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Nixon's tough drug talk: CIA reports raise doubts

WASHINGTON — At a recent narcotics conference, President Nixon declared dramatically that keeping narcotics out of the country is "just as important as keeping armed enemy forces from landing in the United States." The President then an-

Jack Anderson

nounced sternly that he would cut off aid to countries whose leaders "protect the activities of those who contribute to our drug problem."

Predictably, these bold words drew election-year headlines for the President and warm approval from a public alarmed over the drug danger. Yet classified documents in our possession show that the President has refused to cut off aid, despite evidence that certain foreign leaders are protecting the drug smugglers.

Smuggling in Laos

The smuggling operations in Laos, for example, illustrate the difference between what Nixon says in public and what his intelligence documents show in secret. To prop up the Souvanna Phouma government, he has poured in more than \$200 million in military aid annually. Yet his reports from the CIA and other agencies give him every reason to cut off this aid.

Says one document: "A broad spectrum of Lao society is involved in the narcotics business, including generals, princes, high-level bureaucrats and province governors."

The CIA specifically advised that Laotian generals are providing the transportation for drug smugglers. Incredible as it sounds, the planes and trucks used to carry the U.S.-bound narcotics are provided by the

U. S. military programs which Nixon has sworn to cut off.

Military ahead of drugs

The secret documents make clear that the President is putting his military policies in Asia ahead of the drug invasion. "The difficulties of undertaking such drastic action (as aid cut-offs) cannot be overemphasized," declares another document on Laos, "since . . . the risk of jeopardizing some part of the military effort is high."

In Cambodia, President Nixon also continues to bolster an unstable dictatorship with \$240 million worth of U. S. aid a year. Yet Cambodia is an important transshipment point for dope. An intelligence document explains why Nixon, however, has no intention in Cambodia of carrying out his threat to cut off aid:

"If U.S. aid were withdrawn, the government's ability to withstand Communist aggression would be weakened to the point of collapse."

Saigon smugglers

In South Vietnam, as well, the documents attest to "the corruption among government civilian, military and police officials, some of whom have been actively participating in the narcotics traffic themselves . . ." But again, there is no real thought of cutting off aid.

The secret documents bluntly give the reason: "It is not in U.S. interests to implement an aid cut-off, even to punish Vietnam for failure to control drugs . . ."

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Included in same column as carried by SFChronicle, 13 Oct 72:

PRESIDENT NIXON'S double talk on drugs is nowhere more apparent than in Thailand which gets over \$100 million in U.S. aid a year.

"We believe that major punitive measures (such as) withdrawal of aid, denial of most favored nation status, etc. . . . would probably undermine our cooperative relations with Thailand and jeopardize ongoing security activities . . ." says a U.S. intelligence document.

Footnote: The stack of documents in our hands also tells similar tales of rampant drug activity with various kinds of government collusion or inaction in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Mexico, Lebanon, India, Peru, Bolivia, Hong Kong and Syria.