation of the 1962 agreement?
- (2) How can we keep from reaching that point? i. e., are there means within our current level of military involvement to persuade the Communists that it is too dangerous to upset the balance? Can we forewarn the Communists -- possibly through the co-Chairmen and the ICC -- that further aggression of the Muong Soui type will require us to take another look at the Geneva Accords and the question whether the Communists have not vitiated them?

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(3) What do we do if the point is reached? Do we move into the Panhandle and deprive the Communists of the benefit which they principally sought? Do we encourage the Thai to move into areas of critical importance to them (e.g. Sayaboury) if the Souvanna Government falls? Do we encourage them to do so directly, or to use the enclave for a Lao Government-in-half-exile? How much backing do we provide?

(4) Or do we simply extract what propaganda advantage we can, via the UN and elsewhere?

B. Prepare a plan of retaliation for immediate execution if the Communists attack another Lao keypoint, e.g. B-52 anti-personnel raids. The plan should offer graduated levels of response.

C. Set forth the means for generating maximum publicity concerning Communist pressures in Laos. This would be intended to -

(1) Raise Communist nerves as to what we have in mind;

(2) Prepare public opinion in the US if we have to do something else in Laos (e.g. use B-52's) and provide some protection against the charge of escalation.

The President has directed that the studies be carried out by the East Asian and Pacific Interdepartmental Group.

The studies should be forwarded to the NSC Review Group by October 10, 1969.


Henry A. Kissinger

cc: The Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff