

U.S. MISSION TO LAOS

**INTERNAL INFORMATION
BULLETIN**

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for circulation to mission staff only**

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NEWS ROUNDUP

Government troops operating east and northeast of the Plain of Jars reported a number of explosions in an area where they have mined one of the roads used by the North Vietnamese to move supplies to the vicinity of the plain. These Lao units also reported stiffening North Vietnamese reaction in this sector. In one action there, Lao troops, supported by airstrikes, killed at least forty North Vietnamese soldiers.

Southwest of the Plain of Jars, the battle for Long Tieng continued with both sides fighting for control of Skyline Ridge, a craggy highground overlooking the Long Tieng valley from the northeast. A few skirmishes took place also near the southeastern end of the valley.

Scattered contacts were reported in the general vicinity of Dong Hene in south central Laos, about 50 kilometers east of Savannakhet, but the general situation in the area remains unchanged.

LAOS (USINFO)-North Vietnamese troops in north central Laos were reported Tuesday again threatening the Lao military base at Long Tieng, about 28 kilometers southeast of the Plain of Jars.

According to latest reports, government positions on Skyline Ridge overlooking Long Tieng from the northeast came under heavy fire and ground assaults. The situation along the ridgeline was described as fluid. Sharp fighting is said to continue in the area.

North Vietnamese heavy artillery and mortars have been shelling Long Tieng positions since Friday night. Simultaneous North Vietnamese shelling attacks followed by ground assaults were launched on Lao defense lines near Sam Thong, about 15 kilometers northwest of Long Tieng. Government troops were forced to withdraw from positions generally north, east and southeast of Sam Thong. They regrouped on the western slopes of the valley. Among the positions lost by Lao troops was an artillery base.

Another North Vietnamese attack was reported in an area about 14 kilometers east-northeast of Long Tieng. A North Vietnamese force estimated at two battalions and supported by mortars, rockets, and heavy machine guns repeatedly stormed government troops, finally forcing the Lao to give ground.

In southern Laos, skirmishes continued along Route 23 in the vicinity of the crossroads village of Lao Ngam, 21 kilometers east of Pakse. Farther north, Lao troops, after occupying the village of Keng Gnao Sunday, captured a North Vietnamese truck loaded with artillery ammunition, the fourth truck taken in the last three days. They also discovered a North Vietnamese storage area and found wreckage of two Soviet-built T-34 tanks previously destroyed by Lao airplanes.

Only scattered clashes and occasional shellings were reported from other regions of Laos.

A decision has been taken to make Paris the "contact point" for continuing discussions between representatives of the two countries.

In the Shanghai communique of February 27, it had been announced that "the two sides agree that they will stay in contact through various channels," and the American and Chinese Ambassadors in the French capital evidently will begin this process by talking about exchanges in such fields as culture, technology, sports and journalism.

Superficially, this may not seem much of an advance beyond the practice of having Ambassadors meet sporadically in Geneva, Prague and Warsaw, as they did for several years.

Certainly, keeping the discussions confined initially to the ambassadorial level in Paris suggests how far the United States and China still are from re-establishing diplomatic relations--but President Nixon himself long since warned that no such breakthrough was to be anticipated as a result of his Peking visit.

No doubt the fact that the United States maintains an embassy on Taiwan and adheres to its defensive alliance with the Republic of China limited the possibilities for development of more direct communications between Washington and Peking.

But the American intention to preserve such existing relationships--including those with Japan and the SEATO countries no less than with Taiwan--has been asserted explicitly from the first announcement of the President's China trip.

If that position continues to inhibit development of closer formal Sino-American relations, that is simply evidence that American policy is not, as Secretary of State Rogers has put it, executing a 130 degree turn.

The opening of the new channel of communications in Paris should serve the

LAOS (USINFO)--During the early morning and afternoon of Saturday, Lao government irregular positions in the Sam Thong-Long Cheng area were subjected to heavy direct assaults by North Vietnamese troops using crew-served weapons and heavy mortar and artillery fire. Several positions are now in enemy hands. In spite of those losses, government troops maintain their presence in the Sam Thong area, and from incomplete accounts, appear to have suffered light casualties.

Government defense positions in the Long Cheng area, though receiving moderate indirect fire, are still not under attack. It was reported Saturday that artillery fire at times prevented use of the Long Cheng airfield. Heavy rains on the night of March 11-12 appear to have dampened enemy operations, as military activity during that period was relatively light.

In southern Laos, activity was marked by small unit encounters which continued sporadically in the general area of the crossroads 21 kilometers east of Pakse on Route 23, but without decisive movement on either side.

