

Palladium Books Presents . . .

Advanced RECON

Supplemental Rules and Adventures

By Erick Wujcik



Palladium Books® Presents . . .

Advanced RECON®

Supplemental Rules and Adventures . . .



This Book is Dedicated to three remarkable professors of History, Milton Covensky, T.F. Mayer-Oakes, and Goldwin Smith. They opened my eyes to a great light.

2nd Printing September 1988.

Advanced RECON is *fictional*. Although inspired by real history, any similarity to real people, names, places and events is purely coincidental and unintentional.

RECON® is a registered Trademark held by Kevin Siembieda a.k.a. Palladium Books.

Copyright © 1987 by Kevin Siembieda. All rights reserved under the Universal Copyright Convention. No part of this book may be reproduced in part or whole, in any form or by any means, without permission from the publisher, except for brief quotes for use in reviews. All incidents, situations, institutions, governments and people are fictional and any similarity, without satiric intent, of characters or persons living or dead is strictly coincidental.

Advanced RECON is published by Palladium Books, 5926 Lonyo, Detroit, Michigan 48210

Advanced RECON®

Supplemental Rules and Adventures

Written By: **Erick Wujcik**

Editors: **Alex Marchalszyn**
Florence Stembleda

Cover Painting: **Kevin Long**

Interior Art: **Kevin Stembleda**

Map Art: **Erick Wujcik**

Art Direction: **Kevin Stembleda**

Typography: **Maryann Stembleda**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Introduction	4
Character Creation	4
Step One: Major Characteristics	4
Step Two: Minor Characteristics	4
Step Three: Primary & Secondary MOS	4
Step Four: Choosing Skills	4
Skill Table	5
Step Five: Alignments	5
Step Six: Choose a Name	5
Character Creation Example	5
RECON Electronics (equipment)	
Small Unit Tactics	7
Preparedness	8
Communications	8
Offensive Warfare	9
Defensive Warfare	9
Basic Strategy and Tactics	11
Large Unit Combat Resolution	12
Communist Strategy & Tactics	13
The Advanced RECON World — Circa 1965	14
The Kingdom of Laos	16
Geography & Climate	16
Government	17
Military	18
Foreign Agencies	21
The Opium/Heroin Network	22
Mission Director's Section	24
Long Term Assignment (Vengala/Noi Pot)	26
RECON Tables (New)	26
Adventures	33
Project Boot-Strap	33
The Opium War	36
Radio Wars	40
The Spider's Web	43
Character Sheet	47

INTRODUCTION

Advanced RECON?

Yup! That's the central idea of this book.

The **Revised RECON** is basically a shoot-'em-up kind of game. Characters are easy to create, die like flies, and don't have to think about much more than keeping their weapons clean. In other words, the perfect simulation of a fighting man's, eyeball view of the Vietnam War. RECON is a great game for grunts!

To simulate other Southeast Asian experiences, especially those of the Special Forces units working in remote areas, the war was not quite so simple. Winning the hearts and minds of the local people was more important than winning battles against the Viet Cong. The local Stateside advisor was more than a soldier; he was an ambassador, a propagandist, an organizer, and even a politician.

Dealing with the enemy was more complicated than just killing him. Getting ahead in the propaganda of the war was a lot more important. To win the counterinsurgency battle, the advisor had to out-think, out-fight *and* make more friends than his VC counterpart.

It was an incredibly frustrating job. His worst enemies weren't the communists, they were bureaucracies of both the U.S. military and the Vietnamese government. Even more discouraging, no sooner was progress made in an area, than the advisor would be transferred out. And the military machine never seemed to understand that people were not interchangeable parts.

All this makes for great, role-playing experiences.

Most of the really good opportunities for military advisors took place in the mid-sixties. In this book, we're setting the scene for a Laos Campaign, circa 1965.

This is a setting where player characters can do extensive role-playing and can practice advanced, small unit tactics. They can even, if the Mission Director wants, change the outcome of history. If the player characters do well, they can drive the communists back to Hanoi . . . and, if they screw up badly enough, they can be fighting communist insurgents in the Florida swamps!

Some of the weapons, events and characters in the Laos Campaign are anachronistic. For example, the M-16 wasn't around back in 1965, but it's listed as a weapon for many of the different forces in the game. Don't worry about it! The whole point of any role-playing game is to have fun, *not* to present a completely accurate simulation of history.

CHARACTER CREATION

One way we've "advanced" RECON is by "beefing-up" the characters compared to his/her earlier, grunt counterparts.

Why?

First of all, because we want the characters to last longer. In this kind of game, characters need to build up long-term relationships and long-range plans.

Don't worry about the characters being too tough. The characters in a Laos campaign aren't beefed up just 'cause the game designer is such a nice guy. These characters are more skilled and harder to kill because they are faced with more challenging problems, more difficult enemies, and even deadlier battles.

Characters in the Laos campaign are not currently members of the Stateside military. They may be experienced mercenaries, combat veterans, or Military Intelligence Agency members on "extended leaves of absence." All the player characters have experienced a tour of duty with a combat unit in the early days of the Vietnam War.

All the characters in a Laos campaign will be "free-lance" soldiers. Usually, they are guys who rotated out of the war zone but couldn't cope with civilian life, or else adventurers who have fallen in love with

war. They'll willingly work covertly for *the Company* (CIA), or another such quasi-governmental agency, so long as they can stay involved in the war zone.

STEP 1: ROLL UP MAJOR CHARACTERISTICS

First, roll percentile dice for each of the character's three major characteristics: Strength (ST), Alertness (AL), and Agility (AG).

Next, check to see that the major characteristics meet the minimum service requirements. Each individual roll must be a 50 or more. The combined roll (ST = AL = AG) must total 180.

If the major characteristics meet the minimum requirements, or, if the player decides to keep the character even though the rolls are low, then move on to Step 2.

Otherwise, go back and roll the character's major characteristics over again. No matter how many times it takes, players can keep rolling characters until they get one that meets the minimum characteristics.

STEP 2: ROLL UP MINOR CHARACTERISTICS

Roll 2D10 and add the result to 58. That gives the character's *height* in inches (from 5' to 6'6" tall). For *weight* roll percentile dice and add to 135 (gives a range of 136 to 235 pounds). The number from a 3D10 added to 17 gives the character's *age* (from 20 to 47).

STEP 3: CHOOSE PRIMARY AND SECONDARY MOS

The character's Primary MOS (Military Occupational Specialty) determines how many of each type of skill is available. The character's major characteristics can be a good rough guide to an appropriate MOS.

If the character has a high ST then Grenadier and Pigman are good choices. A high AL points to the Point and Tank Commander MOS. Medic, Sniper, Airplane Pilot, and Helicopter Pilot, all require a good AG. Characters with good all-around characteristics should think about Intelligence, RTO, Artillery, or PBR Captain.

Most of the secondary MOSs are suitable for any characters. The exceptions are Grenadier, Heavy Weapons, and Pigman; which call for a fairly high ST, and characters shouldn't take Point unless they've got an exceptional AG. Mercenary specialties are also available as Secondary MOSs.

STEP 4: CHOOSE SKILLS

Using the Skill Table below, and the skill descriptions in *The Revised RECON*, pick out all the skills for your character. All characters in the Laos Campaign have Basic Training (see *The Revised RECON*, page 12) and automatically receive Assault Rifle (M-16), Grenade Throwing, Climbing, and the basics of handling mines, claymores, radios, first aid, bayonet, unarmed combat, garrote, camouflage and digging.

Notes:

1. Demolitions, Heavy Weapons, Cold Climate and Desert Training MOSs can not be a Primary MOS.
2. The *Type/Weapon* skills refer to Skill Type and Additional Weapons. For Example, 2/4 in Heavy Arms means that the character has 2 skills, *i.e.*, Anti-Tank Weapon and Light Machinegun, and 4 weapons. The character would first pick the primary weapons for the two skills (LAW and M-60) and can then pick an additional 4 weapons within those skills (Browning .30 Caliber Machinegun, M-20 Rocket Launcher, M-67 Recoilless Rifle, and M-40A1 Recoilless Rifle).
3. *Extra Levels* are additional grades of skill available to the character. For example, a Medic could apply all 12 Extra Levels to improving his Medic Skill. The result would be a +5% per level for base effectiveness, +60% total, and the ability to heal 5 ST points per grade, or 60 ST points of healing total.

4. The maximum possible skill levels have been raised. Characters in a Laos campaign can improve their skills above 98%, to the new maximum of 148%. Note that character attributes (ST, AL and AG) are still the same, a *maximum of 98*.

SKILLS TABLE FOR LAOS CAMPAIGN CHARACTERS

<u>Primary MOS</u>	<u>Small Arms Type/Weapon</u>	<u>Heavy Arms Type/Weapon</u>	<u>Hand to Hand</u>	<u>Non-Weapon</u>	<u>Extra Levels</u>
Grenadier	4/3	5/3	2	3	8
Intelligence	3/2	2/2	3	9	6
Medic	2/4	2	2	7	12
Pigman	3/2	5/4	5	4	4
Point	5/4	2/2	4	6	4
RTO	4/4	2/2	2	6	8
Sniper	6/4	4/2	2	4	10
Airplane Pilot	3/2	2	2	8	5
Helicopter Pilot	2/4	2	2	8	7
Artillery	2	6/6	2	5	5
Tank Commander	4	4/4	2	6	5
PBR Captain	2	4/4	2	7	9

STEP 5: SELECT AN ALIGNMENT

Choose an alignment from the ones listed in RECON. Bear in mind that the character is a *volunteer* in the Laos campaign. If you're going to choose an alignment like Idealist-Pacifist or Opportunist, make sure you've got a reasonable explanation why such a character would freely walk back into a war zone.

Because the Opium/Heroin traffic is such a major factor in the Laos campaign, the typical reactions of each alignment to the drugs follows:

Idealists: For these characters, the international drug traffic is one of the great evils in the world. Idealists feel they have a personal responsibility in dealing with this problem.

Opportunist: Like any experienced soldier, every Opportunist character has seen a personal friend ruined by some form of drug addiction. The guy who supplies the \$5 plastic vials of heroin to soldiers is just as much the enemy as the Cong in the jungle. Except Mr. Charlie tries to kill you clean and quick, and the dope merchants drag it out for years . . .

Opportunist-Righteous: All characters of this alignment, from the far right to the far left, agree that the international drug trade is a horrible crime. Death is too good for anyone who profits from the disease of the drug addict! Opportunist-Righteous characters will eagerly and enthusiastically destroy opium supplies, and use whatever force is necessary to punish everyone involved. There are no exceptions. Everyone, from the dealer on the street to the chemist who refines the drug, and from the lowest addict to the richest drug-lords, all should be brought to justice.

Opportunist-Karmic: Drugs like heroin are disgusting to those of Opportunist-Karmic alignments because they turn men into spineless worms. Making a profit on the drugs is even worse. Characters of this alignment realize that the lackeys and addicts are unimportant; it's only the kingpins of the drug world that deserve punishment.

Malignant: What a great opportunity for making some seriously large sums of money! Consider the possibilities of selling a drug that people will risk their whole lives to buy, who will sacrifice *anything* for their next fix! On top of that, it's a small, easily concealed commodity, with a value comparable to that of gold. Yes, to the malignant character, drugs are definitely the ticket to infinite wealth.

Malignant-Psychotic: If people want to take drugs, that's their business. It only confirms the Malignant-Psychotic's basic attitude about people, namely, that you can't trust any of 'em.

STEP 6: CHOOSE CHARACTER'S NAME

That's it! Once the character has a name, he's ready to accept an assignment from the Mission Director.

CHARACTER CREATION EXAMPLE:

Jim, playing his first game of RECON, is instructed by his Mission Director to roll up a character for a Laos Campaign. Here's how it goes:

Jim: Okay . . . Have I got this right? I roll percentile for Strength, Alertness and Agility?

MD: Right.

Jim: I've got ST equals 15, AL at 50, and AG at 68.

MD: You can throw that one out!

Jim: Why?

MD: Anytime you have a characteristic with less than 50 you can throw it out.

Jim: He didn't look too healthy anyway . . . The new guy has ST of 61, AL at 57 and an AG of 58. All above 50.

MD: Let's see . . . 61 plus 57 equals 118, plus 58 equals . . . 176. He's under the minimum total of 180 so you don't have to keep him. Want to roll again?

Jim: Naw. It's only 4 points. Let's see how he turns out.

MD: Roll your height, weight and age next.

Jim: Height is . . . 10 plus 58, or 68 inches.

MD: That makes him 5 foot, 8 inches tall.

Jim: Good! He'll fit right in with the natives. Percentile for weight is 75 . . . plus 135 makes 210.

MD: Pretty chunky for a short guy.

Jim: Don't worry, it's all muscle! I rolled a 13 for age . . . which makes him exactly 30 years old.

MD: In other words, we've got a 30 year old guy, 5'8" tall, 210 pounds, who is well rounded in Strength, Alertness and Agility. Good choices for MOSs are Intelligence, RTO, Artillery, or PBR Captain. Of course, those aren't your only choices, you can take any primary MOS . . .

Jim: That's alright. I already decided I want Intelligence.

MD: And for your secondary MOS?

Jim: Demolitions. Is that Okay?

MD: Sure. Now it's time to pick your skills. With an Intel character you get 3 Small Arms, 2 Heavy Arms, 3 Hand to Hand, and 9 Non-Weapon skills.

Jim: I see on the chart it says 3-slash-2 for Small Arms and 2-slash-2

for Heavy Arms. What do the other numbers mean?

MD: The first number stands for the weapon skills, the second number is the number of extra weapon models you can use.

For example: You've already got Assault Rifle skill with the M-16 (it comes with Basic Training). Using the two extra weapons means you could pick two other assault rifles, say the Colt 5.56mm Commando and the AK-47, and fire them with your base effectiveness.

Jim: So, I get two extra weapons for each weapon type?

MD: No! You get just two extra weapons. You could take the two extra assault rifles, or an extra assault rifle and an extra pistol. A maximum of two in Small Arms and another two in Heavy Arms.

Jim: What's this "Extra Levels" thing? It says I've got 6 of 'em.

MD: Those are extra skill grades. *For example:* You could put all 6 of them in Assault Rifle and you'd end up with an extra 5% per grade, or a total of +30.

Jim: And I've only got 6 to spread around, not 6 for each skill?

MD: Right!

RECON ELECTRONICS

Here's a list of electronics typically found in the modern Stateside Army. Vietnam Era Electronics are those items that were common to RECON units in the war. Many of the Post-Vietnam Era items were available during the war, but didn't come into wide use until later.

VIETNAM ERA ELECTRONICS

PRC-25 "Prick 25" Backpack Radio

Weight: 25 pounds

Range with backpack antenna: Line of Sight to 5 miles.

Range on high point (hill/tower): 12 to 15 miles.

Notes: The PRC-25 serves as a unit's main communication link. The radio was capable of 920 different frequencies. Because the RTO carrying this radio couldn't carry a regular backpack (although he often attached grenades and personal gear to the radio), other team members were assigned to carry his stuff.

AN/PUSQ Starlight Scope

Length: 457mm

Weight: 1.8kg

Magnification: $\times 4$

Range: Starlight: 300 meters

Moonlight: 400 meters

Power Supply: 6.75 volt disposable battery that lasts up to 100 hours.

Notes: This rifle-mounted scope electronically intensifies very dim images. Outline shapes could be spotted clearly, but a man hugging the ground or concealed in heavy vegetation could not be seen. Flares played havoc on starlight scopes, overloading the electronics, and requiring up to 20 minutes for a return to operating condition.

POST-VIETNAM ELECTRONICS

AN/PVS-4 Night Vision Sight

Length: 240mm

Weight: 1.5kg (3.7lbs)

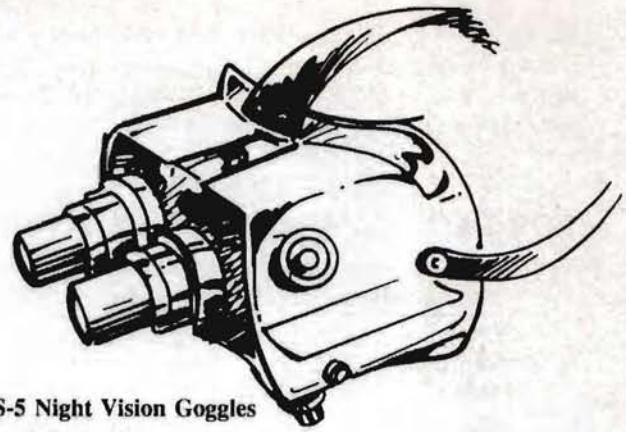
Magnification: $\times 3.7$

Range: 400 meters

Moonlight: 600 meters

Power Supply: 2.7 volt disposable battery that lasts up to 10 hours.

Notes: Designed to be mounted on the M-16 Assault Rifle or on the M-60 Machinegun. Used for spotting outline shapes in dim light. Flash protection means that the system recovers from overload almost instantly. Unlike the earlier PUSQ it has automatic circuitry that keeps the system readjusted for many levels of light from twilight to full starlight.



AN/PVS-5 Night Vision Goggles

Weight: 1.9 pounds

Magnification: None

Range: 150 meters

Power Supply: 2.7 volt disposable battery that lasts up to 10 hours.

Notes: Works like the Night Sights except there is no magnification, only light amplification. Has a built-in infrared light source which can be used for close-ups of objects less than 2 meters away — useful for reading maps or papers, fixing engines or inspecting any close-up object in darkness.

NVS-80 Handscope

Size: 228mm long and 76mm in diameter

Weight: .9kg

Magnification: $\times 3$

Range: 200 meters

Power Supply: 2 "AAA" Batteries

Notes: Advanced technology means the Handscope won't be 'blinded' by bright lights. It is also advanced in that power consumption is very low, 2 commercial batteries will last up to 50 hours. Can be used either as an individual surveillance device or as a weapon scope.

R-100 Laser Gun Sight

Length: 355mm

Weight: 1.275kg

Range: 300 meters at night

100 meters on cloudy days

20 meters on sunny days

Power Supply: 14.4 volt Batteries (good for 1 hour of use)

Notes: Designed as a rifle sight. It works by shining a small red dot of laser light on the target that can be seen by the rifleman. The brighter the light, the more difficult it is to see the target.

AN/TAS-5 Dragon, Thermal Night Vision Sight

Weight: 20.6 pounds

Range: 1,200 meters

Notes: Battery-powered thermal imagery system that detects and displays on a screen all thermal (heat) energy. Uses rechargeable batteries and gas cylinders (for cooling the detector electronics). Needs a recharge after every 2 hours of use. Used only when ready for firing — not as a surveillance device. Needs 10 to 15 seconds to cool down between 'snapshots'.

M-19 Infrared Periscope

Magnification: $\times 1$

Range: 40 meters

Power Supply: 2.7 volt disposable battery that lasts up to 10 hours.

Notes: This is a vehicle mounted sighting device. Works only with some kind of infrared light source; usually, special infrared headlights.

AN/TVS-5 Crew-Served Night Vision Device

Length: 310mm

Weight: 3kg

Magnification: $\times 6.2$

Range: 2,000 meters

Power Supply: 2.7 volt disposable battery that lasts up to 10 hours.

Notes: Designed to be mounted on a .50 caliber machinegun. Works just like the other light amplification devices. Has the same advanced circuitry as the PVS-4.

AN/PSS-10 Radar Signal Detector

Weight: .68kg

Notes: Basically a warning device so that the soldier can keep from being detected by enemy radar surveillance systems. The main unit fits into a pocket or clipped on a belt and is connected by wire to a small clip-on earpiece. Gives off a tone when a radar signal is detected. It's sensitive enough so the warning is given before the radar unit is close enough to detect the operator's location.

AN/TRS-2 Platoon Early Warning System

Length: 190mm for Receiver, 133mm for each Detector.

Weight: 1.14kg for Receiver, .49kg for each Detector

Range: Detectors sensitive to 15 meters.

Receiver can be up to 1500 meters from Detector.

Notes: A complete system consists of two receivers, each with headsets, ten detectors and two carrying cases. All batteries last about 150 hours. Each detector is sensitive enough to ground vibrations and magnetic variations to identify vehicle or human intruders. Typically, it's used to warn of intruders moving in from the rear or flank of a position, especially in areas that are completely out of view.

USING THE PLATOON EARLY WARNING SYSTEM, AN EXAMPLE:

Let's say your 4-man unit is setting up explosives to blow up a small bridge. Ideally, you want the explosive to go off when the first truck of a convoy is in the middle of crossing the bridge. Unfortunately, it's a densely forested area, and you can only look straight down on a small section of the bridge. An armored transport truck moving at high speed will be in sight for less than a second. That's too fast, and if you don't set off the explosive at exactly the right time you may miss the convoy altogether.

The solution is to set up a string of detectors along the road. The first step is to walk down to the middle of the bridge. Then you pace off 100 meters (300 yards) back along the road. By the side of the road you set up Detector #1, making sure to press the test button a couple of times so you know its working. Next pace off another 100 meters and set up Detector #2. And, from that point, go another 100 meters and set up Detector #3.

Now you've got a fool-proof setup. The #3 Detector will warn you that the convoy is on its way. Once you're alerted, you can clock the exact time it takes for the first truck to go from Detector #2 to Detector #1. And that will be the exact time it takes for the truck to go from Detector #1 to the middle of the bridge. You can set off the explosive without even seeing the convoy!

AN/PRC-77 Radio

Weight: 24.7 pounds

Range: 8000 meters

Notes: Basically a modern version of the PRC-25 with more frequencies and a longer battery life (60 hours).

AN/PRC-68 Radio

Weight: .99kg (35 ounces)

Range: 3000 meters

Notes: 10 channels and a 24 hour battery life. Small enough for belt or pocket. A plug-in, telephone-style handset is optional.

AN/PRR-9 Radio Receiver and AN/PRT-4 Radio Transmitter

Range: 1600 meters on Channel 1/500 meters on Channel 2.

Notes: The PRR-9 is designed to be mounted on the helmet and the PRT-4 is a handheld unit. A typical unit would have a PRR-9 for every man and enough PRT-4s for the team leader and Point Man. Battery life is roughly 30 hours. The PRR-9 has a volume adjustment so that it can be relatively silent. Only two channels were available. If the PRR-9 was set incorrectly, then the soldier would have no communications. Incidentally, earlier versions of these units were available during the Vietnam War, but were seldom used.



SMALL UNIT TACTICS

HOW TO STAY ALIVE FOR THE NEXT GAME

Here's a role-playing situation I ran into recently. Imagine being a character in the following game:

You and your team, an elite commando unit, are engaged in a secret, intelligence gathering mission. You've already been informed that you'll be moving through enemy held territory where large, heavily armed units have been preparing extensive defenses. Currently, you are moving through a rugged mountain ravine with rock walls on either side of you. The time is midnight, and your Point Man suddenly calls for the group to come to a halt.

He reports on what he's found up ahead: "There's this big clear area with a few craters on the ground, probably from mortar rounds. About 200 yards away, on the other side of the open area, I saw a little light, like through a window or doorway. It was right at the base of a cliff wall, and I think there might be an observation platform somewhere higher up. What do you think we should do?"

"They're obviously the enemy," says the team leader, "and we should attack the place where the Point Man saw the light. That's probably their camp."

"Yeah," says another player, "in this ravine there's no way for them to escape. Let's do it. Everybody get your weapons ready."

"We'll start moving toward the light," the team leader says to the Mission Director, "and we'll keep fairly close together, with the Point Man in front, me three feet behind him and everybody else behind me."

"Okay," says the Mission Director, "you move out until you're about 100 yards into the clear area. Suddenly, you hear a shot of some kind. There's a parachute flare overhead and it's lighting up the whole area! You see the area you're moving toward is actually a large outcropping of rock that's been converted into a bunker with sandbags! What are you doing?"

"We'll keep moving toward the enemy!"

The Mission Director, somewhat surprised, continues, "You hear the distinctive sound of a heavy machinegun as it opens fire on the group." Rolling the hits and damage from the heavy machinegun takes a few minutes. The Mission Director continues, "You guys are obviously in an Ambush situation and there's a machinegun bunker commanding the area. What are you going to do now?"

"WE CHARGE!" says the group leader. All the other players agree.

"At about this time you notice that there are shots coming from overhead." The Mission Director says painfully, "Apparently there's at least one sniper up on the cliff. Even worse, you hear the whine of an 80mm mortar round. And, since you're standing right in the middle of a targeted area, there's a real good chance it's going to hit you . . ."

Believe it or not, this actually took place in a role-playing game. Not all the player characters died, there were a couple who refused to move out into the clearing at all. Otherwise the fatality rate was 100%.

This isn't a case of a Mission Director being cruel or vindictive either. The player characters were supposed to find the enemy bunker. And, playing properly, they should have scurried back to report it.

It's obvious that the group behaved stupidly. The question is, exactly what were their mistakes?

First and foremost, they forgot their objective. Remember that they were on an *intelligence gathering* mission. They had no business engaging the enemy. Certainly they shouldn't have been attacking an enemy outpost.

Secondly, they ignored a number of clues. They were told of dangerous enemy defenses. A narrow ravine leading to an open area is a natural *ambush site*. Their scout told them of the mortar craters. Targeting a mortar is very much a matter of trial and error, it is common practice to try a few ranging rounds when setting up a mortar base.

Incidentally, that piece of information about the mortar rounds is pretty technical. I certainly don't expect players to know everything. On the other hand, had anyone asked, "Does my character have any idea why these mortar craters are here?" then the Mission Director could have explained the possibilities.

One of the worst mistakes is that the group kept attacking when it was obviously hopeless. Running away is always an acceptable alternative to getting wiped out. Unfortunately, cases of military units charging into hopeless situations are all too frequent in both the real world and in role-playing games.

The worst mistake made by the player's was to act on *insufficient information*. Sure, you've got to take chances occasionally, but, in this case, it would have been simple to learn a bit more before charging ahead.

This experience, and some feedback from RECON fans, has demonstrated that a lot of players can use some directions on strategy and tactics. The first thing to learn is how to define your objectives.

PREPAREDNESS

One of the most important things about small unit tactics is knowing **how** to react **before** an emergency comes up. And the proper reaction depends on the mission objectives.

For example, assume that you've just spotted a lone North Vietnamese soldier walking down a forest path. Should you capture him? Kill him? Conceal yourself so that you won't be seen? Or should you follow him? It all depends on the mission.

It basically boils down to being either RAID, SECURITY, or TRANSPORTATION missions.

A **raid** is a mission designed to damage the enemy. In this kind of operation the group is deliberately looking for combat opportunities. However, most raids have particular objectives. In the case of the NVA soldier, you would kill him if you're on a general search and destroy mission. Or, if you're looking for bigger game, you might follow him in the hope that he'll lead you to an important base. Or, you might hide and let him pass so that you don't accidentally tip your hand.

Before you start a raid you know exactly what kind of damage you're planning on doing to the enemy. And, if you've got a particular target, don't let yourself get sidetracked with anything else.

Security operations are what RECON is all about; *reconnaissance and intelligence gathering*. In other words, you're not looking for a fight, you're looking for *information*. Now this doesn't mean that you won't engage the enemy. It's not your major objective, but, given the opportunity, you'll take prisoners, inflict damage on enemy installations or ambush an occasional patrol. On most security missions, the best way to gather information would be to capture the NVA soldier.

Transportation is a catch-all phrase to describe moving from point A to point B. The cargo can be a message, a prisoner, supplies, or the team itself being relocated. Since you're really only interested in getting through safely, you don't want to be detected. Typically, you'd hide and let the NVA soldier pass by.

COMMUNICATIONS

Any time there is a contact with the enemy, either accidental or deliberate, the first man to make the sighting generally has to make a snap decision and give a signal.

These signals can be made in a lot of ways. One possibility includes voice, especially for things like "Incoming!" and "Sniper!" where it doesn't matter how much noise you make. Prearranged hand signals are the most common signals. Using a radio or a flashlight is also common.

