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struggle, particularly if the country were geographically divided. If non-Asian forces were committed in Laos, the likelihood of an overt Communist invasion would increase.⁴

22. If the Communists should come to believe that a Western intervention appeared capable of resolving the conflict and establishing firm anti-Communist control over Laos, they would then face the difficult decision of whether to raise the ante further, possibly to the point of openly committing North Vietnamese or Chinese Communist forces to the fighting. We estimate that both Communist China and the USSR wish to avoid serious risk of expanding the hostilities more broadly in the Far East or beyond. We believe, therefore, that the Communists would seek through various uses of diplomacy, propaganda, covert action and guerrilla warfare to cause the West to back down. If, however, the Communists became convinced during the course of a series of actions and counteractions that the US intended to commit major US combat forces into Laos, we believe that the odds would be better than even that the Communists would directly intervene in strength with North Vietnamese and possibly Chinese Communist military forces.⁵

23. The Communists would probably counter the unilateral introduction of "volunteers" or regular military units from South Vietnam and Thailand with the introduction of North Vietnamese "volunteers."

⁴ See footnote to Conclusion 5.

⁵ See footnotes to Conclusion 6.

24. The uncommitted and anti-Communist countries of the world would view with alarm a Communist takeover of Laos, but are fearful that a Western intervention in Laos might lead to the outbreak of a major war. Nevertheless, most of these countries, including most members of SEATO, would probably support such intervention if they were convinced of the gravity of the Laotian Government's position and of direct Communist Bloc support of the rebels in Laos. The findings of the UN Security Council subcommittee will almost certainly have an important influence in this respect.

25. If the uncommitted and anti-Communist countries accepted the need for intervention in Laos, they would prefer that such action be taken under UN auspices. If dispatch of a UN-led force were blocked by Communist diplomatic opposition, intervention by SEATO would probably be supported by most Free World countries despite the strong dislike of some neutralist nations for the SEATO concept. On the other hand, SEATO failure to move effectively in response to a Lao appeal for help would not only endanger the existence of SEATO itself but would seriously weaken the confidence of the non-SEATO states of Asia in the West's determination and ability to defend them from Communist attack.

26. US military intervention, such as the dispatch of troops to Laos, in the absence of broad acceptance of the need to intervene would probably have little support even among the anti-Communist nations. Our SEATO allies, however, would probably support us although most might do so with considerable reluctance.

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