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Letters by Ernest Kuhn. 1965

Kuhn, Ernest

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Chicago crash CIA check 12110

Vientiane, Laos

Aug 26, 1965

8 pp

Dear Mom, Dad & Jim,

Well, here are a few lines from Laos, although by the time I send this I will probably be back in Thailand. USAID/Lao flew 6 of us up here yesterday from Bangkok via Air America. They are called Byrd Bros. Specially as they are a "front" for a US govt operated air lines which does the supplying for Lao troops and USAID people and also in Viet Nam. They have cargo planes - we flew in a C46 yesterday but they can be used to drop troops as well as supplies. We got here about 2:30 and went directly to USAID offices for briefing and interviews. Today 3 ~~guy~~ (all 6 are PCV's) guys went to inspect a "clerk" programme. There are 10-2 Americans plus a Lao team who work in the "safe" areas. They operate out of one village in a small radius letting several villages. Hence the term "clerk". The 3 guys were offered contracts today! I sort of ~~felt~~ went I had gone because it is almost a pure job as they need personnel. There are 2 other types of programmes. One is a "forward area" program. There a man (or 2) is sent into a remote "loyal" area which is usually a pocket in a Pathet Lao controlled territory. All support is by air as most places have no roads. As in the clerk prog. The idea is to start civic action projects such as schools, wells, gardens etc. The program interests me greatly. It is run by an ex-Marine Colonel named Haffner who seems

like a tremendous individual. The US AID men get shot at
 occasionally but no one has been killed to my knowledge.
 The 3rd program is refugee work with the Miao in Laos.
 Many of the Miao have been driven out of their mountain
 homes by the Reds so the US is keeping them alive with rice
 drops, free supplies such as steel for axes, cloth, bucket
 etc. This program is run by a guy named "Pop" Buell (Pop?)
 (Buell)?
 You may have seen the series of articles the Sat. Evening Post
 ran on him last year about his work with the Miao in Laos.
 His program is all done in areas where the low lands
 are often controlled by the Reds so that all supplies are
 brought in by air. His work is really dangerous
 but more from airplane accidents than enemy fire.
 Yesterday a plane, no helicopter, crashed and killed the
 American pilot and seriously injured his Miao passenger. 213
 Tomorrow is 6:30 Pop is flying 2 of us up into the mts to
 see the operation at his C.H.Q. He does all his hiring
 personally. If he likes you - you're hired - if not he just says
 you can't do the job in his opinion. It's really exciting work
 to hear from the people here in the program. The contract would
 be for 6 months or \$4600 or \$5200 depending on your qualifications.
 After 6 months there is the option to renew the contract either from here
 or in Washington. If you are hired here you can't go home. Well I
 could but I would have to pay my way which would

mean the PC would pay my way home. Then I would
have to pay my way back here plus back home in 6 months -
a total of \$1200. And if I make \$4600 then I would
take 1/3 of my salary for plane fare. But if I get hired I
can save my plane money from PC for 6 months, then go
home and get hired from Washington who would pay my
transportation back here (and for my wife's as well).
I suppose that I have a 50-50 chance of getting a job
in the Mies program and if that fails still another
good chance in another program. So, in any event, please
don't be too upset if I don't come home for another 6
months. Working here you get PX privileges plus APO. Today
the other PCW who is flying with me and I went to the PX
to buy food to take up. All the USAID guys in the field have
their food sent up from Vietnam by air. I was sort of shocked
by the prices so I went to a big supermarket. The 2 of us
spent \$4 - but that included \$3.50 for 1/2 of Cherry Heering,
lemons, toothpaste etc. But bread 34¢ a loaf! We are supposed
to stay with the Mies until Sunday and then fly back here and
then back to Bangkok on Monday. USAID is paying for transportation
and hotel bills but we have to pay for our own food. I've
got my fingers crossed about the job - I really want it very
badly. In fact I would take nearly any job over here
but the Mies job is obviously the best of the lot.

I know a date with the Thai girl I mentioned in my last
letter. - when I return to Bangkok. She got off work at midnight and
the last three nights I sat on the margin of her and talked -
2:15, 3:10 and Sunday night 4:05!! Sunday morning she ^{very} slept
and married a couple of days at Chulalongkorn University where she is a Jr.
She is 21 - speaks English and French plus Thai of course. I'll admit
I've only known her for 10 days but that seems like enough. We have
had some real serious discussions already. Her aunt, who is a
famous woman lawyer in Thailand owns the hotel where we stay in
Bangkok. I'll keep you posted - London is fading fast. I think I'm
getting a cold from the air condition.

Unkran is a strange city. It is sort of shabby and run down.
The streets are wide at the most French-founded cities but the
buildings look run down, although I suppose that is natural
after all the fighting here. There are a lot of Thai women here - they seem to
be all the city along with the Chinese - the two are almost hard to
find! Last night we went to a few bars which seemed a little
decent and safe compared to Bangkok bars. Even the girls in bars
seemed sort of decent and a little compared to the girls in the
Bangkok bars, although in Bangkok there are all the G.I.'s. Tonight however
I walked down a different street and found a more friendly
of the human district. Food is cheap here - 115 cents 20-30 ¢ or
compared to 50 ¢ in Thailand - Booze, about \$2-4 a 1/2 quart!
Everything is cheaper here - that imported stuff - than it is in Thailand.
Well I want to take a bath and go to bed - have to get up at
5:30 tomorrow morning. Will mail this as soon as possible

Love
Ernie

5
Sam Thong, Laos
Aug. 29, 1965

Dear Mom, Dad & Jim,

I am now writing to you from the GHQ of the big refugee program for the Mee in Laos. We have been here since Friday morning. We are supposed to fly back to Vientiane today but rain is ahead 500 feet.

Well, I guess there is no point in beating around the bush. I am going to stay in Laos for 6 months. I'm sorry, but I've given it a lot of thought and I feel that this is something that I can't say "no" to. I have verbally agreed to a 6 month contract followed by a home leave and then a probable 2 year extension. I guess when I first came here 5 days ago I was interested mainly in the money - \$4800 to \$5200 for 6 months. But after being up here 3 days I have become so wrapped up in the whole aspect of refugee work that the money seems insignificant now. The work that I will be doing will keep me out in the mountains and jungle most of the time. To be frank it is relatively dangerous, - people have and are getting shot at by the Pech. People have been killed in plane crashes. But it is something the people that work here don't seem to consider. The overall operation is much more than any one individual. In essence I am being land picked by "Pop" Bull Limself. Right now there are exactly 4 Americans directing the movement of refugees over nearly all of northern Laos. & there are of course many more Americans in the area with

when this operation is co-ordinated - CID, Air force etc. plus Howard
Mes and Leo and their involved in various aspects of the refugee program.
If I stay here I will be one of a very small and select team. There
is one other fellow but he was in a plane crash 2 months ago and
can't work any more. There is maybe three of the present & may leave in a
few months unless they resign their contracts. Most people here carry
side arms in their knapsacks because of real bad assignments they may take
along a M-1 or a Carbine. The work is not like Viet Nam but only
in the fact that I will not be actually involved in fighting. As I
understand it now the job involves going out to a site, there are
about 170 sites with airstrips for a Helio, and checking on relief drops of
rice, on movements of Mes out of Red-held areas to "White" areas,
determining the amount of food and medicine needed, getting schools
and dispensaries built etc. We met an ex-POW from Indonesia last night.
He was sent out 10 days ago to spend 2 nights in a village. He got
runned down in a Mes village for 10 days on the Red surrounded the
village. He could have walked out but he stayed picking up
information and waited until it was safe for a plane to land.
And actually he wasn't in any danger as the Mes would have gotten him out.