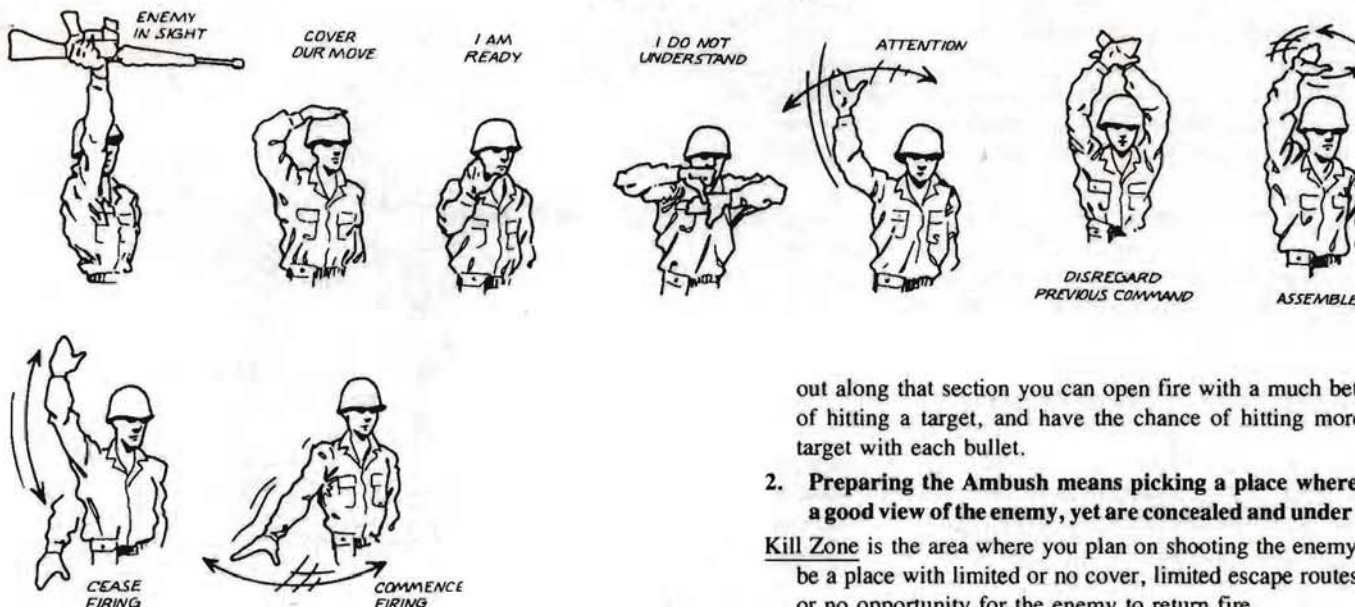
Every player character should understand how to react to the following signals. This is more than good tactics, it's also good role-playing. The game moves along a lot more quickly when everybody knows what they're supposed to do.

Freeze: Everybody hold your position. All the characters should stay quiet and motionless. It usually means that the Point Man (or whoever made the signal) suspects that something is wrong and is still gathering information.

Hasty Ambush: Means "we're going to ambush the enemy." Usually made when the enemy looks vulnerable and when they seem to be heading toward the group. Characters should immediately take concealed firing positions.

Attack! or Immediate Assault: Not the kind of thing you do every day! For some reason, everybody should charge with weapons blazing. *For example*, if the group comes on the rear of an enemy position, or if another friendly unit needs immediate help. Also used on raids. Whoever gives this signal had better have a damn good reason.

Fall-Back: This means to start an orderly, guarded retreat. Usually done with the leapfrog method where one or two men at a time go



back down the trail while the others stand guard. When the operation is complete the whole group should be back in their usual marching order, but heading in the opposite direction.

Ambush: Or, to put it another way, RUN! It means that the group is in immediate danger of being in an enemy ambush.

Incoming: Means "TAKE COVER!" Some kind of indirect fire, like a mortar or an artillery shell, is coming into the group. Everybody should hit the dirt, scatter or find cover immediately.

Sniper: Reacting to a single sniper is a little different than reacting to an ambush. The entire group should open fire on the sniper's position. This may or may not kill the enemy, but it'll sure suppress his fire for the moment.

OFFENSIVE WARFARE

Most players already understand this pretty well. Attacking means shooting at the enemy. And, as we found out in the Revolutionary War, it's a lot easier to shoot the enemy when you're hiding in the bushes and he is taken completely by surprise. Still, here's a few items to consider in any kind of attack.

1. **Fire Distribution is the science of controlling weapon power.** Here's a few of the more popular possibilities:

Point Fire is when you're aiming at a particular target. For example, you might tell everyone to concentrate Point Fire on the enemy machinegun operator.

Area Fire means aiming at any available targets in a particular area.

Suppressive Fire means you're trying to get the enemy to keep his head down. This is the kind of shooting you do when somebody yells, "Cover Me!"

Grazing Fire is usually a straight, horizontal line laid down by machineguns. The idea is to continuously draw a line of bullets about 3 feet off the ground. That way, even if you can't see the enemy, you have a pretty good chance of hitting. Usually used when the enemy is charging toward you.

Frontal, Flanking and Enfilade Fire. These are just terms describing how your shots are hitting the enemy. Frontal fire is when you're facing each other. Flanking means firing at the enemy's side, like shooting down at a party on a trail. Enfilade firing is the best kind because it means you are shooting through a column or row of the enemy.

A good use of Enfilade fire is to set up an ambush so a machinegun is pointed down the length of a trail. Once the enemy group is strung

out along that section you can open fire with a much better chance of hitting a target, and have the chance of hitting more than one target with each bullet.

2. **Preparing the Ambush means picking a place where you have a good view of the enemy, yet are concealed and under cover.**

Kill Zone is the area where you plan on shooting the enemy. It should be a place with limited or no cover, limited escape routes, and little or no opportunity for the enemy to return fire.

Dead Spaces are areas out of sight of the ambushers. For example, a group on a hill may have a good view of the trail, but may not be able to see into a gully right below them. These areas should be booby trapped or targeted for accurate grenade fire.

Claymores, mines and mortars are effective ways of killing, but they lack a little . . . discretion. Booby traps are non-discriminating; if there are friendly forces or civilians in the area, it's best to set up flare traps – that way you can get a good look at the victims before you kill them.

3. **Dividing your forces according to their jobs is always a good idea, even in a four-man team.**

Assault Element is the unit responsible for the main attack. In an Ambush, they would be assigned different firing areas in the kill zone.

Support Element is a back-up or reserve unit. In an ambush the Support Element is often set along possible escape routes so the enemy will be trapped.

Security Elements have the responsibility for keeping everyone else safe. For example, if a unit had set up an ambush on a hill, the Security Element will patrol the back and sides of the hill to prevent a rear or flank attack.

4. **Concealment and Camouflage are useful in any kind of combat.** The more difficult it is for the enemy to see you, the more difficult it is for him to shoot you.

Natural Concealment is anything that hides you from the enemy's sight. Bushes, grass, trees, geological formations and shadows are all effective.

Camouflage is basically artificial concealment. Usually it involves clothing and equipment with the same colors as the natural environment. Irregular shapes of color are the hardest to see. Adding make-up to exposed skin, and attaching leaves and branches to helmet and clothing are also good forms of camouflage.

DEFENSIVE WARFARE

Personal accounts of experiences in Vietnam are often centered around digging. Nearly every U.S. soldier spent a huge portion of their time in 'Nam digging up the countryside. It's also true for the Vietnamese – how do you think they got those incredible tunnels?

The new guys found it all pretty pointless . . . until their first mortar attack. Then, after taking a look at a few bodies, they didn't need much persuading. Mostly they were digging their own shelters and bunkers. And they had plenty of enthusiasm for the job since, every so often, a

few guys would get killed during a midnight mortar attack – mostly the guys who didn't do quite enough digging.

You dug in everywhere. Stationed on a remote base for a month or two? Dig bunkers and shelters. Setting up a watch station? Dig a trench. Pinned down by enemy fire? Don't bother moving around, just start digging down. At the very least it'll keep your mind off the bullets whizzing by.

For a more detailed discussion, let's listen in on William "Red" Dukowski, now a sergeant, as he explains things to some new recruits. Late the previous night they set up an ambush site along a jungle trail. The expected VC bicycle convoy never showed up and, this morning, Red has received word that they should wait another day or two. He's just announced to the men that they have to start digging into position.

Group: "Why Do We Gotta Dig?" is the question from all the new recruits.

Red: "Well, mostly it's a question of physics. When something explodes, whether it's a rocket, artillery shell, grenade, mortar or land mine, it throws out fragments. These fragments, otherwise known as shrapnel, will kill at least half of you guys that are planning on dying."

Slim: "But we've already got good cover. Why should we do any digging?"

Red: "Yeah, one way to avoid getting killed by shrapnel is to hide behind something that'll stop the fragments. Unfortunately, with the advances in modern munitions, there's not much that will stop a high-powered piece of shrapnel. For example, fragments can penetrate the walls of armored vehicles, concrete blocks, and even thick, earthen walls. The bushes and trees we've got out here are completely worthless. So hiding behind stuff isn't usually the best defense against shrapnel.

"Take the bunch of us in position on that hill. Sure, we'll all be invisible in the vegetation. However, suppose the commies decide to drop a mortar round on top of us? Those fragments can't see us, but they'll just rip right through anything in their path . . . trees, bushes, and your tender, young bodies.

"The best way to avoid shrapnel is to go below ground. It works like this; since shrapnel is thrown outward from the blast, and since most explosions take place on the ground, the pieces tend to move **across** the ground. So, sitting in a hole, you tend to see and hear a lot of shrapnel whizzing overhead.

"Of course, a lot of the fragments arc up in the air and down again. The advantage is that they almost never come *straight* down, they always come down at an angle. So the deeper you are in the hole, and the narrower the hole opening, the less chance there is that the frag will reach you."

Chuckles: "So what kind of hole should we dig?"

Red: "Well, we don't wanna' make the hole too big . . ."

Slim: "Yeah, too much dirty work!"

Red: "Naw, it's more a matter of keeping the enemy fire out of the hole. The smaller the opening, the less likely it is that somethin's gonna come inside and getcha'.

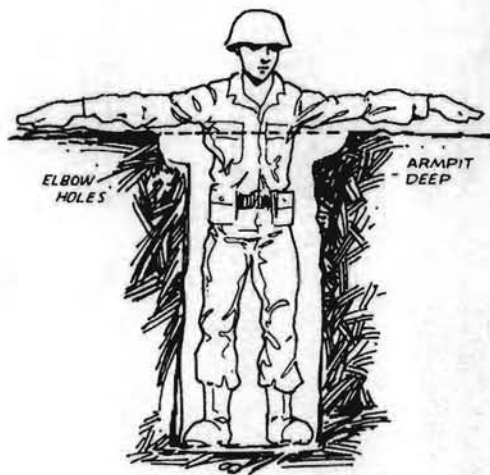
"And you don't want to dig down too deep because you've got to fire out of the hole. The perfect hole should be right up to your armpits so you can easily aim your weapon. That also makes it deep enough so that you can duck down inside when you hear the 'Incoming!' call."

Slim: "So we each dig a hole?"

Red: "Well, one of you guys should team up with the machinegunner. That way he's got somebody to help feed ammo and generally back him up if he gets knocked out. So that's a two-man hole. On flat land or in the woods, they'd all be two-man holes so you could support each other. Since we're setting up an ambush on this hill we want to be spread out to cover more targets so most of the holes

will be for one man."

Later that day . . .



Slim: "It's armpit deep, are we done now?"

Red: "No, now that you've got the hole itself finished it's time to make a few *improvements*."

Chuckles: "Yeah Sarge, can I get a Picasso in my hole?"

Red: "Well, these are more practical improvements. Ways of making your position more effective against the enemy."

Slim: "It's a hole Red, how are we gonna make a *hole* effective?"

Red: "Okay, for starters you've got to make it easy to fire your weapon. Since the hole is as deep as your armpits it's difficult to lean over and aim your weapon 'cause your arms bang into the ground. So what you want to do is dig some nice small holes for your elbows."

Chuckles: "Hey, elbow holes; I like that! So we dig two elbow holes so that we can lean over and fire in comfort?"

Red: "Not just two holes! You've got to put in elbow holes for each firing position that you're going to cover.

"The next step is to make some weapon supports. Basically, these are mounds of dirt you'll use for your rifle barrels. This will give you a little bit more protection and also brace the weapon for firing."

Slim: "Is that it?"

Red: "One more thing. I'm going to teach you how to shoot in the dark."

Chuckles: "Don't we already know how to do that?"

Red: "Not if you really want to hit something. Slim, get some sticks, about a foot and a half long. Here's how it works, Chuckles get down in your hole."

Chuckles: "Okay."

Red: "Now aim at the farthest point on the trail to your left. Okay, now Slim, you put a stick in the ground just left next of Chuckles' rifle barrel. Yeah, push it in so it's solid . . .

"Chuckles, now I want you to aim at the farthest point on the trail to your right. Slim, you push in another stick on the right side of the barrel this time.

"Okay Chuckles. Close your eyes."

Chuckles: "What? Oh, okay."

Red: "Now pretend that you've got to shoot at the trail."

Chuckles: "Hey! That's neat; I can swing the gun back and forth, and I still know I'm pointing at the right area!"

Red: "You got it! Now these are called *aiming stakes* or *firing stakes*. Use as many sticks as you need. For example, you don't want to shoot that big tree right in the middle of your field of fire, so block it off with aiming stakes. For elevation you use a forked stick or a mound, so your gun is at the right level.

"The beauty of this thing is that you'll be able to shoot accurately

even if you can't see a damn thing out there."

Once again, the VC have failed to show up. The next morning Red is getting everybody ready to work again.

Red: "Okay kiddies! It's time to start digging again!"

Chuckles: "Groan! Why? Yesterday you said that the holes were no good if they were too big."

Red: "That's true. Your holes are just right for you. Now you've got to start making room for an occasional visitor."

Slim: "Sarge, this hole is so small I gotta step outside to change my mind. How the hell am I gonna' fit anybody else in here with me?"

Red: "The particular visitors I'm talking about are grenades. What happens when Mr. Charles drops a grenade into your hole?"

Slim: "Hm-mm . . . I pick it up and throw it out?"

Red: "Sure, just reach down there in the dark and grope around for a live grenade. Remind me to send a note to your mother telling her what a brave soldier you are! Anybody else got any bright ideas?"

Chuckles: "How about jumping out of the hole?"

Red: "Well, assuming that you were fast enough to get out before the grenade goes off, that might work. However, since some VC put the bomb in there in the first place it's a safe bet that he's gonna' be aiming in your general direction."

Slim: "So if we can't throw the grenade out, and we can't jump outta' the hole, what's left?"

Red: "What you wanna do is dig another hole for the grenades. The holes are called *sumps* and the idea is to kick the grenade down deep enough so that it can explode without killing you. In a one-man hole it should be along one side wall, and in a two-man hole you need two, one on each end."

Chuckles: "How big a hole we talking about Sarge?"

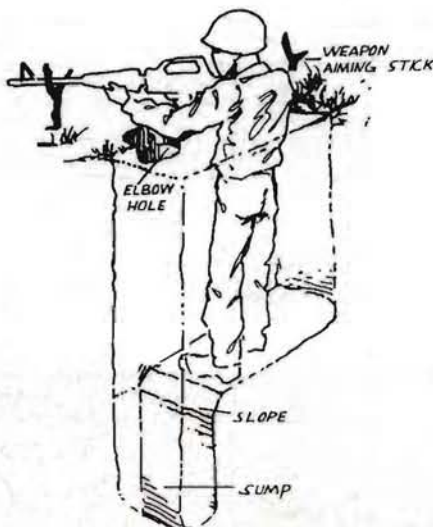
Red: "First off, the top of the sump has gotta be as long as the side wall of your hole, that's so you can't miss when you kick it. Second, you want it pretty narrow, so the blast is contained, but wide enough so the grenade will get in easy. Then you want to dig it as deep as you can get it. Usually a sump is about as wide as the blade of your entrenching tool and about as deep as you can dig without making the hole any wider."

Slim: "Sounds like a good idea. Let's do it!"

Red: "Wait a minute. One more thing you want to take care of while you're digging. You want to put a slope into the floor of your hole."

Slim: "What kind of slope?"

Red: "A slope that'll make that grenade roll right into the sump hole. It'll also be useful for water drainage."



Later that day, Red has just finished talking to his commander on the radio.

Chuckles: "So what's happening?"

Red: "We'll be squatting here for a couple more days at least."

Slim: "Well, at least we got our holes finished."

Red: "Wrongo! Time to get to work again."

Slim: "What! More digging?"

Red: "Naw! Today we're going to build stuff. Namely, we're going to make some overhead cover. That'll protect us from overhead fragments."

Chuckles: "You mean we're going to put roofs on our holes?"

Red: "Exactly! For starters we're going to gather roofing material. That means that we need logs. So some of you guys are going to form a work party to cut trees and collect fallen logs. We need big logs, from 4 to 6 inches in diameter."

Slim: "And the rest of us?"

Red: "At least half of you guys are going to watch the work party, just to hold their guns and make sure they don't get ambushed. We'll start really working when everybody gets back."

Chuckles: "What are we gonna' do with the logs when we got 'em?"

Red: "Well, depending on where you are on the hill, you'll either build a roof on the side or the back of your hole. The two-man hole will have a roof right in the middle. You'll dig in a little ways, plant the logs sideways, cover 'em with a tarp, then with dirt, and finally, camouflage 'em."

Slim: "Hey Red! I got a question. How much work are we going to keep doing on these holes?"

Red: "Why Slim, you're just getting started. We can still dig storage compartments for ammo and gear, and we can brace up the whole works with more logs."

Slim: "All that?"

Red: "That's just the start. The next step is to start connecting all the holes together. That means digging trenches between the holes. Why, in the next couple of weeks, we can turn this hill into a regular World War I bunker!"

Slim: "You've got to be kidding!"

Red: "Hey, it's no joking matter. The more holes, trenches, and cover we got on this hillside, the better off we are. The deeper they are, the safer we'll be. Think about it. We can move from position to position, helping our buddies or moving to different firing points, all without getting our tender bodies shot up. In fact, there's only one time when we can stop digging."

Slim: "When?"

Red: "You can bet that the day we got this hill finished, they'll pull us out and put us on some other friggin' hill. And then we can start digging all over again."

STRATEGY AND TACTICS: THE BASICS

There's no way we can discuss all the concepts of military thought in this book. What follows is sort of a "Reader's Digest Condensed Version" of the principles of warfare. If there is any such thing as a "Law of War" then it's probably hidden in the following list. Remember, these are general guidelines, and in war there is nothing certain.

1. **Maintain the Objective:** Every military operation must be directed toward a decisive, obtainable objective. In other words, if you can't describe the outcome you want, then you shouldn't be getting into the battle. A lot of folks would say that the lack of an objective was the main flaw in America's policies in Vietnam.

Having a stated objective that's known by the soldiers in an

action is critical for them to be able to respond to changing conditions. Having the initiative to take advantage of a sudden enemy weakness, or to retreat in the face of an unexpected enemy strength, depends on everybody knowing the overall plan.

2. **Watch your Concentrations:** In ancient warfare everything was concentrated, because the armies were literally shoulder to shoulder. Modern weaponry makes dispersion essential. A single grenade or machinegun can kill crowds easily. As a general rule, everybody in Vietnam kept at least 5 yards apart at all times. The first limit to this dispersion is communications, you've got to keep close enough so that you can work as a team.

The second limit to dispersion is the need to concentrate attack power. The reason the ancient soldiers massed together was to concentrate their offensive power. In modern times, with long distance weapons, attacks can be concentrated while the attackers remain dispersed. So units have to stay close enough to be able to coordinate and concentrate their weapons on a single target.

3. **Be Prepared to Maneuver:** Consider the brilliance of the Viet Cong Army. Attack them with a superior force and they break into pieces and melt away. Present them with a weak defense and they form up a superior force and wipe you out. Forces must be organized so they can move quickly, both to attack and retreat.

Another aspect to maneuvering troops is maintaining a reserve. No matter how desperate a situation may look, it's vital to maintain a separate reserve that can respond to changing conditions.

4. **Knowledge is Power:** A small army with a good intelligence network is worth a lot more than a large army that's kept in the dark. Which is not to say that we didn't have good intelligence work in Vietnam. The problem in 'Nam was, more often than not, the information wasn't given to the commanders who needed it. The flip side of the intelligence issue is *security*. Always make it as difficult as possible for the enemy to get any information on your activities.

5. **Watch the Multipliers:** The following formulas are ridiculously simplistic. Still, they may be valuable as general guidelines.

a. It costs twice as much to attack as to defend. History records that the attacker, even when wildly successful, loses a lot more men than the defender.

b. Attacking the enemy's flank, or rear attack, is twice as effective as attacking him in the front. Frontal assaults look good in the movies, scare the hell out of the enemy, and usually result in the virtual destruction of the *attacking force*.

c. Surprise doubles the effectiveness of any attack. Anytime you do something *predictable* your chances of getting wiped out are doubled.

d. Defense strength is directly proportional to fortification strength. In other words, holes, bunkers, and trenches can easily double the number of survivors in an attack.

LARGE UNIT COMBAT RESOLUTION

"(using large armies are) . . . a little difficult for your average Mission Director to role-play, and it makes resolving combat during an assault by 1,500 or so VC/NVA a lifetime hobby."

Joe F. Martin, *Hearts and Minds*

There are plenty of times when you'll want your characters to go up against, or lead, fairly large armies. Often consisting of 100 men, or even 1,000 men, or more.

Here's a set of rules designed to make the Mission Director's life a

little easier. It basically allows you to decide the outcome of battles without rolling dice for each, individual, non-player character involved.

Note: These rules should *never be applied to player characters!* Always roll the attacks and damage separately for each player character, even if they are obviously outnumbered and outgunned.

How to Use the Large Unit, Combat Resolutions Table

1. **Determine the kind of weapons being used.** This should be the average weapon. So, if a unit was shooting mostly bolt-action rifles, and a couple of guys had assault rifles, the average would still be *conventional weapons* and you would use Table 1.
2. **Determine how the enemy is attacking.** Is it an Ambush! a Stand-Up War, or a Turkey Shoot. Use the matching column on the table.
3. **Determine how the defenders are situated.** Are they exposed, under cover, or dug in? Use the matching row on the table.
4. **Roll the dice described** on the table where the proper row and column meet. The result of that die roll tells you how many casualties were suffered by the defender.
5. **Determine how many of the enemy are affected.** The result of the dice roll tells you the percentage of enemy casualties. In other words, rolling a 15 tells you 15% of the enemy were knocked out. 15% means that 15 out of every 100 soldiers were killed or seriously wounded. 15% of 50 soldiers would be half that, or 7.5 casualties. For any fraction, round *down*, i.e., 7.5 becomes 7.
6. **Half of the casualties are dead.** The other half are so badly wounded that they can't keep fighting. In case of an odd number of casualties, like 9, the odd casualty is only wounded. 4 dead and 5 wounded.
7. **Light wounds are very common.** For every casualty killed or seriously wounded there is one lightly wounded. So, in the unit with 15 casualties, 7 are dead, 8 are seriously wounded, and another 15 are lightly wounded.

For example: If the attackers' weapons were M-16s, the attackers were in a Stand-Up War, and, if the defenders were exposed, then the MD should roll 4D10. If the result was 13, then 6% of the enemy were killed, 7% were seriously wounded (they could no longer fight), and another 13% suffered minor wounds (they could keep fighting).

Note: "Defenders Dug In" assumes that the characters are either in foxholes, caves, spider holes (VC style), trenches, or buttoned up in tanks or armored vehicles.

TABLE 1: Casualties Against Conventional Arms

Use this table when a unit is facing largely conventional, bolt-action rifles, pistols and bayonets.

	Ambush!	Stand-Up	Turkey Shoot
Defenders Exposed	4D10	3D10	1D10
Defenders Under Cover	2D10	1D10	None
Defenders Dug In	1D6	None	None

TABLE 2: Casualties Against Automatic Rifles

Use this table when a unit is facing largely assault rifles, sub machine-guns, and semi-automatic rifles.

	Ambush!	Stand-Up	Turkey Shoot
Defenders Exposed	1D100	4D10	2D10
Defenders Under Cover	5D10	2D10	1D10
Defenders Dug In	1D6	1D6	None

TABLE 3: Casualties Against Machinegun Fire

Use this table when a unit is facing machineguns, grenade launchers with flechette ammunition, and flame throwers.

	Ambush!	Stand-Up	Turkey Shoot
Defenders Exposed	1D100 + 20	1D100	4D10
Defenders Under Cover	6D10	4D10	2D10
Defenders Dug In	1D6	1D6	1D6

TABLE 4: Casualties Against Heavy Weapons Fire

Use this table when a unit is facing rocket launchers, grenades, small mortars, and heavy machineguns.

	Ambush!	Stand-Up	Turkey Shoot
Defenders Exposed	1D100 + 50	1D100 + 20	1D100
Defenders Under Cover	1D100	6D10	4D10
Defenders Dug In	4D10	2D10	1D10

TABLE 5: Casualties Against Artillery and Air Bombardment

Use this table when a unit is facing bombs or napalm from airplanes, helicopters and rocket fire, or artillery fire.

	Ambush!	Stand-Up	Turkey Shoot
Defenders Exposed	1D100 + 100	1D100 + 75	1D100 + 50
Defenders Under Cover	1D100 + 50	1D100	6D10
Defenders Dug In	6D10	4D10	2D10

Note: In all charts the **Stand-Up** category refers to a **Stand-Up War** situation.

LARGE UNIT COMBAT: AN EXAMPLE

In this scenario, the player characters, Beth and Willy, are the leaders of a unit of 20 Meo tribesmen. They've reached an ambush site, and they're waiting for the arrival of a VC convoy.

MD: Okay, you've got your men deployed at the ambush site. What are you doing?

Beth: We've decided to climb the hill and set up our radio.

MD: Okay, but that puts you out of the action when the ambush starts.

Willy: Yeah. It also lets us see the rear and flank side of our guys so they can't get ambushed.

MD: Good thinking! About 30 minutes later the VC show up. Your Meo troops wait until they've got a nice shot and then open fire. I'll look up the number of casualties the VC are going to collect.

Beth: Don't the VC have to subtract big combat modifiers 'cause they've been just been ambushed?

MD: Yes, but that's already been figured into the table. All I'm doing is rolling to see how many casualties both sides get.

Willy: So, for both sides, you just roll the number of dead?

MD: Well, not just yet. Usually I'd roll for casualties on both sides, but, in an Ambush the attackers can't get hurt on the first round.

Willy: Good! How badly did we hurt them?

MD: Okay, your guys were mostly armed with Assault Rifles . . .

Beth: Don't forget, we had a machinegun too!

MD: Actually, I'm not going to count that. The way the tables work, you base everything on the average weapons being used.

Beth: Is that fair?

MD: You'd probably think so if *you* were the ones being ambushed . . . Anyway, we're rolling for Assault Weapons. The defenders, the guys you ambushed, were out in the open. So I roll 1D100, percentile dice for casualties . . . a 16.

Willy: We killed 16 of 'em?

MD: No, they suffered 16% casualties. Since there's about 50 of 'em, that means 8 got hurt. 4 dead and 4 badly wounded. Time for the next round. By now, all the VC are under cover and are returning fire. Let's roll again for the VC casualties, this time on a 5D10.

Willy: Because the VC are now under cover?

MD: Yep. I rolled a 28. 14% more killed and another 14% seriously wounded. Of the original 50, there's only 28 left. They fire at your guys.

Beth: Our Meo are in Ambush?

MD: No, your Meo are doing the Ambush! So, as defenders, they're in a Turkey Shoot. The VC are using AK-47s and your Meo are under cover, so there will be 2D10 casualties . . . I roll a 9.

Willy: Since there's only 20 of our guys, 9% would be 1.8 casualties. How do we work that out?

MD: Always round down. That means you've only got one casualty and he's not dead, just badly wounded. . . .

