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Telegram From the President's Special Assistant for National
Security Affairs (Rostow) to President Johnson in Texas

Washington, December 26, 1967, 6:02 p.m.

CAP 671165.

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✓ This report was drafted by the Central Intelligence Agency and
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FROM WALT ROSTOW
TO THE PRESIDENT
CITE CAP671165

SECRET

LAOTIAN SITUATION REPORT
(AS OF 6 P.M. EST, 26 DECEMBER 1967)

1. COMMUNIST FORCES ARE KEEPING UP THEIR PRESSURE AGAINST GOVERNMENT POSITIONS IN LAOS.
2. AN ENEMY UNIT, ESTIMATED AT ABOUT BATTALION STRENGTH, RAIDED THE GOVERNMENT BASE AND AIRSTRIP AT MUONG PHALANE ON 25 DECEMBER, AND DESTROYED MOST OF THE CAMP'S FACILITIES, INCLUDING THE USAID AND AIR AMERICA BUILDINGS. ALTHOUGH GOVERNMENT REINFORCEMENTS APPARENTLY HAVE MOVED INTO THE AREA, THEY HAVE NOT YET REOCCUPIED MUONG PHALANE.
3. PRELIMINARY REPORTS SUGGEST THAT THE ATTACK WAS SPECIFICALLY AIMED AGAINST THE U.S. PRESENCE AT MUONG PHALANE. TWO AMERICAN TECHNICIANS WHO MANNED A NAVIGATIONAL STATION WHICH ASSISTS U.S. AIR OPERATIONS IN SOUTHERN LAOS ARE MISSING. THE STATION ITSELF APPARENTLY WAS NOT DAMAGED.
4. THE ATTACK ON MUONG PHALANE IS THE FIRST SIGNIFICANT ENEMY ACTION IN THIS PART OF THE PANHANDLE IN OVER A YEAR. IT MAY BE RELATED TO RECENT ATTACKS FARTHER SOUTH IN THE BOLOVENS PLATEAU AREA. THESE OPERATIONS APPEAR TO BE PART OF A NEW COMMUNIST CAMPAIGN TO FORESTALL STEPPED-UP ALLIED EFFORTS TO INTERDICT THE INFILTRATION CORRIDOR.
5. IN NORTHERN LAOS, THE COMMUNISTS LAUNCHED A MORTAR ATTACK ON THE GOVERNMENT AIRSTRIP AT NAM BAC ON 24 DECEMBER. CONTINUING REPORTS OF A COMMUNIST BUILD-UP IN THE VICINITY SUGGEST THAT MORE GROUND ASSAULTS AGAINST NAM BAC'S OUTLYING DEFENSES MAY BE IN THE OFFING. GOVERNMENT TROOPS ARE BEING REPOSITIONED IN AN EFFORT TO REDUCE THEIR VULNERABILITY.

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LAO 325/2

6. ALTHOUGH THE COMMUNISTS APPEAR TO BE PUTTING A LITTLE MORE BITE INTO THEIR DRY SEASON OFFENSIVE THIS YEAR, THERE IS NO EVIDENCE THAT THEY INTEND TO MOUNT A CONCERTED DRIVE INTO GOVERNMENT-HELD TERRITORY. WE AGREE WITH THE U.S. EMBASSY'S APPRECIATION THAT THE LAO REPORTS OUT OF VIETNAM ON THE STATUS OF THE NORTH VIETNAMESE THREAT ARE HIGHLY EXAGGERATED. IN FACT, THE RECENT COMMUNIST EFFORT AGAINST NAM BAC IN THE NORTH AND THE BOLOVENS POSITIONS IN THE SOUTH, APPEARS DESIGNED TO RESTORE THE STATUS QUO. UNTIL LAST YEAR, BOTH AREAS LONG HAD BEEN UNDER PATHET LAO CONTROL.

7. NEVERTHELESS, WE BELIEVE THAT THE COMMUNISTS WILL MAKE THINGS EVEN HOTTER IN THE COMING MONTHS AS THEY ATTEMPT TO REGAIN SOME OF THE MILITARY INITIATIVE IN LAOS. THIS PROBABLY WILL BE PARTICULARLY TRUE IN THE PANHANDLE, WHERE STEPPED-UP ALLIED OPERATIONS INTO THE INFILTRATION CORRIDOR WILL HIT A HIGHLY SENSITIVE NERVE.

DTG: 270002Z DEC 67

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