He returned to Vinh in the evening. Today was really interesting. I got to see
in a Helio to a site where medicine was being sent. We flew over the Plain
of Jars. This is "enemy" country. Friday a F-105 jet was shot down over
N. Viet Nam but the pilot managed to land in Laos, people think? Yesterday
a Helicopter USAF from Udorn Thailand flew in to rescue the pilot. They couldn't
find him but were shot down and rescued by some Mes. Another
plane went out today and brought the 4 guys to Sam Thong. I talked with
them - real great men. Even 24 hours after being shot down their hands
shook when they drank a cup of coffee. They were complaining about

about inadequate "Choppers" for rescue work and talking with an
Air America pilot. All these men had families in states and kids
and all were on extended duty but they said that when you
go in to rescue a man you don't think about your own safety
during or getting the man out. I saw and talked with
people who probably were mentioned on page 12, 2 times,
in all the local papers in the U.S. Yet here were 7 men risking
their lives to rescue one man. The work up here is so fascinating
that once it gets in your blood - you just can't get out. Two other
PCV's may be with me - Art Stillman from Cleveland may teach
English there. "Pop" has to OK it with Gen. Yang Pao, the only med general in
the Tibetan army. Art will know on Wednesday. Bob King from N.C. is
going back home first - to may finish college or to do his BA yet.
But he may come up in a month. I decided not to come home for 2
reasons - one) I would have to pay my own transportation 2) "Pop"
is desperate for help now and he wants me to get out of the
PC as soon as possible before the 28th of September. I'll be here
for 6 months then I can go home for a couple months and sign a
2 year contract in Washington who will then pay my way back here.
They have drawn up a contract yet but I think I will receive
about \$46 or \$4700 for 6 months. I was also told I get \$9 per
day for every night spent out of Sam Thang! Sam Thang is my base
but I will be working out of Sam Thang. So if in a month
I spend 20 (minimum, maybe 25) days in the field, I receive an

8
extra \$180 per month. If I am out 25 days then \$225 extra!
Theoretically I could make an extra \$1647 for the 6 months. Also we
get 25% of outboard pay for a handy post. Thus if my base is
say \$4600, I get 25% of that which is \$1150. But now I'm not sure
whether the \$4600 is including 25% or not. If not I could clear
as much as \$7397 for 6 months!! But I cannot. I will
actually be less than that. There is nothing to spend money on
out in the hills. I am trying to save the majority of that. If I
could work for 2 yrs 6 months I should have a bank account of
perhaps \$15-20,000! This is naturally idle speculation but it is
possible. The job has to be done - and few people in the US would
or can qualify for jobs like these. I always thought that jobs
demanding commerce, combined with a few guts and a love
of adventure were gone - except for specially trained people such as
space men. But here the field is still wide open. And a sense
I am just as specially skilled and trained for the work - speaking
that - I've been living with the Mes - as are astronauts who
fly space ships. I couldn't fly Gemini 4 but perhaps the men in
Gemini 4 couldn't do what I'll be doing. By the way, I think I will
have APO privileges which means all you have to do is write to an APO
address in the US and save a lot of stamps. Also I can send letters by APO
which means 7¢ instead of 25¢ for both of us. - Oh my food bill
will be small also as I found out the Mes send up food free most of the
time in sum thing and I came in the field I will live with the Mes in
their houses. Also, please note. What I write to you is strictly personal
and is for no reason to be repeated. I suppose all the family can read the
stuff but it should go no further. While my job will not be top secret
it does involve some intelligence work and inference could be drawn
from what I write. So - please keep all my letters in a safe place for me
till I get home. Well, will mail the tomorrow from Bangkok. Love -
Eric

9/17/65

Friday note
Sept. 17, 1965

①

Dear Mom, Dad & Jim,

Here are a few quick lines before I leave tomorrow morning for "up north." I left Bangkok Wednesday noon and arrived in Vientiane about 2:30. I went directly to USAID and agreed to my contract - \$3600 + 25% (900) = \$4500 for 6 months. In addition I get \$9 per day every time I leave my station, Samthong. It already has an extra \$18. Tomorrow I am flying up to Hua Maeng in Sam Nuea Province. Hua Maeng was just recaptured from the Reds 4 days ago. Pop went up this morning and today he reached down for me to come tomorrow morning.

Yesterday I had my first experience in the Commissary - 1 can of M&M's 75, 1 can of cigarettes and one box of cigars! plus 1 bag of peas - the first in 3 years. They had apples but they were gone.

It will be short but I have a few

Things I would like you to do for me
plus giving you my APO number.

I need a "winter" jacket. I thought perhaps
you could send me the page from a Sears
catalog and I could choose or I will tell
you what I want. I want a "waist length"
coat, loose (no elastic at the waist) tight
around the waist. Collar if possible,
zipper and as many pockets as possible.
I would prefer ^②green or ^①blue or khaki
color in that order, but not bright green.
I want one lined with soft light weight
material if possible which at the same
time is warm. Don't worry about the
price - I'll pay for it out of my first check.
Send it air mail to the APO address the
same as the shoe I asked for in my
last letter.

Also I would like you to see about a

a slightly longer sock

checking account - not one like before but
a "real" one. Everything kept here is by check.
All embassy payments are charged
and paid monthly by check. Last money
is bought by check etc. So I will be making
lots of checks. I suppose the last thing is to
have 48 Homewood as the address on the checks.
Also please make arrangement to have my
last loan payment taken out of some of the
money or bonds I have. This has to be done
because I don't ~~get~~ get any money until
after the 30th. I should get \$669 from the
PC corp for plane fare and if that comes
I send it to the bank immediately and
then maybe they can just take the money
out, but I'm afraid I am in a
tight spot. I'll try to make the bank hold it in
suspense until I have time. Also USAID
will make the draft based on my job
as a visitor to the National Security.

