

Pentagon Still Seeks Aid Funds It Asked Before Cambodia Fell

By **LESLIE H. GELB**

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, June 10—The Pentagon is still seeking President Ford's approval for an \$800-million foreign military aid program for the 1976 fiscal year, although more than half of this total was originally earmarked for Cambodia before the Communist take-over there.

Pentagon officials acknowledged that they wanted to take the \$425-million previously scheduled for Cambodia and spread it around to a number of countries, including Greece, Turkey, South Korea and Indonesia, to provide special reassurances to those nations in the aftermath of the Communist victories in Indochina.

Several Administration officials interested in scuttling the Pentagon proposal also pointed out that the \$800-million total was well above the \$475-million appropriated for this fiscal year which ends June 30, and was thus contrary to Congressional wishes to phase out entirely the grant program of military aid.

Memo to Ford Planned

White House aides said that the Office of Management and Budget was planning to send a memorandum to Mr. Ford this week asking him to select a new military aid program to send to Congress.

The memorandum is expected to show widely divergent positions within the bureaucracy. The Office of Management and Budget is recommending about \$400-million and the State Department and the National Security Council staff about \$500-million, against the approximate \$800-million proposal from the Pentagon.

A high Pentagon official said today that Secretary of Defense James R. Schlesinger had not taken final action on the program and that the matter would be treated as a staff proposal until he acted.

According to several officials directly involved, the inter-agency dispute is as much over the tactics of dealing with Congress as it is about the actual military needs of allies.

State Department officials, in particular, want to avoid a

confrontation with Congress on this issue. Though these officials said they saw a reluctance in Congress to appear isolationist, they said they felt that foreign aid was not the right issue for a test of sentiment now.

If Mr. Ford does decide to back any figure close to that of the Pentagon, a clash seems certain. Representative Clement J. Zablocki, Democrat of Wisconsin, the key member of the House International Relations Committee on grant aid matters, was asked in a telephone interview if he would look favorably on a request in excess of this year's total.

"No," he answered, "because by the law we passed last year we intended a scaling down."

Review of Program Promised

When President Ford made his general budget presentation to Congress in February, the grant military aid program was set at \$818-million. Weeks later, as the Indochina fighting was reaching a climax and after the Administration's reassessment of Middle East policy had been announced, the Administration informed Congress that the grant aid program was also to be reviewed and that a new program would be submitted soon.

But before this happened, Administration officials had begun to testify before Congressional committees on the \$818-million grant aid request. In open hearings on Feb. 3 before the House Appropriations Subcommittee, Lieut. Gen. Howard M. Fish, who runs the program for the Pentagon, was asked how much of this total was planned for Cambodia.

General Fish disclosed that the figure was \$425-million. This was considered a slip by Administration officials because exact totals for specific countries are almost invariably classified information and are made known to Congressional committees only in secret documents.

After Cambodia came under full Communist control in April and was taken off the aid rolls, the Pentagon's own program should have been reduced to \$393-million. In the last month,

however, Pentagon officials working on the program began to argue that the funds thus made available should be used to make up for Congressional cuts in the program in the last few years and as a way of underlining American commitments in Asia and supporting American policy elsewhere.

Not without opposition within the Pentagon itself, the Pentagon staff responsible for the program proceeded to develop a new program that added million of dollars in military hardware for about eight countries and included a general contingency fund said to total about \$150-million.

The State Department went along only with the increases that the Pentagon had earmarked for Greece and Turkey. As one high State Department official said, "when we go to Congress we have to be purer than Caesar's wife, otherwise Congress will kill the whole program."

The Office of Management and Budget staff argued, largely on budget grounds, that the program should be no larger than that originally presented to Congress minus the funds intended for Cambodia.

When State Department officials raised the question of whether the Pentagon proposal was contrary to the law, the Defense Department response was that the exact language of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1974 left sufficient leeway.

Humphrey Demurs

The law reads that the program "should be reduced and terminated as rapidly as feasible consistent with the security and foreign policy requirements of the United States." But Senator Hubert H. Humphrey, Democrat of Minnesota and chairman of the Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Foreign Aid, said that "the programs of the magnitude forecasted are clearly inconsistent with the will of the Senate as expressed in last year's bill."

Another section of the law directs the President to submit to Congress "a detailed plan for the reduction and eventual elimination" of the present grant aid program. Officials in the State Department and the Pentagon said that no such plan had yet been developed.

The grant military aid portion of the foreign aid bill customarily includes funds for tanks, aircraft, ammunition, training and similar requirements. It is separate from the military credit sales program run by the Pentagon. The sales program, the officials said, will seek about \$575-million from Congress to finance purchases totalling more than \$1-billion.

The direct economic aid part of the foreign aid bill, totalling \$1.3-billion, has already been submitted to Congress.

Officials said that none of the military aid programs to be presented to Congress in the next few weeks would include funds for Israel, Egypt, Jordan and Syria. Such requests will be sent to Congress separately after the Middle East policy reassessment is completed.