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NSC BRIEFING

19 October 1960

LAOS

- I. King Savang shows signs of trying his hand at resolving the crisis in Laos.
- A. General Ouane, the armed forces commander, has told [REDACTED] 25X1A
25X1A [REDACTED] in Luang Prabang that the King will soon announce he is taking over as supreme commander.
- B. While the details of the plan are obscure, Savang apparently has in mind setting up a transitional military government.
- II. The first step in this plan apparently already taken. Ouane has reportedly tendered his resignation as defense secretary, a move designed to impel Souvanna Phouma's resignation.
- III. Plan also includes diversionary attacks by Phoumi's forces southeast of Paksane against Kong Le's paratroopers.
- A. It is hoped this will draw the bulk of Kong Le's forces from Vientiane, thus making feasible an attempt by infantrymen loyal to Ouane to take over control of Vientiane.
- IV. What action Souvanna takes in response to this scheme is of pivotal importance.
- A. If he resigns, lines will be clearly drawn, with legality back on the anti-Communists' side.
- B. If as now seems likely he decides to stick it out, the legal situation might be sufficiently murky to give an air of justification to any Sino-Soviet bloc support for Souvanna.

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1. Ouane claims that Souvanna is already asking the Soviet ambassador to seek the return of the International Control Commission to Laos.
- C. It is conceivable Souvanna might refuse to recognize the validity of any proclamation by the King on the ground that the King is merely the captive of forces rebelling against the legal government.
- V. It is possible that the King would not go through with his plan if Souvanna does not resign.
- A. King has always taken a very restricted view of the throne's role in politics.
- VI. Pathet Lao, in current negotiations for over-all settlement with Souvanna regime, have demanded a coalition government and integration of armed elements.
- A. These probably represent maximum bargaining position, to be trimmed if necessary as talks proceed.
- B. Pathets have also just agreed to turn back Sam Neua province to government, thus fulfilling precondition set by Souvanna for serious substantive talks.
1. Unlikely, however, that government control of province will be more than nominal.

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