Well I may be able to work
more here & have some money then I

Thank it. I'll fill in all the details
in a couple of days -

Bye for now

Love,
Ernie

Hi. Saturday morning. I haven't left
yet so I'll add a few lines. Just thought
of something else - a bedroll. One that
is lightweight but warm and will roll
into a tight roll. This stuff will sure
make living here easier. If you can get
the thing for me, send them air mail
but in separate packages. Don't send the shoes
yet. I think my old ones may be ^{for a while} OK. I'll
let you know later. Also can you inquire
about health insurance. I can get accidental
death - disability here but I have no
information on health insurance. The govt will
reimburse me up to \$700 for insurance.

I don't have a resume yet. I thought I
could buy one in Vietnam even than Bangkok
but I find now I should have gotten one there.

The Americans here carry them in their baggage
so they can't be seen - as far as one
has ever heard of. There is so much I
couldn't get from W. S. Taylor if I were home.
Well, I'll close again - I hear some
planes coming in and I may go out
on one of them -

Love

Enni

The plane didn't stop here. Do you know
anyone in St Paul's Lutheran Church at
Glenford. There are several boxes of used
clothing sent from Glenford which was sent
to "Pop" Buell. Well, bye again. I'll
get a letter off to everyone as soon as
possible -

Love

Enni

Sam Hong Sept 26, 1965

Dear Mom, Dad, Jim,

Please excuse the paper but my stationery got wet from a rain storm today. Well lots of things happened since my last letter - even though I forget exactly when I wrote it. Today the Prime Minister of Laos, ^{Saphone} ~~Savang~~ ^{Phouma} Phouma (the spelling is incorrect!) came up for a visit. He spent the afternoon here. Pop has loaned me his camera - a Canon - and I hope I got lots of good pictures of him. U.P. (Vang Pao) the Major General was with him plus a few other gen's. I think I know one - including Taubay, a former cabinet minister who is a Mao. I was supposed to have gone out into the field today for 4 days but Pop said that maybe we might like to see the Prime Minister. The other night - Mon or Tues - we talked to a USAF officer who told us about the F105 shot down and the rescue attempt too - all 5 men captured. It was in the papers a couple of days later. The PC and VC have dropped for a while in Sam Neua. However they will probably regroup soon. The concern here is that the US bombing of North Vietnam has helped Laos because the North VN can't get supplies to the Viet Minh and pulled back forces in Laos. The doctors say that now there are almost no casualties due to mines whereas before the bombing of NVN the VC could get mines from NVN. Don't repeat this but don't be surprised if you hear about

armed uprisings among the Muong and Black Thai in
North Vietnam. This is a "guess". I signed my contract
on Friday. I will be finished March 14 I think the
date is. I had to sign 607 copies. If you have not
sent the shoes a coat - don't for a while. I have a
real good pair of sort of military - pilot boots which
are very good. Then the wool I found "up here" a
US army coat which is really nice - medium length,
water proof - lots of big pockets and a zipper lining.
No one has claimed it so I confiscated it. - Well if you
have a jacket for me send it, but not the shoes.
As far as anyone knowing who I am - It's O.K. to
say that I am an ^{in USAID} Gold Operations man at

SAM THONG
Sam Thong, Lao. My work is ~~the~~ helping to
distribute relief supplies - rice, blankets, clothing,
salt, pots etc to refugees. The program is run
by the United States Agency for International
Development with co-operation from the Lao Gov't.
I was in Vientiane last night and came back
up this morning. I stayed at Pops' apartment
since he was home plus the use of his jeep. I
made a sort of 4 expedited trip Thursday night -
we had an emergency evacuation - soldiers were
shot down. We had raided ahead for ammunition
to meet us at the airport but it was 40 minutes
after we landed before they got there.

28 Oct. 65

015

11/3/65

Dear Mom, Dad : Jim,

~~I guess it's been a long time since I last wrote to you. Actually I wrote 24 pages about 3 weeks ago but I never got it mailed and then I haven't been in Sam Thong much since then. I got the feel that I think about the 6th but I'm not really sure about the date. I needed it on the 6th I think so I don't know how long it may have been in Vientiane. I read it and it's really nice and warm. I like the top - it's not the kind that gets you up like a cocoon. The one has the zipper on the neck and the top is open so you can get your arm out (in a hurry!)~~

I guess what I have to say now is sort of bad news but not serious. I am in bed with malaria. Monday of last week I began to ache all over and Monday night I flew to a new refugee site to spend the night. I got chilled and began to shake. When I got into the DB after dinner I was OK. The next day I flew to #36 No Khang - a big bar - and did some business in the morning. In the afternoon I went to bed with the chills. Stayed in bed till noon the next day. Went back to Sam Thong. In the afternoon came to Vientiane after the Doc at ST said I had to go to bed. Had top-level Docs at USAID look at me (Bak Dahn was also with). Rested until Saturday morning and went back to ST. Saturday afternoon got chills and ache again and was sent to Vt. again. Am staying at the Weldon-Heyan both MD's and Doc in head of Public Health. Saturday night part of Sunday and Monday I could hardly move - head aching, eyes ached, body ached all over. I guess I had dengue fever part time and malaria the second trip. I taking medicine - quinine etc. Today, Thursday, I feel pretty good, only I'm still a little, no very much, weak. However, this is not supposed to ever recur and I guess I'll have some type of immunity (for a while?). ~~Since I will have to rest for another week or two I may go to Bangkok to buy Christmas gifts and Aunt Betty's jewelry.~~ The Doc. just said she will know by Sat if the malaria is linked - I still have a high fever - However I feel pretty good. I'm reading a lot and drinking lots of water. A US secretary at PH comes over every day to see if I want anything - ~~I had her buy me a pair of PJ's - see cream etc.~~

~~I have a lot of stuff to buy at Sears but the catalogue I have now need the order to Calif. where they ship stuff out of APO; in Asia, so the stuff you won't have to worry about.~~

Al- Have you sent me any other packages? Betty, the "see" came over today and said that there was a package for me about 2 weeks ago but that it got "lost" in the APO room! I thought it may have been the bedroll but they said it was in there 2 weeks ago. Al- Someone in Bangladesh sent word to USAID that there had been a package for me at the GPO in Bangladesh - came about June. After 2 months unclaimed they are supposed to send it back to the sender. I can't figure out why a package at Bangladesh GPO was not sent to Tom Kas, and who notified USAID and whom the GPO knew I had come to Loo? Al- one of the packages was from HOWARD, OHIO ??? Where's Howard, Ohio? I've never heard of it. I think this was the package "lost" by APO & I believe it was registered. What a foul up.

