

U. S. SAID TO PLAN TO QUIT CAMBODIA BEFORE DEADLINE

Shift in Date From June 30
Is Reported to Depend on
Situation in Sanctuaries

MONSOONS ALSO FACTOR

Officials Call Administration
Eager to Announce Move
for Domestic Reasons

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WASHINGTON, May 25 —

The withdrawal of all United States ground troops from Cambodia is to be completed ahead of the June 30 deadline under present plans of the Nixon Administration, senior Government officials said today.

No new date has been set for the full pullout, these officials said, because the military situation in the enemy sanctuary areas and the advent of the monsoon season remain important factors in planning the withdrawal.

The officials also said that the destruction or removal of captured military equipment was among the problems involved in seeking to advance the deadline.

Domestic Reasons Cited

But, they controlled, for domestic political and economic reasons—including the stock market slump—the Administration is eager to be able to announce as soon as possible that American troops will leave Cambodia earlier than initially scheduled.

These officials reported a widespread belief in the Administration that announcement of an accelerated departure from Cambodia — made by President Nixon or a high aide — would have a beneficial effect on the political and financial situation at home.

The June 30 deadline was reported by Mr. Nixon at his news conference May 8. He said that "the great majority of all American units will be out by the second week of June, and all Americans of all kinds, including advisers, will be out of Cambodia by the end of June."

Improvement Sought

Officials said today that the Administration's aim was to "improve" on Mr. Nixon's commitment by having all Americans, including the advisers to South Vietnamese forces, withdrawn from Cambodia perhaps a week or more ahead of this deadline.

At the White House, Ronald L. Ziegler the press secretary, said that the United States would not keep its troops in Cambodia past June 30, despite a reported request from Foreign Minister Yem Sambaur of Cambodia for the continued presence of American forces until fighting ends.

The Defense Department said that there were about 14,000 American soldiers in Cambodia now. This is down 4,000 from the peak of 18,000 men just after United States forces entered Cambodia on May 1.

All the United States troops

Continued on Page 5, Column 4

Continued From Page 1, Col. 8

now in Cambodia are confined to the Fishhook salient of enemy sanctuaries along the border, according to Defense Department officials, while the growing numbers of South Vietnamese troops are engaged in operations deep in Cambodia. Under White House directives, all American troops, including the advisers, are limited to an area extending 21.7 miles inside Cambodia.

Administration officials said that there might be a strategic relationship between the recent doubling of the South Vietnamese troops in Cambodia and

the reported plans for a speed-up in the American withdrawal. The number of South Vietnamese soldiers in Cambodia stood today at some 40,000 men, compared to about 20,000 at the start of the operation.

Acknowledgment of the widening scope of the South Vietnamese military activities in Cambodia was mainly attributed, however, to Saigon's plans — now apparently enjoying full United States blessing — to maintain its troops indefinitely on Cambodian territory.

Administration aides and official spokesmen, who last week still sought to hedge on the question of whether the South Vietnamese would stay after the American departure, made it clear today that there was no more question about this.

After Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird said last Friday that it would be a "mistake" to impose withdrawal deadlines on the South Vietnamese, Administration officials spoke freely in private conversations of the changing mission of the

Saigon troops—from the initial attack on the sanctuaries to the support of the Lon Nol Government.

For the first time, the Administration today admitted the possibility that the United States would provide tactical air support to the South Vietnamese troops in Cambodia after the Americans had left.

Carl E. Bartch, a State Department press officer, said that "I am leaving that possibility open" when he was asked whether the Administration's policy on the withdrawal of United States air support after June 30 was being alerted.

At the news conference, Mr. Nixon said that "I would expect that the South Vietnamese would come out approximately at the same time that we do because when we come out our logistic support and air support will also come out with them."

While the Administration has made it clear that United States bombers would continue to raid enemy concentrations in Cambodia after June 30, the present thinking is that the

South Vietnamese should receive air support for their ground forces, if required.

Mr. Bartch suggested that there may be a brief gap in air support for the South Vietnamese as the Americans withdraw.

"I think it's fair to say that when the United States withdraws its forces from Cambodia by June 30, that air and logistic support might also be withdrawn," he said. "I am distinguishing between that and what might arise in the future after June 30."

He agreed that logistic and air support might be cut off on June 30 and restored on July 1.