

FEB 24, 1973

Clashes Persisting After Truce in Laos

NYTimes

By MALCOLM W. BROWNE
Special to The New York Times

VIENTIANE, Laos, Saturday, Feb. 24—A day after a cease-fire technically went into effect in Laos, widespread fighting persisted yesterday, with each side accusing the other of violations and without any progress toward setting up peace-keeping machinery.

The Premier, Prince Souvanna Phouma, called correspondents to his home yesterday to tell them that the Communists had started a major offensive. He described the situation as grave.

Later, the spokesman for the Communist-led Pathet Lao, Sot

Continued on Page 6, Column 5
Petrasy, said in an interview that he thought Prince Souvanna Phouma had been much too hasty.

The Prince had charged the Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese with 29 major violations during the first day of the truce. He particularly mentioned the Communist capture of the town of Pak Song and, appearing to be personally enraged, charged the Pathet Lao with betraying the Government's good faith in signing the accord.

Communists to Deny Charge

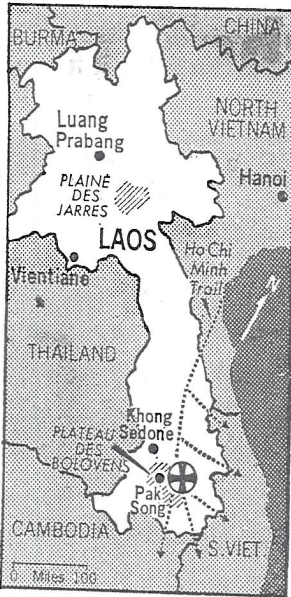
Mr. Sot Petrasy said: "I have no information on violations yet, but I doubt they were committed by our side, which was ordered three days ago to observe the cease-fire strictly."

"I ask you to remember that the right-wing Vientiane generals held a meeting a few days ago at which they decided the agreement was only political and would not apply to the military," he continued. "I think

the trouble is being caused by rightists and by Thai mercenary troops.

"Prince Souvanna Phouma's threat to ask the Americans to resume bombing does not frighten us. We have fought the American bombers up until Wednesday and can do so again if we have to."

He said that the fighting at Pak Song had still been in progress at the time the cease-fire went into effect and that Pathet Lao troops could not



The New York Times/Feb. 24, 1973
U.S. planes attacked Pak Song area (cross).

stop fighting while the Government fought on.

Mr. Sot Petrasy predicted

that the fighting would subside soon.

Despite various meetings during the day, the Vientiane Government and Pathet Lao failed to set up a mixed commission as planned, and neither side was willing to predict when the commission would be established.

The mixed commission, once in operation, must form two subcommissions, one military and one political.

The military subcommission will be responsible for peace-keeping, and only after it is functioning can there be a basis for the International Control Commission to carry out its task of surveillance and control.

The Government's chief delegate to the military subcommission will be Maj. Gen. Bounthieng Venevongsos, and his Pathet Lao counterpart will be Mr. Sot Petrasy. But the two have not met yet.

Matters will be complicated during the next few days by the absence of the two ranking Pathet Lao representatives, who