COMMUNIST STRATEGY & TACTICS

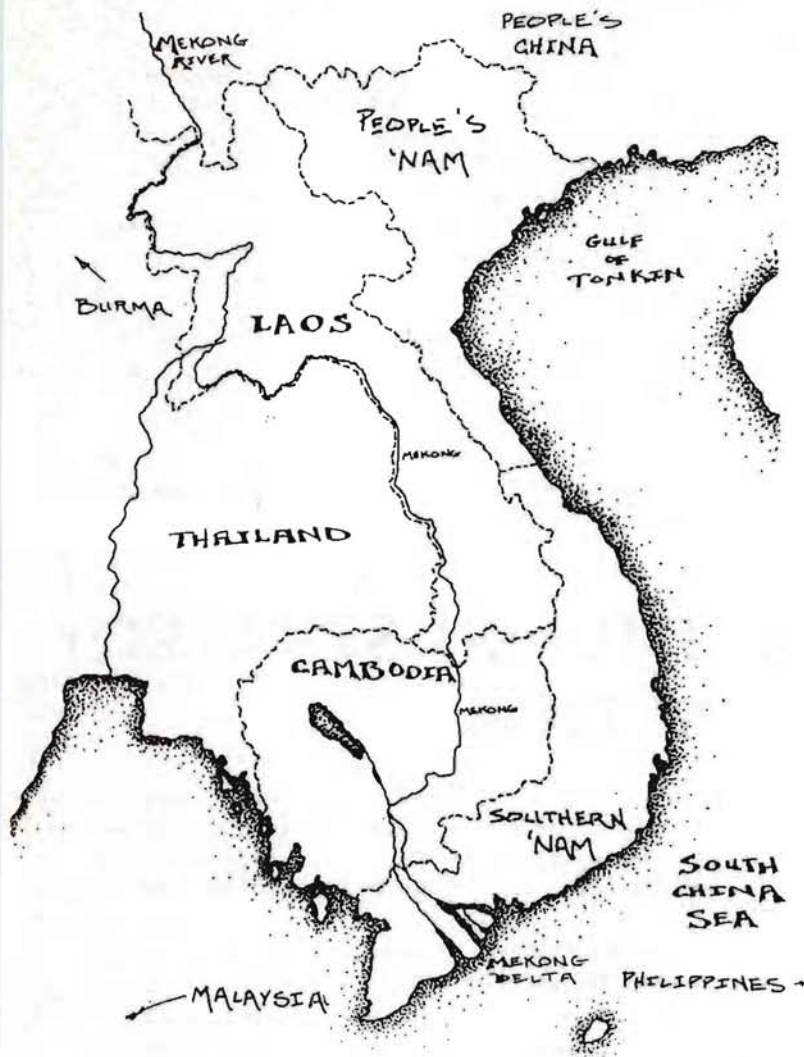
The communist military commanders of Southeast Asia shouldn't be underestimated. They are often well-trained, combat seasoned, and very well-read in military thought. Nevertheless, they tend to follow certain basic principles, mostly based on Mao Tse Tung's *Essays on Military Affairs*.

1. An attack should be made only when the enemy is outnumbered by at least three to one, and preferably by four, five or six to one.
2. Attacks should be designed to completely annihilate the enemy.
3. All intelligence operations must be complete before any attack is to take place.
4. It's more important to consolidate the area currently occupied than to conquer more territory.
5. An enemy should be destroyed in pieces, attacking the weakest components.
6. Never attack a strong, united enemy; instead, retreat until the enemy has fragmented.

Although the communist military theory is excellent, their political control system tends to reduce their effectiveness. The typical *weaknesses of communist military practice* are as follows:

1. They tend to be slow and methodical. Generally, the communists will plan methodically before committing to any attack plan.
2. Communist troops are often wasted in frontal assaults. Much of the communist training involves 'psyching up' the troops into a frenzy where they'll just keep up a wild-man assault until they're completely wiped out.
3. Flexibility is not a communist strong point. Once committed to an attack, they'll keep going even when it becomes hopeless. If caught unaware, even by an inferior force, they tend to flee rather than fight.

THE ADVANCED RECON WORLD - CIRCA 1965



When it comes to border trouble, there's not a lot of countries in worse shape than Laos. Among the neighbors are two hardline communist states — People's China and People's 'Nam, two strong western allies — Southern 'Nam and Thailand, plus two countries constantly threatened with anarchy — Burma and Cambodia. Any or all of these countries engaged in excursions into Laos at one time or another.

Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines, while not having a direct influence on Laos, are sensitive to events in the war zone. All three countries experience internal dissent, communist revolutionary movements, and basic instability. In other words, if enough Southeast Asian "Dominos" start falling, then they will be threatened also.

All the national descriptions relate the national circumstances as of 1965. In the real world by 1980 both Vietnams, Laos, and Cambodia were under the absolute control of the North Vietnamese Communist Party. Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines were strong Stateside allies. Burma remains a neutral buffer zone.

SOUTHERN 'NAM

Population: 17 Million

Government: Unstable, Military Dictatorship

Military Forces:

Army: 150,000 ARVN

Regional Irregulars: 100,000

Paramilitary: 110,000 Police

Youth Corps: 10,000 Development Cadre

Ethnic Irregulars: 60,000 CIA/Special Forces trained troops.

Stateside Military: 22,000 troops.

Navy: 17 Frigates, 1 Minesweeper, 4 Coastal Patrol Boats, 64 "Swift" Patrol Boats, 42 Assault Support Patrol Boats, 80 PBRs, 20 Armored Troop Carriers, 2 Monitors, and 15 Amphibious Landers.

Economy: Largely agricultural. Products include rice, rubber, and coal. Pre-war economy was much more diversified. Currency: 1 Piastre = .01 Stateside dollar.

History: After the defeat of the French, a republican government took power in the south. Most recently, the popular General Thiery, took over. He has started to publicize a series of upcoming elections. Should his popularity decline, there are plenty of other generals interested in taking his place. It seems unlikely that a civilian government will take power. General unrest among the people is balanced by a growing fear of the communist's terrorist tactics.

PEOPLE'S 'NAM

Population: 30 Million

Government: Stable, Communist Dictatorship

Military Forces:

Army: Approximately 30,000 Viet Cong

20,000 NVAs disguised as VC

90,000 NVA Regulars

Approximately 50,000 Porters carrying supplies south.

Navy: 10 Frigates, 30 Coastal Patrol Boats, 16 Patrol Torpedo Boats, 5 Amphibious Landers.

Economy: As Southern 'Nam, only with more industrial/manufacturing potential. Currency: 1 Dong = .04 Stateside dollar.

History: Its early history is the same as Southern 'Nam. After World War II, the hero of the resistance against the Japanese fought against the French when they attempted to return to power. Eventually he and his generals defeated the French, and negotiated a settlement that called for a temporary partition of the country and a timetable for elections. Both *Stateside* and *Southern 'Nam* pointed out that they had not signed, and refused to hold the reunification elections. People's 'Nam announced the formation of the *National Liberation Front* — the Viet Cong. Following the death of 'Nam's greatest hero, President Tong continues the war effort.

THAILAND (SIAM)

Population: 35 Million

Government: Unstable, Constitutional Monarchy

Military Forces:

Army: 175,000 soldiers, trained and equipped by the Stateside, with 600 armored vehicles and 400 combat aircraft.

Navy: 1 Frigate, 30 Destroyer Escorts, 4 Patrol Frigates, 3 Minesweepers, 3 Guided Missile Boats, 22 Patrol Boats, 2 Minelayers, and 5 Assault Landing Crafts.

Economy: Teakwood and other forest products are the dominant exports. Also a large producer of tin, iron, manganese, tungsten, and antimony. Wide variety of agricultural products including rice, coconuts, tobacco, pepper, peanuts and beans. Currency: 1 Baht = .05 Stateside dollars.

History: Since 1949, the country has experienced one coup after another. In spite of their military power, or perhaps because of their military power, each government is shakier than the last. Prime Minister Gittiphol Sandhaki has little control over the general population, and is threatened with the outbreak of a student revolution. Communist rebels are everywhere.

CAMBODIA

Population: 7 Million

Government: Unstable. Essentially a Monarchy (King Shanouk)

Military Forces:

Army: 30,000 troops.

Stateside-lead Militia: 14,000 troops.

Communist Insurgents: 15,000 troops.

Communist Vietnamese: 35,000 troops.

Economy: Rice, iron, rubber, and paper. Currency: 1 Riel = 1 Stateside dollar.

History: The country became an independent monarchy in 1953. Currently, Prince Hanisouk has been trying to maintain the country's neutrality while still accepting assistance and military aid from *Stateside*. However, Stateside bombings inside the Cambodian border, the growth of the right-wing, and some violent battles spilling over from 'Nam border, have forced the Prince into action. With the unanimous approval of the National Assembly, he has decided to refuse all future Stateside aid. The result may turn out to be a military anti-communist coup.

MALAYSIA

Population: 10 Million

Government: Unstable, Constitutional Monarchy

Military Forces:

Army: Roughly 51,000 with 100 armored vehicles, and 20 combat aircraft.

British Southeast Asian Forces: 6,000 armed with modern weaponry and the latest in support vehicles and aircraft.

Malay Navy: 1 Frigate, 2 Guided Missile Patrol Boats, 4 Fast Patrol Boats, 24 Gunboats, and 30 Police Boats.

Economy: Rubber, palm oil, rice, tin and oil. Currency: 1 Ringgit = 1 Stateside dollar.

History: A brand new country created in 1963 out of the old Federation of *Malaya*, *British Singapore*, and *British Borneo*. Relations between the ruling Malays and the urban Chinese of Singapore and Kuala Lumpur have been tense and rioting is frequent in many urban areas. Negotiations are underway to separate Singapore into an independent republic. There is open guerrilla warfare between Malaysia and neighboring Indonesia, as well as an active, communist resistance movement.

INDONESIA

Population: 110 Million

Government: Unstable, Personal Dictatorship (President Sukarno)

Military Forces:

Army: 225,000 troops, with varying amounts of weapons and equipment depending on their commander's closeness to the President. About 600 armored vehicles and 30 combat aircraft.

Paramilitary: 110,000 troops.

Communist Insurgents: 30,000 troops.

Navy: 2 Submarines (Soviet 'W' Class - diesel/electric), 6 tubes, (4 forward/2 aft, 14 torpedos or 28 mines); 7 Frigates, 9 Torpedo Patrol Boats, 9 Guided Missile Boats, 12 Patrol Boats and 15 Minesweepers.

Economy: Rice, tin, oil, and rubber. Currency: 1 Rupiah = 1 Stateside dollar.

History: Became independent after WWII. Sukarno was the first President and neglected to resign from power when his term was up. Currently, the country is involved in attacks on Malaysia. The communist party of Indonesia has more than 300,000 members, and is a potent political force. The military is also gaining political power and is threatening a coup.

BURMA

Population: 28 Million

Government: Uncertain, Cult of Personality (General Ne Win)

Military Forces:

Army: 110,000 troops with 100 armored vehicles and 10 combat aircraft.

Chinese Nationalist Army: 12,000 troops.

Shan National Army: 8,000 troops.

Karen Revolutionary Army: 4,000 troops.

Communist Insurgents: 13,000 troops.

Navy: 4 Frigates, 8 Patrol Boats, 22 Gunboats, 8 River Transports, and 35 River Boats.

Economy: Rice, cotton, tobacco, oil and lead are the principle exports. The country is also known for precious stones including rubies, sapphires and jade. Currency: 1 Kyat = .18 Stateside dollar.

History: The 1962 coup brought General Ne Win to power. He has consolidated his power and eliminated the threat of any military coup against him.

The country is still badly fragmented. Many areas are semi-autonomous or have declared their own independence. Currently, internal wars are waging against the Nationalist Chinese Army, the Shan National Army, and two regional insurrectionist armies. General Win, while retaining western support, is also coordinating his actions with People's China in moves against the Nationalist Chinese.

PEOPLE'S CHINA

Population: 690 Million

Government: Stable, Communist Dictatorship

Military Forces:

Army: 3,700,000 soldiers with 11,000 armored vehicles and 3,000 combat aircraft.

Navy: 2 Nuclear Carriers, 1 Ballistic Missile Submarine, 35 Torpedo Subs, 6 Guided Missile Destroyers, 4 Destroyers, 4 Soviet Riga Missile Frigates, 8 Frigates, 58 Missile Patrol Boats, 40 Torpedo Patrol Boats, 102 Hydrofoils, 150 Soviet Torpedo Boats, 390 Patrol Craft, 24 Minesweepers, and 560 Landing Craft.

Economy: A huge and growing economy that produces the goods and services for the largest population in the world. Currency: 1 Dong = .04 Stateside dollar.

History: Established as a communist state in 1949, it has served as the role model for all the other communist movements in Southeast Asia. Although remnants of the anti-communist Nationalist Chinese Army still exists in Taiwan, Burma and elsewhere, the country is secure from internal or external threats.

PHILIPPINES

Population: 35 Million

Government: Uncertain. Presidential Republic

Military Forces:

Army: 32,000 troops with 100 Armored Vehicles and 120 combat planes.

Navy: 1 Frigate, 15 Patrol Boats, 2 Hydrofoils, 20 Small Patrol Boats, 4 Minesweepers, and 9 Armored Landing Crafts.

Economy: Gold, silver, hemp, copra, sugar cane and pork. Currency: 7 Pesos = 1 Stateside dollar.

History: Independent from Stateside rule since 1946. Stateside military bases have 99 year leases with the government, a fact that causes some unrest. Communist "Huk" guerrillas are active in remote areas. Moro secessionists in southern Mindanao threaten revolution.

STATESIDE

Population: 250 Million

Government: Stable. Constitutional Republic

Military Forces ('Nam war forces only):

Army: 3,000,000 troops, with the most advanced equipment and training in the world.

Navy: The world's largest; with Aircraft Carriers, Battleships, Cruisers, Guided Missile Cruisers, Destroyers, Submarines, River Boats, Hovercraft, Amphibious Assault Craft, Hospital Ships and Freighters.

'Nam Allies: Major commitments from: 15,000 South Korean
4,000 Australian
500 New Zealand
10,000 or more multinational Mercenaries

Economy: A strong, vital and diversified economy with *global interests*. Quite capable of spending several billion dollars on the war effort. Currency: Stateside dollar.

What you are about to read, a description of something called "The Kingdom of Laos", is *fiction*. The *real* Kingdom of Laos was, and this may be hard to believe, even more chaotic, more violent, and more corrupt, than what's described in this book. Many things, place names, events and organizations, are the same as those in real Laos. Everything that is changed has been changed so that Laos would be easier for a Mission Director, and so that the missions of the player characters would be more interesting and playable.

The first thing to remember about Laos is that, on paper, it was a peaceful neutrality. The second thing to remember about Laos is that it was a war zone.

Sound confusing? You're not alone. Just about everybody in South-east Asia had trouble figuring out what was going on in Laos. Especially the soldiers fighting next-door in Vietnam.

"... Finally they closed Ta Ko out when it was sort of embarrassedly discovered that the camp was probably located in Laos, through map error. No one knew for sure whether it was in Laos or not. Those borders were very poorly defined."

Jim Morris, *War Story*

INTRODUCTION TO THE KINGDOM OF LAOS



THE KINGDOM OF LAOS (for the RECON RPG)

POPULATION: 3,000,000

33% are Lao Lum (the lowland dwellers) whose 20 ruling families run the government. They speak Lao, which is the *official* language. It's a close relative (with the same alphabet) of the language of Thailand.

14% are Tribal Tai, or Lao Tai, who live in the plateaus and upland valleys. Their major groups are the Black Tai, Red Tai, Tai Nua, Lu and Phutai; each group with its own, separate dialect and culture. They are mainly farmers, and produce much of the country's rice and meat.

18% are Lao Theung, or Mon-Khmer; who live in the hills below 3500 feet, and who are probably the original peoples of Laos. They are also the *poorest* people in Laos, in terms of land, wealth and status. Their language is similar to Cambodian. They have more than 40 different tribes; including the Kha, who were, historically, slaves owned by Lao Tai.

12% are Meo; highland people who live above 3500 feet and who originally come from China. They are quite independent and have, traditionally, made their living growing opium.

9% are Tibeto-Berman; another highland people, who include the Yao, Akha, and Lahu people. Each group has a separate language and culture.

7% are Vietnamese.

4% are Chinese.

1% are French.

The remaining 2% of the people are from India, Pakistan, Cambodia, the Philippines and Stateside.

Considering all this ethnic diversity and the geography of the area, it's a wonder that the country exists at all. There are more than 8 times as many Lao Lum in Thailand than in Laos. Tribal Tai are found in several countries in the region. There are more Meo in North Vietnam than in Laos. And there are more Lao Theung in Cambodia than in Laos.

Size: 91,428 square miles. Almost exactly the same size as the United Kingdom island of England, Wales and Scotland.

GEOGRAPHY AND CLIMATE

Laos is really two lands. Most of the country is rugged highlands covered with dense forests. The southwestern edge of Laos consists of damp, hot lowlands.

The other important feature of Laotian geography is the **Mekong River**. The waterway borders on, or flows through, Laos for more than 1,000 miles. It is the center of the Laos economy for the ruling, lowland

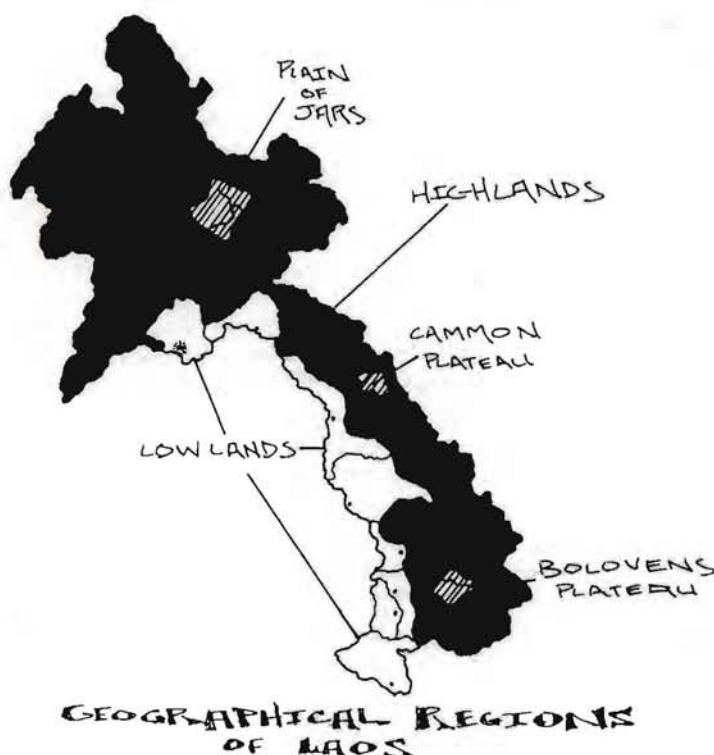
people. The Mekong flood-plain provides the major wet-rice lands, and its waters furnish fish; the main protein in the diet. The canoes, sampans, and light barges, also transport most of the country's freight. Virtually every major town is somewhere on the Mekong.

Geographical features of military importance start with the **Plain of Jars**; a flat plateau in the middle of the mountains of the northern highlands. It lies at about 3,500ft above sea level, and is roughly diamond shaped. It's 30 miles from northern point to southern point, and almost 40 miles from the east to the west points. Control of the Plain of Jars gives control over much of the surrounding area. It's also the only practical place to have conventional battles using tanks and regular armies.

Next comes the **Annamite Mountain Chain** which follows the eastern border of Laos, and serves as a natural barrier to the two Vietnams. Peaks range from 5,000 to 8,000 feet high. Barthelemy Pass, Keo Nua Pass, Loi Na Pass, and Ban Karai Pass, are the only places that trucks can travel across the border into the Annamites.

At the southern end of the country, there's another important plain — the **Bolevens Plateau**. It's also at 3,500 feet and surrounded by mountains. In addition to its strategic importance, it also has some of the most fertile soil in Southeast Asia.

There are also only two seasons in Laos. It depends on the prevailing winds. The wet Southwest Monsoon lasts from May to October, and the dry Northeast Monsoon from November to April.



CURRENCY

600 Kip = \$1 U.S. Throughout this book, the notation K50 will mean 50 Laotian Kip, and \$50 will mean 50 dollars in United States currency.

ECONOMY

Largely agricultural. Products include rice, opium, teakwood, shellac, some coffee and citrus fruits. Meat products include freshwater fish, beef, pork and chicken. Although there are substantial mineral deposits in the country, Tin and Gold are the only metals currently being mined. Exports average 1.4 billion Kip, and imports are an average of 12 billion Kip. In other words, without foreign aid and the opium traffic, the country would fall apart.

Food prices are fairly low in the country. A chicken might cost K150 and one kilogram of pork is K50. A handful of rice, the daily meal of the country's poor people, is K2. However, *all imported goods cost about twice what they would cost in the U.S. or Hong Kong.*

THE TRIPARTITE GOVERNMENT

The official flag of Laos has a red field overlaid with a 3-headed, white elephant standing on a five-step pedestal under a seven-layered, white parasol. And if you thought the flag was complicated and confusing . . . Well, let's just say the government of Laos is a mess.

First, a little history. Laos was created by the French as a Constitutional Monarchy under King Visavan Song in 1949. From then on, it was effectively a battleground between the *royalists and the Laotian Patriotic Front*. The war simmered quietly; largely because the big powers had bigger fish to fry, and the country was pretty peaceful in spite of the conflict.

Around 1960, the two sides started receiving larger amounts of aid, advisors and pressure from their respective allies. The King, Sri Vavang Sathana, and many of his advisors became alarmed at the sudden increase in violence and backed General Kun in a *Neutralist coup*. This move was popular enough to attract many members of both the Royal Army and the Patriotic Front.

There was alarm in both Moscow and Washington. Since neither side particularly wanted to be totally removed from Laos, they decided to convene a 14 member council at Geneva to deal with the problem.

In 1961, the solution was born. The 14 member states, including Burma, Cambodia, Canada, People's China, North Vietnam, South Vietnam, France, India, Poland, Thailand, U.S.S.R., Great Britain, and the U.S.; plus all the Laotian right-wing, left-wing and neutral factions, signed the International Agreement on Tripartite Government. This created a government headed by all three sides. In other words, a real, three-headed, white elephant.

Prince Souma, head of the neutral Royalist Army, became head of the Tripartite Government in 1962. In 1963, he was ousted by a right-wing coup headed by General Lei. This was followed by fighting in the Plain of Jars with the Ata Lao. The result was a communist victory.

The right-wing then stepped aside and let the neutrals take over the government again. And, as soon as the neutrals worked out an agreement with the Ata Lao in 1963, there was a second, right-wing coup.

By this time, the King was getting pretty impatient with the whole idea of a Tripartite Government. In 1964, he dismissed the National Assembly and called for a new election. By 1965, the results were in; the neutrals won by a landslide. However, the Ata Lao had refused to participate, and General Lei refused to resign from power.

So, when the player characters enter Laos, they'll find a country ruled by *factions*. Each part of the country is ruled by either the right-wing army, the Royalist Neutrals, the communist Ata Lao, a foreign occupying army, or an independent warlord. Every government agency has Ministers, Vice-Ministers, Department Chiefs and Secretariats; each with the power to veto or stall any action, and who each belong to different factions.

The official chief of state is the King. His duties are mostly ceremonial, and the few, real powers granted to him by the Laotian constitution are ignored by the right-wing administration.

The Prime Minister is the official head of the government. He supposedly has the power to hire and fire Ministers and Secretariats, but all such appointments have to be approved by the National Assembly and the King's Council. As a result, he runs the government through the military and ignores the official bureaucracy whenever possible.

There are Ministers for National Defense; Foreign Affairs, Veterans Affairs and War Victims; Information, Propaganda and Tourism; Finance; Interior; Justice; Planning and Cooperation; Rural Affairs; Na-

tional Economy; National Education; Culture; Youth and Sports; Public Health; Social Welfare; Public Works; Posts and Telecommunications; and Religious Affairs. Each has to get the cooperation of their Vice-Ministers in order to accomplish anything. In practice, this means the only way things get done is through bribery.

The National Assembly has a majority of Neutralist representatives. However, their power is pretty much ignored by everybody. Since coming to the capitol is dangerous (too big a chance of getting shot) and unproductive (no bribes), they rarely even show up.

The King's Council, a body of 12 elder statesmen, form a kind of Laotian Senate. Since they are appointed by the King, they are mostly Neutralists. They have the power to veto any official appointments in the administration.

The entire higher level judiciary, including a Court of Nullification and all the Provincial Courts of First Instance, have gone into hiding. Occasionally, they'll reappear if a criminal has been found, and condemned by all three sides of the government. Otherwise, it's not worth being assassinated just because somebody disagrees with your decisions. *The District Tribunals*, usually following the directions of whoever is in charge of the province, provide most of the court judgments.

Local government consists of Provincial Governors, District Officers and Canton Chiefs. In practice, they tend to be representative of whoever is controlling their area. For example, a right-wing governor, assigned to an Ata Lao area, would be wise to either stay away from his province or resign quickly.

THE HIGH COST OF GREASING PALMS

Wonder why graft and corruption are so rampant? Consider the pay range in the Royal Laotian Army. A Private starts at \$4.16 a month, and the maximum, monthly pay for a Major General is \$70.92 in U.S. dollars. Civil servant wages, even at the highest levels, are worse than in the military. Even this meager amount is sometimes not available, and whole Battalions may go months, or even years, between paydays.

Just about everybody has found new ways to increase their income. Here are some guidelines:

Ministers and Generals

K1,000,000 for an official change of policy.
K200,000 to approve a specific action.
K100,000 to overlook the rules in a particular case.
K250,000 to release a prisoner.
K60,000 a month for regular services.

Vice-Ministers, Secretariats, Battalion Commanders and Provincial Governors

K600,000 to betray a direct superior.
K500,000 for an official change of policy.
K100,000 to approve a specific action.
K120,000 to rubber-stamp a higher level action.
K50,000 to overlook the rules in a particular case.
K60,000 to release a prisoner.
K30,000 a month for regular services.

Low-Level Bureaucrats, Military Officers, Judges and District Officers

K300,000 to betray a direct superior.
K60,000 to rubber-stamp a high-level action.
K60,000 to excuse a major crime (murder, tax evasion).
K30,000 to release a prisoner.
K15,000 a month for regular services.
K6,000 to overlook the rules in a particular case.
K6,000 to excuse a minor crime (theft, drugs, gambling).

Government Clerks, Noncommissioned Officers, Policemen, Canton Chiefs, and Tribal Leaders

K120,000 to betray a direct superior.
K30,000 to rubber-stamp a high-level action.
K12,000 to release an important prisoner.
K6,000 a month for regular services.
K600 to release a minor prisoner.

Licenses, Taxes, Fees and Tariffs

K12,000 or 50% of the crop on every village harvest.
K6,000 automobile tax.
K2,000 motorcycle tax.
K1,200 for a license to operate a small business.
K300 for a license to fish or farm in an area.

MILITARY

The Royal Army of Laos is actually several armies. The right-wing, Geala Party controls most of the active, well-armed units. However, should the King attempt to personally lead the Royal Army, a large number of officers and troops will come over to him.

MILITARY CAPACITY

Regular Army: Officially, the army consists of 90,000 men organized into 58 Infantry Battalions. In reality, the army is splintered, and under the control of various generals.

River Force: Admiral Foudeari is a staunch, pro-communist Neutralist. He commands 400 men in 36 Patrol Craft and 10 Landing Craft. However, since he has no political support and no foreign military aid, virtually all of his boats are out of order. Since he allows no bribery in his command, most of his men support themselves by running gambling casinos on the river-boats.

THE ROYAL NEUTRALISTS

The neutralists control the city of Luang Prabang and the immediate area. This is also the location of the royal court, the headquarters of the national Buddhists, and the ancient, traditional capital of Laos.

Another peculiarity of the neutralists is that they control none of the military, while still having power over it. In other words, the only way for the King to have any military power is by appealing to the soldiers to revolt against their generals and come over to the King.

One General is irrevocably committed to the King, Prince Phillippe Soudamou. He controls *Borikane Province*, and maintains his four Army Battalions as tools for the Neutralist cause.

Current Ruler: Prince Phillippe Soudamou

Objectives: Support the King and maintain Laotian independence.

Military Capacity:

Royal Army: 2,300 troops armed with M-14 rifles, M-60 machineguns and a few mortars.

Paramilitary: 300 Provincial Police armed with Sub Machine-guns.

