

somewhat disquieting because so far Americans do not repeat not seem to have any constructive alternative in mind, in either field, beyond continued hope that Commission might be able to control situation.

5. Americans remind us that they are under heavy pressure from congressional groups and press to avoid a settlement in Laos prejudicial to their position in Southeast Asia and they also tell us that Thai and South Vietnamese are insisting on this. Sooner or later they will have to balance the risks in Laos against risks elsewhere in area, but they do not repeat not seem ready to face this issue yet.

6. While we would not repeat not wish Laotians to reach a political settlement which would be tantamount to capitulation to Communists, it is difficult to see how situation on ground in Laos or at Conference in Geneva can be resolved until a provisional government has been formed. This would presumably entail a formal cease-fire agreement which would make it easier to control situation in Laos and would result in seating at Conference of one delegation representing Laos. This in turn would provide a basis on which Conference could finally get down to business of making a serious effort to draw up terms of a settlement. To pose the situation in these terms is to concede a great deal to opposite side but it may be that, if there is to be any possibility of reaching a settlement and of avoiding unpredictable circumstances of failure it will be necessary to go this far in recognizing the underlying realities of situation.

[C.A.] RONNING

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*Le secrétaire d'État aux Affaires extérieures
au chef de la délégation à la Conférence sur le Laos à Genève*

*Secretary of State for External Affairs
Chairman, Delegation to Conference on Laos, Geneva*

TELEGRAM Y-389

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CONFERENCE PROSPECTS

While the establishment of a single government is one element in Laotian situation, the promotion of such a government clearly is not repeat not our responsibility. Our primary interest has been and continues to be supervision of the cease-fire, and the securing of effective terms of reference for the Commission.

2. We have spoken to the Indian High Commissioner, pointing out that while there must eventually be a single government to sign agreements worked out at Geneva, absence of such a government at this stage need not delay detailed study of terms of reference and provision of the essential equipment to the Commission, particularly since three main political forces are now seated in Conference. It would be helpful if you could use your influence with Indians to overcome their reluctance to proceed immediately with above practical tasks.

3. As you point out, if there is to be a settlement, at some point Americans will have to balance risks in Laos against risks elsewhere in South East Asia, and this process may entail acceptance of a single government which is not altogether to their liking. It is, however,