

1. The US Government has received a report regarding chemical warfare operations against Hmong resistance strongholds in northern Laos beginning in 1976. The information is from an LPLA pilot who participated in such missions.

A former Lao People's Liberation Army officer said that he flew L-19 and T-41 aircraft on missions in the Lao People's Democratic Republic (LPDR) which were specifically intended to dispense toxic chemical agents on Hmong villagers in the Phou Bia area vicinity of northern LPDR. Source said the LPLA, in cooperation with the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN), was involved in conducting chemical warfare (CW) operations in the LPDR since April or early May 1976. At that time, two LPLA H-34 helicopters were flown from the Phonsavan airfield, Xieng Khouang Province, to Long Tieng, Xieng Khouang Province, on a series of flights that transported rockets back to Phonsavan for storage.

Between June and August 1976, the LPLA launched attacks in the area of Bouamlong, Xieng Khouang Province, which was a stronghold for remnants of former Hmong General Vang Pao. During military activities in the Bouamlong area, the LPLA utilized L-19 aircraft to conduct rocket attacks on the Hmong resistance in an effort to eliminate them. However, LPLA crews responsible for loading rockets on the attack aircraft noted that the rockets that had been moved from Long Tieng to Phonsavan were not allowed to be used, even though the rockets stored at Phonsavan were much closer to the Bouamlong target area than Long Tieng where LPLA aircraft were required to re-arm. Source said for nearly three months before flying on missions to the Bouamlong area he flew to Long Tieng with his L-19 aircraft to have it fitted with rockets.

In late 1976, the L-19 aircraft flown by source was re-armed with rockets stored at Phonsavan. Initially, H-34 helicopters were used to transport the rockets from Phonsavan to depot near the Ban Xon airfield, Vientiane Province, where they were fitted onto racks of the L-19 aircraft for missions in the Phou Bia area. Later, the rockets from Phonsavan were transported to Ban Xon by LPLA trucks. The source said that all US-manufactured rockets were stored with the tip and canister kept apart; in other words, the two parts had be joined together before fitting them to the racks on the aircraft. However, all the rockets transported from Phonsavan to Ban Xon were already fitted together.

As part of his routine flight activities, source said he would check over his aircraft and in doing so he had examined the tip portion of the new smoke rockets. He said the majority of those rockets, which has been transported from Phonsavan, appeared "loose" in the portion where the tip and canister joined. He said that the ordinary explosive-type rockets at Long Tieng were noticeably more tightly connected--the tip and canister.

In late 1976, in preparation for airstrikes in new areas of Phou Bia and Kasy, Louang Prabang Province, the source said he began flying two or three PAVN staff officers, sometimes accompanied by one LPLA staff officer, on T-41 aircraft over the target areas. The PAVN officers were conducting a reconnaissance of the areas in anticipation of launching airstrikes. Initially, the L-19 aircraft was flown on the airstrike mission with a pilot and an LPLA staff officer sitting in the rear seat. However, after about two to three weeks, PAVN staff officers began riding in the rear seats of the L-19 aircraft and alternating missions with the LPLA officers. The PAVN officers who flew these missions spoke excellent Lao. Before each mission, the PAVN or LPLA staff officer assigned to the mission would go over target areas outlined on situation maps taken along. He would point out the targets to be attacked. The source noted that at no time did the PAVN staff officer sitting in the back seat of his aircraft communicate with LPLA officers on the ground as did the LPLA staff officers. PAVN officers who flew with him on T-41 reconnaissance and L-19 airstrike missions in the Hmong areas were switched around so that a new PAVN officer was used on each mission. (The average age of these PAVN staff officers was mid-40s).

Before flying L-19 airstrike missions with a full-load of rockets, the source related that he was often warned by an LPLA commander to fly at above normal altitudes when firing rockets, otherwise, it could be hazardous to the pilot and the accompanying staff officer. Because of this continued cautioning about not flying at too low an altitude, the source surmised that the smoke rockets fired at the Hmong people were unusual. He said that as a pilot of an L-19 aircraft which fired the smoke rockets, he was able to observe that the smoke rockets detonated in the air and some produced white smoke with a mixture of blue smoke while others produced red smoke with a mixture of yellow. The ordinary explosive-type rockets detonated on impact. The commander or his designated representative told the source before every mission that the type of operation he was going on was to "wipe out" the reactionary Hmong people. The purpose of firing the rockets was to cause the Hmong people to die out completely.