The rest of the country was relatively quiet.

Yemen. He is in Damascus for a meeting in that state. The chief of state is convalescing at a Syrian coastal town. He repeated charges made by his government Saturday that South Yemen had massed troops on the border, sent troops over North Yemen territory and killed or wounded scores of people in recent months by shelling and bombing.

THE UNITED STATES:

Senator Muskie announced Sunday he will soon disclose the sources of all contributions to his political campaign. The announcement comes two days before the Florida Presidential primary election and after pressure from other democratic candidates to do so. Senator Muskie said he will disclose his contributions with the hope that President Nixon will follow his lead. Two weeks ago, Senator McGovern became the first democratic candidate to disclose campaign contributions. Mayor Lindsay did so last week. Two other democratic candidates, Senator Humphrey and Governor Wallace have announced they too will soon disclose their contributions. One democratic candidate who has not disclosed his contributions is Senator Jackson. Jackson said Sunday he would comply with the law which states that campaign financing must be disclosed beginning April 7.

Governor Wallace, in a television interview Sunday, predicted that by Presidential inauguration time next January all American troops will have

IN THE UNITED STATES:

With Senator Vance Hartke's support, Senator Humphrey took his Presidential campaign to Minnesota while his leading Democratic challengers stumped across Wisconsin in preparation for the April 4 primary.

Hartke, in withdrawing from the race, said he would devote his full energies to Humphrey's bid.

The Louis Harris Poll said President Nixon would score a decisive victory if an election were held now with Humphrey running for the Democrats and Governor Wallace a third party candidate.

President Nixon named former Commerce Under Secretary Rocco Siciliano to serve as the only business representative on the Pay Board. The other four business members of the board submitted their resignations. Nixon announced last week he would reduce formal business representation on the board to one member after four labor representatives, including George Meany, walked off the board. Siciliano is president of a Los Angeles holding company.

A Federal judge acquitted Pakistani scholar Iqbal Ahmad of two charges, but refused to acquit Ahmad and other Harrisburg Seven defendants on the main charge alleging a kidnap-bombing conspiracy against the government. But Judge R. Dixon Herman also denied a blanket motion for a judgment of acquittal of all the defendants, in addition to separate acquittal motion in behalf of two others. The rulings came as the government and defense prepared for final summations. The defense rested its case Friday without calling a single witness.

Richard Hallock Davis, a career diplomat, died of a heart attack Sunday at San Juan airport while on an inspection tour of missions in the Caribbean. He was 59 years old.

LAOS (USINPO)--North Vietnamese and Pathet Lao soldiers Saturday attacked another refugee village in northern Laos, killing six village defenders and wounding fourteen. The villagers, however, managed to repulse the attackers and protect the rest of the population.

The village of Shing Saha, about 35 kilometers north of the Plain of Jars, fell victim to the communist attack only hours after the neighboring village of Bhuu Cua was raided by North Vietnamese and Pathet Lao terrorists who ran through the hamlet firing rockets and small weapons into houses. Some 20 houses were burned down, 16 civilians were killed and ten more were wounded.

Neither of the two villages has any military installation and, except for a small local self defense force, no government soldiers are stationed there.

Several small unit clashes took place in an area about 30 kilometers northeast of Pakse in southern Laos, and in the immediate vicinity of the crossroads village of Lao Ngam, 21 kilometers east of Pakse.

A fire of undetermined origin broke out in an ammunition storage area near the Lao military installations at Soukhouma, about 80 kilometers south of Pakse. The dump exploded and was destroyed.

SOVIET UNION:

The Soviet Union launched Venus 8 and said the unmanned spaceship will attempt to soft-land scientific equipment on Venus in July.

The Soviet Union will be ready to sign a limited agreement on nuclear weapons curbs with President Nixon at the May 22 Moscow summit, Soviet bloc sources cited by UPI said.

BACK IN THE U.S.:

In San Francisco, an all-white jury found two black convicts known as the "Soledad brothers" innocent of murder charges in a case linked to that of Angela Davis. The two, Fleeta Drumgo and John Clutchette, were charged with the murder of a Soledad prison guard two years ago.

In San Jose, prosecutor Albert Harris said the State has evidence to prove that Angela Davis entered a conspiracy to kidnap hostages from a San Rafael courtroom and that her action led to the murder of Judge Harold Haley on August 7, 1970. In an opening statement to the jury, Harris said that her motive was to free George Jackson and two other "Soledad brothers" now being held in San Quentin Prison.