Part of crowd the post moved. A helicopter circled (about down?)
and killed 4 US, 1 Sov, 1 Thai. I reacted on the announcement of the

deaths in the AIDS bulletin only 2 US were named - I guess the other
were "legally not in Laos". There are several of those types around here,
a "Pala" cracked that no injuries - a helicopter cracked no injuries. Last
week an International Control Commission plane was flying to Hanoi.
The last radio contact from that was "am circling Hanoi airport". The
plane was never heard from since. Wreck hasn't been found either.
Either it crashed in NVN, was shot down or VNUN for some reason
is holding it and the people aboard. - 13 [Fremont, Pala, Indian & Candan - 100]

I'm reading a book Conflict in Law. If it is in New York Public Library you should read it. It confirms keeping everyone straight. But it's interesting to read about people whom I have met and know here.

I was supposed to have had dinner Monday with Mr. Moore, the ex head of USAID but since I was sick I couldn't go. I think he wanted to discuss coming back for a year after home leave. It's tempting - the work is fatiguing but extremely interesting - and the money is good. Given I should get married to help income tax!! The month, Oct, I'd only get 4 or 5 days p/d. - Ugh. Last month, at I guess when I turned by my ship they included through Oct 11. I should be getting that money soon but I don't know how much it will be.

~~I was 4 to get the off in the morning, still with much a few days.~~
~~telling me what I'm doing. That's now. Love you.~~

Dear Mom, Dad & Jim,

I just wrote to you 2 days ago but I'll write again as I get my check today. I'll send them home to you if you don't mind - I don't like to send signed checks by mail to a bank. It's too inviting for someone to steal if the addressee is a bank, but an ordinary home address less so for me. Please put this check in a savings account. - my old one if I still have one, or begin a new one for me. If you can do it, before you put the money in the bank, take out the money for the sleeping bag and postage. If you can't do it that way I'll send you a check. Now to forget about money -.

I received a letter from the draft board this week but it was dated 10 Sept and had been sent to Thailand and then here. They wanted to remind me that I was 1-A on 1 Sept (not 30 Sept as I thought) and if I wanted further deferments the PC should write to them immediately. On the 28th Sept the Director of USAID here wrote them a letter as I hope everything is OK now. But by all means don't call or write the Board. I'll just let USAID take of everything. If I can find the copy of the letter I'll send it to you - a classic! Tell about my job and how vital it is and how dangerous it is and how the gov't has a large stake in SEA. Then the final paragraph talks about VU Nam and how VU has top priority on all gov't projects etc. They wrote the same letter for 4 of us and we can't figure out why VU was mentioned and what it has to do with Leo, but oh well - as long as it works!!

Pop was in to see me for a while this afternoon. He looks real good after his stay in Korea. They said he was OK now and his heart is in good shape after the heart attack he had a few months ago. To me he looks about 65 although he is supposed to be only 52. However his children look older than possible if he is only 52. I don't know -!

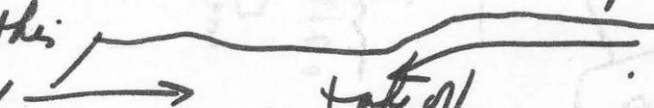
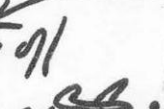
I don't know now whether I'll get to Bangkok or not next week. I felt very good today. Betty came

our last night and stayed til after midnight. I slept most of today. The Waldens, daughter had a slumber party last night as sleeping was difficult in general. They go on home leave next Friday - 4 months. Doc came back today from Ceylon where he had been attending a regional PH meeting. Betty was a little upset last night about life here and how the Embassy and USAID people have their little groups and the petty group etc. I think she is a little disturbed with her job in PH in regards to the personality conflict of various people and some people who encroach on another person's job etc. It's no wonder we are often so ineffective ourselves - the people running the show don't get along.

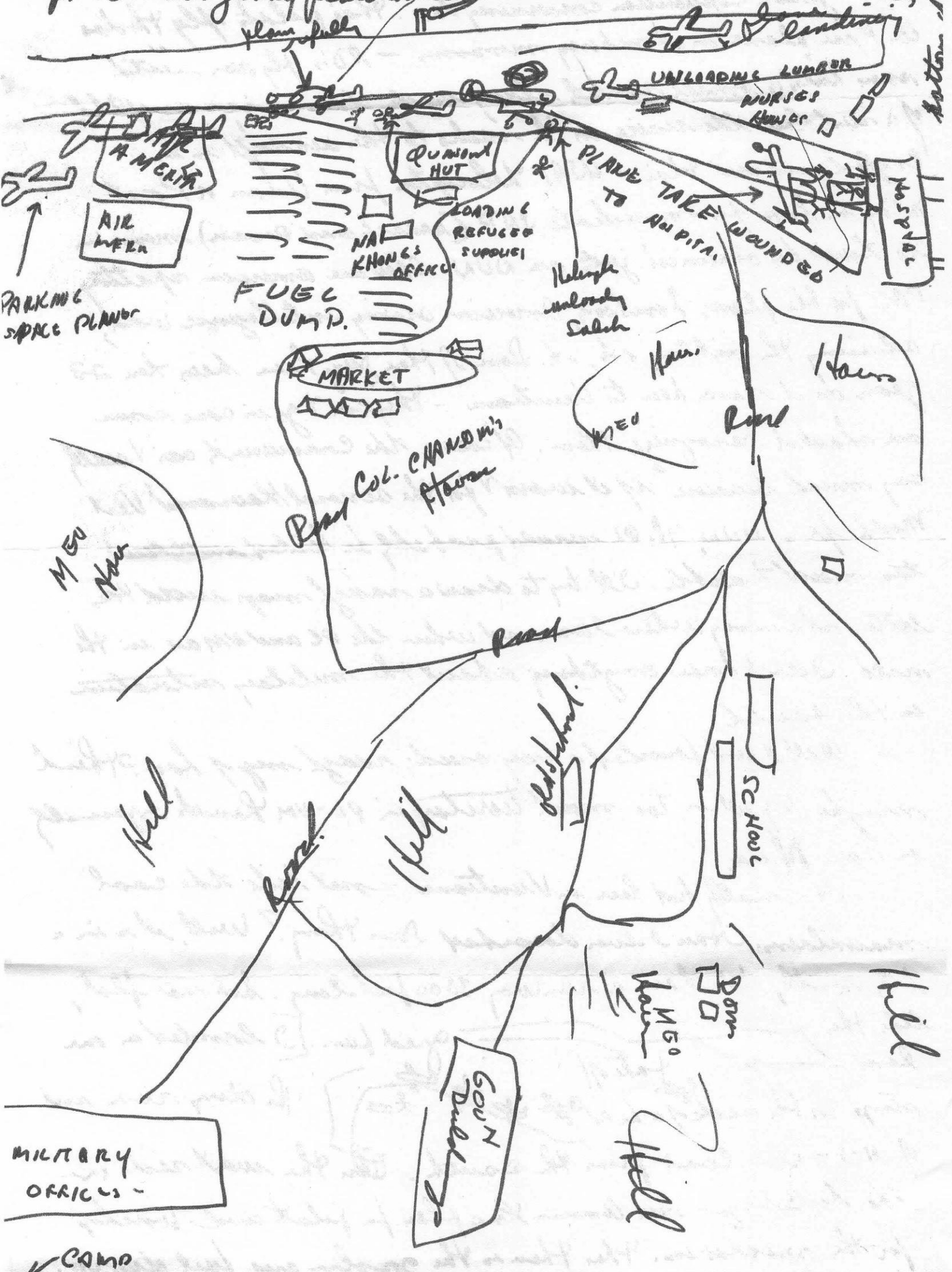
For instance, take where I work. I am working in the Refugee Relief Program which comes under the Rural Development Division. In RDD there are 2 other sections - the Cluster Program - This is straight CD work, build roads, dig wells, garden etc. The program operates in areas military secure and each cluster consists of 2-5 villages located close together. @ Forward Area Program - These people also do CD work but they are in areas more exposed to the areas of frequent fighting etc or at least in areas of fairly constant tension. All 3 programs are mutually incompatible. The refugee relief program as it operates out of Sam Theng was originally begun by Pop Buell and later when the Waldens came to Public Health they jumped in with Pop. So the 3 of them, Pop and the 2 Drs. Walden [Mr. & Mrs.] look upon the relief program, at least in the north, as their personal little operation. Now when Pop wants to do something he just does it - he has the freedom to do pretty much as he pleases. This doesn't go to well ~~about~~ with the other 2 sections. Then too he has the ear of the Ambassador, the USAID Dir. Mendenhall and the ^{Sullivan} section Dir Moore. I have been instructed by Pop to give no information refugee wise, a military wise to anyone but the above 3 plus one other man in the Embassy. This obviously ^{doesn't} make RDD too happy because they feel a little left out, which of course they are in a way! So in some respects the whole atmosphere is not so healthy. But yet at the same time