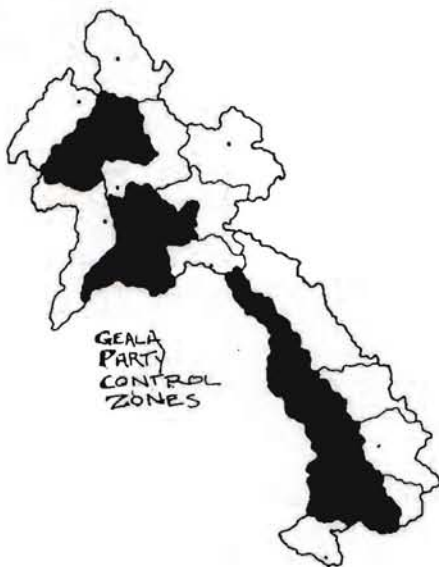
Area Insurgents: 2,000 Ata Lao

1,000 CIA-Supported Meo

THE GEALA PARTY

General Cheouou Lei is Prime Minister of Laos and commander of the Army. The Geala Party is a coalition of rabid anti-communists and the most corrupt generals in the Royal Army. They receive massive military aid from the U.S. and are engaged in fighting the Ata Lao on several fronts.

General Lei controls Jhaleng Province and the capital city. Western Khammouane, western Savannakheui, western Saravane, Sedone, Cham-



passak, and western Xeng Khuouang Provinces, are all occupied by the Army. Luang Prabang and Attopeu Provinces have substantial Army forces attempting to seize control. *Vapikhamthong Province* is under the dominion of General Vuoung, a powerful rival to General Lei.

Current Ruler: General Cheou Lei

Objectives: Seize control of all Laos, drive out the communists, and build up personal wealth.

Military Capacity:

Regular Army: 30,000 professional soldiers; well-trained, well-armed (with full range of U.S. arms), and usually assigned to guard duty.

Paramilitary: 8,000 Lao National Police.

Mercenaries: 6,000 Thailand Recruits. These are good fighters, armed with the latest U.S. arms and equipment.

Levy Troops: 18,000 troops are either conscripted, drafted or arrested (when the Army arrests somebody, they are automatically guilty; the choice of sentence is join up or be executed). They are cannon fodder, who serve on the front lines of most conflicts. They are usually watched by Thai Mercenaries. Average casualties are 10% per battle.

Armored Units: (2) M-60 Main Battle Tanks, (12) M-551 Sheridan Tanks, (24) M-41A3 Walker Bulldog Light Tanks, (36) M-113 Personnel Carriers, (6) M-125 81mm Mortar Carriers, and (12) M-577A1 Carrier Command Posts. All the heavy tanks, and about half of the rest, are under personal command of General Lei. The rest are given out to his favorite Generals.

Air Force: (75) Training Planes, (20) C-47 Transports, (10) H-34 Helicopters.

Potential Reinforcements: They can depend on *Stateside* support, Thai Army support and support from the CIA-Controlled, Meo Army.

Area Insurgents: There are Ata Lao guerrillas operating in virtually every Army-controlled province.

THE ATA LAO

The Ata Lao communist movement has been fighting in Laos since the early 1950's. They now control much of the eastern side of the country, including Houa Phan, Khammouane, Savannakhei, and Saravane. Guerrilla movements are underway virtually everywhere else in Laos. Major armies are fighting for control of Attopeu and Luang Prabang.

In exchange for *North Vietnamese* arms and support, the Ata Lao levies heavy taxes and duties on the people it controls. Typically, up to 80% of crops must be paid as tax, and any valuables are confiscated.

There is a "Portage Rule" that obligates every man, woman, and child, to take one long trip per year carrying goods along the mountain trails. For an adult male, this usually means from 30 to 45 days carrying up to 40 pounds of cargo from People's 'Nam to the Viet Cong in the south.

The Ata Lao official troops get only 8 Kip per day as payment, and they must buy their own food. Desertions are common and there is much resentment against the "foreign", North Vietnamese Army officers.

Current Ruler: Prince Liang Souvanabouda

Objectives: To seize control of the country by military force and through guerrilla uprisings.

Military Capacity:

Formal Army: 25,000 Laotian recruits led by NVA officers and Ata Lao political commissars. On defense and in guerrilla tactics, the army is outstanding. However, they are not aggressive and do poorly on the attack.

Irregulars: 7,000 "Red" Meo soldiers make up the most aggressive parts of the Ata Lao military. They are well-trained and well-armed, with an assortment of communist and Stateside arms, and equipment. Geoung Ly, a popular Meo leader, is a staunch communist and believes in a Meo liberation movement. He will not attack any other Meo military units.

Potential Reinforcements: 30,000 North Vietnamese, and some Viet Cong, are available as support in case of any major threat to the Ata Lao.

Area Insurgents: The worst threat to the Ata Lao are the CIA-backed, Meo Mercenaries. Many of the local people are resentful of communist control and outbreaks of violence are frequent.



THE MELO MERCENARY ARMY

In their mountain strongholds, the Meo are still largely untouched by the war. Since they have an interest in fighting, they willingly fight for whoever provides arms.

Whoever they fight for must provide an outlet for their main cash crop, opium. As long as the CIA continues to provide weapons and air transportation, they will continue to fight.

The main Meo base is in *Xeng Khuouang Province*. They control at least 80% of the province militarily.

Current Ruler: Ukunie Ly

Objectives: First, make enough money for a comfortable living. Second, acquire as many arms and munitions as possible. Third, kill lots of Lao Lum, Tribal Tai, Lao Theung, and Vietnamese. Finally, establish

an independent, Meo state.

Military Capacity:

Irregulars: 14,000 "Black" Meo soldiers are armed with M-16s, and other, modern Stateside weapons.

Potential Reinforcements: In case of crisis, the Meo can enlist up to triple their numbers from their villages. They will be reluctant to do so because it would strip their home areas of protection from the Ata Lao and the Royal Army.

PEOPLE'S CHINA

Occupying the *Phong Saly Province*, at the extreme north of Laos, is the Army of People's China.

It all started back in 1960, when the neutralist government decided to form better relations with its giant neighbor to the north. Part of the agreement with People's China was that a road would be built from China into the provincial capital of Phong Saly.

Well, the road got built, but the Red Chinese never bothered to leave. They claim that they are "patrolling the border" and "keeping the new road safe from imperialist, opium-trading terrorists." Actually, the Chinese are keeping the province as a buffer zone against the Nationalist Chinese Army, and so that any major battles won't spill over into their own territory.

Current Ruler: General Ho Chan is Territorial Commander

Objectives: Not interested in expansion; they just want to keep a buffer zone. If things get too hot, or if Laos becomes unified, they'll simply retreat back across the border. Occasionally, they may make strikes against small units of the Nationalist Chinese Army.

Military Capacity:

Formal Army: 21,000; all well-armed and supplied with Chinese copies of Soviet infantry weapons. Since this is one of China's only war fronts, the men and officers are all high quality.

Irregulars: None. They prohibit the arming of any other groups in their area.

Artillery: Emphasis on anti-aircraft; with radar stations, 180 anti-aircraft guns, and 215 anti-aircraft missiles. One battery of heavy artillery, and 100 mortars of various sizes.

Air Force: At least 50 Migs and 200 transport aircraft are stationed at a base just inside of the Chinese border of the province. No combat helicopters.

Potential Reinforcements: People's China can commit enormous armies to the area. In practice, they will not send in more than another 20,000 soldiers.

Area Insurgents: Virtually none. Even the North Vietnamese are discouraged from entering the province.

NATIONALIST CHINESE

When the communists took over People's China in 1949, there were still huge elements of the Nationalist Army left intact. Most of these were moved to Taiwan. Yet there remains thousands of Nationalist soldiers operating out of *northern Burma* and *Laos*. They keep a fairly low profile; hiding their camps and wearing civilian clothes when dealing with outsiders. They are easily mistaken for ethnic Chinese, and many have integrated with various, highland tribes.

Still, their military effectiveness has not disappeared. In their hidden camps, they openly fly the old, Nationalist Chinese flag, and display pictures of the former presidents of China. They continue to recruit new soldiers from their own children, from the local tribes, and from the ethnic Chinese throughout Southeast Asia.

Having been recently pushed out of eastern Burma, they've set up in the *Sayaboury Province of Laos*. Here they are the dominant force on the scene. They also have excellent relations with Thailand; receiving substantial military aid and support.

Most of the rest of their money comes from trading opium. This also makes them quite a few enemies. The Meo Tribes, the Shan Army, and the right-wing Lao, all view the Nationalist Chinese as dangerous competitors.

Current Ruler: General Thu-An Chu

Objectives: To reconquer People's China. Since that may take awhile, they are content to kill whatever communist insurgents are handy. They are particularly keen to acquire more modern weapons.

Military Capacity:

5th Army: 4,000, highly trained and motivated troops. They are well equipped; with M-1, M-16 and AK-47 Rifles, .50 Caliber Machineguns, 60mm Mortars, and 75mm Recoilless Rifles.

Irregulars: About 12,000. They've organized many of the tribes, especially those who are ethnically Chinese. These units typically number less than 200, and are armed with either M-1 Rifles or AK-47s, and take anywhere up to 2 weeks to muster.

Armored Units: None. They've only got about 40 trucks, and much of their transport depends on pack animals.

Air Force: None, but will be supported by the Thailand Air Force.

Potential Reinforcements: They are allies with the right-wing Laotians, but neither side trusts the other. The only other help in the area comes from the Thai Army. There are also two more Nationalist Chinese armies in the north of Burma who could smuggle in a few more men.

Area Insurgents: 2,000 Ata Lao



THE SHAN LIBERATION ARMY

The Shan are a large minority in Burma. They speak a dialect of the Thai language and are lowland rice growers. Traditionally, they believe in a Shan Independent State and are at constant war with the Burmese Government. They operate a large military coalition called the Shan National Army (SNA). The 4th Division of that army, suffering a major defeat at the hands of the combined People's Chinese and Burmese Armies, was forced to retreat into Laos.

Currently they control the *Houa Khong Province*, one of the richest poppy-growing areas in the world. Their main income comes from heroin traffic.

Current Ruler: General Fuan Chan-She

Objectives: To liberate the Shan Province of Burma.

Military Capacity:

Militia: 3,500 non-uniformed soldiers armed with M-16 Assault

Rifles and with excellent radio communications.

Irregulars: 2,000 highly paid and adequately trained tribal mercenaries.

Potential Reinforcements: The 1st and 3rd Divisions of the SNA are scattered over eastern Burma. Given three months warning the Shan presence in Laos could triple in size. They also receive some support from the Thai government.

Area Insurgents: 2,000 Ata Lao Guerrillas control major sections of the province.

THE FRENCH LAOTIAN MISSION

"If the Laotian Government considers it necessary, the French Government may as an exception leave in Laos for a limited period of time a precisely limited number of French military instructors for the purpose of training the armed forces of Laos."

—Declaration on the Neutrality of Laos

This is the final remnant of the French Colonial Army that once controlled all of Southeast Asia. The French Army officers were intended to act as advisors for the Laotian Army. Their attempts to clean up the widespread corruption led to their being transferred and ignored.

Eventually, they all ended up in *Sithanione Province*. Together with several hundred French veterans, they've formed a small, but highly professional, regional army. This is technically one of the official units of the Royal Lao Army, in practice it is used strictly for regional defense.

There are now quite a few French nationals living in the province, including quite a few with Vietnamese or other Indo-Chinese wives. They are determined to defend the territory, realizing that, if it falls to the communists, they may have to return to France.

Current Ruler: Provincial Governor Andre LaPorte

Objectives: To protect lives and property in their area. As a secondary mission, they will try to inflict damage on any communist units operating in their area.

Military Capacity:

French Army Officers: 93 in uniform.

Retired French Veterans: 310 form the "Bataillon Speciale 1"

Laotian Nationals: 1200 in French Uniforms.

Irregulars: 3500 Tribal Lao-Theung led by the Veterans.

Armored Units: (4) AMX-13 Light Tanks, (60) 2.5 ton trucks.

Artillery: (15) 155mm Model 50 Howitzers.

Air Force: (12) Light Observation Aircraft.

Potential Reinforcements: If threatened, they will probably call for help from Thailand, the right-wing Laotian army, or the U.S.

Area Insurgents: Under 1,000 Ata Lao Guerrillas.

NOTES: Infantry weapons for the French forces include MAT-49 Sub Machineguns, 7.62mm FR-F1 Sniping Rifles and AA52 Machineguns.

7.62mm FR-F1 Sniping Rifle

Damage: 4D10+10

Weight: 5.2kg

Length: 1138mm

Magazine: 10 rounds

ROF: 10 rpm

MER: 800 meters

Mercenary Price: \$120

Notes: An old, but reliable, French bolt-action rifle. Still available in large quantities.

7.62mm AA52 General Purpose Machinegun

Damage: 4D10+10

Weight: 9.15kg

Length: 1145mm

Magazine: Belt-Feed

ROF: 700 rpm

MER: 800 meters

Mercenary Price: \$1,300

Notes: Comes with bipod attached to barrel or with convenient rotary tripod. Common in French services.

AMX-13 Light Tank

Combat Weight: 15,000kg

Length: 6.36 meters

Range: 350 kilometers (road)

Speed: 60kmph (road)

Crew: 3

Armament: 90mm Gun with 34 rounds, 7.62mm machinegun with 3600 rounds of ammunition.

Armor: Stops pistol, rifle, machinegun and fragments. 60% chance of survival against anti-tank rockets.

Notes: A popular tank with many third world countries. Relatively reliable and easy to maintain.

FOREIGN AGENCIES AND ADVISORS WORKING IN LAOS

The International Commission for Supervision and Control (ICC)

The ICC has three Commissioners, one each from India, Canada and Poland. Although they have the right to inspect any area of the country, they seldom leave the capital. They all have the power to prohibit the entry of soldiers, advisors, weapons and military equipment.

The Indian Commissioner, Omadme Singe, generally argues for neutrality and wants to prohibit all weapons and soldiers from entering the country. Rodney Carruthers, the Canadian Commissioner, clears all his actions through the U.S. Embassy in Vengala. Poland's Commissioner, Stosh Dublonski, clears all his actions through the consulate of the U.S.S.R. Since each Commissioner has an absolute veto over any ICC actions, almost nothing is ever done.

The Stateside (U.S.) Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)

The CIA operates out of several office buildings in downtown Vengala. From there it coordinates two private airlines, *Air America* and *Continental Service Airlines*, and several service agencies. The *Rural Development and Construction Program* (RDCP) takes charge of captured spies and soldiers, and interrogates them in secret prison camps. *International Service to Agriculture* (ISA) organizes and provides arms to villages for local militia. The *Development Council on Civil Aviation* maintains secret airfields and radar monitoring stations throughout Laos.

The U.S./Stateside Embassy in Laos is basically another arm of the CIA. Ambassador Dwight O'Shay is kept in the dark about most everything and spends his time conducting tours of model farms, military camps and villages for visiting dignitaries.

The Laotian National Security Office (LANASO), is basically a unit of secret police. All the employees are citizens of Laos. It has missions ranging from intelligence gathering to assassination. This organization is one of the most feared in Laos, especially since its agents do not accept bribes.

Resources of the agency include a budget of over \$15 million a year, 800 administrative personnel and 600 trained operatives. Their fleet of aircraft includes 24 UH-1H Hueys (slicks only), 12 HH-3E "Jolly Green Giants," 48 AC-47 Skytrains (cargo configuration),

and 75 twin-engine civilian aircraft.

Executive Officer: Assistant Undersecretary Bradley Smith.

Objectives: To establish a strong, anti-communist government in Laos, to infiltrate North Vietnamese forces, and to assist the U.S. forces in Southern 'Nam.

The Heroin Connection — Yuan Chinese Middlemen

Often masquerading as legitimate businessmen, the Yuan operate an information and transportation network throughout Burma, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam. They are primarily interested in buying raw opium and shipping it to their refineries in Hong Kong.

The **Security National Bank of Laos and Cambodia** is owned and operated by the Yuan. In addition to using it for a depository for drug money and gold, it also operates as a legitimate bank. Bribes to Laotian officials are often disguised as "low interest loans" or "deposit bonuses" in the Security Bank.

Current Ruler: Wu Chan Lee

Objective: Profit

Military Capacity:

Mercenary Army: 1,200 experienced soldiers, mostly highland tribesmen, armed with M-16s, pistols and sub machineguns, are organized into small, bodyguard units of 20 men each. They are responsible for safeguarding the heroin, cash and gold shipments, and are well paid for their trouble.

The Stateside (U.S.) Air Force

Many of the bombs hitting Northern Vietnam originate in Thailand. All these flights pass over Laos. The North Vietnamese Army therefore bases many of their anti-aircraft radar units and weapons inside of Laos.

The Air Force will occasionally send in commando raids against Ata Lao or NVA positions inside of Laos. Further extensive bombing of supply lines and strongholds inside of Laos are expected.

Air Force planes and men in Thailand are virtually unlimited. Every kind of U.S. bomber, fighter and transport aircraft are in good supply.

Current Ruler: General Scott Reed

Objectives: Inflict strategic damage on People's 'Nam and eliminate any anti-aircraft threats in Laos.

Agency for Development Evaluation (ADE)

This organization is sponsored by the Stateside Pentagon's Southeast Asia Overview Committee (USSAOC) and by the Department of Agriculture's Committee on International Productivity. See the *Player Characters in Laos* section for more details.

Ambassadorial Row

Ambassadors, military advisors, media representatives and businessmen from dozens of other countries are also present in Vengala. Military attaches (allowed for by international agreement) from the 14 members of the International Commission, plus West Germany, East Germany, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Taiwan, Mexico, and Pakistan are also in the country and may be involved in military operations.

THE OPIUM/HEROIN NETWORK

First, a little lecture about a very pretty flower.

The plants are called poppies. They have beautiful, white or purple flowers.

Every year these plants produce a pod. If you cut the pod in just the right way, a sap will ooze out of it. The sap is called raw opium. From about an acre of these plants, you can get 10 kilograms of *raw opium*.

A kilogram of opium is usually packed into a loaf or brick for

transportation.

The next step in the process is converting opium into morphine base. This is a fairly simple chemical process requiring calcium carbonate and ammonium sulfate. From 10 kilograms of opium gum, you get 1 kilogram of off-white powder.

Turning the morphine base into heroin is much more difficult. It requires three, separate, chemical operations. These are also dangerous, and there is always the risk of poison fumes or an explosion. The resulting white powder is called heroin, or, more technically, *#4 Heroin*.

The highlands of *Laos, Burma, Thailand and Cambodia* are perfect for growing opium. The tribes, especially the *Meo*, have been growing poppies for centuries. Not just for the drug, which they use for medicine, but for many other things. The oil is used for cooking, the leaves and seeds are eaten, the pods are fed to animals, and the stalks are used for weaving and building.

Rice is the alternative to opium, and rice is much more useful. But poppies, or more specifically, opium, is just about the only thing that the people in these remote areas can sell for cash.

Opium is big money for the tribesmen. They are paid as little as \$4, or as much as \$40 (Stateside dollars), per kilo of raw opium gum. Which is usually their entire yearly income.

Of course, the opium traders make a little bit more. They usually do the conversion to morphine base before they sell it. Then it brings anywhere from \$500 to \$1,000 per kilogram.

After that, it has to be converted to heroin. The conversion was traditionally done in *Marseilles*, France or in *Hong Kong*. Currently, processing laboratories in *Laos* produce most of the heroin.

Sold to a dealer in Vengala, one kilogram of pure *#4* heroin brings from \$2,000 to \$8,000. Double that in *Hong Kong*. And \$18,000 in New York City.

The final vendor, or "pusher", cuts or *dilutes* the pure heroin to about 4% heroin and 86% harmless chemicals. It's also packaged for street sale in small, plastic bags. In this form, the one kilogram of heroin will sell for \$24,000 to \$120,000.

No one knows exactly how large the heroin traffic is. A conservative, very low estimate, is 10 to 12 *tons* of heroin is imported into Stateside yearly. That works out to somewhere between \$24,000,000 and \$120,000,000 in yearly income.

Now all that money is very attractive.

It's attractive to the *Meo* tribesmen. The few thousand dollars a year that a village makes selling raw opium will buy imported goods like tools, weapons and medicine.

It's attractive to Nationalist Chinese and Shan Armies. They have the arms and the know-how to collect the raw opium out in the highlands of Southeast Asia. The money from heroin is enough to supply them with food, clothing, and, most importantly, modern weapons and ammunition.

It's attractive to the generals of Laos. His salary, at most, is \$851 a year. The traditional way of supplementing his income is with graft, corruption or unfair taxes. The heroin trade doesn't hurt anyone in Laos, and it makes *lots* more money.

It's attractive to the Southern 'Nam generals. They can buy heroin cheap, fly it into Saigon on Stateside Air Force transports, and then sell it to Stateside soldiers for enormous profits.

It's attractive to the international dealers. Their agents in Laos, usually *Yuan Chinese*, make huge sums of money at very little risk.

There's only one little problem with all this.

Heroin Kills!

First, thousands of people die every year from overdoses. Heroin isn't administered by specialists. Every time somebody takes the drug they run the risk of overdose. Dead are 14 year old kids trying it for the first time, and addicts who have been taking it for years.

Second, tens of thousands of people get sick. Heroin addicts get diseases from dirty needles, from self-abuse, and from weakening their bodies. They use up thousands of hospital beds and cost millions in public health dollars. And they usually die of their illnesses.

Third, hundreds of thousands of people turn to crime to support their heroin addictions. All that money comes from somewhere. And very few heroin addicts can make \$1,000 a week, or more, to support their habits.

The result is millions of crimes. Theft, robbery, armed robbery, murder, or whatever it takes for the addict to get his next fix.

The Meo farmers and tribesmen know nothing about the human lives lost in the heroin traffic. For them, the opium gum is good for easing the pain of a wound or calming an upset stomach.

Likewise the Shan and Nationalist Chinese are pretty ignorant about why the crazy westerners spend so much money on something that a dumb highland farmer can grow. For them, the trade is a matter of necessity.

Everybody else in the drug trade is going in with their eyes wide open. Opium dens and heroin addicts are common sights in any Southeast Asian city. In the east, the drugs may be cheap, but the cost in human lives and suffering is just as high.

HEROIN ORGANIZATIONS IN LAOS

AIR AMERICA

Air America is an airline operated by the CIA. In addition to shipping weapons, supplies and passengers, they also ship raw opium from the highland villages to buyers in Luang Prabang, Vengala, Xieng Khomang, Pakse, and other locations in Thailand and Southern 'Nam. They don't do this for profit, but just to keep their Meo Mercenary Army from revolting.

Transportation Resources: At least 600 aircraft, ranging from C-47s down to small, civilian aircraft, are based in Southeast Asia. They also have 24 UH-1H Hueys.

Political Connections: In exchange for transportation services, the CIA demands information from the Yuan, Shan and Nationalist Chinese. The CIA is in the unique situation of owing nothing to anybody, but making sure that everyone owes them a few 'favors.'

Average Annual Traffic: 8 tons. About 90% raw opium and 10% morphine base. Transporting #4 heroin is done only to secure special favors or information.

YUAN CHINESE

The Yuan Chinese, once the undisputed kings of the Southeast Asian drug network, have suffered with the rise of the Laotian generals. They still have enormous resources, but they don't have any government-sanctioned pipelines. They must either pay substantial bribes or work out clever schemes to get their product out of the country and to their bosses in Bangkok and Hong Kong.

Currently, they are shipping "*Cardamon Spices*" from Laos to Hong Kong. *This is, usually, really #4 heroin packaged in spice sacks.*

Transportation Resources: Mostly riverboats and junks. They ship down the Mekong River to the ocean, and from there to Hong Kong or Singapore.

#4 Heroin Purification Labs: They have 15 modern labs in *Hong Kong* and a new facility in *Bangkok*. Their laboratory in Pakse was seized by the Army.

Political Connections: They have ancient ties with many peoples. The Meo regard the Yuan as the only really trustworthy opium buyers. Several Yuan have places of influence in the Laotian Court and, should a Neutralist Government come into power, they will do very well. Both Shan and Nationalist Chinese hire Yuan brokers to do trading with Meo

and other tribes. The Yuan are unsurpassed at languages, and usually charge from 3% to 10% of the profits for their translating duties.

Average Annual Traffic: Currently, 4 tons yearly in morphine base. Perhaps 1 ton in #4 heroin.

SHAN NATIONALISTS

The Shan are able to range far up into the northwest Burma, and have exclusive trading rights in the Shan territories of eastern Burma. That they are forced to pay "duty" to the Nationalist Chinese upon entering Laos or Thailand is particularly irritating to the Shan. The Shan ship both ways; opium out of Burma and trade goods back in.

Transportation Resources: The Shan travel on foot and use hundreds of donkeys to carry cargo.

#4 Heroin Purification Labs: A lab in southwestern Houa Khong is owned and operated by a Laotian general. The Shan have discussed seizing the facility, but are reluctant to endanger their relationship with the Laotian buyers.

Political Connections: They have good relations with the Laotian Army, the Yuan, and most Tibeto-Berman tribes. The Meo deal with Shan, but do not trust them.

Average Annual Traffic: 11 tons; mostly raw opium.

NATIONALIST CHINESE

Much of the profit for the Nationalist Chinese comes from charging the Shan and the Yuan "duty charges." Their own buying routes are currently restricted to *Laos* and *Thailand*.

Transportation Resources: Mostly foot, horseback, mules, and a few buses and trucks.

#4 heroin Purification Labs: They are experimenting with a laboratory outside of Sayaboury Town. So far, they've got all the equipment, but all they've managed to do is blow up a couple of workers.

Political Connections: Their connections with the Yuan, and other ethnic Chinese peoples, is excellent. They sell to both the Laotian generals and to some officers in Thailand. They have good relations with the Meo, but are distrusted by most other highland people.

Average Annual Traffic: 18 tons of raw opium. They always make the conversion to morphine base before they sell.

LAOTIAN GENERALS

By far, the wealthiest heroin traders are a group of generals in the Geala Party. *General Lei* is **not** one of the heroin traders, but he certainly accepts their "donations".

Transportation Resources: Military, commercial and government aircraft of all kinds, are used for the huge heroin traffic.

#4 Heroin Purification Labs: Production facilities in Xieng Khomang, Vengala, Pakse, and in several rustic locations along the Mekong River. Another lab, in Pathek, is operated independently by General Vuoung.

Political Connections: They lavishly bribe officials in Thailand, Southern 'Nam, Hong Kong, Singapore, and in the Stateside military. They have pushed the Yuan out of the way, and are not the main buyers for morphine base. They buy from CIA-sponsored Meo, Shan and Nationalist Chinese.

Average Annual Traffic: 21 tons annually. Mostly #4 heroin exports.

MISSION DIRECTOR'S SECTION

ADVANCED RECON:

THE MISSION DIRECTOR'S JOB

The idea of advanced role-playing isn't restricted to the players. It's also up to the Mission Director to try pushing back the frontiers a bit; to attempt to do some new and novel things with the role-playing game.

One of those novel things, in a RECON game, is called **Campaign Building**. This involves setting up a long-term series of games (at least six sessions), using the same player characters.

That's one of the main reasons that we've included the new character roll-up section in this book. We need to beef-up the character a bit if we expect him to be around for a few sessions.

ASSIGNING THE CHARACTERS

Characters in a Laos Campaign must play "*incognito*". In other words, they are in Laos under false pretenses because foreign military advisors have been banned by the *Geneva Tripartite Treaty*.

Although the characters are mostly hired for their military skills, they are also expected to take seriously their role as regional advisors.

There's no doubt that the people of Laos need the help. In 1965, there were less than 40 doctors in the whole country, 14 pharmacists, and 650 practical nurses. Educational facilities were also in short supply, and most people live at subsistence levels. They rarely starve, but they don't have much of a life either.

Every advisor group has the following Mission Objectives.

1. Provide Security. Protect the people of the region from terrorists, from communist tax collectors, and from Ata Lao involuntary conscription (forcefully drafting the people to serve as soldiers or porters). Defend the local people against bandits and invading mercenary armies. Act as intermediary between the locals and Laotian government officials.

Early in the campaign, this will be a significant portion of the player character's actions. Until they establish trust and prosperity in the region, they will not be able to count on any help from the locals.

2. Provide Welfare. Improve the lives of the people by raising their level of health care and making sure they don't starve or freeze. Above all, let them know that you are their friends and that you will help and care for everyone, no matter how poor or isolated.

