

PRECAUTIONS TO BE TAKEN AGAINST BURGLARIES AND PILFERINGS

Just as does America, Laos has its burglars and pilferers. The Security Department has researched this situation in Vientiane and offers the following household security tips to help keep you from being a victim, or, at least, to cut your losses:

A. Prevention of Inside Jobs (By Servants)

1. Before hiring a servant, check his references or take him to the U. S. Mission Guard Service (MGS), across the street from the U. S. Embassy, for file checking, fingerprinting, ID Card inspection, and interrogation. Have the servant bring with him a one-inch square photo of himself. Otherwise the service is free. The MGS will advise you if the servant has a bad record. To make this Servant Identification Program effective, you should notify the MGS of any bad experience you have with the servant later.

2. Put new locks on the drawers, wardrobes or closet doors inside which you keep your valuables. Then hide the keys.

3. Never leave your wallet, purse, jewelry, cash or checkbooks lying out. It is unwise and unfair to tempt a servant (or your own or neighbor's children) that much.

4. Instruct your servants not to allow their friends or unexpected visitors to enter the house during your absence. Such persons could be "spotters" for professional thieves.

5. When you decide to terminate a servant, pay him off (with an extra payday's salary) and send him away immediately. Do not give him two weeks notice, for instance, and keep him employed during that period. Instead of working for you, he will use the two weeks to brood and think of ways to get even.

B. Prevention of Outside Jobs (By Professional Burglars)

1. If possible, choose to live in a house or apartment with a high wall or a strong, high fence all the way around it. Apartments are more secure than houses, say the insurance companies.

2. Hire a nightwatchman. Arm him with a billy stick, ^{flashlight,} and a whistle. The U. S. Mission Guard Service can usually supply a night watchman for your home for limited periods of time at a rate of 35 cents per hour.

3. Rig some lights outside to illuminate the yard.

4. Get a watchdog for the yard, and train him to bark fiercely at (but not bite) strangers. A dog for inside the house would be helpful, also.

5. Lock all gates, doors and windows prior to retiring. Screens do not afford adequate protection since these can be easily and silently slit open.

6. At night, if you normally keep your bedroom door closed, you should lock it.

7. Install bells or alarms, and do not oil any hinges. You will want to hear if someone enters.

8. If you must have maintenance men inside the house, try to conceal target items (such as Hi Fi equipment, cameras, watches, cash, etc.). Those men, or their friends, may return uninvited.

9. A boon to burglars is a house in which the occupants sleep in airconditioned bedrooms, while the living room downstairs or in front is full of prized items. The burglar knows that the roar of the air conditioners will drown out any noise he makes.

10. DO NOT be a hero and chase a burglar. You are not going to teach him or the Lao people any lessons if you catch him. On the other hand, he might just turn on you and kill you. Instead, if you think you hear a burglar, turn on some lights and stomp around -- slow; most probably he will drop his booty and run away. If you do spot him, shout or blow a whistle; that should send him on his way. Remember that despite some recent modifications to the rules, Air America employees are still prohibited from possessing firearms in Southeast Asia without special permission. If you were to shoot a burglar, even if you do not get into serious trouble with the Company, think of the interminable police interrogations, court appearances, demands for written reports, newspaper publicity, fines, pay-offs, and possible jail sentences or ejection from the country to which you would be subjected. It would be a nightmare experience lasting months. In short, DO NOT shoot him; just scare him off.

11. If you are going to be away from Vientiane for an extended period, ask another American to check your house from time to time. Prized items and valuables, if small, would be better off left in the home of a friend who is remaining behind.

C. Action to Take After an Incident

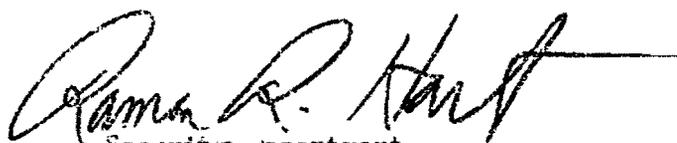
1. The first normal workday after you discover that you have been "khamoyed," go to the MGS office and report the incident. You will be advised whether or not a report to the local police would be required or worthwhile. The MGS will also advise you whether or not the incident should be reported to AAA Security.

2. In Laos, unfortunately, very little stolen property is ever recovered; and then only if the victim knows and is able to identify the thieves. The Lao Police also expect a generous reward for any property restored to its owner.

D. Loss Compensation

1. There is at least one insurance company in Vientiane which will sell you Loss Insurance (Fire or theft) on your personal property. The annual premium is 2 % of the value you declare when you take out the policy. Each item covered must be described in detail, with model and serial number noted.

2. It would be a good idea for you to inventory all your personal property anyway, whether or not you intend to cover it by insurance. You should keep a copy of the list in a safe place in Vientiane and send a copy to a friend in America. If you were to report a theft to the Lao police, they will demand all the statistics on the stolen property: date of purchase, value, make, model, serial number, etc.



Security Department
Air America, Vientiane
1 October 1971