

Declassified in Part - Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2012/08/22 :
CIA-RDP79T00472A000400010023-2

Page Denied

Declassified in Part - Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2012/08/22 :
CIA-RDP79T00472A000400010023-2

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

OCI No. 0339/65

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Office of Current Intelligence
22 January 1965

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Soviet Draft Message on Laos

1. The 19 January Soviet note, in the form of a draft message from the Geneva cochairmen to the US and the three Laotian factions, provides further evidence of Moscow's concern that recently publicized US air strikes in Laos may call forth Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese counteractions which could lead to a dangerous military escalation. For the first time since the Soviets threatened to renounce their co-chairman responsibilities for Laos last July, Moscow has resorted to the draft message device as a means of focusing international attention on Laos. Following previous practice, the Soviets published their draft without waiting for a British response.

2. In addition to expressing support for Souphannouvong's routine call on 17 December for a new Geneva conference, the Soviet draft urges the leaders of all three Laotian "political forces" to refrain from actions which would aggravate the situation and complicate the tripartite Lao negotiations in Paris. This could be interpreted as an oblique warning to the Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese to avoid moves which might provoke greater US intervention in Laos.

3. Moscow's attempts to inhibit the actions of both sides in the Laos conflict may have been prompted by a belief that the North Vietnamese and Chinese are developing a public justification for renewed offensive action in Laos, possibly coordinated with increased military pressures in South Vietnam. Propaganda and official statements over the past month have at least implied that Hanoi and Peiping would regard US air strikes against "liberated

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

CONFIDENTIAL

areas" in Laos as a move to "extend the war to all of Indochina." The North Vietnamese foreign minister's 26 December reply to Souphannouvong, for example, hinted that Hanoi might openly disregard the Geneva Accords to help the Laotians resist US war-expansion moves. He asserted that although North Vietnam has always observed the Geneva agreements, it is "resolved not to let the US scrap those agreements." Chinese Communist Foreign Minister Chen I's 31 December message to the Pathet Lao leader charged that the US was responsible for "collusion" between Saigon and Vientiane in launching "joint military operations" in Laos. He warned that China "will stand by the Laotian people and give them all-out support and assistance." Peiping's People's Daily comment of 17 January on the shooting down of the two US fighter-bombers asserted that the air strikes are part of a US plan to extend the war and declared that "what is happening in South Vietnam will be repeated in other parts of Indochina" if the US insists on expanding its aggression.

4. Moscow's more vigorous public support for Hanoi was evident in Gromyko's letters to the North Vietnamese and Chinese foreign ministers supporting their recent protests against US actions in "involving troops of its South Korean puppets in the aggressive war against the South Vietnamese people." Gromyko stated that the USSR, "as before, will render every support and assistance" to the people of Vietnam.

CONFIDENTIAL

Page Denied