3. Organize Development. Improve the farming and animal raising techniques of the area. Introduce new crops, fertilizer, irrigation techniques, and provide transportation and marketing help so they can sell excess crops. Build roads, bridges and wells. Set up schools, medical clinics, regional marketplaces, and craft industries.

In other words, make their economy healthy enough to produce excess fighting men. Also, make it comfortable enough so that the people will fight to defend it.

4. Organize Militia. The ultimate goal of the advisor is to build a strong military force in the region. At the beginning, that won't be much more than hiring a few guards. *Later* on, when the people are starting to get organized, train, arm and equip village defense forces and fortifications. The best men can then be formed into small reconnaissance units. Eventually, the group should be able to put together large strike units, capable of attacking regular army forces of the enemy.

AGENCY FOR DEVELOPMENT EVALUATION (ADE)

Operated jointly by the *Stateside Department of Agriculture* (USDA) and Major Willard "Yank" Jurris, an officer under the Pentagon's *South-east Asia Overview Committee* (USSAOC). This is the player characters'

employer and chief supplier.

The characters will routinely report to the USDA officials (who are *not* aware of their real mission) and get help, equipment and supplies for assisting and developing their area. They will also, on occasion, get specific assignments for things like vaccine inoculation programs, water purification guidelines, and experiments with new crops or livestock.

Their military assignment officer is Major Yank. He issues the military mission objectives, takes reports, and fulfills the characters' requests for weapons, supplies and equipment.

OPTIONAL - DEVELOPMENTAL OCCUPATIONAL SPECIALTY (DOS)

Each character *can* receive **advisor training**. This can be assigned by the mission director or rolled on the following table.

01-20 Languages. Character is fluent in the main language of the area, and has some training in most of the other languages. Secondary DOS is Education.

21-30 Public Health. Knows about sanitation, food and water safety measures, controlling insects and pests, and can administer a clinic or dispensary. Must have language as the Secondary DOS. **Note:** This is not a substitution for Medic skills. Public Health is *not* medicine and is not used for curing injury or disease.

31-50 Engineering. Knowledge of construction and design techniques for planning large buildings, roads, bridges, dams and major construction projects. Secondary DOS is Language.

51-70 Agriculture. Training in planting, growing and harvesting techniques. Has Secondary DOS in BOTH Construction and Language.

71-80 Animal Husbandry. Knows about breeding, feeding and slaughtering animals. Also has learned a bit of animal medicine. Roll 1D6 to determine animal specialty; 1-Chicken, 2-3 - Pig, 4 - Cow, 5 - Goat, 6 - Equine (horse, donkeys and mules), or 6 large animal (elephants, water buffalo, and oxen). Secondary DOS in BOTH Language and Construction.

81-00 Education. Character can put together a regional education plan, organize parents, and make lesson plans. Can also teach several groups of children (all of different ages), at the same time. Must have Language as the Secondary DOS.

Secondary DOS

Language. Knows how to ask simple questions and make simple greetings in the language of the village. Will naturally get better with time.

Construction. Given a set of plans, the character can execute most building projects. Knows how to use building tools and techniques, and can supervise others.

Education. Can teach basic reading and writing skills to small children. Knows how to get along with kids.

RANDOM DEVELOPMENT MISSION TABLE

(Roll a Twenty-Sided)

Remember that there will always be some local resistance to any project. Although getting the support of all the village elders for a project is difficult, it's easier than having the project boycotted later on. The local shaman should be consulted before selecting or starting any construction sites. It's his job to insure that the local Phi (spirits) are not offended. Incidentally, this "primitive" practice is used for

building the latest skyscrapers in Hong Kong and Tokyo.

This list is arranged in rough priority order. A mission director can simply assign each item in sequence. Another possibility is to let the player characters figure out their own missions and priorities.

1. **Building a Rural Medical Dispensary.** Effectively, this is a tiny hospital complete with operating room, pharmacy, examination rooms, and live-in ward.
2. **Building a School.** Initially, a large hall; later, it can grow to include a residence for teachers, storage rooms, extra classrooms and an open-air auditorium (suitable for plays and movies for the whole community).
3. **Building an Access Road.** When the characters first arrive, the best way into the area is on foot or pack animal. About 200 man-hours are needed to fix up each mile of road, so that a cross-country vehicle, like a jeep, could get into the area.
4. **Digging a Well.** Usually about 200 man-hours of heavy work. Since only a couple of guys can get in the hole at any one time, it takes a week or two.
5. **Constructing a Public Marketplace.** Selecting a central location for a weekly market fair is a natural idea. However, this shouldn't be tried until regional security is fairly tight. Eventually, the marketplace can be built up to include storage areas, a permanent roof, and livestock pens.
6. **Set up Regional Smithy.** There are usually a few blacksmiths in the area, but they work under terrible conditions. The building should be near a running stream so a "draw pipe" can be set up — this can be used instead of manual bellows to pull air through the fire and keep it hot. The department will provide a good anvil and some excellent tools. Most of the local smiths will be skeptical at first, then they'll fall in love with the new equipment.
7. **Building a Truck Road.** Much more difficult than an access road. Involves heavy labor, demolitions, and thousands of man-hours for every mile. This is necessary before the area can really start exporting goods and making money.
8. **Introducing Crop Rotation and Fertilization.** Teaching the farmers advanced ideas. This also allows for year-round growing so that the farmers can be more productive.
9. **Digging an Irrigation System.** For bringing water to the crops, rice paddies and animal troughs.
10. **Mosquito Control Program.** Involves going around and filling in all the mosquito breeding ponds in the area. If everybody pitches in, the project could be done in a week, and, a year later everybody would be amazed at the results.
11. **Delousing Program.** Spraying the villages and the villagers to kill lice, fleas and mites. Mission Directors shouldn't have to assign this particular mission; just keep reminding the characters of their own "colonies."
12. **Vaccination Program.** Can be for smallpox, cholera or typhoid fever.
13. **The Fancy Stuff.** Installing electric generators (at first gas or oil, but, later, connected to a waterwheel), constructing concrete latrines and showers, installing plumbing, bringing in sewing machines, electric lights, refrigeration, and power tools.
14. **Building a combination Dam and Well.** Local streams and rivers can be dammed to create lakes and ponds (good for fisheries and ducks), and for use by mills for processing food and generating electricity.
15. **Reconstructing Villages.** Using the new resources available — electricity, plumbing, lumber, and somewhat better technology — rebuild an entire village.
16. **Building a Bridge.** Anything from a rope bridge to connect villages, to a large, wooden bridge capable of handling truck traffic.

17. **Build a Lumber Mill.** With the plentiful woodlands, there is a natural commodity in timber. A lumber mill is usually set up along a river so that logs can be floated down to the mill, and so the mill can use water power to run the saw blade.

18. **Set up a Cooperative Store.** Build a country store building and sell goods made outside the village, necessities like kerosene, soap, and salt. And luxury goods; like Stateside T-Shirts, candy and transistor radios. Run it on a profit-sharing cooperative basis.

At first the people will shop there because it offers easy credit and low prices. They will be astonished when they are paid the first monthly dividend in cash; from then on, the store will be a booming success.

19. **Build a Communal Livestock Barn.** This will be used for disease control, breeding, trading, and slaughtering.

20. **Provide Entertainment.** For Laotians, movies are like a piece of paradise. They'll travel days, wait for hours, and sit fascinated for just about anything. Bring in a Hollywood spectacular, and they'll go nuts, demanding to see it over and over again. Don't be surprised if even the local Ata Lao and NVA show up to watch. Either they'll sneak in one at a time, or a whole unit, complete with weapons and equipment, will demand front row seats. Player characters should recognize this as a great propaganda opportunity. Give 'em some popcorn and hope that a few (or maybe the whole group) will change sides.

Note: Area development programs, like the one described, really were wildly successful in Laos and Indochina. One group grew from 9 villages to 76 villages in four years, with substantial increases in crops, technology, consumer goods and wealth.

Unfortunately, the government discovered that the villagers had changed from quiet and subservient subjects into demanding and intelligent citizens, who remembered unkept campaign promises and recognized government corruption and incompetence. Basically, the people had changed from passive, accepting and ill-fed, subsistence villagers, into prosperous, pushy farmers. The people recognized that their lives could change, that they were capable of implementing change, and that the American aggressiveness was a positive thing.

Government officials, having visions of whole provinces full of armed peasants demanding changes, quickly withdrew their support from the projects.



PLAYER CHARACTER

LONG-TERM ASSIGNMENT

Characters are recruited in 'Nam or back Stateside. They are told that they will be paid well (about \$1200 a month; a very respectable salary in 1965), and that they will be expected to act as official *civilian advisors*. They are also supposed to maintain a *secret* role as military advisors. While in Laos, they will be "officially" listed as operating in some kind of Stateside, Department of Agriculture, civil servant capacity.

The following example assumes that the player characters have been assigned to the Noi Pot Development Region. However, the first place they get to in Laos is the international airport outside of Vengala . . .

VENGALA

Vengala is the national capital of Laos, its the most populated city (150,000), and the place where most foreigners spend their time. Every government office, foreign embassy, newspaper or media organization, and commercial enterprise in the country is located here. In other words, if you can't find it in Vengala, you can't find it in Laos.

Aside from government officials and bureaucrats, you can also find any kind of illegal, illicit or immoral activity in Vengala. The value of weapons, equipment, and even human lives, are all measured in ounces of gold or stacks of Stateside currency.

It's the city with a wild night life; including nightclubs like "The Spot," "Tiger Al's," and "The White Czar." There are also opium dens, gambling casinos, clubs for soldiers and officers; plus restaurants, theaters and coffee houses. About 10,000 cars, 8,000 motorcycles, and hundreds of trucks, clog the streets at all hours. This is truly a 24 hour town.

At the lowest end of the spectrum is *Hu-Long's Casino*. This is the most notorious dive in town. It occupies every inch of a huge, five-story building. Prostitution, opium dens, gambling of every kind, knife fights staged for money, and the worst smell on the continent. It's rumored that Hu-Long must pay out over \$50,000 in bribes every month, and that there are an average of three dead bodies carried out every morning.

As high-level servants, the player characters are entitled to participate in the heights of society functions. Every time they come to town, they'll be invited to at least one official, Embassy party. These are usually hosted by Stateside, the French, or the Soviets, but can also be in any of the other official embassies.

Embassy parties are noted for excellent food, fine wines and liquors, and fascinating conversation. Characters will occasionally be seated next to their NVA or Ata Lao enemies. Yesterday's mortal enemy becomes tonight's charming dinner companion. Likewise, spies and soldiers from every faction are sociable in Vengala.

Characters will usually have to travel to Vengala at least once every other month. They will make formal reports, accept new missions, and spend up to a week relaxing before going back out in the field.

THE TRIP TO THE NOI POT DISTRICT

The player characters are instructed to report to their office in Vengala at daybreak, about 5:00 AM. After a briefing and assignment, they begin their trek to Noi Pot District.

For the first trip, the characters are taken by truck from Vengala, along *Highway #9*, and east to Paksane. The road is a one-lane gravel track, and bordered by dangerous drop-offs and dense, bamboo forests. Beyond Paksane, the truck turns left onto *Highway #13*, the main Laotian artery. This is a two-lane gravel road that strains the truck's engine as it climbs up into the mountain.

Player characters will be thrilled at the sight of crashed buses, trucks, and cars, that have fallen off the road at one point or another. There are no guardrails; just a few, white-painted rocks to let the driver know where the road ends and a 500 foot drop-off begins.



At Xieng Khounang the truck bears right, leaving Highway #13 and entering eastbound, *Route #6*. This road alternates between dirt, graded rock and mud flats. After travelling 60 miles northeast and 50 miles north, the characters finally arrive at the end of their truck trip.

Sore and dusty from 14 hours of bouncing around, they discover that the worst is yet to come. A Meo guide is waiting with pack mules for the final leg of the trip; a 30 mile, cross-country walk that will take 5 days.

MISSION LAOS: THE NOI POT DISTRICT

Here's a sample of an *Area of Assignment* for your player characters. The Mission Director is free to use this one, or create an original area.

The Noi Pot District is an area about 6 miles in diameter. There are rocky peaks as high as 6,000 feet, and valleys that drop down to less than 2,000 feet in altitude. The wide, Nam Khan River Gorge is only 1,400 feet above sea level. Most of the area is forested ridges and 'V' shaped valleys.

In the region, are 5 "Black" Meo villages, 3 Lao Theung villages, a Lao Tai village in the river gorge, and a, tiny Kha village.

Noi Pot Village

The player characters' base is in the *Noi Pot village*.

Like most villages in the region, Noi Pot is pretty self-sufficient. They grow their own food, make their own tools and clothing, and build their own houses. They produce their own tobacco, betel nut (a mild drug that's usually chewed by older women and men) and beer. The local ironsmiths make most of their metal implements and tools. The only things they must import are weapons, ammunition, salt and

kerosene.

In the village, there are 39 wooden, dirt-floored houses, with each home occupied by a clan of 6 to 36 people. Up until now, the villages' main source of income has been the production of 700 kilograms of opium every year.

Noi Pot's headman is *Vaire Husai*. He is considered a powerful leader and a good war chief. He also controls the other four Meo villages; Kra Ple, Rogei Tam, Suk Nam and Noi Longpot.

Neighboring Villages

Pakou Sat is the main, Lao Theung village. They have no central leader; instead, each village has a sort of council of elders. Phou Long and Pakou At are the other two Lao Theung villages. The Lao Theung build their houses on hillsides, using long stilts to keep them level.

Chim Ban, the Lao Tai village, uses the flat bottom of the river gorge for rice paddies. The Lao Tai are suspicious of the highland tribes, and they can remember the old people talking about the "hill barbarians" and the atrocities they committed.

The Kha village isn't much more than a collection of huts inside a thick, bamboo forest. The people are very nervous around outsiders and will retreat into hiding places in the bamboo, or caves in the hillsides, if threatened.

RECON TABLES

TERRAIN DESCRIPTIONS

01-20 Moist Woodland — "Green" Forest. Usually, in valleys or lower altitudes (below 3,000ft), these forests are exceptionally dense with the tree crowns forming a continuous "roof" over the forest at 85 to 100 feet high. The trees are either broad-leaved evergreens or broad-leaved deciduous. A secondary "roof" is halfway down, at 45 to 60 feet above the ground. This secondary roof is made of creeping vines (up to 200 feet long), orchids, ferns and other lush plants. Between the ground and this secondary layer, the tree trunks are bare of branches. The ground in between the trees is clogged with various small plants. Movement along paths is about 2 miles an hour, and cross-country takes about 3 hours of hard work for every mile covered.

21-30 Dry, "Brown" Forest. These forests are filled with trees that can survive a five month dry season. Found just about everywhere, but especially at the higher latitudes (above 3,000ft). They are usually 45 to 65 feet high, and close enough together so that their crowns touch. The underbrush consists of patches of tall (5ft), coarse grasses, and dense clumps of thorn bushes (sometimes extending for miles). In clear or grassy areas, men can move about 3 miles an hour; movement through thorn bushes requires either cutting (one man can cut through 30ft in an hour), or crawling (about 5 hours per mile and very uncomfortable).

31-35 "Pine" Forest. At mid-latitudes, in the northern part of the country are found pine trees. Found extensively in the areas surrounding the countries, three plateaus. They are pretty much like pine trees in North America, complete with pine needles and pine cones. Movement is fairly easy, and on level ground, a man can do up to 4 miles an hour.

36-45 Bamboo Stands. Found anywhere in the country where fires have destroyed the local woodlands. The bamboo stands are dense with plants, so dense that moving through can only be done at less than a mile an hour. The plants range from 20 to 90 feet tall.

46-60 Grass Savanna. Found on the Bolovens Plateau, the Plain of Jars, the Cammon Plateau, and in lowlands and valleys throughout the country. These areas look like African savanna, with grasses that range from 3 feet to 15 feet high. Movement is usually no more

than a mile an hour in short grass areas, less than a mile every 2 hours in tall grass.

61-65 Barren Rock. In this lush country it's fairly rare to find bare ground. Some areas have soil unsuitable for any plants and, at high altitudes, the rock is completely bare. Although there are no plants to obstruct movement, these areas are usually rugged enough that people spend more time climbing than walking.

66-75 Highland Farms. Areas under cultivation can be anything from rice to vegetables, to fruit trees to poppies. The farms will usually be in level areas, in valleys, or on ridges along the hillsides. Lao Tai prefer to grow rice in mountain valleys. Some ethnic Chinese people build "shelves" or flat rice paddies into the sides of the hills.

76-80 Lowland Jungle/Swamp. Dense, moist wetlands. Travel usually is no more than a mile every 4 hours cross-country and about 1 mile an hour on a path. Quicksand, bogs, mud flats, and monstrous amounts of insects are common.

81-99 Lowland Rice Paddies. Most of the Lao Lum are crowded into the lowlands, and those areas are heavily populated. There are about 60 people in every square mile, and the villages are usually only about 4 miles apart.

100 Urban Area. The only cities are Provincial Capitals and they typically house about 5,000 people.

MISSION DIRECTOR TIP

One of the problems with running an outdoor scenario, especially when most of the players live in cities or suburbs, is communicating descriptions of terrain. Here, for your convenience, is a list of *Terrain Features* as they are officially described in the Stateside military.

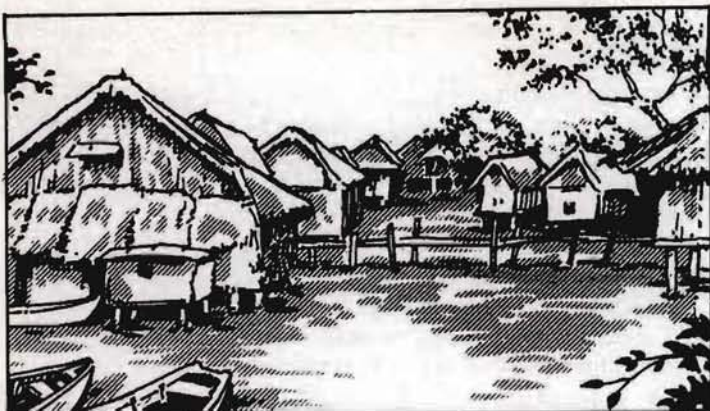
1. **Hill** — A point or area of high ground.
2. **Ridge** — A line of high ground.
3. **Valley** — Level ground bordered by higher ground, big enough to maneuver around in.
4. **Saddle** — A dip or low point along a ridge.
5. **Depression** — A hole or low point surrounded by higher ground.
6. **Draw** — Similar to a valley, but generally sloped with one end higher than the other. Often a V-Shape caused by erosion.
7. **Spur** — A sloping line of higher ground jutting out from a hill or the side of a ridge.
8. **Cliff** — A vertical or near-vertical slope.

ANIMAL ENCOUNTERS

This table is designed for hunters, and people who are deliberately looking for animals. Other than birds and monkeys, most travellers won't see any animals.

01-05	Elephants
06-07	Tiger
08-09	Leopard
10-20	Wild Ox
21-30	Wild Buffalo
31-32	Bear
33-50	Deer
51-70	Hares (Rabbits)
71-90	Monkeys
91-00	Squirrel

Note: Cranes, partridges, peafowl, pheasants, and ducks, are so common that they are easily found (no roll required). Fishing is also easy in the Mekong, and in many streams and ponds. Roll 1D6; 1 – carp, 2 or 3 – catfish, 4 – mullet, 5 – perch and 6 – trout.



VILLAGE EVENTS

01-02 Adoption Ceremony. One of the player characters is invited to become a member of the tribal, mens' club. The character will have to spend the night in the woods with one of the elders memorizing the club's secret chants. Then there's a big ceremony where a buffalo is sacrificed, and there is much food and beer.

03-05 Evil Dreams. Dreams are commonly discussed in the village, and most villagers believe that they are divine messages. When someone has an evil dream, the village shaman will go through several chants and rituals to safeguard the character and the village.

06-07 Phi-Pop. Someone is accused of being a Phi-Pop, one who is possessed by a demon. Everyone is frightened, especially whoever was accused. Supposedly, a Phi-Pop has a Ho (a demon) inside of him or her, and can kill by incantation. Either the person will be killed, exiled or put into seclusion. The only way to "cure" a Phi-Pop is to get an exorcist, a very rare kind of holy woman. This can involve a dangerous trip into enemy territory. It also involves paying the exorcist several hundred dollars.

08-09 Crime Wave. One of the villagers, or someone from a neighboring village, has been caught stealing. They have since discovered a pile of stolen goods hidden under the thief's house. The thief's wife, mother and daughters come to the hut of the player characters and stand around crying and wailing. When asked what's wrong, they will plead for the player characters to intercede. The village elders are wavering between executing, mutilating (cutting off his hands), or exiling the criminal. Either way will mean disaster for the man's family.

10-15 Apprentice G.I. One of the young boys (roll 1D6 + 5 for age) has decided to become an American. The kid will pick out one of the player characters and follow him around everywhere — even out on patrol. If the player character accepts the kid, then he'll become responsible for the child. If they treat the kid badly, then the whole village will decide that the Americans "don't like children" — the moral equivalent of cannibalism and nazism combined.

16-25 Hunting Party. The player characters are invited to participate in a hunting party. The villagers will be in a happy and joking mood if any player characters are going to go along. They'll keep asking the players about their previous hunting experience, and will make a big deal about any successes. When it's finally time to leave, early one morning, the player characters will find out that all the hunting is done with crossbows, no guns allowed. The villagers will boast of any PC who does well with a crossbow, and will endlessly make fun of anybody who doesn't.

26-30 Field Hockey. The villagers invite the player characters to participate in a local game. It's sort of like field hockey, using sticks to hit a rubber ball and moving toward a goal. It's also a lot like brawling (see *The Revised RECON*, pp 25 & 26, "Tavern Combat"). The villagers like to use their sticks (equivalent of Bayonet) a lot; if the ball isn't handy they just hit the nearest member of the other team. They'll try to talk the player characters into playing as a team

against the whole village. If a player points out that the PCs are terribly outnumbered, one of the villagers will innocently say, "but you Americans are very big, one of you same as three of us!"

31-35 Love Story. One of the village girls falls in love with one of the player characters. The girl will start 'accidentally' running into the PC, giving him food or gifts and will clean his house and clothing. The older village women will approach the PC and ask whether or not he is married. If he says he's not married, the entire village will start badgering him, "Why nice boy like you not married?"; "Are American girls ugly?"; and "Don't you like children?" If he says he is married, the village men will start asking all kind of questions about how rich he is, what he owns, and what his relatives do back in the U.S. Eventually, they will suggest that he is rich enough to take a second wife.

A crisis point comes if the player makes any encouraging moves toward the girl. At the point, the girl's relatives will approach the player and suggest marriage. Turning them down insults the whole village.

36-40 Animal Problems. A wounded animal (roll 1D6; 1 or 2 means tiger, 3 means leopard, 4 or 5 means elephant, and 6 means bear) is starting to attack villagers. The player characters are asked to help track down and kill the animal.

41-45 Intruder Alert. A character on night patrol duty notices someone sneaking around the village in the middle of the night. The villagers will deny knowing anything about it. It will keep happening just about every night. If the player characters attempt to trap or shoot the intruder, they'll discover that two of the villagers are having an adulterous affair. If word gets out, the whole village will go through an upheaval as the various families fight about whose "fault" the whole thing is. The husband of the unfaithful wife will have to either kill her or leave, in order to save his reputation.

46-50 Government Inspection. Every so often, somebody from the outside world will drop in. Usually, the player characters are expected to act as tour guides. **Note:** This is often an opportunity for an *Ata Lao* assassination. Roll to determine visitors.

01-20 Members of the International Control Commission come to the village looking for violations of the Geneva treaty. They will question the player characters to make sure they are not military advisors in disguise. They'll also look around for weapons and ammunition.

21-30 Laotian Government Inspectors come around to see how much more money can be squeezed out of the area. They will treat the player characters politely, but will be rude and abusive to the villagers.

31-40 A member of the Stateside Department of State, complete with entourage, will take a tour of the area. Awards and certificates will be presented to the player characters, and the villagers, for things like "Contributing to the prosperity and health of the Laotian democratic ideal."

41-50 Member of the Stateside Congress, on a "fact-finding" mission, will pay a short visit to the village.

51-60 The player character's superiors (the military ones) come to inspect the progress of their mission.

61-80 A newspaper reporter shows up with a native guide. They are investigating reports of (roll 1D6) 1) *Ata Lao* rebellion, 2) Nationalist Chinese Army, 3) Undercover US Military Advisors, 4) Opium Traffic, 5) 'Nam military maneuvers, or 6) quaint ethnic customs.

81-90 A Red Cross team coming into the area to give inoculations against smallpox or other disease. The villagers are going to have to be convinced by the player characters that there are no demons in the needles.

90-99 A Stateside television crew flies in on a helicopter. They take a few pictures and are gone within hours.

100 Royal visit. A member of the Laotian court will make a

ceremonial appearance in the area. Usually, at the site of a Buddhist temple. For the local people, no matter what their ethnic background, this is the equivalent of the Pope and the Queen of England combined. They will eagerly throng to the area for a glimpse of the King. Even armed Ata Lao rebels will attend. Any attempt by the player characters to commit violence during the King's visit will be viewed as barbaric.

51-60 Agency Supply Drop. Either by parachute drop or a landing in a nearby airstrip. Supplies and equipment requested by the characters shows up. About 25% of the time, the shipment turns out to be dead wrong, usually containing something in either ridiculous quantities (a small, Meo village once received over 5,000 Army sweaters) or inappropriate (Snowshoes? Typewriters? Caviar?).

61-70 Medical Problem. Since the group's medic is the closest thing to a doctor in the village, he'll be faced with a lot of problems. Of course, after any encounter with the enemy, he'll have his hands full with those wounded.

01-10 Somebody accidentally swallows poison, or is bit by a poisonous snake or insect. Roll on Medic skill.

11-20 Local midwives call in the Medic to help with a difficult birth. Roll on Medic skill.

21-50 A villager suffers a serious accident. It can be broken bone, cut, burn or sprain. Roll on Medic skill.

51-80 Villager contracts serious disease requiring medicine from outside.

81-94 A disease hits most of the villagers. They are suspicious as to why the Americans don't get sick. The Medic will have to call for help and medicine.

95-00 One of the Medic's patients dies unexpectedly. A rumor starts up that the Medic is not really skilled, only "lucky" and people stop showing up for treatment.

71-80 Informant. An informant from a nearby area will report on local, communist movements. Roll on Communist Traffic Table.

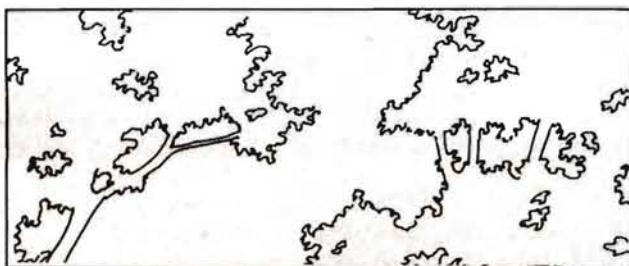
81-90 Enemy Attack. Players receive word from their scouts that enemy forces are in the area. Roll on Communist Encounter Table.

91-92 Attack on Player Character(s). Sooner or later, if the group is successful in their mission, somebody is going to decide that they are too much trouble. The order then goes out to kill the character or characters causing the problems. Usually, the character(s) finds out through local informants, but it's a lot more fun to have the character find an Ata Lao "Wanted Poster" with his name and picture on it. Roll to see who comes gunning for the character(s). *See the Table for Wanted Characters.*

93-97 Revolutionary Talk. One of the local ethnic groups starts talking about creating a "new nation". Although it is sometimes started by Ata Lao, it could just as easily be a genuine desire for self-government. Player characters are in a tricky situation since they will be asked their opinion.

98-99 Revolution. One of the ethnic groups suddenly revolts. They attack all the local Lao Lum officials and talk about establishing a new country. Player characters must either talk them out of it or end up fighting when the Laotian Army comes in to put down the rebellion.

100 Village Disasters. Roll on Village Disasters Table.



VILLAGE DISASTERS

01-05 Search and Destroy. A unit of the Laotian Army decides that the village is a hiding place for Ata Lao. They move in, shoot anybody who gets in their way, arrest anyone suspicious, and set fire to the village. The characters will return to find only about a quarter of the people remaining. The rest are dead, taken away, or have fled to live with relatives in other villages.

