

Laotian Premier Confers With Pathet Lao Official

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VIENTIANE, Laos, Nov. 10—The Laotian peace negotiations appeared to take a significant step forward today when the Premier, Prince Souvanna Phouma, received the ranking member of the Communist-led Pathet Lao delegation, Phoumi Vongvichit.

The Prince returned to Laos yesterday from a trip to France and the United States that had kept him away for a month. During that time, although Pathet Lao and Government negotiating teams have met each Tuesday, there has been no progress.

Mr. Phoumi, generally regarded as one of the main political leaders of the Pathet Lao, arrived here a week ago to add his weight to the peace talks. He was reported by Government sources to be planning to leave here tomorrow for Hanoi on the way to the Pathet Lao capital at Samneua, presumably for consultations with the Pathet Lao leader, Prince Souphanouvong, and others.

Mr. Phoumi met in closed conference today with Prince Souvanna Phouma for one and one half hours at the Prince's residence. Spokesmen for both sides declined to say what was discussed.

Depends on Vietnam Truce

Officials of both the Pathet Lao and the Government have conceded in private that progress toward a Laotian peace settlement depends on a settlement in Vietnam first. Nearly all of eastern Laos is occupied by the North Vietnamese Army, and the Laotian population of 3.5 million is completely overshadowed by its two powerful Vietnamese neighbors.

The war in Laos reportedly was being fought hard today despite the peace talks. Heavy fighting was reported in Dong Hene, 30 miles southeast of Savanakheth in southern Laos. The town had been held by the North Vietnamese for a year, but attacking Government troops reportedly established a toehold there late yesterday and

were fighting their way through the streets today.

Clashes and shelling were reported in northern Laos near the royal capital of Luang Prabang, and in other parts of the country.

The United States Embassy announced today that the charred bodies of two women found last week in the town of Kengkok recaptured from the North Vietnamese had been positively identified as two American missionaries, Miss Evelyn Anderson and Miss Beatrice Kosin, both of the Christian Mission in Many Lands organizations. The two women had been taken prisoners by North Vietnamese troops entering Kengkok and tied with

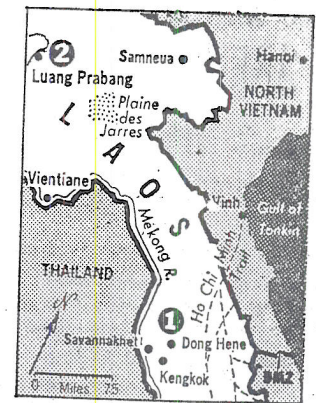
wire to posts in a house that was later burned down.

An embassy spokesman said the families of the two women had forbidden autopsies and therefore their manner of death could not be determined.

Two other missionaries seized at the same time, Lloyd Dudley Opper, a Canadian, and Samuel Mattix, an American, are still missing. Loatian villagers captured with them who subsequently escaped said the two young men were forced to march barefoot to a village named Kham Thao for a distance of 70 miles.

The two reportedly were in good condition apart from bruised and bleeding feet.

A missionary spokesman re-



portedly sought yesterday to appeal for their freedom by talking to the Pathet Lao spokesman here in Vientiane. But the spokesman, Soth Pethrasi, reportedly declined to receive the missionaries.