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31 July

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Desai, M. J. (Commonwealth Secretary,  
New Delhi, India)

- 1 letter to D.H.



COMMONWEALTH SECRETARY

CONFIDENTIAL

D.O. No. 474 -CS/59.  
MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS  
NEW DELHI

July 31, 1959.  
Sravana 9, 1881 (Saka).

Dear Mr. Hammarskjöld,

I returned to Delhi on 24th. As promised when we met in Geneva on 15th July, I have acquainted the Prime Minister with your views on the Laotian problem and the method of tackling it that you suggested when we met in Geneva.

2. The main point, as you stated and as stressed in the Prime Minister's letter of the 30th June to you, is to set in motion the necessary machinery which can take measures of mediation and conciliation with a view to reducing tension between Laos and North Viet Nam. In our discussion, you suggested that, in the context of the Laotian attitude to the reconvening of the Commission - and which attitude is supported by the U.K. and Canada - the only way of initiating measures of mediation and conciliation was to make, as a start, an informal personal approach to the Laotian Government. This would avoid rigid or inflexible attitudes which governmental or institutional approaches would evoke. You suggested that I could, perhaps, undertake a brief tour of South-East Asian countries and incidentally visit Laos and North Viet Nam, listen to their views and impress on them the need for facilitating the functioning of the normal mediation machinery of the Commission or of some other mediating agency that may be authorised by the Commission.

3. Since my return, I have learnt of further developments in Laos. As you know, the Geneva Agreement on Laos permitted the French Military Mission to continue in Laos for training purposes with a total maximum personnel of 1,500. During the last week, about 108 United States Service officers have been seconded to work with this French Mission in Laos and some more will be added soon. Though they will be working as civilians, this development is inconsistent with the Declaration made by the Royal Laotian Government in Geneva in 1954 with reference to Articles 4 and 5 of the Final Declaration of the Geneva Conference and Article 6 of the Geneva Agreement on Laos. The Chinese and the North Vietnamese are, naturally, complaining very loudly against these developments which, they allege, are in violation of the Declaration made by the Royal Laotian Government in Geneva and the Geneva Agreement on Laos.

Apart from the above, there has been another development. The Royal Laotian Government have a couple of days back arrested all leaders of the Central Committee of the Opposition Neo Lao Haksat Party. Reports have reached us that severe fighting between the insurgents and Royal Laotian troops has started in the province of Sam Neua on the Laos-North Viet Nam border.

These developments are extremely unfortunate as they will intensify internal and external tension.

4. Our Parliament session begins early next week. Apart from the normal pressure of work during the Parliament session, there are several other urgent matters which make it difficult for me to leave Delhi. I learnt on my return to Delhi that our Delegate on the Viet Nam Commission, who had been previously Chairman of the Laos Commission, is coming home on a month's leave. With the Prime Minister's concurrence, I have asked him, before he comes on leave towards the end of August, to pay an informal visit in his personal

capacity to Vientiane and Phnom Penh so that we can review the situation in the light of the latest information that he brings about local developments in Vientiane, Phnom Penh, Hanoi and Saigon and then consider what further action can be taken to initiate processes of mediation and conciliation to reduce tension in the area.

5. The Prime Minister has asked me to convey to you that he will keep in mind the suggestions you have made and will review the position after we have had a chance to get a first-hand report on the situation from our Delegate on the Viet Nam Commission who is due in Delhi in the last week of August. Meanwhile, we hope that you, on your part, will advise the Royal Laotian Government to exercise moderation and restraint in dealing with this extremely delicate situation.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,



(M.J. Desai)

His Excellency  
Mr. Dag Hammarskjöld,  
Secretary-General,  
United Nations,  
NEW YORK.