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Cambodian Orders Inquiry Into Killings

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NEAK, Luong, Cambodia, April 16 — A ranking security official in Pnompenh said he was shocked by news that hundreds of bodies had been seen floating in the Mekong River and that he had ordered an immediate investigation. He said that no responsible official had ordered a mass execution.

Lieut. Col. Kim Eng Kouroudeth, chief of army intelligence, said that he did not know what had happened, but that he assumed the dead might have been the victims of the wrath of a population aroused by the collusion between Vietnamese residents of Cambodia and the Vietcong and North Vietnamese forces that had invaded Cambodia.

A French Roman Catholic priest in Neak Luong, a town on the Mekong River, estimated today that about 1,000 bodies had floated downstream since last Monday afternoon. Many of the bodies were tied together in groups of up to 10, and many also had their hands tied.

Neak Luong is midway between Pnompenh, about 40 miles upstream, and the point at which the Mekong crosses into South Vietnam. No bodies have been seen in the river at the capital and as far downstream at the village of Meat Krasar, eight miles down from Pnompenh. The assumption is, therefore, that the bodies were dumped into the Mekong in the stretch between Meat Krasar and here.

At a military briefing in Pnompenh today, Maj. Am Rong said that the Government wanted to protect the rights of innocent Vietnamese, but he did not list any security measures that had been taken.

The Cambodians and the Vietnamese have been enemies for centuries, and the Cambodian leaders who ousted Prince Norodian Sihanouk as [illegible] on March 18 have been storing up this enmity.

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KILLINGS IN CAMBODIA: A thousand bodies were said to have floated down Mekong past Neak Luong.