

CAMBODIAN COAST UNDER BLOCKADE BY ALLIED FLEET

U.S. Confirms Participation,
Disclosed by Ky—Saigon
Flotilla Removes 3,500

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NEAK LUONG, Cambodia, May 12 — Vice President Nguyen Cao Ky of South Vietnam said here today that allied naval vessels had begun blockading a 100-mile stretch of Cambodian coastline to prevent enemy forces from resupplying their troops by sea.

Six hours later, the United States campaign in Saigon issued a statement confirming that United States Navy vessels were participating in the patrolling operation.

The blockade, which Mr. Ky said started last Saturday, extends from the principal Cambodian port of Kompong Som, formerly Sihanoukville, to the South Vietnamese border. The objective, the command's statement said, is to intercept any North Vietnamese or Vietcong boats attempting to bring supplies across the Cambodian beaches.

Mixed Fleet in Action

The blockade is being enforced by a mixed fleet that includes heavily armed United States coastal patrol vessels and Chinese-style South Vietnamese junks equipped with heavy machine guns, Navy sources said.

The action is the latest development in a widening pattern of South Vietnamese military involvement in Cambodia. As a symbol of this pattern, Vice President Ky set off in his helicopter today to visit South Vietnamese units that are operating, with American assistance and air support, 40 miles inside Cambodia.

[Fifty miles northeast of Pnompenh, 3,500 Vietnamese, including all the Vietnamese in Kompong Cham, Cambodia's second largest town, were taken aboard vessels of the South Vietnamese flotilla and headed downstream toward Vietnam.]

Shortly before noon, Mr. Ky landed here, where three battalions of Vietnamese marines are holding a strategic ferry-crossing site on the western bank of the Mekong. Pnompenh is less than 40 miles to the northwest.

At an impromptu news conference, Mr. Ky said South Vietnam was planning to conduct extensive military operations throughout eastern and central Cambodia after United States troops are withdrawn by the end of June.

Mr. Ky was asked what South Vietnam would do after the United States withdrew its logistical and air support by the June 30 deadline set by President Nixon.

The Vice President said:

Continued on Page 17, Column 1

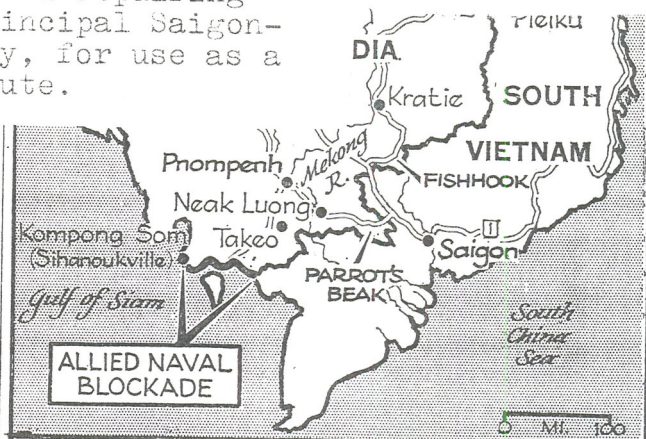
"That's why I'm here today, to discuss with our commanders the steps we can take to carry on by ourselves."

In addition, Mr. Ky said, an engineering battalion has already begun clearing and repairing Route 1, the principal Saigon-Pnompenh highway, for use as a land supply route.

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Mr. Ky added that he and other members of the Saigon Government had been in personal contact with the Cambodian general staff and that Pnompenh had asked for South Vietnamese assistance in fighting the North Vietnamese and Vietcong on both sides of the Mekong River.

The Vice President said that South Vietnam had been providing air support, presumably tactical air strikes, for the Cambodian forces fighting on the western side of the Mekong for the last two days. With this support, he said, the Cam-



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South Vietnamese and U.S. vessels were reported to be patrolling 100 miles of Cambodia's coast to prevent enemy boats from bringing supplies across the beaches.

bodians had retaken the provincial capital of Takeo, which fell to the Communists two weeks ago.

Mr. Ky said he thought South Vietnam could safely afford to keep about 15,000 soldiers operating in Cambodia for the next several months without jeopardizing security in South Vietnam.

He asserted that the plans for the naval blockade had been discussed in some detail by senior South Vietnamese and Cambodian military officers and that the two Govern-

ments had agreed on the project in advance.

The action appears to be a simple extension of the operation that the United States and South Vietnamese Navies have been conducting along the 1,000-mile South Vietnamese coast for several years.

A fleet of several hundred armed coastal boats constantly patrols the area from the demilitarized zone to the Cambodian border to prevent enemy infiltration of arms and

supplies into South Vietnam.

Since Saturday, according to Navy sources, this operation has been extended to include the Cambodian coastline as far westward as Kompong Som.

There was no immediate indication whether any enemy vessels had been stopped or seized yet.

The United States command said the blockade would not interfere with intrnational or Cambodian shipping or the extensive fishing operations in the Gulf of Siam.