

30,000 Laotians Trained by CIA

WASHINGTON — (UPI) — A transcript of secret Senate testimony disclosed today that the Central Intelligence Agency has been secretly training and supporting 30,000 guerrilla troops in Laos since 1962.

The figure was disclosed for the first time in published closed door hearings before the Senate Armed Services Committee.

Backbone

G. Murtrie Godley, U.S. Ambassador to Laos, told the committee the Cia-financed guerrilla units "have been the backbone of the military effort in Laos" to repel the North Vietnamese forces.

"The irregular forces in Laos today . . . number about 30,000 men," he said. "These forces are organized into SGU (Special Guerrilla Unit) battalions and these battalions now comprise

about 330 to 360 men each."

Godley said the guerrilla units operated every where in Laos except the area around the capital, Vientiane.

Series of Coups

"The reasons that no personnel has been recruited in the Vientiane area was that there were in the 1960s a series of coups," he said.

"Military personnel played a rather prominent role in these actions, and the United States did not wish to become intimately involved in the internal political machinations or political military actions in that country."

Godley said the CIA began covertly assisting Lao irregular forces in 1962 and 1963, when it became apparent the North Vietnamese were not going to respect the Geneva Accords barring outside military interference in the Laotian affairs.