

SAIGON IMPATIENT ON THAI WAR ROLE

Sees Stalling in the Dispatch
of Troops to Cambodia—

Air Support Is Urged

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SAIGON, South Vietnam, June 15—Authoritative South Vietnamese sources expressed impatience today with what they consider to be stalling by Thailand in rallying to the defense of Cambodia. The sources said that South Vietnamese forces would continue to defend the regions of Cambodia that are vital to South Vietnam's security — roughly the southeast part of the country on a diagonal running from the port of Kompong Som, formerly Sihanoukville, through Pnompenh, the capital, and then due east to the border.

But, the sources here said, for her own security Thailand will have to move into the western regions of beleaguered Cambodia, which is wedged between South Vietnam and Thailand.

Air Support Sought

In the common cause of defeating the North Vietnamese and the Vietcong in a third country, the sources in Saigon would particularly want the well-equipped Thai Air Force to join the fighting in Cambodia. It was South Vietnamese helicopters, it is noted here, that flew Cambodian wounded out of Siemreap during the recent fighting, although the town in northwest Cambodia is far closer to Thailand than to South Vietnam

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and its capture by the Vietnamese Communists would pose a threat to Thailand.

The sources said that the South Vietnamese Air Force was spread too thin to fly regular missions, particularly over the northern half of its own country, as well as missions in support of Cambodian ground forces, who have no air force to speak of.

The sources here want to see the Thai Air Force get into the fight now. They also want Thai ground forces to act.

Thailand announced early this month that she would send Pnompenh a force of ethnic Cambodians living in Thailand. Bangkok also withdrew part of the Black Panther Division it had in South Vietnam, but thus far no Thai troops have been reported sent to Cambodia.

Greater Need Discerned

Because of Cambodia's geographical position, South Vietnam believes that it and Thailand have primary responsibility for shoring her up. But Saigon believes that the need is greater than that.

Sources whose thinking reflects that of President Nguyen Van Thieu expressed a hope that current exchanges of visits between officials of Cambodia and those of Nationalist China and South Korea will result in the speedy dispatch to Cambodia of troops from those countries. They advocate this even in the awareness that such action might provoke counteraction from Communist China and North Korea.

Sources close to Vice President Nguyen Cao Ky, who is considered to be the leading hawk on Cambodia, say bluntly that it would be good if all countries other than the United States who have troops fighting in South Vietnam sent contingents of more than symbolic size of Cambodia. The Philippines, which withdrew her forces from South Vietnam at the end of last year, is a country mentioned by high officials here in that connection.

A Sense of Urgency

Authoritative sources in Saigon expressed a sense of urgency, particularly as regards Thai military intervention, in view of the scheduled withdrawal by July 1 of all American ground troops in Cambodia. The sources expressed a hope also that President Nixon would interpret as liberally as possible the authority he reserved to continue aerial operations in Cambodia. The sources said that in pursuit of their mission to help defend Cambodia, South Vietnamese troops would require continued tactical air support. A particular need, the sources said, is American medical evacuation helicopters.

The sources stressed that Saigon had no intention of occupying any part of Cambodia but that in her present state of weakness Cambodia needed foreign troops for her defense. South Vietnamese troops, they said, therefore need to remain in Cambodia, at least in some of the border areas that served as sanctuaries for the Vietnamese Communists and at one key forward base.

That base is Neak Luong, a town that straddles the Mekong River where the Pnompenh-to-Saigon highway meets it. The sources termed Neak Luong, where the South Vietnamese are building a long-term base, the key to the defense of Pnompenh.

Without Pnompenh, the of-



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Broken line shows the Cambodian border areas that South Vietnam is said to consider important for it to defend, with Thais expected to move into western areas. Enemy troops were reported holding on to Kompong Speu (1) in face of several South Vietnamese and Cambodian attacks. South Vietnamese also were fighting near Preyveng (2).

Officials here believe, Premier Lon Nol's Cambodia would collapse and would be replaced by a regime controlled nominally by Prince Norodom Sihanouk, the deposed Chief of State, but in reality by the Chinese Communists.