

# Saigon Units' Role In Cambodia Viewed As Bar to Sihanouk

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WASHINGTON, May 14—Concern over a possible Communist attempt to install the headquarters of the exile regime of Prince Norodom Sihanouk in Cambodia after the departure of American troops was reported today to be one reason for a growing expectation here that South Vietnamese forces will stay in Cambodia.

Robert J. McCloskey, the State Department's spokesman, said at a news briefing that there was "no understanding or agreement" between Washington and Saigon on how long the South Vietnamese would remain in Cambodia.

Mr. McCloskey offered no explanation of why there was no agreement, but other official sources said that the United States and South Vietnam feared a new Communist thrust into Cambodia after the American withdrawal.

While President Nixon has committed himself to the complete withdrawal of United States units from Cambodia by the end of June, the Saigon Government has indicated that its forces were not bound by this timetable. Mr. McCloskey said that South Vietnam had not given Washington any "specific policy statement" on how long its troops would remain in Cambodia or whether they might withdraw and subsequently return.

## Broader Mission for Saigon

As described by President Nixon, the mission of the United States forces in Cambodia is to destroy the Communist sanctuaries and arms depots to relieve the pressure on American forces in South Vietnam.

Officials here have begun to acknowledge privately, however, that the mission of the South Vietnamese troops is developing into a broader operation, increasingly designed to assure the survival of the Government of Premier Lon Nol in Phnompenh and prevent the return to power of Prince Sihanouk.

A major hint of this emerging strategy came yesterday when Secretary of State William P. Rogers replied to a question at a news conference about South Vietnamese cooperation with the Lon Nol Government. He said that "the whole Nixon Doctrine as produced at Guam is that Asians should work with each other to take care of their common problems."

Intelligence sources here estimate that a North Vietnamese thrust into northeastern Cambodia—to protect the Ho Chi Minh Trail and to secure a military and operational base for Prince Sihanouk's regime—may be carried out by units currently operating in southern Laos.