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SECRET/EXDIS

Pres file
Wednesday, October 18, 1967
12:15 p. m.

Mr. President:

Herewith Arthur Goldberg's
account of Souvanna Phouma on a
bombing pause.

It will interest you in view of
your appointment with him on Friday,
October 20.

W. W. Rostow

USUN 1490, October 17, 1967

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WWRostow:rln

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E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4(b)
White House Guidelines, Feb. 24, 1983
By *rg* NARA, Date 11-4-91

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E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4

NEJ 24-449

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By , NARA, Date 10-23-64

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Tuesday, October 17, 1967

CABLE TO THE PRESIDENT FROM AMBASSADOR GOLDBERG (USUN, 1490)

SUBJECT: Souvanna Urges Vietnam Bombing Pause

In his October 16 meeting with Goldberg, Souvanna Phouma recommended the U. S. attempt a 15-day pause in bombing of North Vietnam to test the North Vietnamese willingness to come to the conference table.

Prince Souvanna Phouma opened the conversation by asking the U. S. position on the Vietnamese war. Goldberg drew his attention to the President's San Antonio speech and his own statement to the UN General Assembly. Goldberg underlined the formulation which the President had used by first making a flat statement of willingness to stop the bombing when this will lead to peace talks and then adding the assumption that North Vietnam would not take advantage. Goldberg emphasized the U. S. has always talked of both Geneva Conferences, 1954 and 1962, since the latter is directly concerned with the security of Laos. He said the heart of the problem was not cessation of bombing but unwillingness of the other side to abide by the Geneva Accords. U. S. policy is not based on gaining popularity abroad or at home.

Souvanna said the Laos experience is one chance of attaining peace. There is an obligation to try it. Souvanna would envisage that during the fortnight pause of military operations within Laos, including both Laos ground forces and bombing operations, would continue. He also believed continued military operations within South Vietnam could minimize dangers of the North Vietnamese taking advantage of the bombing pause. Souvanna also suggested that the U. S. reveal its plans and intentions to the Soviets in advance, and ask that Moscow intercede so that the pause would have a maximum chance of leading to peace talks.

Goldberg said it might be useful if Souvanna, in a conversation with the North Vietnamese representative in Vientiane, could ask strictly on his own if a 15-day pause would bring North Vietnam to the peace table. Similarly, Goldberg suggested Souvanna might ask the Soviets, also on his own, what action they could take in connection with such a pause proposal.

Souvanna assured Goldberg he would raise these questions as appropriate. He closed the conversation with emphasis on the importance of isolating Chinese Communist influence in the Far East by such actions.

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In a parenthetical conversation regarding the Pathet-Lao, Souvanna said the Soviets take the position that the Pathet are still part of the Laotian Government; they urge him to be patient, claiming the end of the Vietnamese war will solve Pathet problems. Souvanna insists in his talks with the Soviets that this relationship is non-existent, as recognized officially and publicly during his visits to Hanoi and Peking in 1964. Souvanna said the Pathet-Lao is the creation of, and controlled by, Hanoi; its real leaders are Kayson and Nouhak (phonetic). In answer to Goldberg's direct query, Souvanna said Hanoi's aims in Laos are not only territorial gain but also support of its military operations in South Vietnam. He considers this a continuation of the historic Vietnamese desire to command the entire Mekong Valley.