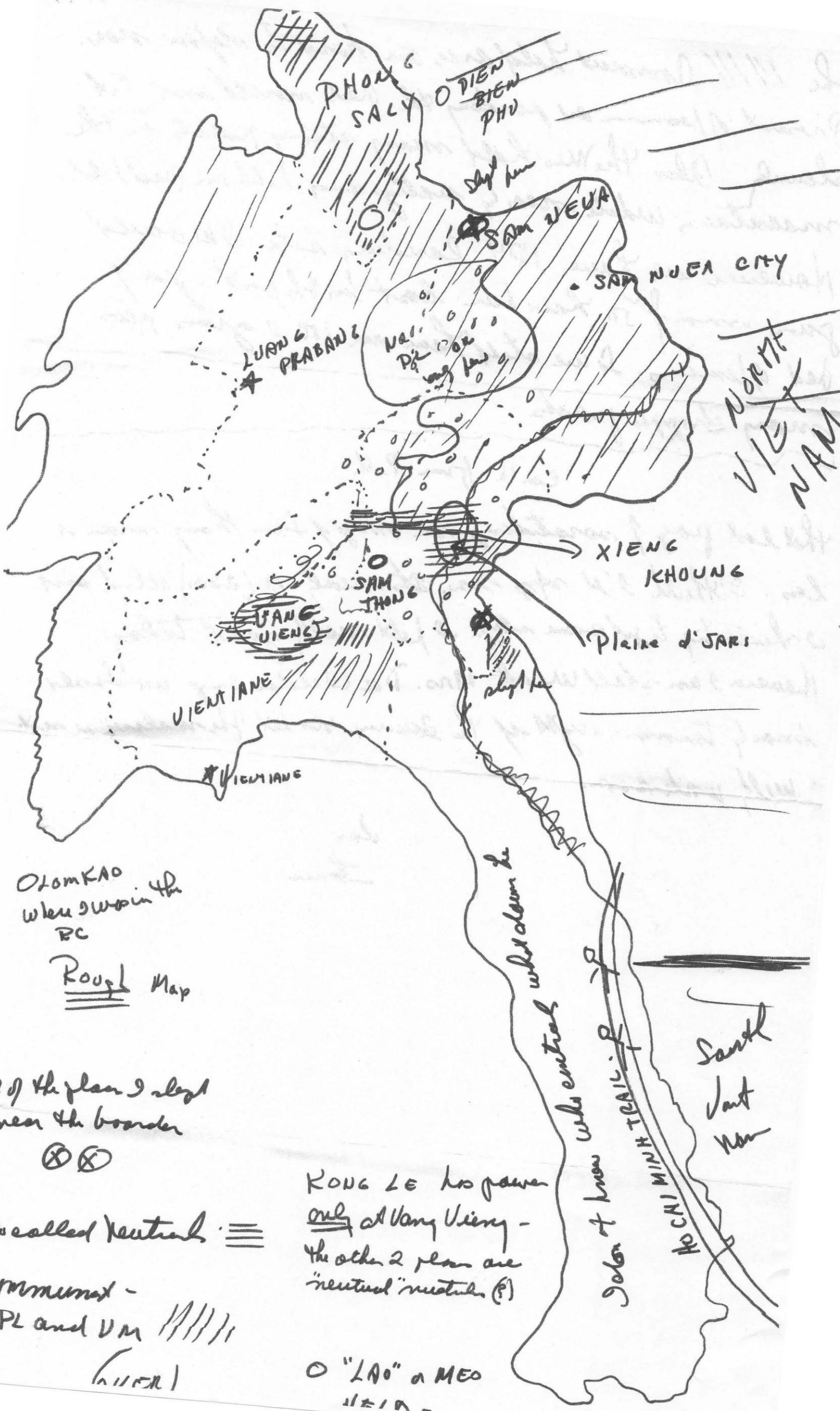
there has to be some secrecy because in the area where I work and under the Ref. Rel. Pro. is being carried out there is a war going on. And in time of war there has to be some restriction on news. There are lots of Americans in Laos who are here "illegally". The government knows it, sure, because they are working with the Lao military - but this is in violation of the Geneva Convention concerning Laos. Thai pilots fly the Lao Air Force planes on bombing missions - AD's fly over with some kind of small rocket slung under the wings and all of a sudden the noise on the radio to the aircraft is in English and not Thai. - USAF Helicopters from Udorn or Korat stay in Laos for immediate SAR (Search and Rescue) mission to hunt for downed jets over NVN. There are American spy things FAC for the planes, bombing, American doing intelligence work, advising the military etc, etc. Some of these guys have been here 2-3 years and never been to Vientiane - They can't go in case some one should recognize them. Of course the Communists can't really say much because if it wasn't for the General Hanoi and Viet Minh from NVN, the PL would probably be licked without too much trouble. I'll try to draw a rough map with the letter showing where I am and where the PL and VM are in the north. I don't know anything about the military situation in the south.

