

Guerrillas' Strange Opium Offer



— Jack Anderson

THE COLORFUL Shan guerrillas have offered to sell the U.S. most of the Southeast Asian opium crop and to wage war on any other opium convoys that may try to operate in the area.

In exchange, they want \$12 million in hard cash and a U.S. promise to help them win autonomy from Burma.

This astonishing proposal was made in writing by two top Shan leaders who sent an emissary down from the hills to meet clandestinely in Bangkok with Representative Lester Wolff (Dem-N.Y.). As chairman of a House narcotics subcommittee, Wolff is the House's leading expert on Burma - Thai - Laos opium production. He was in Bangkok last month on a survey with five other congressmen.

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THE SIGNED Shan offer to destroy up to 400 tons of high-grade Asian opium, combined with the U.S.-sponsored crack-down on Turkish opium, theoretically could wipe out 75 per cent of the supply of heroin on America's streets. And \$12 million admittedly would be cheaper than trying to stop the smuggling operation the hard way.

As Wolff recounts his dramatic encounter in Bangkok, the Shan emissary, an Englishman, arranged by letter and tele-

phone to meet with him in a hotel lobby away from his congressional colleagues. A follow-up meeting was held in a nook off a bustling Bangkok street.

The Englishman handed him the two-page proposal signed by General Law Hsin Han and Boon Tai, the two rebel leaders.

Skeptical at first but eager to explore the offer, Wolff invited American diplomatic, narcotics and CIA officials in Thailand to a meeting where he laid out the strange Shan proposal. At this private session, the authorities confirmed that the Englishman was an authentic Shan contact.

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OUR OWN sources report that both the State Department and CIA had also been approached by the Shan insurgents but that the negotiations had been aborted by Washington.

Wolff left it to the American officials in Bangkok to pursue the offer but asked for a quick progress report, fearing the unorthodox Shan gambit might become snarled in red tape and bureaucratic timidity.

When Wolff reached Hong Kong four days later, he was called by his Shan contact, who reported nothing whatsoever was being done about the Shan offer.