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## THE SITUATION IN LAOS

### THE PROBLEM

To estimate Communist capabilities and short-run intentions in Laos, and to estimate the reactions of Communist and non-Communist countries to certain contingent developments.

### CONCLUSIONS

1. We believe that the Communist resumption of guerrilla warfare in Laos was primarily a reaction to a stronger anti-Communist posture by the Laotian Government and to recent US initiatives in support of Laos. We consider that it was undertaken mainly to protect the Communist apparatus in Laos and to improve Communist prospects for gaining control of the country. (Paras. 7-8)
2. The Communists probably believed:  
(a) that guerrilla warfare offered some prospects—at low risk—of promoting Communist objectives in Laos even if the Laotian Government received substantial moral and material support from the outside, and (b) that military forces which the West would be likely to commit inside Laos would be indecisive against the flexible Communist guerrilla tactics. (Para. 18)
3. We estimate that the Communists intend to keep the risks and the costs of their action on a low level and they are not likely in the near future to resort to large-scale guerrilla activity, at least so long as the UN fact-finding mission is in Laos. (Para. 19)
4. Most uncommitted and anti-Communist countries would probably support Western intervention in Laos if they were convinced that the Laotian Government's position was grave and that there was direct Communist Bloc support of the Laotian rebels. In that event, they would prefer that such action be taken under UN auspices. (Paras. 24-26)
5. Hanoi and Peiping have warned that any foreign military intervention in Laos would be considered as a direct threat to their national security. However, depending partly on the scale and nature of the military move, the Communist military reaction to the Western intervention, whether under UN, SEATO, or US auspices, initially would probably take the form of further covert North Vietnamese intervention rather than overt invasion. There probably would be less effort than at present to camouflage this intervention. This Communist action might, in the first instance, be limited to seizing substantial territory in Laos—such as Sam Neua and Phong Saly provinces—which we believe they could do under existing conditions with an aug-

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