Well I just finished a very crude, rough map of Laos. I think maybe I put in too much territory in PL-VM hands especially in Sam Neua.

It is really hot here in Vientiane - not like the cool mountains. Have I ever described Sam Neua? Well, it is in a big valley. We have a runway 3300 feet long. but not flat, like this  great fun. [I landed on one end  the other runs out of N-S - you land from the south. On the west side on the building - An American has a place for pilots and workshop for the mechanics. Then there is the smaller one just across.

Then comes the Quamud hut. One end is a warehouse for rice, blankets, reeds, butter oil, clothing, and for everything that we give to refugees. The next section is the medical warehouse. Then the "office" with the radio in one part and the "dishes" and tables in another part with beds in rest of a "loft." A real janky place to live - no toilet and shower.





O LOMKAO
where I was in the
PC

Rough Map

2 of the plan I slept
near the border

⊗ ⊗

So called Neutral ≡

Communist -
PL and DM
(11/11/11)

KONG LE has power
only at Vang Vieng -
the other 2 plan are
"neutral" (P)

O "LAO" a MEO
HEIR -

Go to know who central who down to

HO CHI MINH TRAIL
South
Viet
Nam

the 1111 Communist held areas are hard to defend now.
Present of/comm in pushing the Red north and East
slowly. Also the Mos hold many strong points in the
mountains, while nearly valleys and hills are Red held.
However we have 184 landing sites I know of
guns, maybe 50 have been lost in the past year of
Red of/comm. So we still have over 100 guns plus
many chopper packs.

Emil from P. U.

that last page of scratching is a map of Sam they were a
loss. I think I'll stop now. It's nearly 10 (2200) o'clock and
I should try to get some sleep. I felt really good today.
However I am still weak. Mrs. Doc Welden says we should
know by tomorrow night if the Quinians do hit the malaria or not.
Well, write soon.

Love,
Emil

Wednesday 17th
3 Nov 1965

Dear Mom, Dad, Jim,

Hi - Guess it's been a week or so since I last wrote. Haven't heard from you all for a while but I guess it's because my mail is sent to Sam Hong.

Enclosed are 2 checks - one \$302.91 my pay check and one is \$84.95 pension. Actually my pension was \$104.95 but I had a "deduction" when I first arrived here. Please put the \$84.95 in my savings account and \$302.91 in my checking account. Also did you transfer \$500 from the checking to savings account? I just wrote a \$260 to cover my Commissary Bill, \$18 for insurance and \$50 some dollars to Sam for clothes etc. Is if the \$500 was taken out then wouldn't be enough left to cover all three checks. The banking by air is a mess and trouble for you but when I get my bank book maybe I will be easier. My commissary bill was terrible. Until I got sent it was only \$145. Then I bought a Canon QL 17 camera \$52 and since I've been here in Ventriane for a month it's been quite so expensive. Then I had to go

to Bangladesh for 4 days - Well, another
~~250~~ however in Bangladesh I bought Christmas
 gifts for everyone in the Koh-Buddhi family
 familiar (except in Myanmar). This was the first
 time in 2 years I've been able to buy Christmas
 gifts as I splurged. However I'm over the
 stuff now I arrived until after Christmas.
 Also I bought Aunt Betty some jewelry. Then
 I bought some of gloves and lot of food.
 So I can account for the money but I've
 never had so much like this before. I signed
 three old buddies as PCV's were in Bangladesh. They
 signed contracts with USOM/Thailand
 but yesterday there and more as PCV's here
 every month.

I guess my dengue fever and malaria
 are cured. But - I caught a cold from the
 air conditioner in the hotel and coming up
 on the plane yesterday I got back my sleep
 ear infection - 5 more days here with an
 acute inflamed inner ear. I think I'm
 jinxed.

My girl in Bangladesh didn't know I
 was coming so I thought I would surprise
 her.

3. 2 Dec 65

However I guess I was surprised instead
~~as it was in the in Hospital was some kind~~
~~of fluid in her lung - It will be operated on in~~
~~a few days.~~

I'm sorry I haven't written sooner but I've
been up country for a week and running Sam
Hong for almost a week. I was out of reach
when I got Mom's letter 2 weeks ago. I can't
~~understand why no one wrote to me that~~
~~she was in the Hospital.~~ However I got a letter
last week and I guess Mom's old nagging
before illness & I am fine now. I had
this dengue fever which lowered my re-
sistance and then this serious kind of
malaria broke through. You see we take pills
every week to prevent malaria but the kind
that I have is merely suppressed and
in a run-down condition physically it
will "pop" out. Then I got the crazy ear
infection. However I am fine - my weight
is up to 153 lb, more than ever in 2
years. The doctor told me to drink lots of
beer as I was down to 125 lb when I was
sick. So I drink 5 or 6 cans a day and
I am getting a small "beer belly". I'm

been eating like a horse and I feel fine.

~~My finances are all messed up. I have no idea how much money I have in savings acc't and checking acc't. Please let me know. The next trip to Vientiane I will have my check sent directly to the bank. They will put a certain amount in a saving acc't and certain amount in the checking acc't. Then you won't have to worry about it and neither will I.~~

I've been trying to learn as much about the operation here as possible. Pop will be here but his #1 ointment jar on home leave the end of Dec so I will have to take over for him when he leaves. Of course I can't be as effective as he is because he has worked here for $2\frac{1}{2}$ years and knows the whole program perfectly. But I am & know the operation as well as he. I have just about definitely decided to come back here for 2 more years. I plan on coming home in March or the first of April and spend about 3 months at home and Washington and then come back again to Sam Thong.

6 Dec.

Back again - Hope to get this in the mail tonight. I am now on ~~you~~ will probably get take longer to mail a letter from me to you and you to me due to the APO system. We get mail in Laos via APO Sunday and Friday. Then it takes at least 2 days for USAPO to send the same thing. Then on mail home if I send a letter out on Sunday it would have to be sent to Vietnam on Saturday. In Friday I could send it on Wed or Thursday morning. Then too I often times do not have much free time to write often.

On Thanksgiving we were at Nam Thauai up near the Thai-Lao border. If you look on the map it would be near Hanoi Lai on the Mekong River. We had turkey and all the trimmings however the cook yaks work the USAPO guys there fixed the turkey "local style". That is instead of roasting it he cut the bird up into tiny pieces and fixed it several different ways. However it was good so we could leave it on the table and eat all day. Yesterday I flew way up north in Laos

Nuea province. We just got back a large area north of Sam Nuea City. We had a team go in and the PL and VM got scared and pulled out. A few moved in. The people around the area have moved to one central location and had machine guns been formed and given arms. They had been under the PL for nearly 5 years. It was very interesting flying over the country up there, especially flying close enough to Sam Nuea City to be able to see it from the air.

