

25X1



7 January 1961

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD:

**SUBJECT: North Vietnamese Involvement in
the Fighting in Laos**

1. Although hard confirmatory evidence of North Vietnamese involvement in recent military operations by the Kong Le-Pathet Lao forces is necessarily difficult to obtain, circumstantial evidence and persistent reports [redacted] create the strong presumption that at the very least North Vietnamese supervisory personnel, technicians and gun crews are operating in Laos.

25X1

2. Prior to the fall of Vientiane there were several reports that North Vietnamese gunners had been flown in by Soviet IL-14's along with the howitzers and mortars provided the Kong Le forces in response to an appeal for assistance by Quinim Pholsana, information minister in the Savanna Phouma government. The accuracy of the fire from these weapons during Kong Le's five-day defense of Vientiane has been judged by American military observers intimately acquainted with the Lao army to be far beyond the capabilities of the indigenous artillery units.

3. During the period of Kong Le's slow withdrawal northward, there were persistent reports from Kong Le troops who surrendered to the government that a sizeable group of North Vietnamese paratroopers--according to some as many as 300--were dropped by Soviet IL-14's in addition to military supplies and food. Although North Vietnam is not known to possess any regular paratroop units, it is within the realm of possibility that a limited number of paramilitary operatives have been trained to jump.

25X1



4. A helicopter which crash-landed in Thailand on 17 December has been positively identified as a Soviet Mi-4 helicopter. The ten passengers who escaped into the jungle have been reported by Thai border police to have been of Asian extraction, most likely either Vietnamese or Sisk Thai.

5. Since mid-December, [redacted]

[redacted] North Vietnamese battalions were involved in the attack on the government outpost of Hong Net, just inside the Laotian border with North Vietnam. [redacted]

[redacted] a North Vietnamese prisoner dressed in a Pathet Lao uniform was captured near Hong Net. He was subsequently identified as a former Pathet Lao soldier who had defected to the government. Communist radio broadcasts attributed the capture of Hong Net on New Year's weekend to the Second Pathet Lao Battalion, but it would appear logical to suppose that North Vietnamese units may have assisted in its capture, after which they could easily withdraw the few miles to the border. However, Lao government claims that from five to seven battalions were involved are probably exaggerated.

6. The speed and efficiency with which the Kong Le-Pathet Lao forces took the Plaine des Jarres, Xieng Khouang town and Hong Net suggest a degree of coordination and advance planning well beyond the capabilities of either the Pathet Lao or Kong Le. There thus arises a strong suspicion that the operations may have been directed on the spot by non-Laotian Communist personnel.

7. Attached are illustrative examples of the type of reporting being received on the subject of North Vietnamese and other Communist involvement in Laos.

25X1

25X1

by

11 Dec 60

[redacted]
60 North Vietnamese artillery men were landed at the Vientiane airfield along with Soviet-provided artillery and mortars.

25X1

15 Dec 60

[redacted] 5-man gun crews in unfamiliar uniforms taking over weapons as they were unloaded.

25X1

15 Dec 60

Two American liaison officials with Lao army state accuracy of Kong Le artillery they had just witnessed in Vientiane far beyond Lao capabilities.

17 Dec 60

[redacted]
a number of North Vietnamese soldiers were airdropped at Phou Hong and Ban Naha, north of Vientiane.

25X1

18 Dec 60

[redacted]
that North Vietnamese gun crews with Kong Le force about 35 miles north of Vientiane.

25X1

18 Dec 60

[redacted]
one company of North Vietnamese artillery men airdropped north of Vientiane.

25X1

19 Dec 60

[redacted]
government troops west of Hong were
killed under mortar fire from one
battalion of North Vietnamese troops
and associated Pathet Lao elements.

25X1

19 Dec 60

[redacted] identified North Vietnamese prisoner captured near Hong Hot on 12 December as a captain in the 6th Infantry Regiment who had been in contact with Pathet Lao for several years.

25X1

- 10 Dec 60** Lao officer who recently surrendered stated three Kong Le artillery pieces were under the command of a North Vietnamese artillery captain and each manned by three Vietnamese gunners.
- 20 Dec 60** Interrogation Thai villagers produced report that ten men in Soviet helicopter which crash landed asked for directions to Pak Lay, Laos. Nine said to speak northern Thai dialect, one Lao.
- 24 Dec 60** General Quane states three North Vietnamese battalions at Nong Het, two in Nam Noun area.
- 24 Dec 60** Lao volunteer company to north of Vang Vieng reports one company of North Vietnamese paratroopers there.
- 25 Dec 60** Another surrendered [redacted] officer states Kong Le has single engine reconnaissance plane with Soviet pilot, as does Pathet leader Prince Souphanouvong. [redacted]
- 25 Dec 60** [redacted] area state 72 North Vietnamese at Vang Vieng, headed by colonel who acts as advisor to Kong Le-Pathet Lao.
- 31 Dec 60** General Phoumi et al state five North Vietnamese battalions moving from Nong Het toward Plaine des Jarres. Kong Le drive from west supported by Soviet airdrops.
- 3 Jan 61** Information from American personnel recently in the Plaine des Jarres area indicated unquestionable Vietnamese participation with the Pathet Lao in latest and widespread uprising and

25X1

25X1
25X1

25X1

25X1

(3 Jan 61)

professionally conducted military attacks. They say that the Plains des Jarres was taken by mobile task force delivering accurate fire over whole distance from Muong Soui which they made in one day clearing any resistance quickly. Attack followed 2 diversionary attacks at Heng Het and Ban Ban and evidenced an impetus and/or command leadership and co-ordination of a caliber never before observed in Pathet Lao or, for that matter, Lao Army. American personnel stated missionaries and other Lao speaking personnel increasingly meeting individuals in area who speak no Lao and not responsive queries.

Page Denied