

NEW YORK TIMES
24 JAN 1973

CUM

**Strike by Pilots for the C.I.A.
In Laos Is Reportedly Averted**

Special to The New York Times

VIENTIANE, Laos, Jan. 23—A strike by airline pilots in Laos that would have severely impaired support of anti-Communist forces fighting there has apparently been averted.

The dispute involves Air America, a quasimilitary airline used by the United States Central Intelligence Agency in Laos to supply irregular troops, many of whom depend on parachuted or airlifted supplies.

A company spokesman said tonight that the pilots involved in Laotian operations had been ordered by their union organizer to call off the walkout, that had been scheduled to begin tonight at midnight.

The dispute apparently remained unsettled, but the local chapter of the Airline Pilots Association reportedly decided against a walkout at this time.

The spokesman said he did not know whether the strike would go into effect in the other areas of Asia where Air America operates, such as Taiwan, Japan, Thailand, Okinawa and South Vietnam.

In Laos, Air America oper-

ates 31 planes and 35 helicopters. It has 112 pilots stationed here, nearly all of them American citizens under contract to the company.

The pilots are seeking higher salaries and other benefits.

The airline also has six planes based at the nearby Udon Thani base in Thailand, including two C-130 transports, that are sometimes used in Laotian operations.

The United States withdrew direct military air and advisory support from Laos after the Geneva agreement of 1962, which theoretically ended the war here and neutralized the country.

But as the war expanded, the C.I.A. took over many of the functions normally assigned to military units, including, in some cases, the direct command of Laotian irregular units.

Laos is sparsely populated, mountainous, and has few roads or navigable waterways. During the fighting in the interior, especially near the Plaine des Jarres and toward the North Vietnamese frontier, units can be supplied only by air.

APPROVED FOR RELEASE
DATE: 28-Oct-2009