The ones arrested will turn out to be draft-age males, any obvious male leader, and the village's prettiest girls. If the player characters manage to recover the prisoners, they'll be able to get back into the good graces of the villagers. The village will never again trust any Lao Lum or any government run by them.

06-15 Tactical Bombing. The village was hit by artillery or aircraft fire. About a third of the people are dead and half the buildings are destroyed. The villagers will demand to know why their "friends" have done this to them. Even with massive aid and reconstruction help, they will never completely trust the player characters again.

16-25 The Local Draft Board Visits. A unit of government troops arrived and drafted all the males who looked to be over 14 and under 40. Player character assistance will be welcomed, but the village will be paralyzed. If the characters can return the draftees (very difficult — requires major bribery) then they may recover the villagers' trust. Formerly drafted males will develop a real hatred for the Laotian government and their army.

26-40 Relocation. The player characters will return to discover the village deserted. Further investigation will reveal that the entire population has been "relocated". In other words, the people are now in a lowland *concentration camp* in the south. If found, about half the people will be dead or dying of disease from the unfamiliar climate and terrible living conditions. This was done just before an area was scheduled to receive strategic bombing.

41-45 Army Invasion. A large unit of any of the major armies moves through the village. The entire village is searched for weapons, ammunition, and "spies". All weapons and ammunition are seized, and anyone suspicious is arrested. People are expected to temporarily house the officers and feed the soldiers. Anyone who refuses to cooperate is shot.

46-80 Strategic Bombing. The entire village is smashed and cratered by aerial bombardment. This bombing extends over a wide area, and is intended to stop all movement of the communist 'Nameese in the area. Only about 20% of the people are still alive, and they are living a miserable existence in the woods and in caves.

81-85 Multiple Tax Collections. Tax collection in remote areas is barbaric. The officials show up with troops, inspect the village, and charge some percentage of its value (from 5% to 50%). Payment is to be made immediately, either in cash or whatever goods are laying around. Since tax collections are often not reported, they are occasionally collected more than once. To village people this is outrageous; pure theft! Villagers will be angry and resentful, and will refuse to do anything to help the government until they are compensated somehow.

86-95 Government Crop License. Regional officials occasionally run out of money. A handy way of getting more is by selling licenses to farm, fish, hunt, make clothing or whatever else might be important. Anyone caught without a license is fined, drafted, or imprisoned.

96-00 Government Secret Police Persecution. Geala Party secret police decide that the village people know something about, or are cooperating with, the enemy. They "interrogate" (torture) several of the village elders. Anyone who refuses to cooperate is arrested, and at least one person is killed as an "example."

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

The following are the encounters a group is likely to have as they patrol the rugged highlands of Laos.

01-06 Booby Trap Contact. Although fairly rare, occasionally a visiting Viet Cong would leave a "calling card" for the Americans in the area. Roll for specifics.

- 01-25 Crossbow Type
- 26-45 Hand Grenade with Trip Wire.
- 46-60 Antipersonnel Mine
- 61-75 Drop Fall
- 76-90 Rock Slide
- 91-00 Spring Trap — usually a branch or small tree bent backwards, and studded with spikes or razor blades. Upon release it would "spring" back and nail anyone standing in the way.

07-13 Village. The Mission Director can also roll on the *Village Events Table* to see what's happening in the village as the characters approach. At least one person in each village speaks French.

- 01-26 Lao Tai Village — In a deep valley there is a settlement of 10 to 20 houses on stilts, surrounded by rice paddies. At least 6 armed men will appear to challenge the group.
- 27-50 Lao Theung Village. Built in the forest or on a hillside, and all the buildings are on stilts. Crops are mixed, and there will be pigs, cows and chickens wandering about freely. The villagers will be quite friendly.
- 51-55 Kha Village — Hidden in the forest are several buildings. The people will immediately run away and hide. They are convinced that outsiders will only capture them and force them to become slaves.
- 56-75 Meo Village — Usually a prosperous village with 20 to 40 low buildings. The headman will personally greet any armed parties who approach. He'll be backed up by at least a dozen other armed villagers. The headman will insist on feeding and sheltering the group, and will be offended if they do not accept a drink.
- 76-90 Yao Village — As soon as it becomes obvious that the group are is threatening, many of the villagers will come out with trade goods. They love to trade and are very interested in getting cash of any kind, especially silver. Nothing is free; even information from small children must be paid for.
- 91-95 Unknown Culture Village — Sooner or later, the group is going to find totally unfamiliar people. They will look pretty much like Lao Theung or Yao, but their language will be completely incomprehensible. Most of these people are friendly and hospitable.
- 96-00 Disaster Torn Village — Roll on the *Village Disaster Table* to see what has happened, and then again on this table to find out what kind of village.

14-19 Civilians

- 01-20 Hunting Party. From 3 to 18 (roll 3D6) local villagers looking for meat. They will be armed with crossbows, bolt-action rifles and a couple of pistols.
- 21-30 Smugglers. Illegal smuggling is universal in Laos. It is not necessarily international. Very often the smuggler is just trying to avoid a corrupt, local, government official. Since the government charges such high tariffs, just about everybody smuggles at one time or another. Gold, opium and consumer goods are the most popular items. Roll 2D6 for number of mules; there will be half that many armed (semi-automatic rifles) men.
- 31-50 Farmers. A group of farmers travelling to or from the local government center. They are generally friendly, but cautious. About a third are armed with rifles.
- 51-65 Phi Ritualists. Holy days, or special ceremonies, will bring dozens of people out into the woods. They will usually

gather around a particularly impressive tree or rock. Roll percentile and multiply by two for total numbers.

66-75 Buddhist Monks. Carrying only their begging bowls and a small bag of essentials, and dressed in a one-piece robe. They are usually on a pilgrimage to a holy place. They will avoid talking to armed men, but will readily speak to members of the group who approach unarmed.

76-80 Christian Missionaries. Either French Catholic or American Protestant, they will usually be accompanied by from 2 to 12 Lao Tai.

81-00 Merchants. From 1 to 6 travelling salesmen. They are ethnic Chinese, usually Yuan, and travel with two mules per man. The mules are laden down with cloth, clothing, pans, lanterns, salt, and other items of interest to villagers.

20-24 Animal Contact

- 01-75 Flock of Birds
- 76-90 Monkeys
- 91-99 Roll on *Animal Encounters Table*
- 100 Animal attack (roll on *Animal Encounters Table* — even rabbits and squirrels can be dangerous if handled in the wrong way. . .).

25-30 Aircraft Overhead

- 01-05 Helicopters. A fairly rare occurrence. Most of highland Laos is perfect for ambushing helicopters. When the chopper lands in a valley, the Ata Lao can shoot down and across from the ridges.
- 06-75 Single engine, small plane. Usually an Air America supply flight.
- 76-85 Twin engine, small plane. Larger Air America transportation.
- 86-90 Military transport. Usually used only for landing troops (Royal Laos Army), dropping paratroops, or evacuating refugees from an area. A sign of trouble of some kind.
- 91-95 Jet Fighter-Bomber. Could be on low flying, troop support missions, or sent to attack NVA Anti-Aircraft emplacements.
- 96-00 Strategic Bomber. B-52 Stratofortress, flying at high altitude, on its way to attack People's 'Nam.

31-40 Military Units. Although not necessarily hostile, these groups could be dangerous. Player characters who are greatly outnumbered run a small risk of being attacked, and a much larger risk of being intimidated and threatened.

- 01-10 Shan National Army. Roll percentile for numbers.
- 11-20 Chinese Nationalist Army. Roll percentile for numbers.
- 21-25 Royal Neutralist. This unit is trying to avoid contact with either the Royal Laotian Army or the Ata Lao. They operate from secret bases and will generally move away from any armed forces. Roll 2D10 for numbers.
- 26-40 Armed Irregulars. Usually a tribe of Meo, but possibly another ethnic group. They are CIA-backed and supplied, and usually carrying M-16s, M-79s and M-60s. They are usually friendly, but may attempt to get a "donation" for the "anti-communist fund" from smaller units.
- 41-00 Royal Laos Army Regulars. This is a unit of government troops on patrol. If they greatly outnumber the player character group, then they will attempt to "detain and search" by claiming they are looking for contraband. Their officer will hint that units moving through the area should pay a "toll".

41-50 Waterway. One of the frequent bodies of water in Laos.

- 01-20 Natural Spring. Water coming directly out of the ground. 95% chance of being pure, excellent, drinking water. Otherwise, contaminated by below ground minerals and rarely (1%) poisonous.
- 21-40 Stream. Roll 5D6 for width in inches.
- 41-50 Small River. Roll 3D6 for width in feet.
- 51-55 Large River. Roll 2D6 and multiply by 10 for width in

feet. Group may have to swim, or travel up or down stream to find a crossing.

56-59 Waterfall. Beautiful sight of water falling over a cliff. Generally, a small river.

60-80 Pond. A body of water no more than 50 feet in diameter (roll 5D10).

81-90 Swamp. Some swamps fill entire valleys. Such areas are difficult to travel through and filled with insects.

91-00 Lake. Somewhere along a small or large river. Ranging from 50 feet to a mile in length. Width, from where the river enters to where it leaves, is about a fifth of the length.

51-60 **Change of Terrain.** Roll on Terrain Description Table.

61-70 **Roll on Communist Encounter Table.**

71-80 **Roll on Communist Traffic Table.**

81-00 **No Encounters.**

COMMUNIST ENCOUNTER TABLE

These are combat forces who are prepared for conflict. They are often reconnaissance units or strike forces. Unless they are at a great disadvantage, they will always engage the player characters.

01-10 Sniper. An Ata Lao acting as a lone guerrilla. He will select a good ambush point and open fire on the characters. There's a 10% chance that a claymore has been set up around the characters. There is also a 50/50 chance that the sniper set up some kind of explosive or booby trap to cover his escape.

11-15 Ata Lao Ambush. A six-man team of Ata Lao Guerrillas. They have dug in, set up a good field of fire for a machinegun, and (15% chance) set up claymores.

16-20 Ata Lao Mortar Attack. From 1 to 3, 80mm Mortars have been set up and are ready to fire. At least 6 men, armed with Sniper Rifles, are in good watch/fire positions.

21-30 Ata Lao Strike Force. 40 Ata Lao and 2 NVA officers are moving toward a local village. They intend on doing interrogation, assassinating the village elders, and, if the village is uncooperative, on burning it down.

31-40 Ata Lao Tax Collection Unit. 4 Party officials and 12 AK-47 armed guards are intent on collecting "taxes" from villages in the area.

41-50 Ata Lao Army Column. From 600 to 3600 (roll 6D6 and multiply by 100) Ata Lao soldiers are moving toward a major battle with Geala Army forces. They will engage with anyone who tries to block their path.

51-70 "Red" Meo Ambush. From 3 to 36 (roll 3D6) Meo are waiting for victims to enter a particularly vulnerable mountain pass. They are all armed with AK-47s.

71-85 "Red" Meo Strike Force. A 16 man force armed with AK-47s and a few grenades.

86-90 "Red" Meo Army Column. From 200 to 1200 (roll 2D6 and multiply by 100) Meo involved in a major assault.

91-95 Ata Lao Armored Unit. A Stateside, M-60, Main Battle Tank; 3 M-113 Personnel Carriers and 150 supporting Ata Lao Infantry. These units were captured in earlier engagements and are used with great effectiveness.

96-00 NVA Strike Unit. 36, People's 'Nam, elite soldiers; 4 Snipers with SVD Rifles, 22 Riflemen with AK-47s, 1 officer armed with a 7.62mm Pistol, 2 60mm Mortar teams, and 1 Heavy Machinegun Team. They will be spread out, with forward and outlying scouts.

COMMUNIST TRAFFIC TABLE

The communist traffic along the 'Nam border is mostly involved in transportation. Although armed, they are not in the best position to get into a fight.

01-05 Lone Pedestrian. A solitary man or woman, separated from a larger group, carrying about 40 pounds of rice. Unarmed.

06-10 Medical Relief Unit. From 2 to 12 medical doctors and nurses. They are carrying heavy loads of medicines, bandages and surgical equipment. Accompanying them are 4 NVA soldiers armed with AK-47s.

11-15 Tax Collectors. Two tax collectors with metal boxes on their backs. They are returning to the north, and are escorted by 8 NVA soldiers armed with AK-47s.

16-20 Prisoners of War (POWs). A unit of 8 guards and one officer are escorting prisoners to the north. Each guard is armed with a MAT-49, 9mm Sub-Machinegun, and the officer is carrying a 9mm Pistol. Roll below to determine type of POWs.

01-30 One or Two American Pilot(s).

31-40 From 1 to 3 Special Forces Soldiers.

41-80 Roll 3D6 to determine number of ARVN POWs.

81-00 Stateside Army POW.

21-30 Porters. Roll percentile and add 20 to determine the number of porters. About a quarter of them will be VC or NVA armed with AK-47s. Except for two forward scouts, everybody will be burdened with large packs of rice and supplies (at least 40 pounds per person).

31-40 Viet Cong Political Unit. From 4 to 24 (roll 4D6) Viet Cong officers. About half will be carrying 9mm Pistols, the rest will have MAT-49 Sub-Machineguns.

41-50 North Vietnamese Army Regulars. A full unit of 72 NVA troops. They will be distributed in fighting teams, with forward scouts, small rifle teams, and three-man heavy weapon teams. Weapons include AK-47s, Dragunov SVD 7.62mm Rifles (with scopes), RPK 7.62mm Machineguns, RPG-7 Antitank Launchers, and hand grenades. There will be 3 Heavy Machinegun teams and (8), 82mm, Type 53 Mortar teams.

51-60 Conscripts. From 6 to 36 (roll 3D6) conscript prisoners are being marched up from the south. Guarding them are 4 Viet Cong armed with MAT-49 Sub-Machineguns.

61-65 Heavy Weapon Teams. From 4 to 24 (roll 4D6) three-man mortar teams. Each team is carrying a disassembled, Type 53, 82mm Mortar. There are 6 forward scouts carrying Sniper Rifles and AK-47s. Along the sides of the column are another 18 soldiers armed with AK-47s.

66-70 Bicycles. A column of from 3 to 18 (roll 3D6) Viet Cong pushing heavily laden bicycles. One out of three has an AK-47.

71-85 Road Building Crew. A unit of 20 to 120 (roll 2D6 and multiply by 10) Ata Lao and People's 'Nam workers, and soldiers. They will clear brush, dig and level road surfaces, build bridges, and do whatever is necessary to make the area passable for supply trucks. They always have at least 6 scouts (usually, "Red" Meo armed with AK-47s), ranging far out into the surrounding area. About half the workers have weapons nearby, usually, AK-47s and semi-automatic rifles.

86-90 Surveyor Team. Using surveyor's equipment, a team of 5 men are carefully examining the area, probably judging what needs to be done to fix the road. They are all armed with SVD, 7.62mm, Sniper Rifles.

91-99 Trucks. A convoy of from 2 to 12 (roll 2D6) supply trucks. At night, they drive without headlights and keep about 100ft apart from one another. Each truck contains a driver, and a guard armed with an AK-47.

100 Tanks. One or two, PT-79, Amphibious Tanks with full crews, and an extra 1 to 6 (roll 1D6) NVA riding on top. There is a 10% chance that the tanks are Soviet T-55s.



WANTED CHARACTERS TABLE

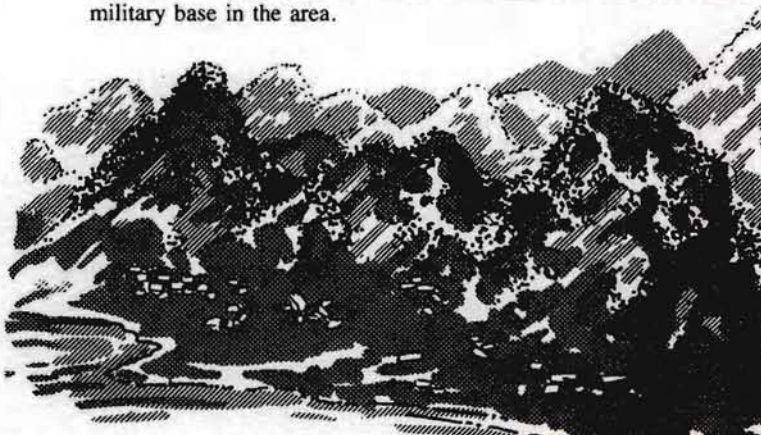
- 01-20 Lone Assassin.** A sniper with an SVD Rifle will station himself in a good ambush location and wait; for weeks if necessary.
- 21-40 Assassination Team.** A team of 1D6+2 Ata Lao infiltrate into the area. They will attempt to sneak into the camp at night. They are all armed with AK-47s.
- 41-50 NVA Commando Team.** A team of 3D6 will infiltrate into the area and try to set up an ambush. Armed with AK-47s, Sniper Rifles and Machineguns.
- 51-75 Local, Mercenary, Bounty Hunters.** 3D10 Meo and Shan mercenaries. They are tough veterans, armed with an assortment of assault rifles and medium machineguns. They will openly confront the targeted player character and ask how much he will pay for them NOT to kill him. If they are offered at least 10% of the bounty, they will go away happy. They will only kill the character if he is unpleasant.
- 76-85 Small Reward** (roll percentile and multiply times 10) in Kip (Lao-tian currency). Everybody makes jokes about how valuable the character has become.
- 86-00 Large reward** for the character in Stateside dollars or gold (roll percentile and multiply times 10). This is a serious emergency, since quite a few mercenary groups and villagers value money more than friendship.

RANDOM MILITARY MISSION TABLE (Roll a Twenty-Sided)

Here are a few of the possible military missions.

- 1. Observation of Local Unit Movement.** This means finding a hiding place with a good view of a main trail or road. Simply count the number of Ata Lao, NVA, and other troops who pass by.
- 2. Locate Supply Depot.** Try following Ata Lao tracks through the woods. Hopefully, the tracks will indicate where they are storing ammunition and supplies.
- 3. Neutralize Village Chief.** Once a village chief has been identified as an Ata Lao collaborator, he needs to be eliminated. This means either kill him, capture him and send him to the government, or somehow intimidating him into changing sides.
- 4. Village Defense.** A company-sized, Ata Lao force has been spotted moving toward a friendly village. Move into the village, dig in, and repulse the Ata Lao attack.
- 5. Ambush.** Along a main Ata Lao or NVA trail, set up an ambush using claymores and machineguns.

- 6. Demolition.** Sneak into Ata Lao territory, locate a strategic building (ammunition dump, administration building, motor pool), and blow it up.
- 7. Road Destruction.** Once again, the NVA has trucks running along their supply route. Move into the communist controlled area and disable the road.
- 8. Bodyguard.** The Ata Lao have announced their intention to assassinate one of the village elders in a remote part of the players' development zone. Players must protect the old man and try to eliminate the assassins.
- 9. Knocking out Ata Lao resources.** The Ata Lao have just finished collecting the rice tax from nearby farmers. Locate their supply dump and liberate or destroy the rice.
- 10. Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol.** Player characters are sent out on a two month patrol to investigate the extreme northeastern areas of Laos.
- 11. Organizing and Training Local Militia.** A village in Ata Lao territory has requested help in setting up a rebellion. Player characters must infiltrate with 100 assault rifles, 10,000 rounds of ammunition, and various other supplies. Once at the village, they will train and equip a militia force, then lead them against the local, Ata Lao headquarters.
- 12. Constructing Village Defenses.** Using trenches, barbed wire, and guard towers, construct a solid fortification for the village closest to Ata Lao territory.
- 13. Set up booby traps or mines along NVA trails.**
- 14. Rescue Air America Unit.** An Air America plane landed at a nearby airfield. Unfortunately, it has already been taken over by Ata Lao. CIA agents, and the pilot, are now pinned down in a valley and are on the radio calling for help.
- 15. Raid Prison Camp/Detention Area.** A camp containing captured or drafted local tribesmen has been spotted in Ata Lao territory. Infiltrate, and liberate the prisoners without killing them in the process.
- 16. Set up radio fire-control.** A massive bombing raid is planned for an NVA convoy. Player characters are to infiltrate the area, find a good lookout point, and then radio-guide the planes to the target.
- 17. Knock out NVA Radar or Anti-Aircraft Unit.** The player characters must destroy this emplacement, even though it's guarded by 120 Ata Lao and NVA.
- 18. Destroy NVA Tank.** A Soviet, PT-76, Amphibious Tank has been ripping through the player characters' irregular troops. Destroy the tank, and break up the 50-man infantry unit that is supporting it.
- 19. Infiltrate People's 'Nam.** A major anti-aircraft base, just across the 'Nam border, must be destroyed. Characters must figure out how to get across the barbed wire and patrols on the border, knock out the base, and get back.
- 20. Attack Ata Lao Base.** Requires a major unit of well-trained and armed, regional irregulars. An all-out assault on the Ata Lao's main military base in the area.



ADVENTURES

PROJECT BOOT-STRAP: THE SPICE SCAM

Here's a rarity; a RECON adventure with a little humor thrown in. The characters are given a real, civilian-type mission: get a group of rural, tribal folk to cash in on a new, boom crop — the spice called *Cardamon*. Humorous interludes include discovering that the natives already know everything about the spice, and that the international trade in "Cardamon" is something else altogether.

RECON TEAM MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

Suitable for any level of RECON characters. Groups can be as small as two characters, and need no particular skills or equipment to participate in the mission.

MISSION DIRECTOR NOTES

Ideally, the players' team should already be working as advisors in some remote village. That would allow the Mission Director to simply apply this scenario to the setting and non-player characters that are already in use. Obviously, if the characters are based somewhere other than Noi Pot, the MD should substitute the place name in the briefing below.

MISSION BRIEFING

The player characters are summoned to their regional headquarters and introduced to Archie Waters, one of the Department of Agriculture's top advisors in the region. He gives the following speech:

"Well men. I have some really excellent news! It seems that we've finally discovered a cash crop that will grow well for the local tribesmen, and has an excellent market price. It's a spice called Cardamon, and it grows anywhere the high grasses and bamboo are found.

"We've gathered together everything you'll need to start the villagers working on production of Cardamon. And, by the time you've prepared your first crop, we will have the distribution and payment mechanism worked out.

"We'd like you to go out to the remote village of Noi Pot where a tribe of Lao Theung are living at the level of meager subsistence. Your initial visit should be for about a week, and you should pay a follow-up visit every month or so until harvest time.

"Remember that you are giving these people their first real opportunity for a better life."

Archie will gladly answer any technical questions regarding agricultural methods, growing seasons, soil, fertilizer and the like. In fact, the characters will understand very little of what he's saying. One question that he can answer is about the market price of Cardamon, "Averaging it out, accounting for regional disparities, currency fluctuations and tariff charges; it's something like \$12 a Kilogram."

Characters will be able to check out vehicles, equipment, food and supplies from the district HQ. Weapons and ammunition are available through their usual contacts.

The following equipment will then be distributed to the player characters:

1. Three shipping crates. Each with 320 bricks of commercial grade sulfur, each wrapped in brown paper. The bricks are the size and shape of regular building bricks. Each brick weighs about 2.5 pounds.

The sulfur will burn easily. It can be started with a wood match and gives off only a dim blue flame.

2. 120, bamboo, drying/smoking trays. Each are roughly 3 feet wide and 6 feet long (1 by 2 meters).
3. 10,000 Brochures on Cardamon. They have bright, color photographs of Cardamon plants; Cardamon flowers, Cardamon seed pods, Processed Cardamon, and a fancy diagram of the sulfur smoking process. Each brochure is a three part fold-out on expensive, glossy paper, and written in English, French, Vietnamese and Chinese. It reads:

"*CARDAMON (Elettaria cardamomum Zingiberaceae)*: A spice commonly found in curry, and in a variety of other Indian, Asian and Scandinavian foods. Currently, the value of Cardamon on the Laotian export market has shot up. Two years ago it made up a mere 2% of the country's total exports. Last year, that figure jumped up to 31% of the national exports. The Stateside Department of Agriculture has determined that Cardamon will make a significant contribution to village economies in highland areas of Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam.

"*Growing Conditions*: The plant itself grows like a kind of large grass, with leafy shoots rising up from 5 to 20 feet high. Any soil that produces healthy bamboo or elephant grass will also support Cardamon.

"*Harvesting*: The fruit is harvested from the flower shoots, which are usually only about 3 feet tall (one meter). The first part of the reproductive cycle involves the plant's displaying flowers with green petals, and a bright, white "tongue" shot through with delicate, purple veins. After fertilization, the flowering shoots also produce the green fruit. These are tiny, 3-sided, oval pods. Healthy pods are about .3 inches (8mm) long and each contains 15 to 20 dark, reddish-brown seeds.

"*Processing*: The tiny seeds have to be processed by drying. After the seeds are peeled, they must be placed either in commercial drying tanks, or, in remote areas, placed on dry, bamboo trays in direct sunlight for several days. Care must be taken not to allow the seeds to experience any moisture during processing.

"*Bleaching*: Although not necessary for consumption, Cardamon must be bleached if it is to be acceptable on the international market. The seeds have to be bleached with the fumes of burning sulfur until they turn a creamy, white color. Bleaching is best done outdoors using a makeshift chimney. The fumes of the burning sulfur should be channeled up through the seeds. Bleaching time is about 30 minutes per tray. The same bamboo trays used for drying can also be used for bleaching.

"*Caution*: Sulfur dioxide (sulfur gas) is toxic. Care should be taken to avoid breathing the fumes. The odor is strong and suffocating. Human exposure causes irritation to eyes and respiratory tract. Treat with fresh air, and wash eyes with water. If symptoms persist after 2 hours, then consult a physician.

"*Packaging*: Trays should be ventilated for at least three days before packaging to eliminate any traces of sulfur smell. Usual commercial packaging is in 1 Kilogram bags — bulk, and small paper envelopes — retail."

4. 4,000 Packets of "Cardamon Seeds." They have a bright, color picture of the Cardamon plant on the front, and planting instructions

on the back (in English, French, Vietnamese and Chinese), "Plant in shaded area suitable for bamboo, mountain rice or tall grass. Seeds should be placed no deeper than one finger joint. Water lightly, every other day for the first two weeks. Once shoots have appeared, water once a day until the ground is well moistened."

5. 200, small, white, cloth bags. All are stamped, "1 Kilogram - Cardamon, product of the Kingdom of Laos."



ENCOUNTERS

After the briefing, the characters should go through the following steps:

Encounter with the Villagers

As soon as the player characters return to the village with the equipment, they'll draw a crowd.

Initially, the villagers will be fascinated by any presentation made by the player characters. Remember, that in a world without television, every sort of presentation is a form of theatre. The villagers will be very appreciative and attentive. Even the children will watch with wide open eyes.

When the characters make any kind of reference to making money, they will get a lot of applause and approval from the crowd. In fact, the people will get more and more enthusiastic. Until, that is, they actually get to examine the picture of the Cardamon. Then read:

"You see that Aba, the oldest woman in the village, is behaving really strangely. She starts hacking, spitting and coughing loudly. The other villagers try to quiet her down, but she ignores them. One of the very small children goes up to her and whispers fiercely. Aba takes the child by the hand and walks over to an overgrown patch of grass. She roots around in it for a minute, and comes back with some plants.

"She pushes it into *your* (choose a player character at random) hand. You realize that she's just handed you a Cardamon shoot, flower and seed pod. "This Ca-Da-Min? Like this?" she asks.

The villagers will explain that Cardamon is a weed that they have to pull up out of the ground in their rice and vegetable patches. They use the spice themselves and they find it difficult to believe that it has any monetary value.

If the player characters ask about more Cardamon in the area, they'll be met with unanimous agreement. At that point, the whole village will lead the player characters down a path until they come to a huge, dense patch of Cardamon. There is easily a ton or more Cardamon available for harvesting.

Facing Production Problems

Convincing the villagers that they should waste their time and effort on a field of weeds is something of a challenge. Remember that the villagers are pretty savvy people. If there were any kind of decent market for Cardamon, they would know about it. The going price for *real* Cardamon is about K30 per Kilo (roughly 2.5 cents a pound). That's not enough money to make the processing worthwhile.

