

C O P Y

Vientiane, Laos  
February 23, 1966

Mr. David H. Hickler  
General Manager  
Air America  
Vientiane

Dear Mr. Hickler:

I am writing this letter to you in my capacity as Chairman, Administrative Support Team (AST), since all community services for the American Community in Laos have been placed by the Ambassador under the jurisdiction of this Team.

You and your personnel, by virtue of your status under USAID contract, are an integral part of the official American community here. It is thus a matter of common concern to us to acquaint you with those Embassy policies which govern the American community.

As you know, Air America personnel enjoy the privileges of using the Commissary and other activities of the American Community Association. Further, your personnel have the right to send and receive mail through the Embassy APO unit, to buy gasoline at the Embassy's Silver City compound, and to use the Embassy's medical facilities. Finally, in addition to the standard consular services provided American citizens, your employees and their dependents are included in arrangements made by the Embassy for the physical security of the American community in the event of emergency situations arising here.

In obtaining these facilities and privileges for your employees, the Embassy has undertaken a solemn commitment to the Royal Lao Government to ensure that these employees comply with Lao laws. I would add to that specific formal obligation a further requirement that Lao customs and traditions be respected.

Specifically, Embassy Administrative Memorandum No. 64, dated April 6, 1965, and Administrative Support Team Memorandum No. 66-006, dated August 13, 1965 (copies attached), were written and circulated to establish standards of behavior and compliance with Lao law which would insure close Lao-American cooperation in a harmonious atmosphere. However, memoranda tend to become forgotten after some time on a Company bulletin board, and new personnel are not always immediately aware of the "do's and don'ts" which apply equally to us all.

Accordingly, three steps are being taken to assist you in avoiding incidents which might cause trouble or embarrassment to the American community. First, new employees of your company and their dependents will be invited to attend the quarterly Orientation Programs given by the Embassy. (Those employees now on board will be more than welcome at our next Orientation Program in April.) Second, copies of AST Memoranda of interest to, or containing guidance for, the American community will be sent to you for the information of your American employees and their dependents. Finally, additional copies of the Embassy weekly newsletter, the Khao Lao, will be sent to your office to insure a wider distribution of news and greater sense of integration in the American community for Air America personnel.

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In recent months, there have been reports of persons under the age of 18 operating automobiles and motor scooters. This is in violation of the Lao regulations quoted in AST Memorandum 66-006. There have been reports of driving in excess of Lao speed limits quoted for everyone's information in AST Memorandum 66-006. There have been allegations that articles imported duty free, and bought by Americans at the Commissary, have been given to people who do not enjoy duty-free privileges.

Each instance of the examples in the preceding paragraph tends to undermine Lao-American relations. Repeated failure to appreciate privilege and respect local law tends to complicate and retard the effective execution of United States programs in Laos.

It would be appreciated if you would insure that this letter and its attachments as well as future communications on this subject receive wide distribution among your American employees and their dependents. Your cooperation, as well as your suggestions, can contribute importantly toward realizing the best possible relations between Americans and Laotians. As you know, this is one of our most important goals in Laos.

Sincerely yours,

/s/ N. G. W. Thorne

N. G. W. Thorne  
Chairman, Administrative Support  
Team