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a. It would seem desirable to acknowledge the acute sensitivity of Cambodians to the U. S. attitude toward Sihanouk's brand of neutrality and to reinforce the general guidance on this question given as a regional course of action in paragraph 14 by more specific treatment in the country section.

b. Another problem which probably merits specific attention is the presence française in Cambodia. Guidance on U. S. policy toward the attempt to maintain French influence in Cambodia, and on the use of this influence in the furtherance of U. S. objectives, would appear desirable.

c. Paragraphs 40 and 41, dealing with U. S. aid, probably could be revised to reflect the fact that our military and economic assistance programs in sensitive fields are essentially preclusive in nature and to provide clearer guidance on the use of U. S. aid to prevent communist penetration.

d. Finally, the guidance on Cambodia's relations with its neighbors might be strengthened to reflect the greater significance this problem has assumed in recent months and consequently the more urgent need for the U. S. to exert a moderating influence.

Laos (Paragraphs 43 through 49)

*4. Both the internal political situation and the country's external relations have evolved considerably since NSC 5809 was approved (April 2, 1958), and the guidance contained in paragraphs 43 through 49 is not entirely adequate in the light of operational experience.

5. More specifically, our problem in the last few months has not been "to strengthen the determination of the RLG to resist subversion" (P. 43) or "to prevent Lao neutrality from veering toward pro-communism" (P. 44). Without minimizing the importance of these objectives, our immediate operational problem has been to persuade the Lao leadership from taking too drastic actions which might provoke a reaction on the part of the North Vietnamese and which might alienate free world sympathy for Laos--as for instance, outlawing and eliminating by force the NLHX, or taking a hard anti-communist position in international affairs.

6. Again, the events of the past summer have strengthened the belief of the Lao in the UN and have satisfied them that SEATO and, more importantly, the U. S. would come to their assistance in the event of armed conflict with the communist bloc. Therefore, the question now is not to

*See Attachment: Laos: Political Background.

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