

# U.S. SAID TO URGE LAOS TO CONCLUDE EARLY CEASE-FIRE

Official in Vientiane Asserts  
That Premier Goes Along  
Despite His Misgivings

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WITHDRAWAL KEY ISSUE

Americans Reported Giving  
Assurance That the North  
Vietnamese Will Leave  
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VIETIANE, Laos, Feb. 2—  
A high Laotian Government  
source says that the United  
States is strongly urging the  
Government of Premier Sou-  
vanna Phouma to conclude a  
speedy cease-fire with the  
Pathet Lao and that the Pre-  
mier has accepted the Ameri-  
can view despite misgivings  
that no accord with adequate  
guarantees can be reached.

The United States, through  
such high-ranking officials as  
William H. Sullivan, a Deputy  
Assistant Secretary of State, and  
Gen. Alexander H. Haig Jr.,  
assistant to Henry A. Kissinger,  
has reportedly assured Laotian  
leaders that it is certain that  
North Vietnamese troops, which  
have borne the brunt of the  
fighting on behalf of the Pathet  
Lao, will withdraw.

For Prince Souvanna Phou-  
ma and his Government this is  
the essential condition for  
peace—and the one most dif-  
ficult to obtain since Hanoi  
does not acknowledge that its  
troops are fighting here.

#### End of Bombing Forecast

According to the Laotian  
source, the United States sug-  
gested to the Premier and his  
principal aides that it could  
not continue bombing Laotian  
territory much longer, and per-  
haps not beyond the middle of  
this month. Without American  
air support, ranking Laotian  
military officials believe, they  
cannot resist the Communist

forces.

The Laotian source said he  
had been assured that in the  
course of the negotiations be-  
tween Mr. Kissinger, President  
Nixon's national security ad-  
viser, and Le Duc Tho the  
United States had obtained an  
understanding from the North  
Vietnamese that they would  
withdraw. The Americans be-  
lieve that Hanoi will live up  
to the understanding after the  
opposing Laotian factions have  
concluded the cease-fire nego-  
tiations now under way here,  
the source added.

On Jan. 24 Mr. Kissinger said  
at a news conference in which  
he explained the Vietnam set-  
tlement that a Laotian cease-  
fire was expected shortly, to  
be followed by the withdraw-  
al of "foreign forces" and the  
end of the use of Laotian ter-  
ritory as an infiltration route.

To encourage the Laotian  
Government, the United States  
has suggested that it would not

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tolerate repeated and serious  
North Vietnamese violations of  
the understanding. At least one  
ranking American official has  
reported the continued presence  
of American-operated air base  
and about 50,000 American  
troops in neighboring Thailand.

#### Contradiction Discerned

Although the official did not  
say so, this created in the minds  
of Laotian leaders the idea  
that the United States was  
undertaking to resume bomb-  
ing if the North Vietnamese  
continued to make war in Laos.

A skeptical Laotian leader  
has said to an important Ameri-  
can official that the resump-  
tion of bombing would con-  
tradict President Nixon's in-  
dicated decreasing American  
interest in fighting other  
people's battles. The skeptic  
received no reply.

Even Laotian leaders who are  
dubious about North Vietnam's  
readiness to withdraw believe  
that their hesitations cannot  
much longer delay an agree-  
ment. Not only is Laos unable  
to fight successfully without  
American air support, these  
leaders feel, but even with it  
the army and the American-  
sponsored irregulars who are  
the best troops cannot fight  
much longer. Too many men  
have been killed and the gaps  
can no longer be filled.

Laos estimates the number of  
dead in battle at 35,000 in a  
country of approximately three  
million.

To the skeptical Laotians,  
who want peace but want  
a North Vietnamese withdraw-  
al to be specified in the agree-  
ment and strictly enforced un-  
der international supervision,  
American officials have re-  
sponded that North Vietnam is

exhausted by the war — par-  
ticularly by the December wave  
of American bombing—and has  
to make peace.

The Laotians counter by not-  
ing that for many years, since  
the days when Gen. William C.  
Westmoreland was the United  
States commander, Americans  
have been saying that to their  
Indochinese allies.