

**The original documents are located in Box 12, folder “Indochina - Laos” of the Ron Nessen Papers at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.**

### **Copyright Notice**

The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material. Ron Nessen donated to the United States of America his copyrights in all of his unpublished writings in National Archives collections. Works prepared by U.S. Government employees as part of their official duties are in the public domain. The copyrights to materials written by other individuals or organizations are presumed to remain with them. If you think any of the information displayed in the PDF is subject to a valid copyright claim, please contact the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

May 14, 1975

LAOS

Q. What are U.S. plans for evacuation, if any, from Laos? Will we be thinning out our non-essential Americans? How many Americans are there in Laos at present? What is the nature of the U.S. commitment to Laos?

A. We are reviewing the situation in Laos and the magnitude of our mission there. Instructions to that effect have gone out and we see no need now to take immediate action.

The U.S. has no plans to evacuate Americans from Laos at this time. Should the occasion warrant an evacuation, we are prepared to do so. As to your question on the number of American citizens in Laos, there are approximately 1,000, of whom roughly 150 are private American citizens and their dependents. The remainder are officials and their dependents.

[ONLY IF ASKED: We have no formal treaty with Laos, though we have supported the coalition government as the best means of maintaining peace in Laos.]

FYI ONLY: The U.S. Embassy in Laos has reported its judgment that though volatile, the situation in Vientiane does not require implementation of emergency evacuation measures. Nor are such measures deemed necessary elsewhere in Laos (except in Pakse where civil unrest has prompted the departure of a small number of U.S. dependents and non-essential personnel).



LAOS

1. Background: Student agitators in Savannakhet have occupied the AID compound, and they are still holding hostage three of its American employees and the area's rightist provincial governor. We have reports that representatives of the Joint Commission to Implement the Agreement has been sent to Savannakhet to negotiate the release of the hostages, who are unharmed according to reports.

No Americans have been seized during the demonstrations in Luang Prabang, but the AID compound there has been thoroughly vandalized and a number of local business establishments looted.

The U. S. Charge has registered a strong protest with both Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma and his Pathet Lao deputy, Phoumi, over the incidents in Savannakhet and Luang Prabang, and has demanded the immediate release of the three American hostages.

2. In response to questions on an American evacuation from Laos, the State Department spokesman said yesterday:

Obviously, we are watching the situation closely; and we are concerned about the safety of Americans, particularly those in areas outside of Vientiane. In fact, I understand that most, if not all, Americans have been withdrawn from the outlying areas, except for the three AID officials being detained in Savannakhet.

As part of this process, the Embassy in Vientiane is reviewing the number of its staff members needed in the light of the current situation; and during the next several weeks the size of the staff will be reduced.

It is important to reemphasize that no evacuation is planned at this time. (Refer to guidance of 5/14/75.)

\* \* \* \* \*



- Q. What are we doing to secure the release of the American citizens in Savannakhet?
- A. We have been in very close touch with the Laotian Government officials, including the Prime Minister, and they have sent officials to Savannakhet to help obtain the release of the hostages.
- Q. How much assistance have we provided Laos this year ?
- A. For FY 1975 there is \$28 million appropriated for military aid and \$33 million appropriated for economic aid.
- Q. Is aid continuing? Will our aid program be cut significantly?
- A. As is normal in a changing situation, such as this one, all our programs are under review. At present our military and economic programs are under review and are continuing on a restricted basis

FYI: (We don't have detailed breakdown on restrictions, though much of our aid is in the form of food and clothing. Refer specific questions to A.I.D.)



## American Detained in Laos

### Background

US AID official Michael Rozel was detained in Laos Thursday by Lao officials who claimed, "his work was not finished." Rozel is one of the officials charged with closing out the Laotian payrolls and the Lao Government thought he was trying to leave without completing the paperwork for disbursement. In fact the opposite is true. All the relevant papers to close out the AID Mission had been sent to Washington and Rozel was coming here to finish his disbursement task.

The issue is quite complex and we are advised that all questions on this issue should simply be referred to State.



R N

## LAOS

### Background

Our embassy in Vientiane reports this morning that 18 Americans left Laos today. The total number of official Americans that still remain in Laos is 268. State has told our embassy to reduce the number of persons to under 50.

