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

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

TELEGRAM 1016

Geneva, June 29, 1961

CONFIDENTIAL, OPIMMEDIATE.

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LAOS CONFERENCE – PRESENT PROSPECTS

Statements over last week by Communist representatives in Conference seem to have been directed toward three major objectives: (a) a redefinition in even more restrictive terms than had been apparent before of their approach to the terms of reference for International Commission; (b) underwriting by Geneva Settlement of formal abrogation of SEATO protection for Laos; (c) establishment, as representing unified “voice” of Laos, of their interpretation of Zurich communiqué.<sup>25</sup>

2. Two most significant statements in connection with terms of reference for Commission have been those of Chen Yi and Quinim Pholsena representing Souvanna Phouma. Perhaps in reaction to Cambodian draft, Chen Yi strongly implied that China would not repeat not accept stationing of Commission teams along borders of Laos. This was reinforced by Quinim when he stated that it was official view of Souvanna that there would be no repeat no fixed teams whatever and that Commission in sufficient numbers should be stationed at Vientiane. He then went on to add further restriction that any activity undertaken by Commission should be only at request of Laotian Government, a limitation which was not explicit in Soviet draft. Any doubt Quinim’s meaning was dispelled yesterday by North Vietnamese.

3. In a conversation at Boun Oum reception we taxed Quinim with going beyond what Souvanna had previously said about Commission. He insisted that his statement had been made on Souvanna’s authority but when pressed said that there was nothing more he could say in view of his instructions. We had impression that in this he may have been referring to emergent communist party line rather than to specific instructions from Souvanna Phouma. French still think that Souvanna himself would accept better terms for Commission if he could assert sufficient independence.

4. As we have reported in other recent messages, Harriman still seems reluctant to place much trust in Souvanna Phouma and, now that he and Phoumi are in Washington for consultations, it seems likely that USA policy on Laos is under review. It is evident that, as far as USA delegation here is concerned, there is no repeat no disposition to break off Conference but they evidently feel pessimistic regarding its chances of bringing about a satisfactory agreement and at same time are suspicious of any political settlement likely to be worked out in Laos. These attitudes are certainly understandable but from our point of view they are

<sup>25</sup> Voir/See United Kingdom, Parliamentary Papers, Cmnd. 2834, *Documents Relating to British Involvement in the Indo-China Conflict, 1945-1965* (London: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1965), pp. 174-75.