

Communist Activity Indicates Trouble Ahead for Shaky Laotian Truce

Tokyo - (UPI) - Stepped up Communist activity in Laos indicates that the Reds may be planning to shatter completely the shaky Laotian truce.

So far, no major battles have been reported between Royal Lao forces and the Pathet Lao rebels. But a series of small, sharp clashes held the portent of bigger fights to come.

The most daring Communist raid in months came last week when 300 pro-Communist guerrillas attacked a village only seven miles from Vientiane airport and attempted to lure a relief column into an ambush.

The ambush failed as the column's infantry screen

broke up the ambush before the rebels could explode demolition charges intended to destroy armored cars belonging to the loyal forces.

The attack and ambush cost the rebels at least 35 killed or wounded, according to American sources in Vientiane.

But the audacity of the attack so close to the administrative capital pointed up the confidence of the rebel guerrillas.

In the north, aerial photos disclosed that thousands of Chinese Communist laborers had entered Laos to build a highway linking Red China to Laos' provincial capital of Phongsaly, an area dominated by a warlord named Hkam-

mouane who does not have close relations with the rest of the country.

What worried Western officials, however, was evidence that the Communists intend to extend the highway to the town of Guang Sai, a jumpoff point for rebel attacks on the village of Nam Tha and probes toward the royal capital of Luang Prabang.

The Chinese Communists currently are building a causeway over the Nam Bang river valley six miles inside Laos, according to the aerial photos. The Chinese Reds agreed to build the road under a pact with the rebel "government" in the Plaine des Jarres.

Activity by foreign troops also was reported in southern Laos.

Western sources said at least two battalions of regular Communist North Vietnamese troops have reinforced the rebel air base of Tchepone. Tchepone is the jumping off point on the so-called "Ho Chi Minh Trail" leading into South Viet Nam and which is used to reinforce Communist Viet Cong rebels.

Sources said, however, the North Vietnamese battalions appear to be a permanent garrison at the base.

Two Pathet Lao rebel battalions also were reported in

the southwest of the provincial capital of Attapeu which they attacked last Tuesday.

The rebels cut the road between the "old town" and the "new town" and held it for 72 hours before they finally melted away into pro-Communist territory to the west.

American officers believe the attack was actually a reconnaissance in force to determine whether Communist forces could bring Attapeu under siege.

The Communists also stepped

up their activity in central Laos, cutting off the vital Mekong river supply route to Luang Prabang. A rebel company seized the riverside village of Pak Beng for the third time in five months with a flanking attack which cut off a large government force between rebel front lines and the river.

The village of Nam Tha was still under siege by the rebels. Royal troops had driven Communist forces back two or three miles and out of mortar range, but the rebels

still were able to shell the Nam Tha airstrip by using newly acquired artillery.

On the non-military side of the Lao situation, pro-western Premier Prince Boun Oum planned a visit to Thailand and South Viet Nam soon to seek technical and economic aid.

The Lao economy has stagnated following withdrawal of American aid to the royal government. The U.S. took the move in an attempt to force the government into a coalition with the Pathet Lao

and followers of so-called "neutralist" Souvanna Phouma, a former premier.

Boun Oum and strongman Gen. Phoumi Nosavan hope eventually to ask for aid from every anti-Communist nation in the Far East.

Soviet Ambassador Alexander Abramov, left for a vacation in Russia.

To some observers, Abramov's departure was sign that nothing was likely to happen in Laos for the next few months, despite the stepped up tempo of small clashes.



DISCUSS SHIP STRIKE—Robert Moore, left, deputy director of the Federal Maritime Service, confers with J. Paul St. Sure, president of the Pacific Maritime Association, at San Francisco in an attempt to mediate differences between shipowners and the seamen's unions. Negotiations between the PMA and the unions reached an impasse again last week after President Kennedy used the Taft-Hartley Act to obtain an 80-day cooling-off period in the West Coast waterfront strike. (UPI)

Young GOP Group To Attend Fair

The April meeting of the Jackson County Young Republicans will center on "Know and Support your Candidates." Members of the group will meet at the Central Point Grange hall at 8 p.m. Friday to attend the Candidates' Fair.

Chairman John Ness pointed out that this is an opportunity to hear each candidate express his qualifications for office and what specific action he will take if elected.

Immediately after the fair the group will have a brief business meeting at the Ness home at 232 Bradford Way in Medford. Impressions of the candidates will be discussed and a report on the success of the Voter Registration booth operated at the Sportsfair will be given.

All Republicans between the ages of 18 and 40 are invited to attend. Further information may be obtained by calling Gary Boshers at Spring 3-6761 or Doug Phillips at Spring 3-4306.

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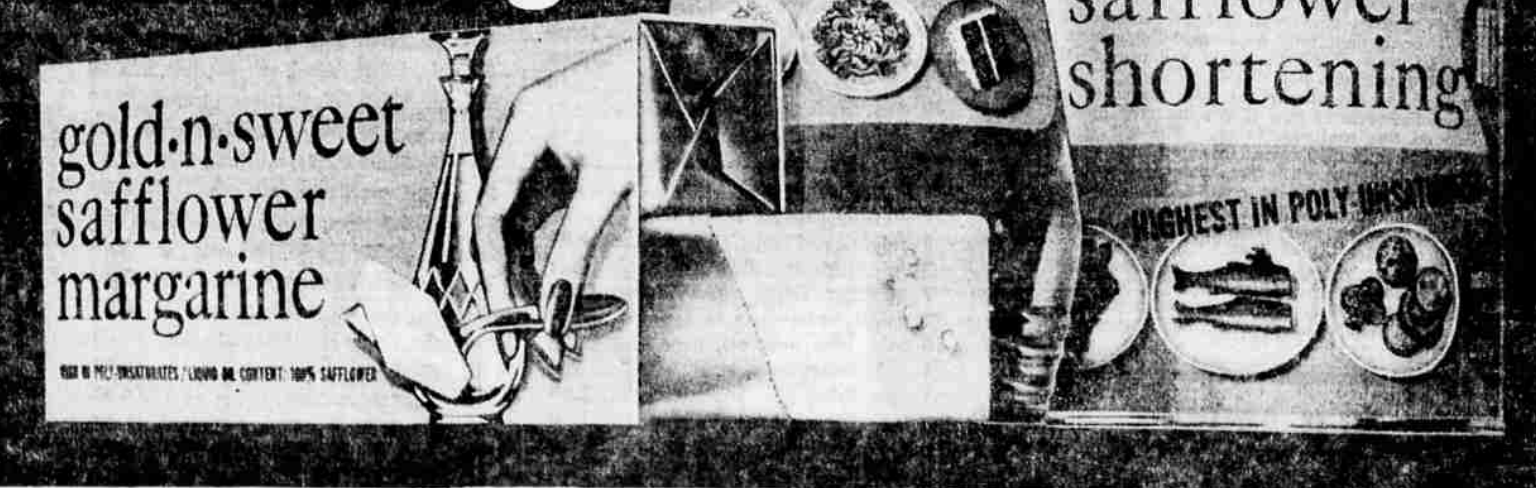
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(Figures from U.S. Dept. of Agriculture Home Economics Report No. 7)

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