

U.S. MISSION TO LAOS

INTERNAL INFORMATION BULLETIN

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NEWS ROUNDUP

THE PARIS CHANNEL:

Ambassador Arthur Watson and Chinese Ambassador Huang Chen conferred for 70 minutes at the U.S. Embassy in Paris, second such meeting designed to promote trade and cultural exchange and eventual normalization of diplomatic relations. Mr. Watson described the session as "a fine meeting." Both sides have agreed to keep their meetings "out of the public spotlight."

IN OTHER DIPLOMATIC EXCHANGES...

Soviet Communist Party leader Leonid Brezhnev sees "bright prospects" for President Nixon's visit to Moscow, but denigrated any prospects for a U.S.-Soviet deal "at the expense of third parties," reports UPI.

Chinese diplomats in London also let it be known that the Soviets seek reassurances from President Nixon that no clandestine agreements were reached in Peking which would menace Soviet interests, UPI added.

The Franco-British summit meeting over the weekend brought the two countries closer together than they have been for years, British officials say.

President Pompidou and Prime Minister Heath reached "broad agreement" on how the European Common Market should operate after Britain formally joins the community, officials said.

IN WASHINGTON...

USIA Director Frank Shakespeare refused to turn over to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee certain of the Agency's internal working papers--citing executive privilege.

Chairman Fulbright had asked for several country program planning papers to assess whether the USIA is a propaganda agency--"an heir to the old cold war."

The documents in question are unevaluated planning papers, Mr. Shakespeare explained, noting that the reports are not devoted exclusively to USIA activities, but also to the National Security Council and State Department. "They could lead to all kind of misinterpretation," he added.

The Republican National Committee, ITT, and the Sheraton Corporation are named as co-defendants in a suit filed by the California Secretary of State in Los Angeles Federal Court.

The suit accuses the defendants of violating the corrupt practices act in connection with the controversial ITT donation to the GOP convention in San Diego.

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Over the weekend ITT lobbyist Dita Beard issued an affidavit from her Denver hospital bed, branding the purported memo attributed to her (published by columnist Jack Anderson to touch off the controversy) a forgery. The memorandum implies some form of collusion between the Justice Department and ITT in an anti-trust suit which was settled out of court, mentioning a \$400,000 subsidy by ITT subsidiary Sheraton Corp. to the GOP convention.

Senator Vance Hartke of Indiana formally withdrew from the California primary.

ELSEWHERE:

Saigon spokesmen reported capture of a huge communist supply dump in eastern Cambodia, but the military situation seemed to be deteriorating elsewhere in Cambodia and in Laos, where tanks and artillery were massed against a northern Lao government base, UPI reported.

Survivors of a crack North Vietnamese regiment were reported fleeing southward after taking a bad beating in a two-week battle in the Ashau Valley in the mountainous border area. The first infantry division, considered South Vietnam's finest, claimed more than 500 killed out of a 2,000-man communist force.

LAOS (USINFO)--North Vietnamese troops Saturday launched major multi-battalion attacks against Lao government positions in the Sam Thong-Long Tieng sector, about 30 kilometers southwest of the Plain of Jars in north central Laos.

Strong North Vietnamese attacks were supported by tanks, heavy artillery, mortars, rockets and recoilless rifles.

After several hours of sharp fighting, government troops were forced to withdraw from their remaining positions in the vicinity of Sam Thong, but not before they destroyed at least three of four attacking North Vietnamese tanks. These tanks, of the Soviet T-34 class, were destroyed by a combined action of Lao ground, artillery, and air units.

By Sunday, Lao troops from the Sam Thong area, were regrouping and taking new defense positions in the general vicinity of Long Tieng, about 12 kilometers to the southeast.

The base of Long Tieng also came under heavy North Vietnamese attack Sunday morning. While heavy North Vietnamese artillery and mortars were pounding the Long Tieng valley and defense positions along Skyline Ridge, overlooking the valley from the northeast, North Vietnamese infantry stormed Lao positions on the ridge. After many hours of heavy fighting, Lao units withdrew from three defense positions on the ridge. By mid-morning Sunday, a North Vietnamese unit, pushed forward over the crest of Skyline, fell into a well prepared government ambush and was thrown back, leaving 30 dead behind. Three North Vietnamese soldiers were captured in this action. Another North Vietnamese prisoner was taken the day before in sharp fighting a few kilometers to the west.

The situation along Skyline Ridge, a key defense line of Long Tieng, is said to be critical, with both sides engaged in an almost constant, heavy battle.

In the meantime, a Lao task force moved south from the defense complex in the mountains of Bouam Long, about 35 kilometers north-northeast of the Plain of Jars, and has advanced several kilometers, meeting with light to moderate North Vietnamese resistance.

Some 85 kilometers to the west, government units, pushing southward along Route 13 from the village of Klou Kacham, are reported encountering stiffening, though still light, Pathet Lao opposition.