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# McCloskey: Laos Being Devastated

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By Alan Cline

Congressmen Paul N. "Pete" McCloskey and Jerome Waldie returned from an Indochina tour yesterday with charges of devastation in Laos, gross involvement by the Central Intelligence Agency in Vietnamese security affairs and concerted efforts by American authorities to conceal information.

"It is an appalling story," McCloskey told a jammed news conference in an airport customs room.

The reporters were there primarily because of the San Mateo County Republican, a maverick who stated in February — before he left 11 days ago for the Far East — that he was prepared to run against President Nixon next year.

McCloskey, 43 year old Marine combat veteran with a soft but rapid speaking style, repeated his earlier pledge, adding, "I'll start now" if the President fails to end America's involvement in the war.

He didn't elaborate on "now," but he said he was hopeful an older Republican would challenge Nixon on the basis "his policy is wrong and immoral. Lou can't destroy villages and kill people to save face."

Both McCloskey and his traveling companion Waldie, an Antioch Democrat who is already an announced 1974

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gubernatorial candidate, promised a full report to legislators in Washington.

McCloskey concentrated on Laos, and Waldie stressed the CIA at the conference. Nixon supporter, said:

"While winding down the war in Vietnam, the President is doubling the war in Laos."

McCloskey contended he and Waldie learned in two days in Laos and its capital, Vientiane, the United States deliberately destroyed villages, despite denials from the military.

In one instance, he said an Air Force general at the Udorn Air Base on the Thai border insisted no villages had been bombed in the past seven months, but later admitted the northern Laos villages no longer existed. The legislators were shown photographs of the bombing, but were refused prints to take back to Washington, McCloskey said.

Officers who regularly fly over an area with 3500 villages told him none in that

north Laos sector remain, he declared.

Sixteen groups of refugees were interviewed, McCloskey said, and all declared that "in 1969, after Nixon took over, every house was destroyed in those villages."

### 700,000 Refugees

McCloskey says the small country of Laos now has 700,000 refugees, that the village destruction operation — labeled Operation Barrel Roll — had nothing to do with North Vietnamese military movements along the Ho Chi Minh trail. He said the Laos citizens he interviewed told him none of the villages was closer than two kilometers, more than one mile, from a military installation.

"Our suspicion that his country is deliberately following the practice of destroying villages in northern Laos is borne out by the evidence," McCloskey said.

Waldie on the CIA involvement said he stumbled by accident on its role in the Fung Wan, or Phoenix, internal security program.

He said Vietnamese sus-

pected of political sins are detained without any form of due process and turned over for interrogation to centers operated by the CIA. Suspects, Waldie said, are not given an opportunity to present witnesses or confront their accusers, and a Vietnamese could easily turn in his neighbor as retribution for a personal beef.

"If the American presence is going to leave an institution in Vietnam, we wish it would be constructed in more accord with American institutions," Waldie said.

McCloskey said he was told the maximum detention time before trial was 46 days, but in one province "no prisoner ever lasted more than 30 days" before confessing.

He said he met one American adviser who expressed pride in successfully advocating an extension of sentences for political offenses from 2½ months to nine months. That really means little, McCloskey added, as sentences may be arbitrarily continued indefinitely.

He said in one three-

\* POPULATION, 3 THREE MILLION

province region covering a third of Vietnam, the Viet Cong were blamed for 123 assassinations. But he said during the same period in which the 123 died, 2000 Vietnamese were killed, 3500 were sentenced to prison and 4000 were detained for various periods.

"Our terror is working better than their terror," he said.

As for obtaining information the congressman said they found a "built in reluctance to give answers" while constant attempts were made to distract them.

The two legislators said they tried to talk in the main with junior officers as they found a remarkable difference between the views of the second lieutenants and the generals.