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WHITE HOUSE SAYS CAMBODIANS FIGHT FOREIGN INVASION

But Soviet Assert That U.S.
'Imperialist Circles' Fan a
'Fratricidal Civil War'

NEW ATTACKS REPORTED

Washington Is Said to Keep
Contacts With Moscow on
Possible Peace Parley

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WASHINGTON, April 24 —

The United States and the Soviet Union publicly disagreed today over the character of the current fighting in Cambodia, although the two Governments were reported to be maintaining private contacts on the possibility of a broad Indochina peace conference.

Ronald L. Ziegler, the White House press secretary, volunteered to reporters that the Vietnamese Communist offensive in Cambodia was "a foreign invasion of a neutral country which cannot be considered in any way a pretense of a civil war."

[In Pnompenh, high military sources said a great increase in local Vietnamese Communist attacks in the frontier regions suggested that the enemy might be preparing an offensive to divide Cambodia in two. Page 3.]

U.S. Role Is Assailed

The Soviet press agency, Tass, charged in a statement issued in Moscow that "imperialist circles" in the United States were fanning "the flames of a fratricidal civil war" in Cambodia.

But Administration quarters reported that new hints had been received from Moscow this week through diplomatic channels that the Soviet Union remained actively interested in

a Southeast Asian peace conference despite its ambiguous public attitude.

The Nixon Administration, meanwhile, continued to ponder whether to accede to the urgent requests by Cambodia's Premier, Lon Nol, for more arms to resist the attacks.

Hopeful for Conference

The argument against such a move offered by some leading civilian members of the Administration was said to be that even the slimmest chances for a peace conference must not be jeopardized through an American involvement in Cambodia at a time when there even is no sound assurance that United States arms would save the day for the Lon Nol Government, which ousted Prince Norodom Sihanouk as Chief of State last month.

Some officials suggested that Mr. Ziegler's remarks on the "foreign invasion" might have been designed to justify yesterday's airlift to Cambodia from South Vietnam of captured Soviet and Chinese weapons and possibly plans to send more.

Mr. Ziegler said he could not predict when the President would reach the decision on the Cambodian request for American

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can arms, but he said it remained under "serious consideration."

President Nixon postponed a National Security Council meeting from today to next Monday and flew to his mountain retreat at Camp David, Md., where he will remain until Sunday morning.

In a general way, officials reported, at least two members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff advocated a swift and substantial delivery of weapons to assure the survival of the Lon Nol regime so that it could become an ally of the United States in Asia, as is Thailand.

But, according to officials, this view has found limited support among the top civilian advisers to the President. Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird is among those described as less than enthusiastic about immediate shipment of weapons.

Similar reluctance was reported to exist to some extent in the Central Intelligence Agency. Secretary of State William P. Rogers and several key White House advisers were said to have taken a "highly cautious attitude" toward Premier Lon Nol's arms request.

Officials said it was still unclear whether the North Vietnamese and the Vietcong would confine themselves to the securing of their Cambodian sanctuaries on the Vietnamese borders or whether they planned to capture Pnompenh and install a new pro-Communist regime there.

Although officials refused to predict Mr. Nixon's final decision, some of them suggested that, weighed against other considerations, the United States "could live" with a situation in which the Communists merely restored their Cambodian sanctuary, a six-mile strip along the border.