However, by extravagant promises, bribery, and a lot of begging and pleading, the characters should eventually get the villagers working on processing the Cardamon.

Locating the Buyers

Archie will react joyously to the news of the availability of wild Cardamon. He'll direct the player characters to Lee Song Do, an ethnic Chinese merchant. Archie will also tell the players, "Be sure to bring in as much as possible as quickly as you can. You want to take advantage of the current high market prices.

"Oh! Make sure that you pay a courtesy visit first! Some of the local merchants will only deal with you after a certain amount of ritual."

Encounters with the Cardamon Dealer, Preliminary Visit

On the first visit to Lee Song Do's shop, they'll find the proprietor to be extremely friendly and hospitable. He will escort them to a beautifully decorated, Chinese-style room; offer them tobacco, brandy and whiskey, and then talk about light pleasantries for a half-hour or so. Finally, Mr. Do will say:

"May I inquire reason for your most pleasant visit?"

If the characters are the first to bring up business, then Mr. Do will look slightly offended and continue from here. Read:

"At the mention of Cardamon, Mr. Do immediately looks interested. 'Ah, *Cardamon*, indeed in very great demand. It is a subject of great interest. I have three questions. Number one. Are we talking about processed Cardamon?' He looks expectantly at you."

Here the characters may discuss the relative value of raw versus processed Cardamon. Mr. Do knows nothing of the details, but he's not as eager to buy raw Cardamon.

"Very Good! Price for processed Cardamon very favorable this time of year. Second question. How much Cardamon?"

Presumably, the characters are talking about a fairly large volume.

"Exceptional! Exceptional! I offer you my top price. One hundred and ten dollars U.S. per Kilogram."

Actually, his top price is something like \$230 per kilogram. Characters who attempt to bargain the price up can easily raise it to \$150, and, with difficulty, to \$175.

If a deal is made for anything over 20 kilograms, at less than \$180 per kilogram, then tears of gratitude will come to the eyes of Mr. Do. He will press presents on the player characters (expensive, jade, miniature carvings) and will speak fondly of seeing them again very soon.

Encounters with the Cardamon Dealer

When the characters arrive *back* at the spice trading center with their load of Cardamon, they'll be greeted outside by Mr. Do and eight workers. A large door has been opened to the warehouse and there is a weigh scale hanging in the doorway. Mr. Do will greet the player characters, then he will offer to have his workers do the unloading and weighing. Read:

"You see the first bag is handled very carefully, almost ritualistically. They hand it from person to person. Then Mr. Do himself weighs it and passes it on to a well-dressed employee. He and the first bag disappear, and the rest of the workers start unloading and weighing — quickly and efficiently."

Mr. Do will remain with the player characters, and engage in pleasant conversation as the unloading is taking place. Three minutes of game

time later, things begin to happen. Read:

"Suddenly, you see the well-dressed employee run back into the warehouse shouting something in Chinese (those who understand Chinese will know it as "Stop Loading! Put it back on the truck!"). He runs up to Mr. Do and starts speaking in a low, rapid voice (this conversation is too fast and low to be understood). Mr. Do is at first angry, then confused; he says, "What! This some kind of Yankee joke? What are you doing?"

Mr. Do has been told that the substance in the bags is *really* Cardamon! Suddenly, he is beginning to realize that the characters may be dangerous. He'll take an aggressive tone to get rid of them, saying things like:

"Not funny!"

"This spice no good! Is rotten . . . is wrong kind . . . is . . . is . . . too dry?"

"Yes! Too dry, has gone bad; no good . . . go 'way now, we very busy with good stuff . . ."

"You must go now; we closed!"

"Go away. Go away or we call authorities!"

"No! Don't come back!"

The workers will pile all the Cardamon back into the player character's truck, or on the street if necessary. They'll then attempt to force the door closed.

If the characters don't leave, or if they attempt some kind of violence, then the authorities, specifically, the town's national policemen, will show up. They will take the side of Mr. Do in everything, and will claim not to understand a word that the player characters are saying.

Discovering the Real Cardamon Market

When and if the players go in search of other Cardamon buyers, they'll find Gua Sudanama; a small-time exporter in a dingy warehouse. When asked about Cardamon, he'll reply:

"Sure Joe! I buy lots Car-Da-Man. Buy plenty in volume too! Let's see (he looks at some papers). Market price in Bangkok now 57 . . . Okay Joe! Those 1 Kilo bags pretty fancy. I can give you 38 Kip each. How much you wanna sell?"

Since there's 600 Kip to a Stateside dollar, that's not much per kilogram. Certainly a big letdown from over \$100 each.

By this point, the player characters will have figured out that this 'spice' trading is actually a cover for high-grade *heroin* being shipped directly to Hong Kong.

POSSIBLE SCENARIO OUTCOME

1. Attempt to report the operations to the authorities. The big question is (what authorities?) The local Laotian government officials are all paid off handsomely. They'll not want to risk their source of income. The Stateside military and CIA view all this as a Laotian "internal problem." Archie and the guys at the Department of Agriculture are going to be shocked, but they can't really do anything. Just about the only effective way of reporting the "Cardamon" traffic is by tipping off Interpol in Hong Kong . . . which will shutdown the Hong Kong buyers temporarily, but do absolutely nothing about the Laotian network.

2. Inflict Personal Vengeance. Attacking Mr. Do and his associates is fairly easy for the player characters. Mr. Do has two guards in his warehouse. One is in the front room at any time. The other is usually sleeping. They will give up in the face of superior firepower (like an M-16). The problem is then what to do? Mr. Do can, and will, bribe the characters with up to \$82,000 in gold, Stateside dollars and Laotian Kip.

Destroying the warehouse, killing Do, or accepting a bribe, will all bring the characters to the attention of the *national drug organization*.

This can lead to much intrigue.

3. Investigate the Heroin Network. This is probably the best solution. With a little discretion, the player characters can start unravelling the complex heroin network. See *The Heroin Connection* section for more information.

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

Archie Waters

Description: Archie is a real agricultural expert. He has no idea that the characters are anything other than civilian advisors, and will not believe that they are "mercenaries" or "spies." Whenever the characters refer to covert missions, he'll either ignore it altogether or make a joke about how the characters "are really good at subverting rice paddies and tracking down the communist infiltrators in the village pigpen." He is very serious about his job, and does a lot of good work with the local rice farmers.

Attributes: ST: 58 AL: 28 AG: 53

Alignment: Idealist-Pacifist

Skills: Extensive training in horticulture and agriculture. Can speak well in Lao Lum, Lao Tai, French, and three dialects of Lao Theung. No weapon or military skills.

Lee Song Do

Description: Mr. Do (as he is known to almost everybody) is a hard-working smuggler who runs a tight organization. He is personable and charming, but is willing to hire an assassin if it is necessary to take pressure off his organization. He figures that the "Cardamon Scam" will reach the end of its usefulness anytime, and he has already made preparations to change his base of operations.

Attributes: ST: 24 AL: 29 AG: 25

Alignment: Opportunistic

Skills: A wide assortment of business skills, plus fluency in English, French, Lao Lum, Lao Theung, Meo Chinese and several Chinese dialects.

Equipment: 9mm Browning Automatic (22%)

Mr. Do's Warehouse Guards

ST: 71 36 83 73

AL: 31 15 9 47

AG: 73 82 9 30

Equipment: All are armed with .45 Automatic pistols (each with a base effectiveness of 28) and a knife. They are all trained in unarmed combat also.

A Final Note: This scenario was inspired by a stray statistic that I came across. In 1967, the Cardamon crop brought about K10.8 million in Laos. In 1968, even though the value of the Kip went down, the Cardamon crop was K51.5 million. Then, in 1969 it dropped back to K4.8 million. Since most of the buyers are from Hong Kong, and since most of the illegal heroin exports are to Hong Kong . . . well, you can draw your own conclusions.



1987 K. STENBIEGA

THE OPIUM WAR!

Here's an interesting scenario that's useful for testing the rules for large unit conflict. It also leaves a lot of tactical and strategic choices up to the players.

RECON TEAM MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

The characters will either be leading their own militia, or be assigned a unit of Meo mercenaries. No minimum number of players.

MISSION BRIEFING

The player characters have no objectives in this scenario. Certainly they haven't been assigned any real mission. They just happen to be in an area where a war is about to break out. And the prize in that war — 15,000 kilograms of morphine — should interest everyone in the region.

Read:

"You are out on a long range, reconnaissance patrol with a loyal army of ethnic Laotians. Everything seemed pretty quiet . . . until two of your scouts showed up to report that a large force of Shan National Army troops is crossing the Mekong River and moving in your general direction."

1. **Method of Insertion.** Walking into the bush.
2. **Fire Support Availability.** None.
3. **Enemy Movement Information.** Your scouts tell you that there are a couple of hundred donkeys fording the Mekong river nearby. They were accompanied by at least a hundred armed men.
4. **Terrain and Weather Report.** The terrain is heavily wooded highland country. Thick underbrush makes leaving the trail difficult. It takes about an hour to chop through 10 feet with machetes. Weather is clear and sunny; no forecast available.
5. **Mission Objectives.** None. The player characters are expected to act on their own.
6. **Special Rules.** None.
7. **Method of Extraction.** Just like Insertion. Walking.

ENCOUNTERS

If the players move at top speed to the *southeast* from their present position, they will run right into the Shan caravan. This would be a Stand-Up War situation. They will also pass directly under the surveillance of one of the NCA listening posts.

On the other hand, if the players move *southwest* from their position, they will come to the main, east-west trail at just about the same time as forward units of NCA "B."

Moving back, or maintaining the current position, may allow the players time to get good scouting information . . . or it may just make them lose out on any opportunity in the area.

Unless the player characters interfere, NCA "B" will have time to set up an ambush for the Shan caravan on the east-west trail. Only the forward scouts of the Shan will be trapped. The rest will group up and start moving forward cautiously (Stand-Up War). By this time, the NCA "B" main unit will be coming up from the south. The Shan will take minor losses and will move back to the east; eventually heading northeast toward the player characters.

ENEMY FORCES

The Shan National Army

This is the Shan's biggest convoy ever. They've already defeated an initial attack by NCA "A", and they are moving at top speed on their way to Ban Peung. At that point, they can sell the drugs and scatter; thereby avoiding any further conflict with the NCA. Their biggest disadvantage is that the mules are strung out over a full, half mile.

They have a total of 700 men, divided into 5 units:

- 200 men attending the mules, and mostly armed with M-16s. They are tending 500 Mules; each laden with 30 kilos of morphine base (15,000 kilos total) and all the spare food, water, and ammunition for the convoy.
- 30 man platoon doing south forward scouting, and armed with (27) M-16s and (1) .50 caliber machinegun.
- 30 man platoon doing north forward scouting, and armed with (27) M-16s and (1) .50 caliber machinegun.
- 300 man forward attack force carrying (200) M-16s, (20) .50 caliber machineguns, (6) 60mm mortars, and (8) 57mm recoilless rifles.
- 140 man rear guard with (100) M-16s, (2) 60mm mortars, and (2) 57mm recoilless rifles.

Nationalist Chinese Army Unit A – NCA "A"

This unit is actually made up of several, small, "Duty Collection" squads. About 50 of them were involved in the action with the Shan. The rest, they've gathered up along the way. 100 men total, organized in one unit with 10 forward scouts. They have left their heavy equipment with the wounded, and are moving quickly; each armed with M-2 .30 caliber carbines.

Nationalist Chinese Army Unit B – NCA "B"

The NCA's "main force" in the area. They are interested in "punishing" the Shan.

400 men divided into 4 groups:

- 100 man forward unit. Their job is to move quickly enough to intercept the enemy and pin him down until reinforcements arrive. Armed with (40) M-14s, (50) M-2s, (3) .50 caliber machineguns, and (1) .45 pistol.
- 250 man, main force unit. They are expected to move at a moderate rate of speed and provide backup for any trouble that the first group runs into. Armed with (100) M-2s, (50) M-14s, (20) Browning Automatic Rifles, (20) .50 caliber machineguns, (9) 57mm recoilless rifles, and (2) .45 pistols.
- 50 man, mobile artillery unit. Although slow-moving, they can fire off quite a few mortars from a distance. Armed with (15) 60mm mortars and (5) M-14s.

Nationalist Chinese Army Unit C — NCA "C"

This is a scouting unit. If they encounter the Shan coming along the river route, they'll fall back, set up machineguns and mortars, and try to delay them until other units can come to their assistance. Otherwise, if they move quickly enough, they may be able to attack the Shan from the rear.

60 man scouting unit carrying (15) M-16s, (10) M-14s, (6) .50 caliber machineguns, and (2) 60mm mortars. Since only 25 men are actually armed with personal weapons, the load for the 8 heavy weapons is spread among 35 guys. This speeds up their travel considerably.

Nationalist Chinese Army Listening Posts

Each of these high-altitude lookout points is manned by 5 men. Armaments are always M-14 sniper rifles with telescopic sights. Each post is in radio contact with all the others. They also act as RTO fire control for mortars and artillery.

Royal Laotian Army

General Ivoung's men are waiting for a major opium shipment. They know the Shan have been bragging about "the biggest load ever!" but they don't know when it will show up.

He has three units available for dispatch:

- (4) T-28 Aircraft which have been fitted with two, 500-pound bombs each.
- 60 man paratroop unit standing by at the airstrip. They are armed with (50) M-16s, (6) M-60 machineguns, and (4) M-79 grenade launchers.



© 1987 K. SIEMBIEDA

This is an elite unit; one that will not break under fire.

300 man army unit. These are poorly trained, and really only useful as guards. They are armed with (275) M-16s and (25) M-60 machineguns. About 50% of the weapons will misfire and jam because of poor maintenance. They do only half casualties in large unit actions.

"Red" Meo

Having heard about the upcoming conflict, the local army of "Red" (Ata Lao Communist) Meo have decided to move toward the area. If they can either 1) ambush some fleeing Shan, Nationalist Chinese, Laotian Army or "Black" Meo, 2) trap a fleeing shipment of opium, or, 3) if a fight breaks out, they could do a little battlefield scavenging. Another possibility is to wait until after the battle and, if the winner is weak enough, attack! Currently, they are organized "guerrilla style" — in small groups of 5 to 8 men. However, they are maintaining communications. If they need to, they can come together in an army of 200 men.

Equipment consists of (140) AK-47s, (30) SVD sniper rifles, (6) 7.62mm RPK machineguns, (2) SA-7 anti-aircraft missiles, (4) 60mm mortars, and (4) RPG-7 antitank launchers.

This is the unit to be assigned to the player characters. Assuming, of course, that they don't already have a unit. The non-player characters' total force is 100 men. They are armed with (70) M-16s, (10) M-14s, (8) M-60 machineguns, (6) M-79 grenade launchers, and (2) 60mm mortars.

Organizing this force is the job of the player characters.

POTENTIAL OUTCOMES

1. **Shan National Army Victory:** Results in the destabilization of Burma; possibly helping Laos by encouraging the SNA to move out of Muong Luong Province.
2. **Nationalist Chinese Victory:** Strengthens their grip on the opium trade. Results in higher "tax" on future opium imports into Laos as well as greater Nationalist Chinese control. Possibly weakens the Shan in Muong Luong Province. Definitely a disadvantage for Laos.
3. **Laotian Army Victory:** Gives enormous wealth and power to General Ivoung. He will then become the leading candidate for a coup attempt.
4. **Destruction of the Opium:** Increases the value of opium worldwide by as much as 30%. This is a positive action for the Laotian government.
5. **"Red" Meo Victory:** Another Ata Lao victory. The Laotian government undergoes another crisis.
6. **Player Character Victory:** Well, it all depends on what the characters do with the opium. After all, it is still worth \$4,500,000, or more, to the *right* buyer.

A FINAL NOTE: This scenario is based on an actual battle that took place in the summer of 1967, where the Burma, Thailand and Laos borders meet. The Shan National Army, with a convoy of 300 opium-laden mules, was harassed by the 3rd and 5th Armies of the Nationalist Chinese. They were in the midst of fierce fighting when the Laotian Army attacked by dropping 500-pound bombs on both sides.

The Laotian 2nd Paratroop Battalion moved in to mop up, and seized the opium. The Shan, in the face of huge losses, were forced to retreat back into Burma (or maybe deeper into Laos). A large number of Nationalist Chinese were surrounded, but managed to negotiate the right to return to Thailand.

In the end, the Laotian Army had managed to grab 16 tons of raw opium, and extort an additional \$7,500 from the Nationalist Chinese. The Nationalist Chinese were then evacuated in 18 chartered buses, along with their rifles, machineguns and recoilless rifles.

CHINESE-STYLE HEAVY WEAPON TEAMS

A standard set-up for the Chinese, and copied by the Shan, is to assign a three-man team to each heavy infantry weapon.

So, you might ask, is a **.50 caliber machinegun** worth tying up three guys? Wouldn't giving each man an individual weapon, like an M-16, triple the firepower?

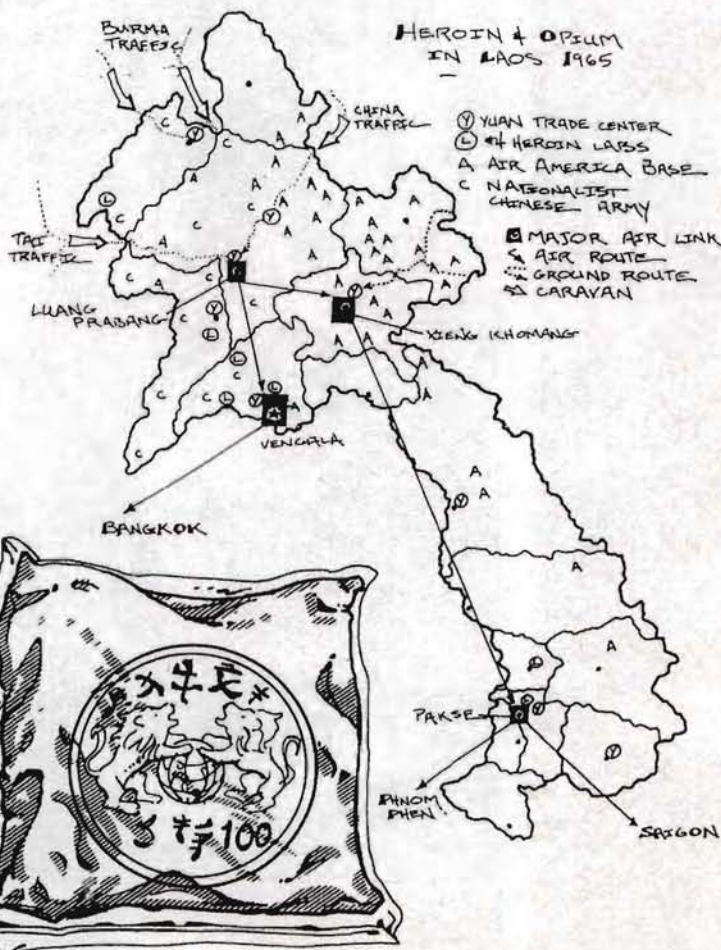
Definitely not! First off, the heavy machinegun is a devastating weapon of war. Fire one of the .50 caliber rounds into the front end of an ammunition truck and it will pass through the grill, through various engine parts, through the crew compartment (and maybe through the crew), through the back wall of the cab, and still may have enough striking power to burst open crates. The massive engine block of a large truck *will* stop a .50 caliber round . . . once the round goes in a foot or so. And one dug-in heavy machinegun can wipe out a huge number of attackers.

A .50 caliber machinegun can be disassembled for transportation. That way, the gun barrel and the tripod could all be carried separately. In the field the unit works together to reassemble the weapon, dig emplacements, set up fields of fire, and feed in ammunition.

Likewise with **Mortars**, the base, the barrels and the bipod brace could each be carried separately. Although mortar rounds do vast amounts of damage, the main advantage is that it can be fired indirectly. In other words, you can "arc" the mortar rounds up and over obstacles and into the target. If cover is good, (and holes are better) then being a half mile away and behind a hill is the absolute best way to fight a war.

Three-man teams are also used with **recoilless rifles**. These weapons send out rounds that punch right through "hard points" and explode near the heart of the target. Tanks, bunkers, ammunition boxes and mortar crews are all excellent targets for recoilless rifles.

This kind of three-man approach works really well in the field. Between the three men, a fair amount of ammunition can be carried, and they can construct good positions for their weapons.



