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Laotian Peace Talks Seem at New Low

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VIENTIANE, Laos, Jan. 2—With insults flying, peace talks between the Laotian Government and the Communist-led Pathet Lao appeared to have reached a new low today.

Meanwhile, military sources reported the beginning of what appeared to be a Communist offensive north of Vientiane over the holiday weekend. Several carriers and an undetermined number of Government soldiers were reported captured by the Communists.

At today's weekly negotiating session, the 12th held since teams from the Pathet Lao and the Government began meeting, no progress was reported, and invective became so intense that the Government side threatened to call off the parallel secret talks that have been going on.

Much of today's meeting was taken up with a denunciation by the leader of the Pathet Lao delegation, Gen. Phoune Siprasouth, of local newspaper accounts supposedly inspired by the Government saying that heroin had been found in the baggage of a Pathet Lao official boarding a plane for Hanoi.

General Phoune said that the delegation member in question had gone to Hanoi on a different day, that there had been no search of his luggage and no heroin, and that the whole story had been made up by Government officials. The Government denies having made the charge.

Informed Western diplomatic sources have said that the allegations against the Pathet Lao are not true.

The Pathet Lao side said that the entire Government attitude was one of vilification and was without good faith.

The Vientiane spokesman, Noupbat Chounramany, charged that the Pathet Lao side was using impolite words, such as "cretin" in referring to the Government's side.

The Pathet Lao indirectly noted the decision by North Vietnam and the United States to resume peace talks, referring to the international climate for negotiations as having improved. But both sides made it clear that such an improvement had not affected the talks in Vientiane.

On Saturday, Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese troops attacked and overran the Government stronghold of Sala Phou Khoun, about 100 miles north of here, the Government said. It reported the loss of two 105-mm. howitzers, two armored personnel carriers and two armored cars.

A Government convoy to the south of Sala Phou Khoun and 10 miles north of Vang Vieng was ambushed on Saturday, and the Government lost two more howitzers. Radio contact with the convoy was broken, and many of its members are presumed captured or killed.

Strongpoints Attacked

Vang Vieng, abreast Route 13, is a key supply point for irregular troops, sponsored by the Central Intelligence Agency, who are fighting the Communists in northern Laos.

Another strongpoint along Route 13 north of Vientiane, the town of Muong Kassy, came under heavy Communist pressure Saturday, but at last report was still holding.

In southern Laos, Government forces recaptured the key bridgehead on the Bang Phae River north of Savannakhet, which had been seized by the Communists a week ago. The three-span bridge is the longest

in Laos and one of the country's most important. The Communists reportedly blew it up before Government forces could retake it.