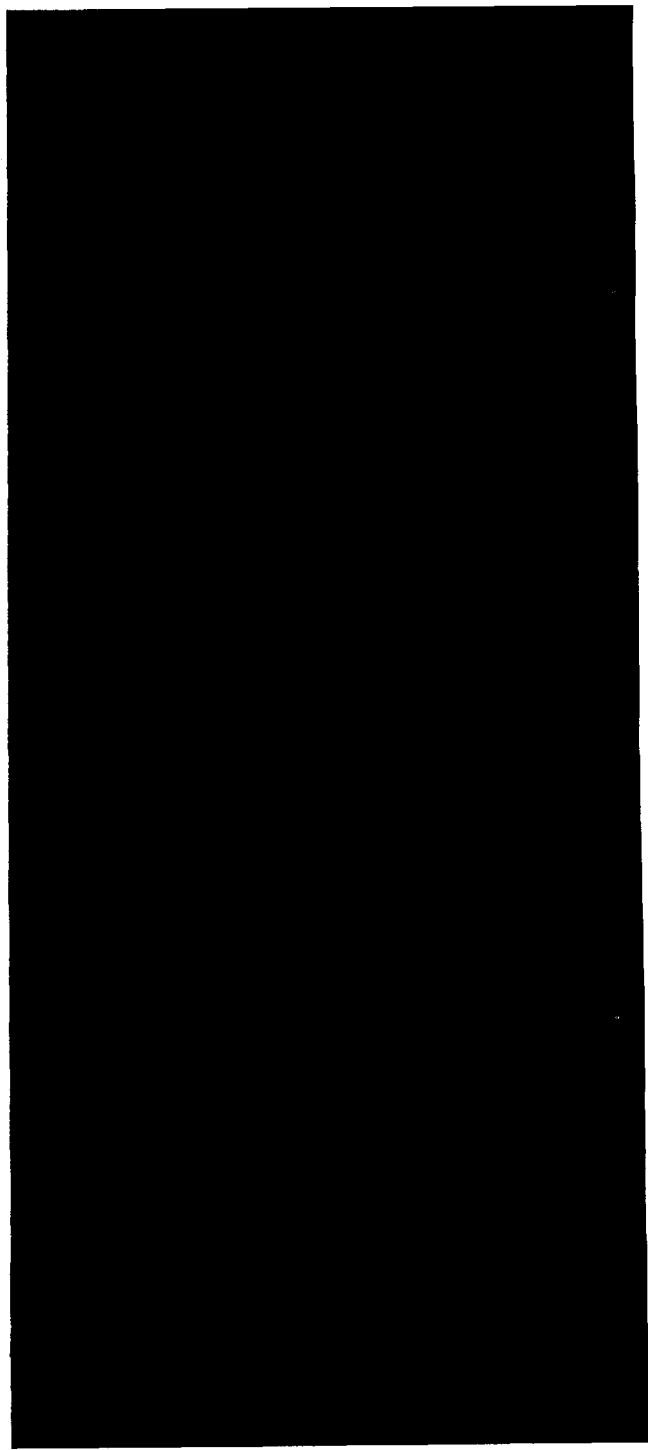


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Remarks:			
<p style="text-align: center;">OS has no record of the attached incident, nor does it have a record of Charles Elboth and <u>Ruben Nacosta</u>.</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 10px auto;"> <p>APPROVED FOR RELEASE <input type="checkbox"/> DATE: 22-Oct-2009</p> </div>			
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Laos Drug Curbs Go Into Effect

By TAMMY ARBUCKLE

VIENTIANE — The Laotian government this week took its first concrete steps against the opium and heroin trade here which, informed sources say, is playing an increasingly significant role in world drug traffic now Turkey opened out.

Laos attracted a comprehensive eight-article law Monday against trading in, manufacture and transport of opium and its derivatives, including heroin.

Passed in August

Taking cognizance of Laos' large tribal population, which was split long in the mountains and jungles beyond effective government control, the law provides for permits to grow and take opium to be issued to Laos on a temporary basis in areas where opium has been grown for generations. But it outlines penalties for infringement of permit regulations. The latter possibility can not be said to be aimed at tribes-

men's opium reaching other areas of Laos and the outside world.

This drug law, first of its kind in Laos, was passed by the Lao national assembly in August and ratified by King Savang Vatthana in September after strong U.S. diplomatic representation.

