

New Secret Laos Peace Talks Begin

Vientiane, Laos

Delegates of the Vientiane government and of the Communist-led Pathet Lao held the first in a new series of secret peace talks yesterday, amid the hope that a cease-fire agreement in Laos could be concluded quickly.

The Pathet Lao delegation leader, General Phoume Sipraseuth, and two members of his delegation met at the home of Ngon Sananikone, acting head of the Vientiane delegation.

Despite the relatively low rank of the delegates it was expected that talks would move rapidly, and it was apparent that procedural problems that characterized the last 16 weeks of formal talks aren't no longer a bar to progress.

The two sides agreed to continue the formal Tuesday talks along with the secret sessions.

The Laotian premier, Prince Souvanna Phouma, is due back here today from a visit to India with a stop in Bangkok. It seems probable that Souvanna will soon be involved in the talks, possibly with the participation of a high - ranking Pathet Lao counterpart.

Communist sources have discounted the possibility of a cease - fire in Laos within the 15 days after the Vietnamese cease - fire predicted by Souvanna. But they acknowledge that a cease - fire is expected soon.

Meanwhile, foreign military sources reported that fighting in Laos remains sharp in some areas, but "normal" for this time of year and there is no evidence that any major push is in progress by either side.

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