

Nixon and Advisers Weigh Decision on Cambodian

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President Nixon and his top political and military advisers continued today to weigh United States policy in the rapidly deteriorating Cambodian situation as Administration officials acknowledged that this might be a critical week in the crisis.

A meeting of the National Security Council, originally planned for last Friday, is scheduled at the White House for tomorrow morning and is expected to take up the question whether the United States should meet the urgent requests by Premier Lon Nol of Cambodia for an early and substantial supply of arms for his small army, which has been battered by North Vietnamese and Vietcong attacks.

Cambodia was not originally on the National Security Council's agenda for Friday, according to the White House press secretary, Ronald L. Ziegler, but Administration officials assumed today that the issue would be taken up tomorrow in the light of the quickening pace of developments.

Critical Decision Foreseen

Mr. Nixon spent the day today at the White House after returning last night from a 24-hour stay at Camp David, Md., where he conferred with Henry A. Kissinger, his adviser on national security affairs.

No responsible official was prepared to predict the course of action that Mr. Nixon might take, but the impression in Administration quarters was that

United States choices were rapidly diminishing.

The consensus among high officials was that the decisions the President might take on Cambodia—to provide the aid sought by Lieut. Gen. Lon Nol or to refuse to do so might well be comparable in magnitude to those made by former Presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson in the nineteen-sixties to intervene heavily in Vietnam.

Officials felt that the effectiveness of the "stop gap" measures ordered last week—to assist Cambodia's anti-Communist Government by an airlift of captured Chinese-manufactured automatic rifles from South Vietnam—had obvious limitations and could not alone assure the survival of Premier Lon Nol's Government.

Some Urge Further Steps

This operation, according to official sources, was planned to provide temporary relief to the Cambodians pending other decisions in Washington. It was authorized for the same reasons for which the United States command in South Vietnam had, in effect, tolerated incursions by South Vietnamese forces into the Communist hideouts across the border in Cambodia.

Since late last week, however, top military leaders here, reportedly including one or more members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, have been seeking to persuade the White House that these operations were inadequate in the light of the mounting Communist offensives in many parts of Cambodia.

One reason for delaying a military aid decision, Administration officials said, was the lingering hope that the Soviet Union might be able to persuade North Vietnam and possibly Communist China to participate in a broad peace conference on Indochina.

This hope was initially based on a suggestion by Yakov A. Malik, the Soviet representative at the United Nations, that a new Geneva conference would be the proper forum to

settle the Southeast Asian conflicts.

But this weekend's public statement by both Peking and Hanoi rejecting a peace conference appeared to suppress these hopes. Officials said this was why Secretary of State William P. Rogers charged in a New York speech last night that the Soviet Union had been "steadily backpedaling" from Mr. Malik's original suggestion.

Recalling that Moscow was co-chairman of the 1954

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Geneva conference on Indochina, which the United States had hoped to see reconvened, Mr. Rogers said that "the Soviet attitude has been negative toward exercise of its treaty responsibilities."

Today State Department officials emphasized that the United States intended to pursue in its contacts with Moscow the possibility of international diplomatic action, despite the latest enunciations of the Soviet position.