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Department of State

17 Aug 81 1000
INCOMING TELEGRAM
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ACTION EA-12

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INFO OCT-01 ADS-00 INN-10 SS-15 OIC-02 CIAE-00 DODE-00
N-01 10-15 NSC-05 NSAE-00 NA-06 L-03 PH-09
ACDA-12 SP-02 SPR3-02 /095 V

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P 170455Z AUG 81
FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1906
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK PRIORITY
CINCPAC HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
AMCONSUL HONG KONG PRIORITY

5. EMBASSY VIENTIANE WILL ATTEMPT TO GAIN FURTHER INFORMATION ON THIS REPORT. IT MAY BE, OF COURSE, THAT THIS STORY REPRESENTS SOME KIND OF FEEDBACK FROM REPORTS ARISING ELSEWHERE. ON THE OTHER HAND, IT HAS CONSIDERABLE SIGNIFICANCE IN THAT IT DOES REPRESENT THE VERY FIRST SUCH STORY THAT WE HAVE EVER COLLECTED FROM WITHIN LAOS. EXCEPT FOR THE EXTREMELY HIGH ALTITUDE OF THE AIRPLANE, THIS ACCOUNTS SEEMS TO CONTAIN NOTHING PARTICULARLY INCONSISTENT WITH REFUGEE STORIES. MOSER

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CONFIDENTIAL VIENTIANE 0732

E.O. 12065: RDS-4 04/17/01 (MOSER, LEO J) OR-M
TAGS: SHUM, HILL, LA
SUBJ: HMONG VILLAGER IN LAOS ALLEGES CHEMICAL WARFARE
ATTACKS TO HONGKONG COMMITTEE ADVISOR

1. CONFIDENTIAL - ENTIRE TEXT.

2. ON AUGUST 15, EMBASSY VIENTIANE PICKED UP THE FIRST IN-COUNTRY SOURCED ALLEGATION OF CHEMICAL WARFARE ATTACKS AGAINST THE HMONG MINORITY.

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[REDACTED]
MENTIONED TO CHARGE MOSER IN A SOCIAL CONTEXT AND VERY CASUALLY, THAT HE HAD BEEN TOLD BY A HMONG VILLAGER LIVING NEAR THE SHORES OF THE NAM NGUM RESERVOIR THAT "ONE OF THE PROBLEMS WE HAVE HERE IS THE VERY HIGH-FLYING AIRPLANES WHO DROP YELLOW DUST ON US THAT KILLS OUR CROPS." THE VILLAGER MADE HIS COMMENTS IN THE PRESENCE OF THREE OTHER VILLAGERS, WHO NEITHER CONFIRMED NOR DENIED WHAT HE WAS SAYING. HE REFERRED TO THE FLIGHTS AS "ROUGHLY MONTHLY" SINCE LATE 1979.

3. [REDACTED] TO BE SKEPTICAL OF THE STORY. IT IS, HOWEVER, THE FIRST TIME THAT EMBASSY VIENTIANE HAS PICKED UP EVEN A SECOND-HAND REPORT OF SUCH ATTACKS FROM THE MANY UN AND THIRD COUNTRY OFFICIALS REGULARLY TRAVELING AMONG OR OTHERWISE DEALING WITH THE HMONG PEOPLE. AN UNUSUAL ASPECT OF THIS PARTICULAR STORY IS THE LOCATION, FOR IT PRESUMES TO REPORT ATTACKS UPON HMONG LIVING ON THE SHORES OF WHAT IS THE PRINCIPAL RESERVOIR ABOVE THE VIENTIANE AREA. EVEN THOUGH IT MAY BE KNOWN TO WHOEVER WOULD BE EMPLOYING SUCH AGENTS THAT THEY BIODEGRADE RATHER RAPIDLY, IT STILL SOUNDS PUZZLING THAT THERE WOULD BE ATTACKS ON AN AREA SO CLOSE TO THE VIENTIANE ZONE AND ECONOMICALLY AND ECOLOGICALLY TIED INTO IT.

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[REDACTED] WE SEE QUITE OFTEN AND UNIVERSALLY CONSIDERED A RELIABLE AND RESPONSIBLE PERSON.

4. THE VILLAGER REPORTEDLY DESCRIBED THE AIRPLANE AS FLYING SO HIGH THAT IT COULD HARDLY BE SEEN. THE "YELLOW DUST" HE SAID KILLED RICE AND "ROTTED THE ROOTS OF THE MANIOC." [REDACTED] THE HMONG VILLAGER IN QUESTION HAD ALWAYS BEEN IN HIS ESTIMATION "PRO GOVERNMENT," AND NOT PARTICULARLY INVOLVED IN PAST ANTI-COMMUNIST ACTIVITIES. HE KNEW OF NO CONTACT BETWEEN THE VILLAGERS AND HMONG REFUGEE CAMPS IN THAILAND, BUT COULD NOT PRECLUDE SUCH CONTACT. THE VILLAGER [REDACTED] HE HAD A SAMPLE OF THE DUST, BUT LATER REPORTED THAT HE COULDN'T FIND IT. [REDACTED] SAW NO EVIDENCE OF DAMAGED CROPS IN THE AREA.

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