THE OPIUM WAR

IN



: TRAIL
 || GRAVEL - 1 LANE
 || GRAVEL - 2 LANE
 ~~~~~ RIVER



# RADIO WARS

Remember the famous Orson Welles broadcast of "War of the Worlds?" No?

Here's the story. Back in 1938, on the Sunday evening before Halloween, *The Mercury Theatre* broadcast a rather special show. It was based on the H.G. Wells novel, "*War of the Worlds*," but it was presented as a breaking news story. The combination of familiar phrases like, "We interrupt this program to bring you the latest news," and the realistic sound effects, were brilliant! Thousands panicked! The militia was called out! People made incredible fools of themselves. And, when it was all over, quite a few folks wanted to lynch Orson Welles.

And what, you ask, does that have to do with a RECON mission in Laos?

Consider this; a sophisticated, 20th century, Stateside audience was easily fooled by an outrageous radio drama. So why wouldn't a bunch of superstitious, Laotian tribesmen fall for a similar trick?

This is one of the classic, "fooled you once" gags of all time. You can't fool anybody twice with this stunt.

But, Oh! How you can fool 'em that first time! What makes it even more effective is that the Laotians have never heard radio drama. All they ever get from their radios are speeches, weather reports, music and raw propaganda.

## RECON TEAM MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

This mission requires at least three player characters with Primary or Secondary MOS as RTO. All player characters should be outfitted for extended field operations and armed with their weapons of choice. This is a fairly *advanced* mission.

## PRE-MISSION EVENT

If the characters are already assigned as advisors to a village, then the following should take place in the village headman's house. All the villagers will be gathered around to listen to the one hour of native language programming broadcast by the national radio station.

If the characters are not assigned to a village, then they'll hear a recording of the broadcast (along with a transcript in English) when they get to the mission briefing.

### Read:

"There's a loud crackle of static, and then you hear a voice in midsentence. It doesn't sound familiar, but it's reading the same, boring list of government farm prices.

"This goes on for about two minutes and then there's an explosion in the background. The announcer stops reading and starts speaking into the radio.

"Citizens of Laos. There seems to be some kind of terrorist action taking place outside . . ."

"Another voice, speaking in heavily accented English, says "I . . . will go and. Check it up. You wait. Here."

"You hear a door open; some heavy booted footsteps moving away, and the door closes. Right after the sound of the door closing, several people start speaking at once.

"Do you think that Joe, our American radio expert, will be safe out there?" says the announcer.

"Holy Buddha protect us," says a high, female voice. The two males say "What can be wrong?" and "It must be the Patriotic Front."

"The announcer's voice returns. 'We must all crawl into the shelter.' There is a sudden sound of rapid gunfire and explosions from the distance.

"This is followed by sounds and clanking. Apparently, some sound effects technician's idea of the descent into an air-raid shelter. The announcer returns."

"Well, at least the radio is still working! Faithful listeners, we will continue to broadcast as long as we can. Wait! The door is opening again. I will peek out."

"Be careful," whispers the female voice.

"Oh horrors! What is that coming in the doorway (there are grotesque snuffling sounds in the background). It is our American advisor. But he has changed into a horrible demon! His teeth are long and pointed. His hair is now long and golden. And his eyes . . . are empty holes!"

"I must find out what is wrong," says a quavery voice.

"Phong! Do not go out there!"

"I must," says the quavery voice.

"I could not stop him," says the whisper into the radio. He . . . he is walking up to the demon."

"Where are the others?" says the ugly, growly voice.

"Th . . . th . . . they ran away," answers the quavering voice.

"Wh . . . wha . . . what are you?"

"You fool! I am a demon, just like all Americans! I am hungry, so I must step outside of my pale, American skin."

"Ho . . . ho . . . how can this be? Why did we not know this before?"

"Puny mortal, we have waited too long to destroy your land. Now it is time for us to eat!"

"Wh . . . wh . . . what are you going to eat?"

"Heh! Heh! You!" This is immediately followed by the sound of a struggle. Then, by horrible screams.

The hoarse, whispering voice of the announcer starts up again. "It is horrible! I can see the demon holding Mr. Jusan by his legs. He is dangling Mr. Jusan over his ugly, gaping mouth!"

The broadcast continues with more American "monster demons" coming into the station, each dragging whimpering and pleading woman and children with them.

## MISSION DIRECTOR TIPS

Watch the players carefully when you read the dialogue. If the players start laughing (who wouldn't), then tell them that they are getting strange looks from the *villagers*. If they try to listen, they hear the villagers whispering things like,

"Why do they laugh at such horrible things?"

"I always did wonder about their large size, and their strange, white skins!"

"How can they laugh when people are being eaten?"

"They must be demons! Listen to their strange talk!"

"I knew it! They are Phi. Deadly *phi-pop*. Possessed by demons."

"It sure explains a lot! I always wondered about those flying machines! I guess we know now how the white devils make them work."

If questioned directly, the villagers will agree with everything the Americans say, and will try to humor them and keep them from getting angry.

"Yes, of course *you* are not a demon. Only those other Americans!"

"Of course, we believe you. Haven't we *always* believed everything you say?"

Obviously, the villagers no longer trust or believe the player characters. In fact, they are scared stiff. Since they really do believe in demons (as Americans believe that science and engineering can explain the world, so do the highland people of Laos believe that spirits (phi) and demons (ho) explain how the world works), they have no problem believing that a trusted friend is really a Phi-Pop; a person possessed by demons.



## MISSION BRIEFING

The characters will be contacted by their operations leader. Read:

"That creepy radio station is really hurting us. At least three dozen agents are missing, mostly in remote areas. One group reported having to fight their way out of the village they'd been working with for six months.

"We've already tried sending out aerial strikes, but that region is too dangerous for low flying aircraft during the day. And during the night, we don't get a peep out of the station we're looking for.

"The only choice is to send out teams into the hills. And you obviously can't take along any of your tribal troops. Right now, they can't be trusted with anything!

"We want you to get in there, knock out that radio station, and, if you can manage it, bring back that radio announcer."

1. **Method of Insertion.** The team will parachute into the area at night, along with all their equipment. The drop zone is in the Ata Lao region of northeastern, Luang Prabang Province.
2. **Fire Support Availability.** Limited. It takes about 24 hours for the Stateside Air Force in Thailand to get permission from the Laotian government for a bombing mission.
3. **Enemy Movement Information.** The whole place is crawling with Ata Lao and NVA troops.
4. **Terrain and Weather Report.** The area consist of rugged, steep slopes and deep valleys, all covered with northern timber and infested with incredible thorn bushes. The weather should be cold, wet and overcast for the next several days.
5. **Mission Objectives.** Find the radio station and stop its operation. Ideally, capture and return with the "announcer" and any others who are responsible for the "demon" show.
6. **Special Rules.** None. Just get the mission accomplished.
7. **Method of Extraction.** If the group has prisoners or wounded, then a helicopter will be sent in for a dustoff. Otherwise, the characters will be expected to walk out.

## MISSION PREPARATION

The RTO-skilled men will be given special equipment and training. The equipment consists of slightly modified PRC-25 radio units. The radios can now do simple directional finding on AM or shortwave signals. By staying far apart (at least a mile) the characters should be able to triangulate the exact position of the transmitter.

## THE SETTING

The radio transmitter is located high up on the wall of a steep valley. There are small caves suitable for hiding the equipment and the "break-apart" antenna. There are 130 Ata Lao troops down in the valley. They

aren't good for much, other than the daily tasks of raising and lowering the antenna. They will see nothing, so long as the player characters avoid moving into the floor of the valley.

At the operations room (in the cave), all of the NPCs, plus two Ata Lao soldiers, spend most of their days. Trapping the radio performers and destroying the equipment are easy.

*The difficulty is with getting the entertainer out safely.* After all, if the play itself is not somehow countered, the mission of all Americans in Laos is in jeopardy.

### The Demon American Radio Show

Here's a brief plot summary of the Ata Lao, "Demon American" radio show. It will be broadcast every day at the same time, until someone manages to shut it down. Jamming the station isn't effective, because it results in even more suspicions of Americans. In any case, the radio show is prepared to change broadcast channels at a moment's notice.

**Episode One:** The characters are: Phung, the announcer; Joe, the 1st Demon American; and Maitai, the love interest. Joe becomes a demon (see scenario introduction) and reveals that the Americans are all demons, intent on eating the entire population of Laos.

**Episode Two:** More horror stories. More Demon Americans come into the building, and the announcer describes them doing hideous things to the bodies of the Laotian dead.

**Episode Three:** The announcer and Maitai are discovered! They are being pried out by the Demons. Just as the lovely Maitai is about to be torn from Phung's grasp — the cavalry shows up! Only, in this case, the cavalry is the Ata Lao.

**Episode Four:** In an interview with Captain Yong, it is revealed that the Ata Lao have been fighting the American Demons for years. The announcer, caught up in loyalist fervor, immediately renounces his previous employment with the "wrong thinking elitist generals" and joins the Ata Lao. Maitai is, of course, delighted, and immediately follows him.

**Episode Five:** Phung, Captain Yong and Maitai, battle the evil Americans and prevent them from killing more people.

**Episode Six:** Phung is captured by the Demons and is interrogated by a normal-looking American. He almost cracks under the pressure of the questioning, but somehow finds the patriotic strength to resist. The American, enraged, turns into a Demon once again.

## MISSION DIRECTOR NOTES

Radio is incredibly important to the propaganda war in Laos. Less than 20% of the people are literate, and not all the people who can read necessarily read the same language. So, any kind of written communications are severely limited.

Still, it's necessary to communicate with the people somehow! The

neutralist government started a program of distributing free transistor radios to remote villages. Although the program has been stopped by the right-wing, most of the villagers are now interested enough to buy their own radios and batteries.

In recent times, radio has turned into the main battleground for distributing propaganda from the various factions.

### THE MAIN RADIO BROADCASTERS IN LAOS

The *Lao National Radio Network* consists of 3 stations in Vengala (2 shortwave and 1 AM), 2 in Pakse, 2 in Luang Prabang, and 1 hidden somewhere in Xieng Khomang.

Typically, the government stations operate about 14 hours a day, broadcasting foreign and domestic news, speeches by government officials, cultural and historical programs, and both western and Laotian music. The languages used are almost exclusively Lao Lum and French.

*Royal Laos Armed Forces Radio* has 4 (2 shortwave/2 AM) stations in Vengala, and 2 in Luang Prabang. Gives out a steady diet of military music and John Phillip Sousa. There are also weekly broadcasts of Army propaganda (recruitment speeches, mostly) in the Meo, Man, Black Tai and Mon-Khmer languages.

Based in Pathek, in Vapikhamthong Province, *Freedom for Lao Radio* is a special project of General Vuoung. It's more of a public relations device; advertising the personality and charisma of the General and preparing the people for his eventual take-over of the country.

*ATA LAO Radio* comes out of 6, AM stations set up near the 'Nam border. It's on the air for 15 hours a day; constantly sending out newscasts, commentaries and gems like:

"All forms of monopoly and exploitation by the ruling circles who are lackeys of the United States Imperialists.

"People's democratic national union administration.

"Struggles of the Asian peoples against imperialist provocations, Stateside Occupationists, and the iron fist of the money hungry banking system, will lead to the glories of national liberation . . ."

About three-quarters of the shows are in Lao Lum; the rest in Meo, Man, and Lao Theung.

Radio of the Patriotic Neutralist Forces (RPNF) is a newcomer, broadcasting out of Khang Khay in Xieng Khouang Province. It tries to be somewhat more entertaining, and speaks in Lao Lum, Laotian Tai and Meo.

Foreign broadcasts, in shortwave come from France, the Stateside's Voice of America, Radio Peking, Radio Hanoi, and the Soviet Union Foreign Radio Service.

### NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

#### Vincent Thuou Ly

**Description:** One of the famous Ly family. When he was a youngster, he was taken to California for a couple of months. He has had to fight the Ata Lao hierarchy, tooth and nail, to get his idea across. To all the old-line communists, propaganda just means talking long enough and loud enough to convince others of your point of view. For an Ata Lao, Vincent is pretty dramatic. He favors cowboy-style clothes (jeans, boots, silk shirts and cowboy hat), and wears his hair in a "James Dean" style.

**Attributes:** ST: 15 AL: 10 AG: 05

**Alignment:** Idealist-Pacifist

**Skills:** Almost none. Vincent is very bright, but he refuses to learn any practical skills.

**Equipment:** Vincent has managed to get hold of an old-fashioned six-shooter (5% to hit, 2D10 damage). He's even put together a "quick-draw" holster.

He spends a lot of time practicing. Fortunately, he practices with the gun empty; otherwise he'd have shot himself in the foot long ago.

#### Captain Ngyen Dong

**Description:** This crusty, NVA commander is not impressed with Vincent's performances. He believes that the whole thing will turn into a disaster. He really can't believe that sensible, peasant people will believe such errant nonsense.

**Attributes:** ST: 34 AL: 34 AG: 09

**Alignment:** Opportunist-Righteous

**Skills:** As a VC Commissar

**Equipment:** Carries an AK-47 (35%) everywhere.

#### Ata Lao Soldiers

**Description:** The soldiers under Captain Dong are less than enthusiastic. They will fight when cornered, but would generally prefer peaceful resolutions.

**General Attributes:** ST: 50 AL: 40 AG: 45

**Alignment:** Mostly Idealist

**Skills:** All have Mountain and Guerrilla Specialist Skills.

**Equipment:** AK-47s (25%)

#### Vladimir Slovenza, Soviet Radio Technician

**Description:** Vlad has managed to keep himself drunk through most of the performances. He understands none of the local languages, only Russian and a bit of French. He is a large, weepy sort of man, given to making large 'sighs' and talking to himself.

**Attributes:** ST: 17 AL: 03 AG: 96

**Alignment:** Malignant

**Skills:** Radio repair and operation

**Equipment:** Carries no weapons and will surrender in the face of any deadly threat.



#### Captain Sal Huoung

**Description:** Phong's, female, "love interest" on the radio show is Sal Huoung. She gives new meaning to the phrase, "strong woman." She has decided that she will marry Phong and he doesn't seem to have much to say about the subject. She is a terrible actress, but is an exceptional officer and can quote the party line frontwards and back.

**Attributes:** ST: 99 AL: 03 AG: 58

**Alignment:** Opportunist-Righteous

**Skills:** As VC Sniper

**Equipment:** Uses a Soviet SVD (92%)

#### Biau Nuwen and Ap Coutea, Actors

**Description:** These two Ata Lao are along because they are trusted party members. Certainly their acting leaves a lot to be desired. Biau Nuwen specializes in deep, scary voices (the Demon Americans), and Ap Coutea does quavering administrators.

**Attributes:** ST: 03 26  
AL: 79 53  
AG: 94 19

**Alignment:** both Opportunist

**Skills:** Nothing particularly useful, both understand paper work and bookkeeping. Both are fluent in French. No weapons or weapon skills.

# THE SPIDER'S WEB

Sometimes corruption in Southeast Asia spreads into the ranks of the Stateside military. How high did it go? The levels it reaches in this scenario are much higher than were ever revealed in real life . . . but you never know who were the superiors of the noncommissioned officers that were caught.

This is really an adventure (not just a mission) that can have the characters ranging all over the world and hunted by virtually everyone. And, if the player's really want a mission, see if they'll accept **Suicide Squad**, immediately following this section.

## RECON TEAM MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

Good for any group of good players. Since the characters will have to rely more on brains than firepower, there's no essential equipment or skills. Players with RTO, Intelligence and Medic, either as Primary or Secondary MOSSs, are recommended.

## MISSION DIRECTOR'S INTRODUCTION

Heroin smuggling, at its most profitable, means selling large quantities of #4 heroin in large, western cities. The barriers to doing that are customs officials, and national and international police (Interpol). Those barriers just don't exist for the military. Anyone with access to military aircraft can fly drugs directly into Stateside, England, West Germany, and a host of other places.

In this scenario, a top officer, someone with command authority over aircraft, supply routes, military police and the controlling paperwork, has been corrupted. He maintains a small circle of trusted officers, who, in turn, control dozens of others.

The profits from this operation are incredible. As much as a half billion dollars in a single year. The risks are large; since these professional military officers have no desire to spend the rest of their lives in jail or as fugitives.

To protect this operation, and the reputations of the men behind it, the organization will do **anything**. Anyone who is seen to be a threat will be *eliminated at once*.



## ENCOUNTER #1: A FLY'S CORPSE

Set up the game by telling the players that their characters are on a standard patrol. Their objective is simply to find traces of Ata Lao or NVA troop movements in the area. Give them time to discuss their equipment and positions, then start playing. If they are assigned as advisors' to ethnic irregulars, then assume the Point Man is brought forward by one of the scouts.

Read the following to the Point Man:

"You notice a strange thing in the trees overhead, and off to one side of the trail. It looks like a bunch of broken branches at the crown of a tree about 80 feet up. What are you doing?"

Should anyone ask, the broken branches make it look like something fell down out of the sky. The spot under the broken branches is about 30 feet off the trail, in some dense bushes. Characters can either cut their way through, which will take about twenty minutes, or crawl in, which takes about 5 minutes of struggling for a small man stripped of equipment. Another possibility is to climb a tree and look down on the spot. From there, one can see the colors of a piece of plaid fabric. When they finally get close enough to see the body, read:

"You see a dead body. It's wearing one of the most obnoxious plaid jackets you've ever seen. His hands are handcuffed behind him. He's a caucasian, slightly balding, with greasy red hair. He's also got a bullet hole that goes in one temple and out the other side. You also recognize this guy. He's Clancy Reynolds; a free-lance newspaper writer who hangs around in Vengala.

Further investigation will reveal that the body is wearing exactly three things: an orange, green and purple, plaid jacket; a pair of blue and white, checked pants, and a pair of handcuffs. He obviously fell out of an airplane. He was shot through the head with a large caliber pistol, probably either, .45, .357 or a 9mm. No wallet, no identification, nothing else on him at all.

## ENCOUNTER #2: WAITING FOR CLANCY

What happens next depends on how the characters behave. If they simply bury the body, forget about reporting it, and pretend it never happened . . . well, let's just say that it wouldn't be much of an adventure.

So, one of two things are going to happen. Either the characters will report the body in a radio call to Vengala, or they'll go to Vengala personally to investigate.

If the players report Clancy's body over the radio, then their contact will just tell them to wait for further instructions. The next day, 2 Huey Slicks will appear near the characters' camp. They are carrying a full complement of the Stateside Embassy's Marine Guards. They politely request the body, put it in a choppers and leave.

Unless the characters make further inquiries, they'll never hear another word about Clancy.

If the characters start asking serious questions about Clancy over the radio they'll receive a standard reply, namely, "We know nothing about it. If you like, we'll check it out."

If the characters are still asking about Clancy a week later, and if they are still in the village, then they should receive orders to participate in the *Sudden Mission* which follows this adventure.

## ENCOUNTER #3: A TRIP TO THE PARLOR

The only way the characters will find out anything else is by visiting Vengala, the stronghold of the drug network. Once there, they can try tracking things down.

Obvious possibilities include other newsmen, and servants of the Hotel Thai-Bang, Clancy's regular dive. Typical responses will be: "I don't know anything about the creepy little bug." and "Too bad he's dead." Eventually, they'll find someone who can say:

"All I know about Clance was that he was talking about a real big-deal story he was workin' on. Claimed it would be huge. Said he had to keep it a secret from everybody 'cept Vee."

Further conversation will reveal that Clancy had a Laotian partner, Veaeng Saeverna. He is now missing also. They hear:

(newsmen) "Y'know, I think I saw Vee in here just in the

last day or so . . . Yeah, he was asking the bartender about where he could find Clancy . . .

And, just in case they ask the bartender anything, he'll respond with:

(barman) "Look here mister. I don't know anything. I don't want to know anything. I don't think you should ask them kinda' questions. You want to drink? I'll fix you a drink! But don't ask me any more of them questions."

All and any questions about Clancy, or an attempt to search his room (it's already been violently searched), will result in the characters being noticed by the *Drug Network*.

## ANOTHER SPIDER FALLS FROM THE WEB

Finding Veaeng should start with a visit to his home. It's a small house, with four small children and a scared, weeping wife. She hasn't heard from Veaeng and she doesn't want to talk. If the characters do a little snooping, they may find out (from the nosy neighbors), that Veaeng's wife was visited the night before by local police, mostly out of uniform and carrying sub-machineguns. There was some hitting and screaming, but they only stayed for about 20 minutes.

Once they leave Veaeng's house, they'll be followed by *Veaeng*. He'll either be spotted by the player characters (roll for AL), or else he'll contact them directly. He wants to tell them the following:

"Clancy was too brave. He wanted to know who put heroin on American, Air Force transports. He found out too much. Way too much. Now I am also in big trouble. They kill me if they find me."

Veaeng is looking for three things: some kind of administrative protection, money to leave for his wife, and someone to share his secrets with. If the characters promise him protection, or offer him a fair amount of money (\$250 or more), then he'll tell them his secrets. It seems that a *Lieutenant Harrison Thurman*, with the Stateside Navy, was Clancy's main suspect.

Veaeng will insist on going to see his wife, alone. He will promise to meet the characters at a bar, later that night. He will, unless the players do something to prevent it, end up dead before nightfall.

## BAD THINGS START TO HAPPEN

How the "Spider Network" to nosy characters will depend on how close they get to finding anything out.

The Mission Director should bear in mind that the network has the clout to arrange for mission assignments, transfers, or arrest orders. The network is so familiar with the military, government, and embassy bureaucracies, that they can arrange for orders to be issued without anyone actually knowing who is responsible.

For example, any character's arrest orders will be signed by a "General Poindexter." Upon investigation it will be discovered that the general is actually in the middle of a 2 week vacation in Hawaii. Not that it makes a bit of difference; the arrest order is still valid. They'll just have to keep the characters jailed up until the General returns.

The following things will happen in roughly numerical order.

1. **Characters will pick up a "tail."** LANASO (Laotian National Security Office) agents will start following the characters. As many men as necessary will be assigned. The agents have no idea why the characters are to be followed, only that it has something to do with "drugs and gold." The characters have to beat the AL of their followers in order to lose a tail.
2. **Characters will receive orders to return** to their superior's office in Vengala. If and when they show up, they'll be told, "I can't believe your luck! All of you have been given a three week pass to Australia. Your plane leaves in 45 minutes!" *Not leaving will seem very suspicious!!* Yes, this is a real trip (not a death trap). People simply want the group out of the way for awhile.
3. **General orders** will be issued, identifying the characters as "... under suspicion and awaiting general court-martial. If seen, please notify the USSAOC. They are to be released of duty weapons, confined, and transported by air to the Stateside Army of Legal Affairs in Saigon." This order comes from *General Poindexter* and will be carried out by any Stateside or Laotian military personnel, including the players' immediate superiors.
4. **Characters are put on "hit" list** by the Vengala underworld. This means their pictures are circulated on a wanted poster in connection with a \$2,000 bounty.
5. **Orders are given to Laotian police** to "plant" evidence on the characters when they are arrested. One of the officers searching a player character will "find" a quarter of a kilogram of #4 Heroin.
6. **Once characters are safely locked away**, the network will not take any further actions against them. The "Spider" will then get rid of any incriminating evidence (including Capt. Villerman). 12 days later, the characters will be released with apologies for "the inconvenience."

## MID-LEVEL MURDERERS

There are three, highly placed officers who actually do most of the missions for the Spider Network.

The characters will find *Lieutenant Harrison Thurman* is already dead. He worked with mission assignment for the Stateside Navy, authorizing most shipments to and from the Stateside. No one is yet aware of his death, except for his murderers. They have planted an agent outside of Thurman's small house in Vengala. The agent's instructions are simple; summon the Geala Secret Police as soon as someone goes into Thurman's house. The Police have already been given their instructions; whoever is caught around the body must be the murderer. Other than the fact he was killed with a 9mm pistol bullet to the temple, there is no evidence at Thurman's.

The agent, Geandano Yee, will show up to collect a reward when the police show up. He's not supposed to do that, but he's just too greedy. The player characters should witness the confrontation between Geandano and the police when he says, "They mine! I turned them in. You owe me money. At least 50 bucks apiece! Remember, I got friends in high places!"



© 1987 K. SIEMBIEDA

**Colonel Prianthung Luoum** is the chief of the Vengala branch of the CIA-supported, Laotian National Security office (LANASO). He's in an excellent position to interrogate any player character prisoners and arrange for their "disposal." He knows his underlings, he knew Lt. Thurman, and he knows that Captain Villerman is the only remaining link to "Spider." His power in Vengala is massive, most underworld figures will not dare to cross him. If he is accused of participating in the drug traffic, he'll laugh it off. As far as he's concerned, the \$15,000 he gives to General Lei every month will keep him well protected.

**Captain Vincent M. Villerman** has his fingers in all of the Laotian portions of the network. He doesn't know who "Spider," his boss, really is. Nor does he want to know. He will not reveal his method for passing messages and money (which follows), no matter what kind of pressure is put on him. On the other hand, Villerman is a very nervous man, because he takes a briefcase with money and messages to the Embassy nearly every day.

Incidentally, Captain Villerman is quite handy with a 9mm pistol (84%).

## THE LONELY CLUE

The network, and Villerman, don't make too many mistakes. In this case, just one little one. Villerman, himself, killed Thurman, and his weasel of an agent, **Geandano**, happened to witness it. Geandano, of course, hasn't told Villerman that he witnessed the crime.

Finding Geandano is fairly easy. With the money he extorted from the police (\$28 per player caught), and/or from other foul deeds, he is getting royally drunk. He is well known as a regular customer at the "*Cross-Eyed Buffalo Bar and Grill*" and will spend the next couple of nights there.

Geandano will talk, if caught and intimidated (just the threat of violence should be enough). So long as he is a free man, he will offer the information for money; \$1,500 to squeal on Villerman.

## THE SCUM JUST NATURALLY RISES TO THE TOP

The ultimate kingpin, the "Spider" himself, is not known to any of his confederates. They deliver messages and money packets (never heroin!) to a locker in the basement of the Stateside Embassy in Vengala.

Once the characters have this information, they can attempt to "stake out" the Embassy. At 5:00 PM, every weekday night, **Corey Lunger**, a minor clerical assistant, takes everything out of the locker and leaves the building with it. Lunger knows nothing about the contents of the briefcases. He's simply a delivery boy.

He will drive directly to the national airport, attach a shipping label to the briefcase, and hand it over to an Air America courier.

To find the actual Spider, roll 1D6 and consult the following table:

1. Air Force General, Gregory Ilands, the commander of the Stateside, Air Force Bomber forces stationed in Thailand.
2. Admiral Peter Vennings of the Stateside Navy, 7th Fleet.
3. Colonel Harry Dorthmann, chief of Military Intelligence in the southern region of Laos.
4. Special Forces Colonel, James S. Springwell, commander of the Meo forces in Southern 'Nam.
5. General Taylor S. Lyminster, a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Washington D.C.
6. Major Willard "Yank" Jurris, the player characters' very own commanding officer in USSAOC.

## WHO YOU GOING TO TELL?

The last problem for the players is to somehow reveal their information. The possibilities are:

1. **Leak it to the press.** The characters will have to stay hidden for a couple of weeks, but at least they'll be safe. The problem is that

the culprits will either get away or cover their tracks by the time someone really comes looking for them. Worse, if a reporter is entrusted, he may be tortured, or paid off, to reveal his sources and the groups' location.

2. **Go to Interpol.** The international police are **not** corrupted. They will conduct a thorough investigation, arrest the guilty, and arrange for the characters to be cleared and protected.

3. **Get back to Washington.** If the player characters can manage it, the best choice is to get back to the Pentagon, walk into the Adjutant General's office and spill the whole story. This will result in the arrest of the guilty, and a lot of glory for the characters. However, speed is of the essence. Unless decisive action is taken immediately, no evidence will remain after two weeks time. Getting to Stateside will not be easy. Remember, the characters are likely to be wanted men by now.

### Clancy Reynolds

**Note:** Reynolds is dead before this adventure begins. However, it's a good idea to use him in a game *before* running this mission. The description also gives you an idea of how the NPCs will react to news of his death.

**Description:** Clancy found his niche in life as an obnoxious snoop.

He was constantly on the look out for scandal. Given to wearing outrageously ugly, plaid suits with no underwear, and no socks. His greasy orange hair was uncut and messy, he rarely bathed and smelled bad even to soldiers in the field.

**Attributes:** ST: 06 AL: 73 AG: 12

**Alignment:** Malignant

**Skills:** None, except for the ability to write understandable, but boring, newspaper articles.

## SUICIDE SQUAD, OR, THE MISSION INSIDE THE MISSION

This is really just a part of *The Spider's Web* scenario; an artificial mission designed to get rid of snoopy characters. At some point, before the characters are outlawed, the drug circle will attempt to eliminate them in a rather common way. They'll just let 'em die in the war.

## RECON TEAM MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

Although there's really no team requirements, the Mission Director may want to pretend otherwise. Just specify the MOS of every characters in the group. As far as equipment is concerned, they should be assigned the *heaviest* kind of weapons that they are capable of handling.

## MISSION BRIEFING

Major John Briggs, of *Military Intelligence*, will give the briefing. The characters will be ushered into his personal conference room; a room noted for luxurious furniture and a well-stocked bar. Read the following:

"Men, I'd like to congratulate you on being chosen for this important mission. As you know, this is the kind of mission that I built my career on back in Korea. Gods! How I'd love to go with you on this one. Just to get that glorious feeling of hunting down the enemy, one by . . .

"Well, sorry; I don't mean to ramble on. It's just that being chained to a desk isn't my idea of war. Consider yourselves lucky to have real combat to look forward to!"

At this point, the Major lights up a cigar and turns to stare out the window.

"Your mission," he continues, "is to rescue some POWs that are being transported up from Southern 'Nam. Our intelligence reports that three American Prisoners of War are to



come north along the main 'Nam pathway, sometime in the next two days.

"Since you are all familiar with this kind of operation, I don't have to tell you how dangerous it is. Send a little heavy firepower in the wrong direction, and there'll be nothing left of those POWs to send back to their families.

"According to our best estimates, the POW escorts will be a small team, from 6 to 9 Viet Cong. Since they only expect to be guarding prisoners, they probably won't carry anything heavier than pistols and sub-machineguns.

"Well, that's about the extent of the mission. I just hope you can get in, get out, and save our boys before it's too late. Any questions?"

The Major will be as helpful as he can, and will answer all questions with the information in the Mission Briefing Details. If asked about anything else, he'll say.

"I really don't know the answer to that. I promise I'll find out by the time you set down in the mission area."

## MISSION BRIEFING DETAILS

These are the details that will be described to the players during their briefing.

1. **Method of Insertion.** You'll be taken by an Air America, small plane to a small airfield near the northern 'Nam border. Take-off will be four hours before dawn, and you'll land just after daybreak.
2. **Fire Support Availability.** We've made arrangements with the Air Force in Thailand. We can knock out any target in your area, with either fighter-bombers or a minigun equipped 'Spooky' (C-47 with (6), 7.62mm, 6-barrelled Miniguns). Be sure to give us a good 20 minutes to get to your location.
3. **Enemy Movement Information.** The area is held by the communist forces. They have little or no troop formations at that location. Most of the strategic points are held by our Meo allies.
4. **Terrain and Weather Report.** Extremely rugged highland terrain. Our meteorologists are predicting clear skies for the next 48 hours.
5. **Mission Objectives.** Recover the POWs and get them out safely.
6. **Special Rules.** Obviously, heavy weapons fire should be kept to a minimum until all the POWs are recovered.
7. **Method of Extraction.** In light of the special nature of this mission, there are 6 Huey Slicks standing by to pick everybody up. Allow about 20 minutes for arrival at the mission location.

## ACTUAL MISSION DETAILS WITHHELD FROM THE CHARACTERS

1. **Method of Insertion.** Everything will go as described previously.
2. **Fire Support Availability.** None.
3. **Enemy Movement Information.** A major troop movement of over 3,000 North Vietnamese and Viet Cong are currently starting to move through the area. In addition, there are 1,200, local, Ata Lao Guerrillas,
4. **Terrain and Weather Report.** The area is rugged, as described above. As far as weather is concerned, it'll rain for the next month.
5. **Mission Objectives.** Once the characters figure out what is really going on, they should be aware of the fact that the only valid mission is getting themselves out of there alive.
6. **Special Rules.** None.
7. **Method of Extraction.** Never, no way, impossible, nonexistent and forget it! You, walk out!

## ENCOUNTERS

The landing field area is deserted. From their maps, the players should be able to easily find the main, communist supply route. It's an easy, two hour walk through the woods.

Troop movements are extremely heavy in this area. For every hour of play time, roll on the *Communist Traffic Table*. Once the players have been detected by the local communist command (say, after the first battle), they'll be attacked by any forces handy. Roll once on the *Communist Encounter Table* for every two hours.

If the characters survive their initial encounters and escape, they'll have to do 10 days of hard traveling to get home. They'll be actively pursued the first day; roll once every 3 or 4 hours on the *Communist Encounter Table*.

**After the second day,** they'll only be pursued by "Red" Meo. Roll once each for morning, afternoon and night, each day, on the *Communist Encounter Table*. If the result is non-Meo forces, then the player characters will escape detection. Any Meo forces rolled will have detected the player characters.

Characters who return alive will be able to continue searching for traces of the drug network. Fortunately, the Spiders think that the characters are dead. If the characters report in after their escape, they'll be under attack from the drug network once again.

# RECON CHARACTER SHEET

Player Name:

↓ Inset Photograph ↓

## MILITARY PERSONNEL RECORD

Name:

WOUND RECORD

Major Characteristics

WOUND POINTS:

CURRENT ST:

Strength (ST):

Alertness (AL):

Agility (AG):

CARRYING CAPACITY:

Minor Characteristics

MOVEMENT RATE:

Height:

Weight:

Age:

↑ Inset Photograph ↑

Military Occupational Specialties (MOS)

Personality

MILITARY STATUS

Primary MOS:

Secondary MOS:

Alignment:

Serial Number:

Rank:

## SERVICE RECORD

Area of Assignment (Mission Location)

Commendations, Medals and Awards

Experience Points

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

## EQUIPMENT LISTS

Clothing List

Pocket Contents

Belt Attachments

Slung on Shoulder

Handheld Items

Backpack-Rucksack Contents

## RECON CHARACTER SHEET

Player Name:

Character Name:

### SERVICE TRAINING RECORD

## Weapons and Combat Training

| SKILLS - Weapons     | Base Effectiveness |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| Assault Rifle        |                    |
| 1. M-16              |                    |
| 2.                   |                    |
| 3.                   |                    |
| Pistol               |                    |
| 1.                   |                    |
| 2.                   |                    |
| Submachinegun        |                    |
| 1.                   |                    |
| 2.                   |                    |
| Bolt-Action Rifle    |                    |
| 1.                   |                    |
| 2.                   |                    |
| Semi-Automatic Rifle |                    |
| 1.                   |                    |
| 2.                   |                    |
| Shotgun              |                    |
| 1.                   |                    |
| Grenade Launcher     |                    |
| 1.                   |                    |

| SKILLS - Heavy Weapon | Base Effectiveness |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
|                       |                    |

| Hand to Hand Combat | Base Effectiveness |
|---------------------|--------------------|
| Bayonet             |                    |
| Garrote             |                    |
| Knife Fighting      |                    |
| Knife Throwing      |                    |
| Unarmed Combat      |                    |

### Non-Weapon Skills

| SKILLS - MOS Specialty | Base Effectiveness |
|------------------------|--------------------|
|                        |                    |

| SKILLS - General Skills | Base Effectiveness |
|-------------------------|--------------------|
| Climbing                |                    |
|                         |                    |



PEOPLE'S CHINA

PEOPLE'S NAM

HONG KONG

BURMA

LAOS

MEKONG RIVER

THAILAND

SOUTH CHINA SEA

CAMBODIA

SOUTHERN NAM

PHILIPPINES

GULF OF SIAM

MALAYSIA

INDONESIA

SINGAPORE

Cat. No. 611  
I.S.B.N. 0-916211-24-X

\$9.95