In addition, before a mission involving smoke rockets, the commander warned the pilots to keep the operation secret. The source said that during the nearly two years in which he flew rocket firing missions, he learned from the LPLA staff officers who flew with him that there were two types of rockets. The first, mostly smoke rockets, were to be fired at targets far away from combined LPLA and PAVN troops. This is to prevent the friendly troops from being exposed to the poison smoke. The second type of rocket was the ordinary explosive-type which was considered a "close support" rocket that could be fired near LPLA and/or PAVN

(leg of Phou Bia) during March 1977.

Source was a 57 year-old man who was in village during attacks.

- Mode of attack: Two planes fired rockets-- exploded on ground.
- Material/Agent used: Red and yellow smokes (gas).
- Number of people in village/unit: 35 families.
- Number of people affected: Many.
- Number of people killed: 28 or more--the old and the very young that could not run away.
- Animals: All animals died--chickens, dogs, pigs, and cows.
- Miscellaneous: Plants--where gas settled on green leaves holes developed.
- Medical findings: Some people seemed "drunk" and died in a few hours. Some would "shake" all over (like chills), and had diarrhea. Odor--"like pepper"--Rhinorrhoea. Eyes--painful, many tears, blurred vision for 3-4 days. Frontal headache. Eyes turned red. Throat painful. Could not speak clear or loud for 15 days. Much spitting (increased salivation). Coughed a great deal--coughed up blood. Breathing painful--more so with inhaling than exhaling. Hard to breathe. Pain in chest for 15 days. Pain in stomach--felt swollen, vomited several times for one day. Had diarrhea with blood. Skin--no effect. Sleep--no effect. Muscles --very weak--could not do anything for weeks.

6. The US Government received a report that a 24 year old former medic treated 49 patients who suffered from "gas" attacks; all died. They had been brought from the villages around Phu Chia. The attacks took place in 1976-1977. The last patient came to him in March 1977. All of the patients died within 24-48 hours. They had the following signs and symptoms:

- Red and swollen eyes
- Bitter taste in the mouth
- Convulsions
- Chest pain
- Difficulty breathing
- Darkened faces
- Stiff necks
- Excessive flow of saliva

9. The US Government received the following eyewitness report: Source said he had witnessed the deaths of six of his family, including his father and mother, who were contaminated with poisonous gas in January 1977. He said the six had been working in a rice field in the Tam Lo area when an L-19 aircraft appeared overhead and fired a rocket which exploded in a red toxic gas. Initially, his family complained of blurred vision, headache, nausea and vomiting, inflamed eyes which watered, dizziness, and an overall feeling of weakness. He said that his father died about 12 hours after exposure. His mother, who also experienced acute diarrhea, died within 16 hours, the remainder of his family all perished the following night after the gas attack. He said that other Hmong people exposed to the poisonous gases lingered on for up to three and four months. In these cases, the initial symptoms were similar to those of his family who died within a day or two, but also included severe diarrhea, dizziness, and a feeling of thirstiness. The more liquids the person drank, the more urine passed until eventually they died of dehydration. Other symptoms included the cornea of the eye turning a milky color resulting in blindness, a loss of appetite, weakness, and malnutrition.

10. The US Government has received the following reports: On 16 April 1977 while commanding more than 500 Hmong and Lao Theung resistance troops near Phou Sang, about 30 kilometers West of Phou Bia, source discovered an unexploded rocket which he believed was the same kind used in the gas attacks against the resistance. He said the rocket, an apparent dud, was found in two pieces and measured overall approximately 120 centimeters (cms) long, a diameter of about 12.5 cms, and weighed an estimated three kilograms. Although somewhat apprehensive that the poison gas might leak out from the canister, he went ahead and ordered the rocket pieces taken back to his resistance headquarters situated in the Tam Khai cave in the Phou Bia area. He said the rocket had several markings and appeared color-coded.

11. US Army physician's interview with Lao refugee source in Thailand, October 6, 1979.

Source witnessed chemical attack on Houi Kam Lang (Phou Bia area) in April, 1977.

-- Mode of attack: Airplane. Two H.E. rockets, two gas rockets.

-- Material/Agent used: Yellow smoke.

-- Number of people in village/unit: 200 in village.