The war in the north is going well but in the south things are not too good. The PL and VM are pressing around Thakeh in the south. I gave us lost 2 villages a few days ago in the PL near Thakeh between them and Savanulhet. However the war in the north is going pretty good. General Vang Pao was over this morning. He's really a remarkable individual. Hope I can get some photos of him before I leave here. Apparently there is no secret about me coming back for 2 years if I decide to. However I'm looking forward to getting home. Another 4 PCU and I may go to the South Pacific for 10 days before coming home - maybe Samuea or Kithi - Well, well and now so this may go out, with love, on tomorrow's plane - bye for now. Love, Ernie

12/21/65 21 Dec 65

Dear Mom, Dad & Jim

Please ignore the writing paper
I am now at "Signal 2" school - c.
east of site 95. I have been here since
yesterday morning. A Mo and I landed
here by chopper to distribute refugee
supplies to 300 men and 20 kids
hungry people who had fled from the Viet
Mien last week. The chopper was
supposed to have picked us up last
night at 4:00 but we saw them
fly overhead very high but to clear
land. Yesterday afternoon 2
choppers landed with rice and
ammunition and as they were
flying they shot the Viet Mien on the
2nd ridge was fired on it. I then
thought the pilot was afraid to come
back. No more 1:00 and no chopper
yet. We had to stay and sleep here
last night. This morning 2 choppers
flew high overhead and I shot off a
red signal flare but it didn't
go off. - Right now I am out in
small night watching the T-28's
bombed the Viet Mien. They have been
been bombing them all day - this
morning they jets hit them also.

ment overran Ba Gia; another annihilated a Vietnamese battalion in Binh Duong province; a third captured the town of Dak Sut; U.S. Special Forces defenders were bloodied at Bu Dop and Duc Co. Talk of neutralism began to stir the cities of the South as the fledgling military regime of Air Vice Marshal Nguyen Cao Ky—the tenth Saigon government since Ngo Dinh Diem's assassination in November 1963—shakily took power in June.

Acting on Westmoreland's urgent plea for more combat troops and planes, the President in July spent eight days in secret conferences before adopting a cautious program of "maximum deterrence" calculated not to unduly alarm Hanoi's friends in Moscow. For the first time in any comparable emergency, the Administration did not order economic controls or mobilize reserves. Monthly draft calls were doubled to 35,000. The armed forces were authorized an additional 340,000 men for a total of 2,980,000. Most important of all, reinforcements were rushed to Viet Nam.

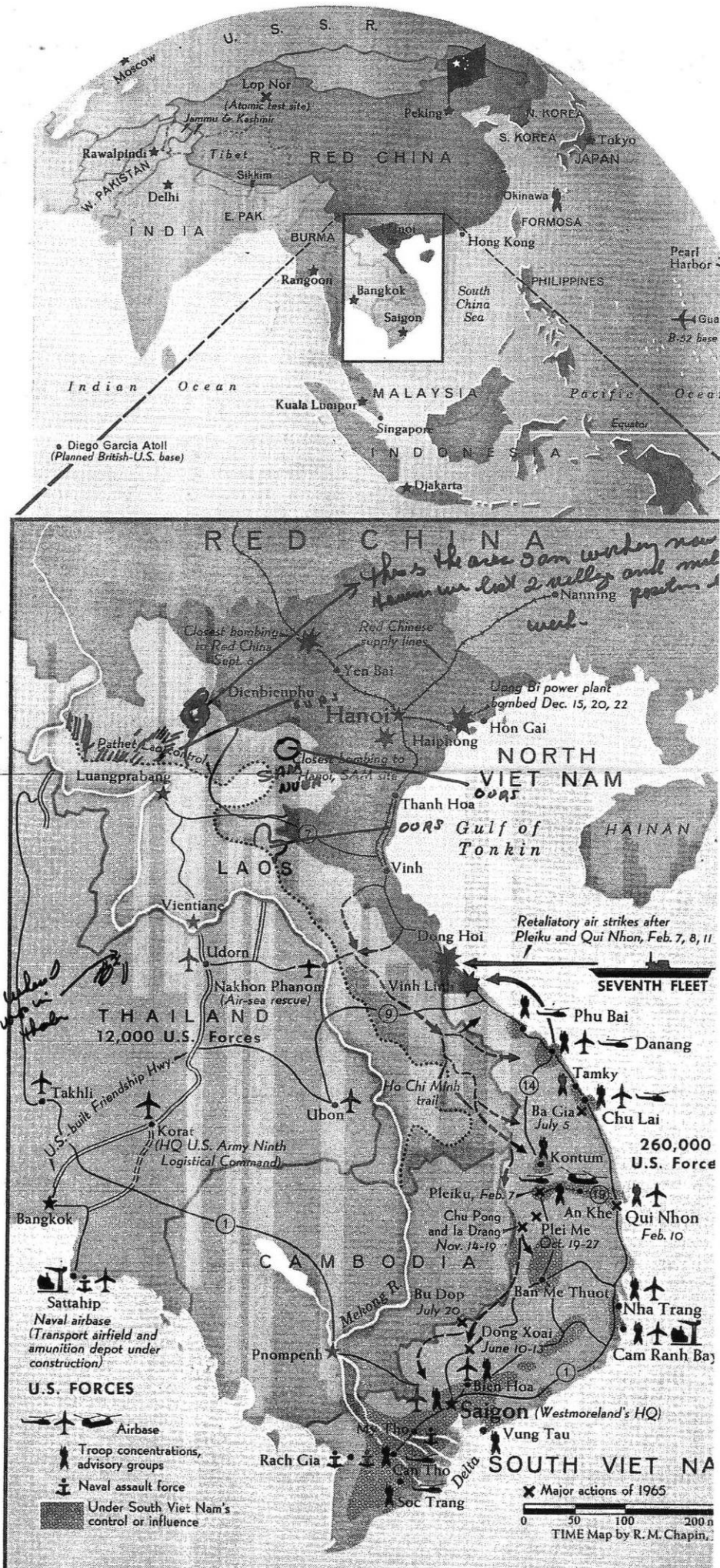
Main Artery. Even the sounds and sights of the land soon changed as U.S. deuce-and-a-halves, Jeeps, bulldozers, helicopters and fighter aircraft raised whirlwinds of cinnamon-colored dust and sand as white as snow. In the north, some 45,000 marines clustered around Hué, Danang and Chu Lai. The new 1st Cav settled at An Khe, just off Route 19, main artery leading to the beleaguered Central Highlands. Qui Nhon, Route 19's eastern terminus, was held by South Korea's crack 15,000-man Capital Division.

