

Laos 449A

Memorandum From the [] Directorate of Plans
(Colby) to the Director of Central Intelligence (McCone)

undated [April 19, 1963].

Source: Central Intelligence Agency, DCI-McCone Files,
[] ~~Secret~~. Sent via the
Deputy Director (Plans).

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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- EO 12356, Sec. 1.3 (a) (_____)
A/CDC/SR by SM 4, 27, 92

APPROVED FOR RELEASE

DATE 30 DEC 92

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

VIA: Deputy Director (Plans)

SUBJECT: Presidential Meeting on Laos, 19 April 1963

PARTICIPANTS: The President, The Secretary of Defense, The Attorney General, Undersecretary Harriman, Assistant Secretary Hilsman, Assistant Secretary Nitze, Mr. McGeorge Bundy, Mr. Michael Forrestal

General Carter, [] Mr. Colby

1.3(a)(4)

1. General Carter gave a briefing on the situation in Laos.
2. In answer to the President's question, Mr. Hilsman stated that the present difficulty comes from an escalation of the tension between the Pathet Lao and the neutralists.
3. The President asked what diplomatic action was in course or contemplated. Governor Harriman and Assistant Secretary Hilsman stated that we had gone to both the British and ICC and had supported Souvanna Phouma in placing clear responsibility for the present situation on the Pathet Lao. They stated that the Department is considering a direct approach to the Soviets, including possibly the dispatch of Governor Harriman for a personal discussion with Chairman Khrushchev, but they want to be very sure what pressure points we have to apply to the Soviets before sending him. They pointed out that the Soviets themselves have very slight leverage

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EO 12356, Sec. 1.3 (a) (

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on the DRV and the Pathet Lao, as they are currently giving them little aid. The major danger from the Soviet and the Communist point of view is one of reinvolvement of the United States in the situation and they consider that this possibility could be suggested to the Soviets. The President asked whether we would not appear to be bargaining from a weak position by sending Governor Harriman, to which the answer was the contrary, that the Soviets would take this as an indication of our strong feelings. Also brought in was the importance of taking some action which indicated to our friends and the neutralists that they were supported, in order to maintain their morale.

4. Mr. Bundy stated that any approach to the Soviets should be viewed in context with ^{the} currently ~~the~~ scheduled presentation of United States and British views on nuclear testing. Khrushchev is returning to Moscow this weekend at which time the British and the United States Ambassadors will probably see him on this subject. It was suggested that they might add orally our strong concern over Laos.

5. With respect to possible United States military action, Mr. Hilsman indicated that the State Department is considering as a minimum the return of the White Star teams. A further step might be sending United States forces to Thailand. At this point, Secretary McNamara reiterated DOD's recommendation that United States troops not be sent to Laos, and various other contingencies which had been discussed. If troops were sent to Thailand, he stated that they should be air elements, not Marines. He stated that consideration was being given to moving a carrier task force into the Gulf of Tonkin off Hanoi as a direct threat. At the minimum, it was suggested that we might alert some of our forces in order to indicate the seriousness of our intentions.

6. The President then stated that he wished to have a National Security Council meeting on 20 April, at which the Department of Defense should propose steps which could be taken in the military

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field and the Department of State recommend various steps in the diplomatic field. He has asked that Ambassador Llewellyn Thompson return from the West Coast for this meeting in order that it may consider the Soviet reactions and attitudes.

7. On at least two occasions during the meeting the President indicated his belief that Soviet activities in Cuba should be considered as an element of the problem in Laos. He recognized that action against the Soviets in Cuba would not affect Laos directly but he did feel that the Soviets were continuing the type of harassment effort in Laos that we had stopped by the Cuban exiles and that the Soviets were not moving out of Cuba as we wished. He believed that there were perhaps direct steps we could take in Cuba, such as resumption of low-level reconnaissance, which would place pressure on the Soviets at a place where they were somewhat weaker as a concomitant action to pressures we might impose in the area of Laos.

[William E. Colby]

cc: DDCI

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