

# U.S. Favors Joint Defense By Saigon and Pnompenh

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WASHINGTON, May 15—The United States publicly encouraged South Vietnam and Cambodia today to produce a joint plan for the defense of the regime of Premier Lon

Nol in Pnompenh from Communist attacks.

But while this encouragement was being expressed at a news briefing by the State Department spokesman, Carl E. Bartch, other Administration quarters indicated that the United States was reserving the right to veto such plans if they threatened the conduct of the war in South Vietnam.

Reports from Pnompenh yesterday said that a de facto military alliance existed. Mr. Bartch insisted, however, that the Administration had not been informed of these plans.

[In Vientiane, a spokesman for the Laotian Defense Ministry suggested that South Vietnamese forces intervene to help Laos, according to Agence France-Presse.]

## U. S. Awaiting Outcome

Mr. Bartch said that the United States was awaiting the outcome of discussions between South Vietnam and Cambodia to see what kind of plans emerged.

He said that he had not "seen anything" to suggest that President Nguyen Van Thieu and Premier Lon Nol had reached an agreement.

Other Administration sources said the United States favored an agreement. They recalled that Secretary of State William P. Rogers had implied this when he said Wednesday that the Nixon doctrine provided that "Asians should work with each other to take care of their common problems."

But today was the first time

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that a Government official specifically referred on the record to negotiations by Saigon and Phompenh for a common defense against North Vietnamese and Vietcong forces.

Mr. Bartch also confirmed yesterday's reports that the United States had provided the Cambodian army with 7,200 M-2 carbines and said that more small arms would be made available.

Other officials said that the number of the M-2's flown from Saigon to Pnompenh was closer to 10,000 and that deliveries were continuing. They also said that the United States was supplying the Cambodian army with mortars and recoilless rifles—both classified here as small arms.

## Entrapment Is Feared

Meanwhile, some officials have expressed concern privately that the United States may have become trapped in the Cambodian venture to the extent that it could affect President Nixon's plans to withdraw 150,000 troops from South Vietnam within the year.

When the Cambodian operation was launched last month, the plans were for the South Vietnamese to remain longer than the Americans but to limit their operations largely to the Communist sanctuary areas. Since then, the South Vietnamese have plunged deeper into Cambodia and their mission has increasingly become one of buttressing the Lon Nol regime.

Mr. Nixon said last Friday that although South Vietnam was not bound by the American withdrawal timetable, United States logistical and air support, as well as advisers, would come out.

What is worrying some officials is the possibility that the South Vietnamese, without advisers or logistic and air support, might be mauled by the enemy. Should this happen, some officials said, the Cambodian operation might become a fiasco and endanger the program of turning the war in South Vietnam over to the South Vietnamese.

Such a possibility, they said, would raise the following question:

¶Would the Administration under such circumstances reconsider its decision on depriving the South Vietnamese of air cover and helicopter gunships? Many officials believe this would become necessary and that the President would then invoke the "protective reaction" argument to justify it.

¶Would United States forces return to Cambodia if the South Vietnamese and the Cambodians were unable to hold the line against the Communists? Officials said today that this contingency was not under active consideration.

¶What leverage does the United States have to prevent South Vietnam from getting into operations that the Administration may consider unwise?

Some officials reported indications that the Administration might have difficulty restraining Saigon from overcommitment in Cambodia and might have to eliminate logistic support.

Mr. Bartch said today that the United States did not know what plans the Saigon Government was developing for Cambodia after the American pullout.