

PACT TO END WAR IN LAOS, INCLUDING POLITICAL PLAN, IS INITIALED BY TWO SIDES

SIGNING SET TODAY

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Cease-Fire Expected to Go Into Effect at Noon Tomorrow

NYTimes

By MALCOLM W. BROWNE
Special to The New York Times

VIETIANE & Laos, Wednesday, Feb. 21—The Laotian Government and the Communist-led Pathet Lao reached agreement this evening to end the war that has torn this country apart for the last decade.

Word came in the form of a brief announcement on the Vientiane radio.

Spokesmen for the two sides said that an agreement had been initialed in the presence of the Premier, Prince Souvanna Phouma, in the course of a 50-minute meeting at his home by the chief Vientiane negotiator, Pheng Phongsavan, and the Pathet Lao leader, Phoumi Vongvichit.

[In Phnom Penh, the Cambodian Government said negotiations with the opposition were under way to set up a united front that could handle contacts with the Communists. Page 18.]

Signing Due Today

The Laotian agreement is to be formally signed today at the Premier's residence in the presence of the full delegations of both sides, representatives of the three-nation International Control Commission, the signers of the 1962 Geneva agreement on Laos, and the diplomatic corps.

The Vientiane radio and the Pathet Lao radio, which broadcasts from Samneua, are scheduled to announce the signing, and the cease-fire is to take effect at noon Thursday Vientiane time (midnight Wednesday, New York time).

The Pathet-Lao spokesman, Sot Petrasy, said in an interview last night that American bombing of Laos would be halted at the same time, although he declined to say whether he had received direct assurance from an American official that this would take place.

Political Solution Involved

The agreement is not merely an informal cease-fire, of the type the Pathet Lao had been proposing for the last few days, but takes into account a complete political solution.

However, it appeared that the accord would cover only general principles, with many details to be discussed by various commissions and subcommissions yet to be created.

Mr. Sot Petrasy said that protocols containing such details would have to be worked out later.

In essence, the agreement will halt hostilities with a "cease-fire in place" of the Vietnam type, will create a new coalition government on a provisional basis, and will bring into being a mixed political council to work out details of future elections and the form of the government itself.

The agreement provides for ministry posts to be divided equally between the Pathet Lao on one side and the rightists and Souvanna Phouma neutralists on the other. Under the 1962 Geneva agreement on Laos, a three-part Government was created that gave the Pathet Lao fewer than one-third of the Cabinet posts, so the new arrangement is a major gain for them.

But the agreement does not state who will be premier in the new government, nor does it even specify how many deputy premiers there will be.

"All these and many details will have to be worked out later," Mr. Sot Petrasy said.

The agreement was said to be only "about eight or ten pages long," and various officials declined to discuss its details.

Mr. Sot Petrasy was asked about prisoner exchanges in Laos, including the freeing by the Pathet Lao of American prisoners who are not scheduled for release by Hanoi.

Details to Be Worked Out

"That is another detail that will have to be discussed later," he said.

The problem of prisoners will presumably be one of the first orders of business for a mixed military commission to be set up by the two sides.

Asked if his delegation was happy with the agreement, Mr. Sot Petrasy replied, "of course! The Laotian people have been suffering from this war far too long."

Reached at his home last night, the official spokesman for the Government delegation, Noupbat Chounramany, expressed pessimism about the accord. He said he did not know its details, but felt that there were "great dangers."

"Now, we shall lack the American force to counterbalance the North Vietnamese," he said. "If they honor the accord, it will be good, otherwise it is death for Laos."

One sticking point repeatedly mentioned by both sides in the talks had to do with the withdrawal of foreign troops. The Pathet Lao, which has not acknowledged the presence of any North Vietnamese troops in Laos, continued to insist that "foreign troops" be given 90 days to leave the country after the cease-fire.

The Vietiane side had insisted that foreign troops be removed in 30 or at the most 45 days.

Yesterday at a negotiating session, the Pathet Lao complained more vigorously than at any time in the past about American bombing. In a brief speech, the Pathet Lao delegation leader, Gen. Phoune Siprasouth, specified these charges: "In the region of the Plaines des Jarres from Feb. 8 through 15, American tactical bombers and B-52's carried out more

than 2,000 sorties."

"On Feb. 10 there were 500 sorties of which 50 were by B-52's."

"On Feb. 12 there were 400 sorties, including 40 by B-52's on the 13th 300 sorties, and on the 14th, 350 sorties."

"In the south of Laos American planes have carried out up to 400 sorties a day, bombing and strafing in masses in the regions of Muong Phalane, Saravane and Pak Song."

The general also charged that the United States and "its lackeys" had introduced Thai troops "on the order of battalions and regiments," complete with artillery units.

U. S. Set to Halt Bombing

Special to The New York Times

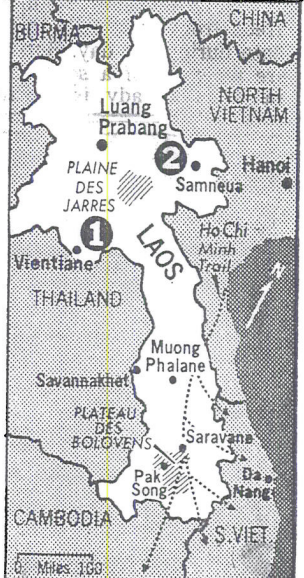
WASHINGTON, Feb. 20—High-ranking State Department officials said today that the United States would halt all bombing in Laos as soon as the cease-fire went into effect there.

The officials, in separate interviews, said they expected the cease-fire to begin at midnight tomorrow night.

The Pentagon spokesman, Jerry W. Friedheim, said American bombing operations in Laos had not yet halted. This was confirmed by the American Pacific headquarters in Honolulu, which said, "We will honor a cease-fire but we do not have a date or official word on the cease-fire as yet."

The State Department officials stressed that the bombing raids had been carried out in Laos at the request of the Laotian Government.

American officials had earlier said the raids would continue in Laos until the cease-fire was in effect.



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Vientiane (1), where the accord was negotiated. Samneua (2), base of the Communist-led Pathet Lao.



The New York Times/Ali Nun

Members of the Pathet Lao delegation during negotiations in Vientiane's Ministry of Education on Feb. 11. Fifth from the right is Sot Petrasy, partly obscured, delegation spokesman. Reading to the right are Prince Souk Vongsak, a vice chairman; Maha Kou Souvannamethy, white hair, also a vice chairman; Colonel Chenj and Mr. Boutsabong.



Members of the Laotian Government delegation at the negotiations. From the left are Dr. Somphou Oudomvilay, Government spokesman; Gen. Bounthieng Venevongsos, president of the Royal Armed Forces delegation to the cease-fire commission and acting president of the 16th session of talks, and Ouday Souvannavong.