

PRESS GUIDANCE -- March 7, 1972Laos

If asked:

CIA and Opium in Laos - Baltimore Sun, March 7, 1972

QUESTION: Has CIA been given assignment of collecting information on narcotics trafficking in Laos?

ANSWER: I think it goes without saying that intelligence gathering on illicit narcotics trafficking constitutes a high priority for the U.S. Government at this time. The CIA, as a member of the Cabinet Committee on International Narcotics Control, has a legitimate role to play in the gathering and evaluating such information. If you are interested in learning more about what the U.S. Government is attempting to do in Southeast Asia and throughout the world to stem the flow of illicit narcotics to our troops and to the continental United States, I would be happy to arrange a briefing with the Office of the Senior Adviser for International Narcotics Matters.

QUESTION: Did US have anything to do with fire which destroyed a heroin refinery last year?

ANSWER: No.

QUESTION: Did US have anything to do with ambushing opium caravans?

ANSWER: Competing opium traffickers have been ambushing each other's caravans for years. We have no information indicating US involvement.

QUESTION: Has US Mission condoned narcotics trafficking in Laos?

ANSWER: No, but until RLG passed a narcotics control law last September, there were no legal sanctions against traffic. Since September, Mission has assisted RLG in setting up a special narcotics control agency and several important seizures have been made.

QUESTION: How much will US narcotics control program cost?

ANSWER: USAID has proposed \$722,000 project for FY 73.

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