Trading slowed to one of its lowest levels of the year on the New York Stock Exchange as prices closed lower.

Dow Jones Closing Averages: 30 Indus 939.72 off 2.56
 20 Transp 253.96 off 0.96
 15 Utils 112.67 off 0.57
 65 Stocks 323.00 off 1.10
 Volume: 12,180,000

Meanwhile, communist forces attacked three South Vietnamese positions around Saigon's outer defenses, overwhelmed a district town--Hoai An--in the coastal highlands region, and pressed a new offensive in Cambodia to open an invasion route along Highway One into South Vietnam.

Heavy fighting, including hand-to-hand combat, was reported on Highway 13 barely 27 miles north of Saigon. There was a smaller attack 13 miles south of Saigon and a major assault at Dau Tieng, 40 miles northwest of the capital.

The South Vietnamese command reported more than 660 North Vietnamese killed in the past 24-hour reporting period, with comparatively light South Vietnamese losses.

Cambodian spokesmen in Phnom Penh reported heavy communist attacks in the eastern part of the country concentrated around the provincial capital of Svay Rieng, 12 miles from the Vietnamese border. They said the drive appeared aimed at opening a new route to funnel supplies into South Vietnam.

The communists also were reported making an effort to break through at Kompong Trach in an effort to open a supply line into the Mekong Delta below Saigon.

UPI quoted military sources as saying that U.S. fighter-bombers were out in strength over North Vietnam again but there was no immediate word on the targets.

North Vietnamese Mig fighters and speed boats attacked U.S. Seventh Fleet warships in the Gulf of Tonkin, and the U.S. command reported that at least one Mig was destroyed and two enemy surface craft were sunk.

In Paris, Reuter reported that Stephen Ledogar, spokesman for the U.S. delegation to the Vietnam peace talks, was asked about Hanoi's offer to resume negotiations April 27 with Politburo member Le Duc Tho attending. He replied that the North Vietnamese offered nothing in exchange for its proposal.

LAOS (USINFO)--North Vietnamese troops Tuesday launched strong attacks against Lao government positions near the village of Ban Gnik on the Bolovens Plateau in southern Laos and forced government units to abandon their defense lines.

The North Vietnamese attack began with a heavy artillery and mortar barrage followed by an assault by a strong enemy force. Government units sustained moderate casualties in killed and wounded and had to withdraw generally west of the village.

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IN WASHINGTON AND AROUND THE NATION:

Agriculture Secretary Butz predicted that the U.S. eventually will make a major sale of grain and soybeans to Russia. In his first news conference since returning from trade talks in Moscow last week, he warned, however, that the agreement may depend on a thawing of U.S.-Soviet relations.

The Commerce Department reported that the U.S. economy expanded by \$30.3 billion in the first three months of 1972, but that more than half of the increase was caused by inflation. It estimated that Gross National Product in the first quarter grew 11.8 percent, up from the growth of 7.6 percent in the last three months of 1971.

The American Society of Newspaper Editors opened its annual three-day convention in Washington with an emphasis on China's emerging role, the Democratic presidential candidates, and the responsibilities of the news media in over-all coverage.

AFL-CIO president George Meany said he no longer believes strikes are good tools for organized labor and has appointed a committee to find an alternative weapon to the strike. Said he: "I don't believe they (strikes) mean what they did years ago."

ELSEWHERE:

A White House advance party of security men and logistical specialists arrived in Moscow to begin on-scene preparations for President Nixon's USSR visit next month. The chief of the Soviet Foreign Ministry's protocol office, Boris Kolokolov, led a Soviet welcoming delegation to greet the party.

The Apollo 16 astronauts have rocketed into orbit of the moon to prepare for a fifth American landing describing the view as fantastic. Command pilot Young was the first to report that the maneuver had been successful as the spacecraft emerged from its communications blackout on the lunar backside. "It was a super double fantastic burn," he said. "Sweet 16 has arrived." The successful six-minute burn put the spacecraft into an elliptical orbit climaxing a three-day upward journey from earth. "This has got to be the neatest way to make a living anyone has ever invented," Young exclaimed as he viewed the craggy, desolate surface. After a further checkout including a maneuver to place the spacecraft in a lower orbit, the astronauts will begin their six days of scientific explorations including the landing on the mountainous lunar highlands. After orbiting the moon twice the astronauts will again fire their rockets, dropping the spacecraft in an orbit that at its lowest point will be only 19 kilometers from the surface. Astronauts Mattingly and Duke will make the lunar descent at 2041 GMT.