

regarding nuclear armaments was unclear (Documents 160, 164, 166). Green saw a possible solution to Canada's dilemma in the idea that "contributing states would relinquish to NATO control of their forces to a much greater degree than has been the case so far. The forces ... and their armament would become operationally the collective responsibility of the Alliance rather than of the individual contributing states." He hoped, perhaps unrealistically, that by the time of the May 1963 NATO ministerial meeting in Ottawa, discussions in the North Atlantic Council would have progressed "to the point where the government would be in a position to make final decisions both on role and armament" (Document 169; see also the comments by Ross Campbell and George Ignatieff in Documents 170 and 171).

In 1961, the International Commission for Supervision and Control in Laos was revived and the second Geneva Conference on Laos began. Canada's representative at the conference, Chester Ronning, sent back vivid, frank reports detailing the negotiations with the "impossibly difficult" Laotian princes (Documents 442, 446-448). An agreement on the neutrality of Laos was finally reached in mid-June 1962 and signed on July 23. The Canadian position as a member of the ICSC meant that officials in Ottawa, Geneva, and Vientiane were deeply concerned that the agreement should facilitate the effective functioning of the Commission. The escalation of military conflict within Laos in May 1962 sharpened this concern (Documents 450, 451). In June Paul Bridle, then serving as Ambassador in Turkey, was appointed as the new Canadian commissioner because of his previous experience in Indochina.

All of Bridle's diplomatic skills were required in the ensuing months. Because both the left-wing faction in Laos and the Americans saw a potential advantage in keeping the Commission's terms of reference vague, the agreement "was an imperfect instrument and contained many articles which were ambiguous" (Document 526). Green therefore presciently feared that the commissioners might be required to "make bricks without straw" (Documents 467-469). Moreover, the Commission's mandate was to supervise the withdrawal of all foreign forces, but it had never been acknowledged publicly by the Laotian government that North Vietnamese or Chinese forces were present. The United States was reluctant to withdraw its own personnel unless the Communist side did likewise. The Americans therefore wanted Bridle to ensure that the withdrawal period would be "stretched out to the maximum possible duration" (Documents 460, 461, 471). Bridle found this request unrealistic, but was "in full sympathy with [the] USA desire to have Commission teams despatched to check points near DRVN and Chinese Communist borders" (Document 465). However, the question of whether the Commission could initiate investigations without a request for action from the Laotian government was a vexed one (see especially Documents 478, 480). From Ottawa, Norman Robertson commented: "In the eight years since the International Commissions in Indochina were established, there has undoubtedly been a gradual erosion of the letter and spirit of the 1954 Agreements, accompanied by a slow deterioration of the situations in Vietnam and Laos ... It seems to us important that the revived Commission in Laos