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123

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

27 June 1964

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: Comment on Certain Questions Relating to the Situation
in Laos.

1. The State Department has requested answers to three questions, as set forth below, relating to the situation in Laos. The following represents the opinion of analysts from this Office, from OCI, and from DD/P.

A. What is the likelihood of a Pathet Lao attack on Muong Soui under present circumstances?

It is impossible to estimate on this question with any confidence, but we believe that the chances of such an attack at some time in the fairly near future are slightly better than even. We know of no evidence of such a PL/VM military build-up as would indicate an intention to make an early attack, but not much of a build-up would be necessary. Our estimate is based on more general grounds, namely (a) that

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an attack on Muong Soui would be a feasible retaliation for the T-28 bombings, especially if these should continue, and (b) that the PL/VM may wish to damage further the military capabilities of the Kong Le neutralist forces, and to strengthen the Communist position for any future negotiations that may take place.

B. What is the likelihood of a PL/VM attack on Muong Soui if the contemplated RLG operation north of Vang Vieng is undertaken?

In this circumstance we believe that the PL/VM forces probably would attack. They have frequently demonstrated both their disposition to react with force against any neutralist military initiatives, and their ability to do so with success.

C. If a PL/VM attack does take place, what is the likelihood that the RLG forces would be destroyed under the above hypotheses?

(a) If a PL/VM attack were launched against forces presently in Muong Soui, it is probable that the latter would be defeated in a few days and forced to withdraw.

(b) If a PL/VM attack occurred after the proposed RLG operation took place (and assuming that the operation succeeded), there is probably about an even chance that RLG forces could hold their position at Muong Soui, at least for some time.

- 2 -

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(c) If RLG forces were defeated in either of these cases, it is likely that the units would not be destroyed but would straggle away to the south and in time be reformed.

2. The above views are given with no firm indication yet at hand of the effect of T-28 strikes on the capabilities and morale either of the PL/VM forces or of those of the RLG.

Sherman Kent

Sherman Kent
Assistant Director, National Estimates