

ARMS RECEIVED, CAMBODIANS SAY; ORIGIN IS IN DOUBT

Weapons American, Aides in
Pnompenh Report, but U.S.
Terms Them Captured

SHIPMENT ON 3 PLANES

Red Forces Quit Saang but
Capture Town on Highway
to a Provincial Capital

By HENRY KAMM

Special to The New York Times

PNOMPENH, Cambodia, April 23—Informed Cambodian sources reported today that their country had received a shipment of weapons for its underequipped army, which has been striving to check advances by Vietnamese Communist troops.

The Cambodian informants said the arms were American-made. [In Washington, Administration officials said that what the Cambodians received were Soviet-designed AK-47 automatic rifles and ammunition that had been captured from Communist forces in South Vietnam.]

The arms reportedly arrived on three cargo planes that landed at the Pnompenh airport, which had been closed to civilian traffic for the shipment.

The shipment is believed to have originated either in Saigon or in Bangkok. Both the South Vietnamese and the Thai armed forces are equipped almost exclusively with American arms, and it could not be learned whether the United States, South Vietnam or Thailand was the donor.

No Joint Program Foreseen

Diplomatic circles here assume that the United States does not want to respond on its own to Cambodia's request for arms aid and that the Asian nations interested in helping this country repel the Vietnamese Communist invasion have failed so far to organize a joint aid program.

Therefore, it is assumed, the shipment marked the beginning of an unofficial program to fill pressing needs until an official and public aid effort could be arranged by a group of nations.

Indonesia has taken a leading role in setting up such a program, according to diplomatic sources, but conversations between interested nations have not yet produced an accord. [In Jakarta the Indonesian Government denied that it has agreed in principle to supply military aid to Cambodia, The Associated Press reported.]

Meanwhile, Cambodian military leaders, who had been dejected, were cheered by the fact that Vietnamese Communist invaders withdrew today from the town of Saang, about 15 miles south of Pnompenh, which they had held since Sunday.

Cambodian troops moved into Saang after an artillery and mortar barrage and found that the Vietnamese had withdrawn.

This news was balanced by the loss to the invaders of the

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town of Ang Tasom, 35 miles south of the capital, in the province of Takeo. The loss of Ang Tasom, with the earlier loss of Samrong, between Phompenh and Takeo town, cuts all road access between the provincial and national capitals.

The North Vietnamese and Vietcong troops also menaced Route 1, leading from Takeo to Saigon, when they shelled the town of Neak Luong last night. It is situated where the Mekong River cuts the road and a car ferry shuttles traffic across the unbridged river.

With regard to the effort to provide military aid, interested countries appear to be presenting a united front in declining to identify the source of the reported shipment. Australian and Indonesian sources would say only that they did not know the origin of the planes and their cargo but declined to deny that they might have come from their countries.

The United States embassy declared that no American planes arrived this morning and declined to speculate on the mission of the three planes.

It is believed that M-16 rifles and ammunition were a substantial part of the cargo. This poses the problem of introducing another weapon into the internationally varied arsenal of Cambodia's forces, with the attendant problem of opening an additional category of ammunition needs. But it is assumed to be better for Cambodia to settle for the basic weapon of a country whose interests are similar to hers and that can therefore be expected to assure a steady ammunition supply.

Cambodian troops are now armed with American rifles—World War I Springfields and World War II M-1's. The most modern rifles Cambodian soldiers carry are the Chinese AK-47's.

Some were supplied directly by Communist China, but the bulk come from Chinese supplies destined for the Vietcong that were diverted by the Cambodians after their arrival at the port of Sihanoukville.

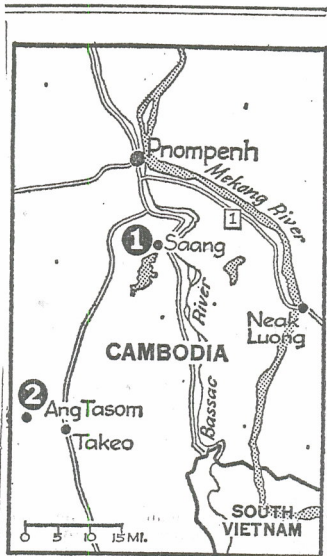
The sources said such diversions took place last February and March prior to the overthrow of Prince Norodom Sihanouk as Chief of State last March 18. That ended the availability of Sihanoukville as a port of entry for supplies for the Vietcong, which have been using areas of eastern Cambodia as a sanctuary.

Asian Parley Mapped

JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP)—Foreign Minister Adam Malik said today that the Association of Southeast Asian Nations had agreed to sponsor an Asian conference to try to maintain Cambodia's neutrality. Indonesia proposed the conference.

Mr. Malik made the announcement after conferring with diplomats of the four other association nations, Thailand, the Philippines, Malaysia and Singapore.

Japan, Australia and New Zealand have agreed to attend the conference and invitations have been sent to Pakistan, Ceylon and India, Mr. Malik said. He added that North Viet-



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ACTION IN CAMBODIA:
Government troops returned to Saang (1) but lost Ang Tasom (2) to enemy forces.

nam had been invited but that he doubted it would accept.

Cambodians Meet in Europe

Special to The New York Times

PARIS, April 23 —A Cambodian Government delegation arrived today for a two-day meeting of Cambodian diplomatic representatives in Europe, Africa and Latin America.

The delegation chief, former Premier Pho Proeung, explained that the meeting was to inform the diplomats of the situation in Cambodia so that they could explain it in turn to Cambodian nationals.