

Laos

Liberation News Service

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Editor's Note: The following is an LNS interview with Sisana Sisane, a leader of the Pathet Lao. The Pathet Lao is the military arm of the Laotian liberation movement known as the Neo Lao Haksat.

The Laotian leader describes with clarity, not only the military statistics of a direct U.S. combat aggression against his country, but also points out and discusses details concerning U.S. ideological policies, indirect military commitment, and this country's extensive invested economic interest.

The interview, conducted by John Pittman, co-editor of the Daily World, was received in May when he was inside Laos as a member of the World Peace Council delegation.

Q. What is the present situation in Laos?

A. At present the liberated areas form two-thirds of the country with one-half its population of roughly three million. That is to say, people's power is established in 638 of the country's 1,078 villages and probably now in 8,620 of its 13,063 hamlets—mostly in the jungles and mountains.

The U.S. controls, through the Vientiane administration, one-third of the country with half of the population, mainly in the plains and-deltas, and with 1,235,000 of the country's 1,729,000 acres of arable land.

As to the current relationship of forces, the enemy is on the defensive, although he is counter-attacking fiercely in an effort to change the balance.

On April 16, our forces put out of action General Vang Pao, the American-trained Commander of its special forces troops. We understand Vang Pao is hospitalized at Udon Thani, Thailand, the main headquarters from which the Americans direct the aggression against Laos.

On April 24, our forces disintegrated seven battalions of special forces at Sam Thong, but they escaped to Van Viang and Pak Sane. Our recent victory in the Plain of Jars put 6,000 Laotian special forces out of action and dealt a decisive blow to the enemy. But the U.S. is carrying out round-the-clock bombing with B-52s in this entire area.

Q. When you speak of the enemy, whom do you mean?

A. American imperialism in the first place. But also the comprador and feudal elements whom the U.S. has installed in the Vientiane regime. ["Comprador elements" are Laotian business men who exploit their own people by buying foreign-made goods, usually from the U.S. at low wholesale prices, and selling them at very high prices to Laotians. This is the economic front of U.S. aggression that strives to create economic dependence on the US. among Asian capitalists and plants the seeds for puppet governments.]

And, of course, the armed forces and political cadres carrying out their orders—including 12 Thai battalions, remnants of Chiang Kai-shek troops, Japanese so-called aid forces and Saigon puppet troops.

Up to last November there were 147 battalions of puppet and mercenary troops operating against us, about 60,000 men. But after they were continuously defeated by our forces, President Nixon reinforced and greatly strengthened them.

Q. Why do you consider American imperialism, rather than the Vientiane comprador and feudal elements and their Royal Army and mercenaries, the main enemy?

A. First, the U.S. provides all the arms, equipment, money for paying the enemy soldiers, supplies and training for all the armed forces attacking the liberated areas. They draw up the plans for the attacks, provide the logistics and give the orders.

Second, the U.S. is using American personnel as well as Asian forces in these attacks, and are solely responsible for the bombings and wanton destruction of our country.

Third, the U.S. is using their so-called development aid to expand and also strengthen the comprador strata, to restore the feudal strata, to monopolize Lao trade and prevent the development of Lao economy, to sow dissension and hatred between our three main ethnic groups and our 68 minorities, to pollute our culture with pornography and trivia, and to set up so-called prosperity zones and refugee camps- holding one-fifth of the Lao population [and then] forcibly impressing our young men into the puppet army and our young women into brothels.

Fourth, the U.S. alone has blocked and sabotaged every agreement reached between Vientiane and our side to sit down and negotiate a settlement of the Lao question. In doing this the U.S. has violated the 1954 Geneva Agreement which it did not sign, and 1962 Geneva Agreement which it did sign, and most of the elementary principles of international law.

Q. Official U.S. sources deny Americans are involved in combat, yet you say they are. What are your grounds for such a statement?

A. We consider our information reliable. We know that at least 1,200 U.S. Green Beret officers and men are actively directing and participating in operations of the so-called special forces of the Royal Laotian Army.

In addition, no small part of the U.S. Air Force personnel in Thailand are directly involved. And we have grounds for believing U.S. Air Force personnel in South Vietnam, Okinawa, Guam, and the Seventh Fleet are also participating in bombing attacks on Laos.

Besides these combat forces, several thousand Americans are engaged in indirect combat, that is, in activities directly supplementing the military operations.

These include 2,000 trainers of the special forces, 200 personnel for the CIA's Air America and Air Continental, and the 3,000 Americans working in USAID and USIS, the agencies for economic-and psychological warfare. Even the 101 Peace Corps people perform duties clearly connected with military operations.

The Vientiane administration has no control over any of these forces. They take orders solely from the U.S. headquarters base in Thailand. Royal Army troops are used mainly for police work in the Vientiane-controlled areas.

The so-called civilian advisors take orders from the U.S. embassy in Vientiane, not the Vientiane administration.

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