

JUN 15 1970

# The Reds Now Control About Half of Cambodia

Associated Press

## Phnom Penh

On April 15, the Cambodian military command issued a map that showed the locations of 54,500 Viet Cong and North Vietnamese troops in Cambodia.

At that time, one month after Prince Norodom Sihanouk had been toppled as chief of state, the red markings on the map showed the enemy forces stretched in a thin line primarily along the frontier with South Vietnam.

Further enemy incursions, reflected in neat little red lines on the map, were seen inching toward Phnom Penh from the south. But the enemy then held only one tenth of the country, or less.

Now, nearly three months

after Sihanouk was removed, the military situation in this ancient land of temples has changed drastically for the worse. Nearly half the country is under North Vietnamese or Viet Cong control.

Roving bands of guerrillas have cut all seven main roads leading to Phnom Penh. The rail link to the port city of Kompong Som, formerly Sihanoukville, has been mined and cut. It appears only a matter of time until the rail link to Thailand is also cut.

There are now no roads of escape from Phnom Penh. Fighting continues at Kompong Speu, just 30 miles southwest of Phnom Penh. This is the same American-built road to Kompong Som, which beside being a port of escape is also the location of

Cambodia's only oil refinery.

Two highways that run south to the port of Kompot and the South Vietnam border near the Mekong River have been cut for weeks. Fighting continues in those areas.

The two highways that run west to Thailand, around the great lake and near the ancient ruins of Angkor are now considered highly unsafe and are periodically cut. At the moment no traffic is moving west beyond Kompong Chhnang, about 50 miles northwest of Phnom Penh.

The only other route out of Cambodia, through Kompong Cham and across eastern Cambodia through the rubber plantations to South Vietnam, has long been cut by large forces of North Vietnamese regulars.

One drastic result of these severed and unsafe highways has been the capture of 24

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foreign correspondents. Three of them, including CBS television newsmen George Syvertsen and Gerald Miller, are known dead. The fate of the others, some captured two months ago, is not known.

Another result of the fighting has been the vast destruction of French-owned rubber plantations, the key source of income for this country of seven million people. In the Chup Plantation, one of the largest privately owned in the world, some Frenchmen estimate damage at \$3 million.

The immediate prospects for Cambodia returning to any semblance of stability are dim. It will become even more so when the United States forces depart at the end of this month from eastern Cambodia.

Intelligence sources in southern Laos report steady supply buildups and rapid improvement of supply systems by North Vietnamese forces. They have one immediate target: Cambodia.

At least two battalions of North Vietnamese and Pathet Lao troops from southern Laos have slashed across the rolling jungle land of northern Cambodia to Siem Reap. Fighting is continuing there and Viet Cong reinforcements are reported

moving in at near division strength. The North Vietnamese are setting up hospitals and storage areas in the Angkor Wat complex.

In these 800-year-old temples, once the seat of a Khmer kingdom that encompassed most of Indochina and half of Thailand, the North Vietnamese know they are secure. The Cambodians have announced they will not attack their sacred temples.

The North Vietnamese hold all of northeast Cambodia. They also control the upper half of the Mekong River. Supplies are being funneled down from Laos and then siphoned off on either the east or west banks of the Mekong. The North Vietnamese are operating with increasing power on both sides now. At the same time, the South Vietnamese thrust into Cambodia has now slowed to a near halt.

Cambodian forces are still fighting to defend the few towns. But the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong are flowing around them, as around rocks in a stream. The same threatening picture is again developing as before the allied intervention last month. Until that intervention many diplomats were ready to start packing. They got a breathing spell, but now some are thinking of getting their bags out again.