American officials here express satisfaction with the new law, particularly the parts covering transport of opium and derivatives. U.S. officials are unsure whether heroin is manufactured on a large scale here or whether the morphine base is sent from here to Thailand for processing to heroin. They believe, however, most morphine base is produced in upper Burma's Shan State, and in North Thailand, not in Laos, and that Laos is more important as a transportation route than as a producer of heroin or morphine. The latter possibility can not be totally discounted, however.

"The new law covers all these eventualities," said a U.S. source said.

Opium Burned

"Getting a law passed was the first step, American official sources said. "Without a law against drugs nobody could be arrested before." Laos, however, has many laws on its books which are not enforced and the most difficult part remains to come — the drug law is enforced.

On Sunday afternoon, the day before the drug bill became law, the Lao government sent through all the nation's public market places

In front of crowds of Lao, Vietnamese and Chinese the Lao police publicly burned 100 pounds of raw opium, 15 pounds of heroin and over some marijuana. The opium was confiscated from a Lao army sergeant and a Chinese official. The Lao army sergeant was arrested in an American village near the border with Vietnam. The Chinese was taken from a Cambodian village near the Laos border of Phnom Penh.

Arrests Made

Police also produced several opium addicts, who claimed to have been cured at a monastery in Thailand and described to crowds what it felt like to smoke opium. Inclusion of marijuana in the burning, however, underlined the true nature of the demonstration, for marijuana is a common cooking ingredient here and often Laos is a problem.

An American official drew the conclusion that the stadium demonstration was "a symbol of concern by the Lao government for the spread of drugs, particularly poor quality 'bus heroin' among their own people rather than aimed at keeping heroin from the international market and U.S. troops in Vietnam.

The problem with enforcing the law here, according to well-informed sources, is large amounts of money and many high-ranking persons are involved in heroin trafficking. Even across rumors have been relatively high-ranking when coming from Laos.

Official Seized

Chao Somsakone, Lao National Assembly vice president, was caught by French police at the Paris airport with a suitcase full of heroin. For political reasons, the French released him. Lao government ministers welcomed him back into the fold in Vientiane and tried to laugh the whole thing off.

Circumstantial evidence points to a figure close to Lao government leaders having been involved with heroin cargo sent abroad from Laos early in September. His safety is assured, however, for the cargo was put in the name of a small Vientiane merchant, and

transported in another person's aircraft.

The small-time merchant had to agree to take responsibility in case of loss of the cargo while the transporter and hauler overtook most of the profits.

Officials' Role Seen

Use of government-owned Lao airlines aircraft and Royal Lao Air Force planes in suspected transport of opium and heroin would also indicate high-ranking involvement. If heroin is in fact being prepared from morphine base on Laos soil the very nature of the chemical operation means that high-ranking cooperation is needed.

Informed sources say "It's a big operation." Well-informed sources say the chemical called acetic anhydride is needed in large quantities to manufacture pure heroin out of morphine base. This chemical, which is normally used in small quantities for plastics manufacture, acts as a purifier and catalyst during heroin manufacture. Other ingredients needed also as perfume, acetone, ether and sodium carbonate, along with lots of clear water, ether from mountain streams or distilled, lots of electricity and equipment such as grout, etc.

Although the Lao jungle is vast, these requirements provide certain limitations and mean location of a heroin factory cannot remain secret from army commanders and local people.

In Laos strangers are noticed immediately in sparsely settled areas. A factory would have no chance of escaping notice of local warlords and eventually of government ministers or high-ranking officials.

Informed sources said heroin produced in either Laos or Thailand was the same weight as French-produced heroin but had twice the volume of the French product.

HEROIN SMOKERS SEIZED IN LAOS

VIENTIANE — Lao police last night arrested 62 persons, including two Americans, on charges of smoking heroin.

The charges were made after a Lao narcotics bureau sweep on seven days for heroin-smokers in Vientiane.

The raids were the first since Laos activated anti-drug laws Nov. 11. Smokers use extremely pure heroin which is mixed into a marijuana cigarette.

Smoking causes addiction and because of the purity of Southeast Asia heroin, is a common form of heroin taking in Laos and Vietnam.

The two Americans were identified as Charles Elbert and Ralph MacCall. MacCall was not named. The 2 Americans were said to be travelers.