

***U.S. Seen Prepared
To Leave Laos or Stay***

By Murrey Marder

Washington Post Staff Writer

The United States is prepared either to remain in Laos or to pull its personnel out, depending on the Attitude of the Pathet Lao who can now dominate the country, a senior American official said yesterday.

"If they want to push us out, we will get out," said the official; "if they want us to stay, we will stay."

The crumbling position of the pro-American rightists and neutralists in the coalition government of Premier Souvanna Phouma was described by an American source as "quite a genteel sort of collapse."

The United States is planning to send a new ambassador to Laos, who may arrive too late to have any influence. He is Galen L. Stone, now minister-counselor in the U.S. embassy in Paris, a career diplomat who served in Saigon in 1968.

Stone who has not yet be nominated by President Ford, will replace Charles S. Whitehouse, who left Laos in April and now is, ambassador to Thailand.

The government of Souvanna Phouma agreed to accept Stone only two days ago, an informed source said. Christian A. Chapman, an experienced diplomat, it is presently in charge of the U.S. embassy in Vientiane.

"There is no feeling [in Washington] that there is a violent catastrophe right around the corner" in Laos, said one official yesterday, because "If the rightists and neutralists are pushed hard, they have no alternative except to give in."

"It depends," this source said, "on how fast the other side wants to make it clear that it has won the fight."

5-12-75

W Post