

PRESS RELEASE



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STATEMENT BY THE HONOURABLE PAUL MARTIN
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

Message from the International Commission in Laos to the
Co-chairmen of the 1961-62 Geneva Conference.

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Paul Martin, today released a letter dated June 14, 1966 from the Chairman of the International Commission for Supervision and Control in Laos to the two Co-chairmen of the 1961-62 Geneva Conference which has been transmitted to the Canadian Government by the British Co-chairman.

In releasing the letter, Mr. Martin made the following statement:

The letter conveys to the Co-chairmen the results of an investigation carried out by the Commission into an attack on a Laotian Government officers' training school by North Vietnamese troops. The Commission was requested by the Royal Laotian Government to investigate the attack, which took place in March 1965, and the Commission's team, in the course of its investigation, interrogated nine North Vietnamese soldiers who had been captured by Laotian forces.

The prisoners, who, in the opinion of the team, gave their evidence freely and voluntarily, testified that they were nationals of North Vietnam who had been conscripted into the armed forces of North Vietnam; that they had entered Laos with other troops and with arms and ammunition; and that they had attacked the reserve officers' training school at Dong Hene in Laos. According to the team, most of the prisoners stated that before leaving North Vietnam, they had been ordered to proceed with their units to South Vietnam and that, to do this, they had to pass through Laotian territory.

A Commission message of September 16, 1965 reported to the Co-chairmen that regular units of the armed forces of North Vietnam entered Laos during 1964 with arms and ammunition, and that they had engaged in hostilities with Laotian Government forces on Laotian soil. The Commission's report on the Dong Hene incident provides a further example of a serious violation of the provisions of the 1962 Declaration on the Neutrality of Laos and its Protocol. The Canadian Government is concerned not only about these specific violations of Laotian neutrality but also by the evidence provided by the latest report that violations are taking place on a continuing basis.