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THROUGH: INR/DDR - Mr. Mark
RSF/OD - Mr. Wolff

January 7, 1969

RSF/GE - Robert D. Hodgson

Marshall Green Memorandum of December 31, 1969

Assistant Secretary Green's Memorandum of December 31, 1969, which arrived in the GE mail on January 5, 1970, requests an up-dating of existing reports on the Laos - Vietnam boundary for targeting purposes.

On the afternoon of the 5th, REA informed me that a briefing would be held at 0930 of the 6th. I furnished Mr. Lyne with the data then available.

I enclose the basic data which have been compiled on the 5th and the 6th.

Attachments:

1. Analysis
2. Memo dated Feb. 10, 1967.
3. Memo dated March 28, 1969.
4. IBS NO. 35.
5. Maps.

cc: REA - Mr. Lyne

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STATUS OF THE LAOS - VIETNAM BOUNDARY

To the Geographer's best knowledge, the attached International Boundary Study No. 35 [Revised]: Laos - Viet-Nam Boundary. June 3, 1966 represents the latest juridical status of the boundary. Basically the study states the southern third of the boundary is delimited by a decree of the Indochinese Governor General; the northern two-thirds is known only from official French maps. However, it should be noted that Mark Pratt in ^{Vientiane} Vietiane A-335 of June 8, 1966 stated that the French Government had given to the Royal Lao Government "...the text of various documents, including the Dalat Agreement on Indochinese frontiers." The Dalat Agreement is the key, as I understand it, to all boundaries on the Indochinese peninsula which were not delimited by specific decrees of the Governor General. In effect, the agreement determined how the Service Geographique de l'Indochine would align the undelimited boundaries on its official maps. The French Government in 1960 refused to give this document to me but did state that the results, and the official French position, were shown on the 1:100,000 maps of the SGI. These maps have been utilized for the compilation of the U.S. boundary representation at all scales.

A serious effort should be made to obtain a copy of the Dalat Agreement and other pertinent French documents obtained by the RLG. These documents could answer most, if not all, of our open questions.

On the question of disputes along the frontier, we have reexamined our files

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For the sake of simplicity, I have divided the boundary into three parts:

- a) From China to 20° North latitude;
- b) From 20° North to the Keo Nua Pass; and
- c) From Keo Nua Pass to the Demilitarized Zone.

The "disputes", i.e. differences in boundary alignment, which we uncovered are marked on the attached series of JOG(G) 1:250,000 maps. The "disputed" areas are approximate although drawn as accurately as the scale of the captured maps permit. Places, which are located correctly on the JOGs, as confirmed by captured maps, have been marked in red. These villages and hamlets are situated correctly politically as well as relatively to the boundary. They merely serve to confirm the plotted position of the Lao-North Vietnamese boundary.

a) China to 20° North

A captured North Vietnamese topographic map with an aeronautical overprint, Ban Do Hang Khong Viet-Nam, Ty Le 1:1,000,000, (SO.1) Hong Ha, undated, covers the area from 20° to 24° North and from 101° to 107° East. The map has been compared with the JOG series and discrepancies noted on the attached JOGs. From the north, the first difference in alignment is noted at 102° 31' East and 22° 02' North. A small circular, mountainous area of Laos is included within Vietnam. However, no significant road or trail pattern occurs in the area and the "dispute", if indeed it is not due to cartographic generalization or error, can be disregarded.

The second difference occurs at 102° 51' East and 21° 45' North.

A long finger of Laos projecting into North Vietnam is eliminated by the

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captured map. The "amputation" of this salient is easily explained. The boundary for most of this region follows the water divide. Old surveys showed the Nam Henn beginning about $21^{\circ} 45'$ North; the boundary, as a result, passed immediately to the north of this point. When the United States photographed this area for the 1:50,000 series, compilers discovered that the stream actually began about 3 miles to the north of the previously plotted position. Since the boundary followed the divide, it was determined that on future maps the stream should remain in Laos. The boundary salient resulted.

