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**Laos Drug Curb Hailed  
But Outflow Continues**

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VIENTIANE, Laos, Dec. 22—As part of a recently initiated campaign by the United States and Laotian Governments to crack down on narcotics traffic in and through Laos, Premier Souvanna Phouma and the American Ambassador opened a new addict detoxification center here today.

Laotian and American officials delivered speeches hailing the results of the anti-narcotics drive and predicted that the situation would improve.

But sources involved in the enforcement of a year old anti-narcotics law said that this year's illicit Laotian opium crop, slated to be harvested in February, was likely to be large. The sources said that although there had been successes in intercepting the flow of opium and heroin from the Laotian hinterlands to the American market, smugglers were finding new routes.

One source said that combat and transport planes of the Royal Laotian Air Force were being used to fly narcotics from Luang Prabang and other airfields to delivery points in neighboring countries.

A large proportion of the opium derivatives such as heroin reaching the American market originate in a remote wilderness known as the "golden triangle," where the borders of Thailand, Laos and Burma meet.

#### Laos Is Transfer Point

While most of the raw opium probably comes from Burma and northern Thailand, Laos is a traditional transshipment area for smugglers sending drugs through Thailand to Singapore, Hong Kong and other major ports.

In Laos herself it is believed that somewhere between 10 and 30 tons of opium are grown each year. The manufacture of heroin requires about 20 pounds of opium for each pound of heroin.

During the height of American ground combat participation in South Vietnam, most of the heroin reaching American soldiers in that country is believed to have been manufactured at a jungle refinery called Hoy Tay in the vicinity of the Laotian border village of Ban Houei said.

This refinery was discovered by anti-narcotics agents after it had been closed down and demolished by its operators.

Two full-time narcotics agents of the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, as well as American customs, civil and military police advisers, are currently working in Laos, and more are on the way

here.

Paradoxically, narcotics experts say, the success achieved in recent months in blocking narcotics traffics between the royal capital of Luang Prabang and Vietiane has apparently provided an incentive to poppy farmers to grow more opium.

Since September 17, 1971, when production of trafficking

in hard narcotics were made illegal in Laos, authorities here have confiscated 602 kilograms of opium and 30 kilograms of heroin, United States Ambassador G. McMurtrie Godley said in a speech today.

Meantime, the Laotian Government has been purchasing opium grown by farmers so as to reduce the hardship to them of changing crops.

But the Government price for opium is only about one-fifth the price obtained on the open market in Laos, and the latter price is rising. Consequently, officials say there is evidence that, if anything, farmers in some areas are increasing production to take advantage of the high price.

#### Dens Continue To Flourish

Opium dens continue to flourish here because under the new law—although production, sale and possession of hard drugs are illegal—it is not illegal to operate opium dens or consume drugs.

Consequently, police are given considerable flexibility in deciding whether to crack down on a given opium den or not.

There has been sharp criticism, both from some Laotians and some American officials working here of the emphasis the United States has lately placed on the suppression of opium in Laos.

"The narcs are fundamentally cops with a very specific job," one American here said, adding:

"They are concerned mainly with enforcement and not with the economic and political effects their work produces. When they make Meo or Yao tribesmen angry with their sometimes heavy-handed approach to these things, it may be hurting our other efforts to keep these tribesmen on our side and not with the Communists. The situation in north-west Laos is dangerous enough as it is without extra antagonizing of the tribes."

Enforcement officials hope that narcotics passing through Laos will be steadily reduced, but they acknowledge that the smugglers involved are experts, generally a step or two ahead of them.

One enforcement official said:

"The old days when Corsican adventurers flew a fleet of light planes from Laos to deliver their stuff around Indochina are over. Now the big dealers seem to be relying on military aviation, and that is very much harder to control. We hope military police will cut the traffic down, but you can imagine the problem, having to check every T-28 fighter before it takes off on a mission."

And then, referring to a Baltimore Federal Court case reported on last week, he added: "And when you hear that heroin has been shipped to the States inside the bodies of G.I.'s killed in action, you know you're up against people who will stop at nothing."