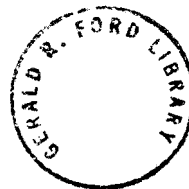
Negotiations between US officials, coalition government representatives, and Pathet Lao-inspired students and other demonstrators continued over the weekend in an effort to bring a halt to the week-long occupation of USAID facilities in and around Vientiane. An agreement was reached in principle between the US Charge Chapman and acting USAID Director Ramsey on the one hand, and Lao Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma, his Pathet Lao deputy Phoumi Vongvichit, and communist Economy Minister Soth Phetrasy on the other, wherein the US agreed to demonstrator demands that it:

- dissolve USAID in the provinces as well as in Vientiane;
- withdraw all American employees of USAID from Laos as soon as possible;
- turn over all USAID equipment and facilities to the Lao government, in accordance with the provisions of past bilateral assistance agreements, by no later than the end of the current fiscal year (June 30, 1975).

US officials also agreed to pay the back salaries of all Lao USAID employees as soon as demonstrators permit Americans access to the USAID compound where payrolls are kept. As part of the agreement, the protesters are to disperse from the compound, and the two US Marine guards and one American civilian employee holed up inside the compound's headquarters buildings are to be released.

The agreement, however, has not yet been accepted by the demonstrators.

MORE



AMERICANS IN LAOS

Q. What is the fate of the (12) Americans detained in Savannakhet, Laos?

A. The Americans are safe and unharmed, but are <sup>restricted</sup> ~~confined~~ *in their activity* ~~to their homes~~. We are in frequent touch with the Laotian government on this matter, and they have assured us they are sending high level officials to Savannakhet to discuss the release of the Americans quickly. For further details, I would refer you to the State Department.



- 1) State has had confirmation that Americans have been taken out of Savannakhet, and officials are notifying the families.
  - 2) Letter to Buchen went out between April 21 and 25.
- for Ron's F. Y. I

LAOSBACKGROUND:

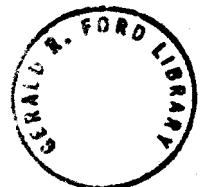
Coalition ministers are in Savannakhet negotiating the release of the Americans there. Expectations are that an agreement will be reached soon and the Americans will be able to depart over the weekend.

In Vientiane there has been no significant change in the situation. 200-300 demonstrators continued their occupation of principal USAID facilities. Several members of the Lao Cabinet expressed anger at the occupation, saying it would jeopardize requests for U.S. aid. The demonstrators have called for an end of the U.S. AID presence, but a continuation of U.S. assistance. (This is a very sensitive issue, and language based on State guidance should be followed carefully. Refer to State for details on specifics of the operation.

State guidance from yesterday on our assessment of the situation is as follows:

FUNSETH: I might just provide a few thoughts on our own assessment of, I think, obvious developments in Laos.

In the first place, the flight of many of the prominent political and military leaders of the Vientiane side of the coalition has caused this coalition to become more dominated by its Pathet Lao side. Pathet Lao military units that have entered the towns in the south in the last few days did so apparently without any resistance from the remaining Vientiane side military leaders. So it appears apparent that with a weakened Vientiane side the Pathet Lao are exercising more and more control over the direction the Lao Government takes.





Q. Does this change the American Government's attitude toward the coalition as a whole? Do we still accept this as a coalition government?

A. In the context of what I've just said, yes, a coalition government of sorts still exists.

And, on the continuing thinning out process:

FUNSETH: Given the continuing situation in Savannakhet and this most recent incident in Vientiane, we are reducing the number of U.S. government employees and their families in Laos. At the time of this briefing when I came in, I checked, (May 21) and we had received no report from the Embassy as to the actual number of people who have left.

And on American assistance to Laos, the following was stated and is reflected in our guidance of several days ago:

Q. At what point do American prohibitions on providing aid to a communist government come into play?

FUNSETH: I think it's premature to make that kind of an assessment. But you will recall, that I mentioned last week that our entire economic and military assistance programs to Laos were under review and that while under review, they are being conducted at a restricted level.



May 21, 1975

LAOS

Q. What is the current situation in Laos? What is the fate of Americans detained in Savannakhet; and what can you tell us about the USAID compound sealed off by agitators?

A. We are informed that the Americans detained in Savannakhet are safe though their freedom of activity has been restricted. We understand that the Americans and Lao employees in the USAID compound <sup>in Vientiane</sup> are unharmed but are confined there. We have protested to the Lao government about the lack of adequate security of our property and have expressed our concern for the safety of our people. We are in continuous contact with Lao officials who have assured us they will be taking measures to secure the release of the Americans. For more details on this I would refer you to the State Department.

---

Tanzania = wire reports are true.  
3 American students missing.  
Don't want to give out names (Next of kin)  
U.S. embassy in Toul will  
Tanzanian authorities,  
who say they will make  
an effort to locate them.

