

Chronology of U.S. Role

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WASHINGTON, Feb. 8—Following is a chronology of events and decisions that marked the increasing United States involvement in Laos:

1954

JULY 21—Agreement was reached at Geneva conference to end Indochina war and establish Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam as independent, neutral countries. The United States took note of conference declaration but declined to sign.

1960

DEC. 31—After breakup of coalition Government threw Laos into three-way leftist-neutralist-rightist conflict, President Eisenhower asserted, "We cannot let Laos fall to the Communists even if we have to fight."

1961

APRIL 19—President Kennedy authorized dispatch of United States military assistance advisory group of about 300 to Laos.

1962

JULY 23—The United States was one of 14 nations to sign agreement in Geneva recognizing neutrality of Laos. The United States later withdrew more than 600 military men from mission in Laos. However, neutrality agreement was regularly violated by both sides.

1964

MAY 19—The United States began reconnaissance flights over southern Laos; after plane was shot down, armed escorts were sent.

1965

JANUARY—The United States disclosed it had started bombing Ho Chi Minh Trail. Later in the year the United States opened a "requirements office" staffed by retired military personnel to

supervise military aid to Laos and training of Laotians in neighboring Thailand. The extent of American involvement then was described in a series of articles in The New York Times Oct. 26-28, 1969. They disclosed that the United States was supplying, training and directing a 40,000-man secret army of Meo hill tribesmen commanded by Maj. Gen. Vang Pao.

1970

March 6—President Nixon, explaining American involvement, said "air interdiction" and bombing of the Ho Chi Minh Trail were intended "to protect American and allied lives in Vietnam." He said no American ground troops were in Laos and none of 1,040 Americans stationed there, including 320 military advisers and 323 logistics personnel, had been killed.

1971

Jan. 19—Officials reported that American helicopter gunships were flying combat missions in direct support of Laotian ground troops, attacking enemy troops and supply convoys along Ho Chi Minh Trail. Other informants said B-52's, tactical fighter-bombers and specially outfitted reconnaissance aircraft were also being used. The United States reported that 13 helicopters had been lost since last March 10, 1970.

Feb. 5—After six days of a blackout on news, the United States command in Saigon announced that 9,000 American troops were supporting 20,000 South Vietnamese poised in northwestern South Vietnam to cross into Laos to attack enemy supply routes.

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