

# Laos 1959-1961 - correspondence, official documents, press clippings, chrono...

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Laos - 1960

25 Jan.

Interoffice memorandum from J. F. Engers  
to D.H. with press clippings.

**INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM**

TO: The Secretary-General

FROM: J.F. Engers

*J.F. Engers*

Date: 25 January 1960

SUBJECT: Laos

FILE NO.: \_\_\_\_\_

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Further to my note of 22 January, please  
find attached the third instalment of the Lucas  
series of articles in the Scripps Howard news-  
papers, and a fuller text of General Phoumi  
Nosavan's remarks.

Our Stake in Laos

# Military Frankenstein Looms

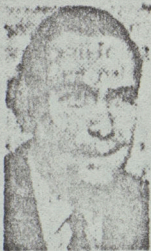
(Last of a Series.)

By JIM G. LUCAS.

VIENTIANE, Laos, Jan. 22. — An oversized Laotian Army supported entirely by the U.S. taxpayer may turn out to be a Frankenstein for this tiny jungle kingdom.

It is too large for Laos to keep up.

Yet it is too small, too raw and too lacking in basic military skills to cope with Communist subversion within, or Communist aggression from without.



Jim G. Lucas

Its favored status as Uncle Sam's "pet" in a nation which lacks even the essentials of existence has even aided and abetted the spread of communism in Laos.

With 80 to 85 percent of the U.S. aid dollar earmarked for this 29,000-man force, little remains for programs which might reach down to the villages.

By making itself the best-paid, best-fed and best-living segment of the Laotian community — it has twice called for pay raises which we have granted — the Army has a virtual monopoly on the nation's strictly limited brains and know-how. Thereby it postpones — if it does not eliminate — the hope that civilian democracy will some day take root here.

The army has done all this without once proving that it can fight. In fact, face-to-face with Communist forces along the northern borders a few weeks ago, Laos troops fell back, often without firing a shot. The explanation: orders. But — and this certainly was not in their orders — they did so in utter confusion, sometimes abandoning their weapons.

The 1954 Geneva Armistice creating Laos as an independent kingdom permitted the French a small (1500-man) training mission here but forbade any other.

Consequently when our aid program began here responsibility for training a Laos army went to the International Cooperation Administration. ICA is not equipped for this

sort of thing. It set up something called Programs Evaluation Office (PEO) and staffed it with retired military men.

The Laos high command then found itself with two sets of political advisers. It played one against the other. The French were here — legally — but quickly adopted a "ho hum" attitude. The Americans considered the French "tired old men."

Between the two, a paper formula was worked out: The French would be responsible for tactics, we would take over logistics, i.e., training Laos how to use our weapons. In practice, we recognize no line of demarcation. The French do, and resist our incursions at every turn.

Denied the right to be here, we have resorted to subterfuge which fools no one. The name of Brig. Gen. John Heintzges, chief U.S. adviser, has temporarily disappeared from our Army lists. So have those of his staff. All wear civilian clothing, and call themselves Mister. This masquerade is embarrassing, and the French exploit it.

From the start — lacking professional supervision — our military aid program was chaotic. We flew in hundreds of tons of the latest equipment. Artillery, recoilless rifles and bazookas arrived for a fledgling army which had never fired a machine gun. Heintzges is still trying to locate and inventory it. No one knows how many millions of dollars were involved; conveniently, these figures are classified.

Only recently did the army get around to building a rifle range. I attended the opening ceremonies. Everything — artillery, bazookas, tanks, machine guns, mortars and recoilless rifles — was fired. The hills echoed. Yet little or none of this could be used in the Red-infested jungles. As it was, many targets escaped unmarked. The explanation: Their commanding general was watching and the boys were "nervous."

Today the Laos Army has 24 battalions. Twelve are "regular," and 12 are "volunteers," the latter, in effect, National Guard troops. They cannot be shifted from their home province. They were never intended to fight a foreign enemy. Their task is civil administration.

The army is the only cohesive force inside Laos. It provides the only communication with remote villages. But it serves its own — not the civil government's — interests.

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LAOS

Jan. 20, 1960

NCSAVAN SAYS LAOS AND DRV CAN COEXIST

Vientiane, Laotian Home Service, in Laotian, Jan. 19, 1960, 1130 GMT--B  
(UNCLASSIFIED)

(Text) Brig. Gen. Phoumi Nosavan, minister of national defense, has stated at a press conference that Laos and the DRV can still coexist. The minister of defense pointed out that Laos is a small country and it is therefore impossible for it to declare war against any nation; that it is in the interests of Laos to uphold the policy of peaceful neutrality.

It is only the DRV which has up to now created tension between the two countries, he said. It was the DRV which instigated the rebellion in Laos and created tension and disorder along the border. Coexistence with the DRV, therefore depends on the DRV attitude, he observed. The general also mentioned the recent kidnaping of Laotian residents from Sam Neua Province.

(Editor's Note: Vientiane home service in French, reporting this interview, adds the following: However, he added that in general, North Vietnam had practically ceased its provocations and that the tone of the Hanoi radio broadcasts had clearly become less aggressive than during past months, particularly during the days when the high command of the Laotian armed forces "had to take over current affairs.")

Regarding the situation within the country, General Phoumi stated that the disturbances in rural areas had decreased during the past several weeks. He said that this might be because the former Pathet Lao group was in favor of the present government; it could also be because the government had given instructions to prepare and hold a new general election.

Asked by correspondents whether the Neo Lao Hak Xat party would be allowed to participate in the election, General Phoumi stated that although certain leaders of the party were still under detention, the Neo Lao Hak Xat party had never been abolished or dissolved; therefore no way is open to prevent the party from submitting its candidates and participating in the forthcoming general election campaign. It is also rather difficult for the present government to issue an order to dissolve the said political party, he pointed out.

The present government (wishes to see harmony and unity among all Laotian people throughout the country?). Asked about his personal opinion on the matter, General Phoumi stated that the army always believes that if all political parties, or as many as possible of such political parties in Laos, should participate in an election, it would be clear proof that the election was a just and peaceful one.

NEW AMBASSADOR TO LAOS

MR. J. M. ADDIS

Mr. J.M. Addis, until recently head of the southern department of the Foreign Office, has been appointed Ambassador to Laos, in succession to Mr. A.H. Lincoln.

Our Diplomatic Correspondent writes:-

The appointment of Mr. Addis to Vientiane means that the Foreign Office will have there one of its most experienced Chinese experts at a time when the position in Laos may possibly be the key to an improvement or deterioration of the situation in the Far East.

Mr. Addis served in Nanking and later in Peking from 1947 to 1951, and as Counsellor and at times Charge d'Affaires in Peking from 1954 to 1957.

(the TIMES (London) Thursday, 28 January 1960)