

PLEA FOR U.N. HELP MADE BY THE U.S.

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Waldheim Offers His Good
Offices to Both Sides

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UNITED NATIONS, N. Y., May 14 — The United States asked Secretary General Waldheim today to do what he could to help obtain the release of the merchant ship and crew seized early Monday off Cambodia.

The seizure was an illegal and unprovoked action that posed a threat to international peace, the United States Representative, John Scali, said in a letter handed to the Secretary General.

Mr. Waldheim responded by offering his good offices to the Governments concerned. He appealed to them to "refrain from further acts of force in order to facilitate the process of peaceful settlement."

Mr. Waldheim sent messages to Prince Norodom Sihanouk, titular head of the new Cambodian government who is in Peking, and to Phnom Penh.

Mr. Scali's request was made a few hours after announcement in Washington that American aircraft had been fired on by the Cambodians and that the planes attacked and sank Cambodian gunboats in the vicinity of the seized freighter.

The timing prompted some here to complain that the United States turned to the United Nations after—not before — had it resorted to force, when it could have appealed earlier. American officials offered no explanation, but it was well aware that potential United Nations help was limited since there was no direct contact with the new Communist authorities in Phnom Penh. It was also believed that the request to the United Nations was something of an afterthought.

Since the Communist takeover there has been only one communication, on April 30, in which the new Foreign Minister, Sarin Chhak, claimed Cambodia's seat here; the message came via Peking. Mr. Waldheim acknowledged it but received no reply.

"The trouble with offering good offices is that one has to be sure they are welcomed by everyone, and it is difficult in this case to know where to address the offer," a United Nations official said.

The United States' letter said it had initiated "certain steps through diplomatic channels" to obtain the release of vessel and crew. Washington has asked Peking to intervene, but it is not clear how much influence the Chinese have with the new Government even though Prince Norodom Sihanouk, its titular head, is in Peking.

The letter also reserved the right to take measures to protect the lives of the Americans and the property involved, as provided in Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, which recognizes the right of self-defense against armed attack without waiting for action by the Security Council.