

## Big Question About Cambodia

# After June 30, What?

By Murrey Marder

Times-Post Service

### Washington

South Vietnam's leadership has forced to the surface sensitive Cambodian questions that the Nixon Administration is struggling to avoid in the tense debate in the Senate.

The firm assertion by Vice President Nguyen Cao Ky yesterday that South Vietnamese forces will remain in Cambodia after the June 30 deadline for United States troops may snarl the Administration's covert strategy.

This strategy, informed sources concede, has been based on keeping publicly murky just what allied officials anticipate after the American ground forces pull out.

What is expected, and planned for, is a continuing anti-Communist military campaign in Cambodia carried on by Asian nations — especially South Vietnam — with major U.S. support and American air power.

U.S. planning contemplates employing in Cambodia considerable South Vietnamese forces; military equipment and advisers and instructors from Thailand and the use of U.S. air bases in that country, plus possible military aid from Indonesia and any other Asian nation that might join in.

Thailand, according to sources in Bangkok, already has agreed to provide military equipment and advisers for Cambodia's forces.

There is a direct, double, U.S.-Thai interest in what happens in Cambodia. Any replacement of the anti-Communist government of Premier Lon Nol by ousted Prince Norodom Sihanouk, who now has open support from North Vietnam and the Viet Cong, could be interpreted as a threat to Thailand.

The Thais hold the tightest U.S. defense commitment in the area; a bilateral, as well

as a multilateral U.S. pledge to come to the defense of Thailand.

Indonesia, so far has concentrated on trying to find diplomatic solutions to the Cambodian crisis. But there are expectations in official Washington that Indonesia may join in providing at least token military aid for Cambodia, in a framework which could be hailed as the first functioning of the Asian element of the "Nixon doctrine." That is, Asians coop-

erating regionally for Asian defense.

There are many potential roadblocks for any long-term Asian operation in Cambodia, such as the historic bitterness between Cambodians and Vietnamese.

There are also ancient enmities between Cambodia and Thailand.

Above all, there are large question marks about whether the United States and South Vietnam have par-

allel or eventually clashing strategies in Cambodia, and the extent to which it will be politically possible for President Nixon to fulfill even U.S. objectives in Cambodia in the present state of domestic ferment.

To assuage domestic alarm, and especially to head off Senate limitations on his actions, President Nixon has sought to assure the nation that not only U.S. forces, but South Vietnam forces, will come out of Cambodia somewhere around June 30.

On May 8 the President said that while the June 30 deadline does not apply to Saigon's troops, "I would expect that the South Vietnamese would come out approximately at the same time that we do . . ."

What the President, and all administration officials, have held open from the outset of the Cambodian operation, however, is that South Vietnamese troops could return if necessary to deal with the "sanctuary" problem.

The current sequence of events strongly indicates that the Nixon Administration wanted the South Vietnamese forces to withdraw from Cambodia at about the same time as U.S. troops to serve as a public dividing line between the attacks on the sanctuaries and the re-entry of South Vietnamese units as "an Asian force" to help defend Cambodia outrightly.