At pristine Cam Ranh Bay, where czarist Russia's fleet took shelter just before its crushing defeat by the Japanese navy in 1905, combat engineers turned the natural harbor into a major port. Twenty miles down the coast, the "Screaming Eagles" of the 101st Airborne Brigade began operating as a mobile strike force. In the guerrilla-infested jungles around Saigon prowled the 1st Infantry Division ("Big Red One"), the 173rd Airborne, a 1,200-man battalion of the Royal Australian Regiment, a 250-man New Zealand artillery unit.

Water Through a Rag. Some of the marines barely had time to pitch their tents when they were sent into their first major battle. On a peninsula below Chu Lai, 5,000 marines, aided by rocket-firing Cobra helicopters, jet fighters and naval guns from Task Force 77, killed close to 700 guerrillas. But this, they soon learned, was Viet Nam. No sooner did Operation Starlight end, said an exasperated officer, than the surviving Viet Cong "seeped back in like water through a wet rag."

Not until the Communists began concentrating troops in the Central Highlands was there another battle of Starlight's scope. Worried that their supply routes might be in danger, 6,000 Viet Minh and Viet Cong on Oct. 19 pounced on a Special Forces camp manned by 400 *montagnard* tribesmen and twelve

TIME, JANUARY 7, 1966



Personality Spotlight

General Vang Pao

By United Press International

GENERAL Vang Pao, Commander of the Meo tribal forces integrated into the Force Armée Royale of Laos, is one of the strongest anticommunist leaders in that country, or perhaps the world. Almost single-handedly, the Meos under his command have for three years stopped the advance of the combined Pathet Lao/Viet Minh forces and have even succeeded in recapturing large portions of Sam Neua Province from the communists.

Who is this man who has become almost a legend in his own time? He is a small, mild-mannered soldier, only 35 years old. But, he personally has a most incredible record of bravery and adventure gained in fighting for the freedom of his people and his country.

He was born in Ban Phou Kong Khao, Laos, on July 4, 1930, the son of a minor official in the Government. His childhood, up until 1945 was normal for a Meo-Lao youth of that era. In early 1945, he was a schoolboy when the attempted Free

French coup against the Japanese took place. Many of the Meo tribesmen, under their chief Touby Ly Fong supported the French. When the Japanese entered Laos in force to restore their control, though only 13 years old, Vang Pao left school to serve his people. He served as a scout collecting information on Japanese troops, which allowed Touby and others to escape capture.

At the end of the Second World War, the Viet Minh revolt against the French erupted. The Meos sided with the French against the Vietnamese, who all through recent history and until the present, have tried to dominate their home region in Northeastern Laos. At first, the young adventurer served as an interpreter for French troops fighting Viet Minh invaders and their Pathet Lao satellites. In 1946 he joined the column which marched from Nong Het to Luang Prabang and liberated the King who had been imprisoned by a group of Pathet Lao and

Chinese.

In 1947 Touby Ly Fong wished to reward his services by preparing him for a government career, but having tasted adventure, the young man would be nothing but a soldier. Therefore, Touby arranged for his appointment to the Gndamerie, and at the age of 17 he found himself in command of a 12-man squad of Meos in the service of the Royal Lao Government. This same year, he was sent for training in Luang Prabang, and in 1948 he attended another six month NCO course in Vientiane. By 1949 he was a Sgt. Chef., commanding a 34-man Meo platoon.

In 1950 he greatly distinguished himself when his platoon was sent to the Nam Mo area, where for two years the French had unsuccessfully tried to wipe out a mixed Viet Minh-Pathet Lao company. Contacting loyal Meos, Vang Pao surrounded the house where 13 Viet Minh, including the company commander, were staying. He attacked, killing seven and capturing three prisoners.

He also captured a notable group of Pathet Lao agents, whom he liquidated. Thus, he thwarted the Viet Minh plan for infiltrating and taking over the entire area. As a result, he was recommended for an officer's school, which he attended all through 1951 and 1952.

In 1953 aspirant Vang Pao was third in command of the 40th Independent Company made up of Meos. That same summer a government battalion of Hua Moun was routed by the Viet Minh. Vang Pao's company joined the remnants at Nong Het which by October was completely surrounded by Vietnamese communist troops. A breakout to the Plaine des Jarres was planned, but most of the troops threw away their arms and fled in small groups.

Vang Pao took 74 Meos of his company and four French and struck out fully armed for the Plaine des Jarres. After ten days, in spite of all assistance, the Frenchmen gave out. Vang Pao arranged with friendly Meos to hide them. Then he split his command into small groups, and, avoiding the Viet Minh, made his way out of the area.

Ten days later the entire group, including his French, reassembled and without ca-

this force until the conclusion of the Indo China war.

During the lull in fighting from 1954 through 1957, he served in FAR, rising rapidly to the rank of Major. He commanded (at that time) the Second Commando Group which consisted of 18 companies of Meos in Sam Neua and Xieng Khouang Provinces. These were the nucleus of those powerful forces which today form the first line of defense and the main bulwark of the Royal Army and Government against the People's Army of Vietnam and their Pathet Lao eyes.

As the fighting increased, Vang Pao's forces took a more and more active part, and he quickly earned his General's stars. Time and again, by cutting their line of communications and attacking their bases and supply depots, Vang Pao and his men frustrated the communist plans, and enabled the Lao forces to turn back major offensives.

Regularly, he has proved that the Communists are not the only master of guerrilla warfare. Repeatedly his fierce tribesmen, fighting for their freedom and traditional way of life under his skilled leadership, have recorded victories with exactly those tactics which made Gen.

country, or perhaps the world. Almost single-handedly, the Meos under his command have for three years stopped the advance of the combined Pathet Lao/Viet Minh forces and have even succeeded in recapturing large portions of Sam Neua Province from the communists.

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Ten days later the entire group, including his French, reassembled and without casualties made their way to Phou San where they rejoined the Royal Lao Forces. This action greatly increased his reputation and the company had been believed to be wiped out. In recognition, in early 1954, he was made full Lieutenant and given permanent command of his unit now renamed the 4th Special Commando Company. He served in combat with

the Second Commando Group which consisted of 18 companies of Meos in Sam Neua and Xieng Khouang Provinces. These were the nucleus of those powerful forces which today form the first line of defense and the main bulwark of the Royal Army and Government against the People's Army of Vietnam and their Pathet Lao lac eyes.

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During his adventurous career, this doughty little warrior has earned no less than 17 decorations, almost all of which were given directly for bravery and exceptional combat performance.

There has been no lack of brave and talented men in Laos to guard that small country's independence through the years of unrelenting communist attack. Yet, it is hard to see how Laos could have been thus far saved without Vang Pao and his thousands of staunch anti-communist Meo fighters.