The third "dispute" is situated to the southwest of Dien Bien Phu at $102^{\circ} 47'$ East and $21^{\circ} 13'$ North. The North Vietnamese map roughly doubles the size of the salient which extends into Laos to the Nam Houa. It should be emphasized, however, that the extension does not reach Route 19. The road remains in Laos as shown on the JOG series.

The fourth area of difference straddles the intersection of the boundary and the Song Ha at $104^{\circ} 29'$ East and $20^{\circ} 31'$ North. The SGI 1:100,000 maps showed the boundary extending eastward along the Song Ha for approximately 4 miles. The North Vietnamese map, however, carries the boundary directly across the river, continuing north-northeastward to the ridge line of the Pha Luong. About 40 square miles of territory is cut off from Laos. The main road, Route No. 6 passes to the west and north of the "disputed territory" and is not affected by it; a subsidiary trail along the Song Ha does traverse the disputed area.

The fifth difference in alignment is noted due south of the Song Ha. The North Vietnamese alignment is situated about 4 miles to the south of and parallel to the alignment shown on US maps; nearly 80 square miles of territory are involved. A connecting road between Route No. 65 and No. 154 is affected by the "dispute".

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To the south and east, centered on 104° 39' East and 20° 15' North is the sixth area of "dispute" as determined by a comparison of the two map series. The area, which is directly on the border crossing of Route 65 measures approximately 4 miles in an east-west direction and 12 miles in a north-south direction. The approximately 50 square miles disputed area places nearly 5 miles of Route 65 in North Vietnam.

b) 20° North to Keo Hua Pass

No evidence has been uncovered to change our analysis of this sector as stated in our Memorandum of March 28, 1969 to EA-Mark Pratt. A copy of the Memorandum is attached.

However, to assure myself, I rechecked the 1:200,000 captured map mentioned in the Memo. The small confirmed boundary segment is marked in red on JOG sheet NE 48-2. An examination of the map shows that the boundary is very near the crossing of Route No. 7 and it does confirm that the North Vietnamese have not made any extensive claim in this region. Places shown on the map to be in Laos and in North Vietnam have been marked in red (Note: the eastern margin of the captured map was 104°; the southern 19° 20' North). Hong Het is confirmed to be in Laos in spite of the British report.

No other evidence, other than the small-scale captured school map of North Vietnamese origin has been located for the remainder of the sector. Fortunately, no major road crosses the frontier between Route 7 and Route 8 at the Keo Hua Pass.

c) Keo Hua Pass to the DMZ

The Keo Hua Pass is marked with a black arrow on JOG sheet NE 48-7.



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The juridical basis of the frontier from the pass south to the Demilitarized Zone is quite clear. The basis is stated in our Memorandum of February 10, 1967 to RFE-Mr. Fred Greene. A copy of this analysis is attached.

In the correspondence exchanged between Laos and North Vietnam, the disputed triangle west of the DMZ was stressed over and over. This region has been marked on JOG sheets NE 48-15 and 16. However, the small-scale school map indicates a claim to a wider area extending parallel to the border from the Keo Nua Pass to the DMZ. The average width of the claim is approximately 10 kilometers. It is our considered opinion that this area should be discounted for the following reasons:

- 1) the French decree is very specific as to the alignment of the boundary;
- 2) Official maps, including the Geneva Agreement annexes substantiate this alignment;
- 3) In the exchange of correspondence, the villages and hamlets claimed by North Vietnam all fall into the triangular area with one exception. This village, as noted, is a few miles to the north of the triangle and close to the Laos-Vietnam boundary as plotted on the JOG sheets.

The triangular area, of course, can be treated as disputed territory in view of the diplomatic correspondence. Mark Pratt, in the cited Vietiane airgram, wrote that South Vietnamese officials had indicated support of the North Vietnamese position on the triangle. However, cartographically, the South Vietnamese Government has agreed completely with the US representation of the boundary between Laos and North Vietnam. Furthermore, no problem of any significance has ever been raised on the location of this boundary by South Viet-Nam.

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