

U.S. Maps New Cambodian Aid

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WASHINGTON, Aug. 24 —

The Nixon Administration is mapping plans for a multimillion-dollar economic assistance program for Cambodia, informed sources said today.

The economic aid would be in addition to a \$40-million program of military assistance to Cambodia, which was formally announced by the State Department today.

Senior officials at the State Department and the Agency for International Development have met a number of times in recent days to work out the details for an economic aid program for Cambodia.

A source close to the discussions said that figures as high as \$200-million in economic assistance had been discussed, but other officials doubted that the Administration would propose anything that large to Congress.

Study Team Sent

To gather data on Cambodia's economic needs, a team headed by Charles A. Mann, the director of the Agency for International Development's program in Laos, was sent to Pnompenh late last month.

The group was reported to have advised Washington that as much as \$200-million would be required to restore Cambodia's economy, which has been disrupted by the war with Vietnamese Communists.

In addition, low-cost, long-term loans were said to be needed to spur economic development and salvage the important rubber industry, which has been especially hard hit during the fighting.

An inspection team from the international Monetary Fund is in Pnompenh now to examine

Cambodia's economic situation, and its report is due early next month. When it is received, officials here will explore the possibilities of assembling an international group of donor countries, perhaps through the World Bank.

An Administration source said today that no public discussion of the proposed American program for economic assistance was likely until after Congressional appropriations hearings on the foreign assistance bill next month. Then, in an effort to reduce Congressional criticism, the Administration was said to plan to go back to the appropriations committees for authorization for the Cambodian program.

The principal purpose in this would be to avoid a confrontation with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, many whose members have spoken out in recent days against what they see as a widening United States commitment to the preservation of the government of Premier Lon Nol.

Senator Frank Church of Idaho, a Democrat on the committee, warned Friday that "any sizable economic assistance program will inevitably lead to a growing United States presence in Pnompenh, which, in turn, will feed on itself."

"Once you get an aid contingent in there to administer the program," he said, "you need to find housing for them and bring in more marines to protect them and on and on. We went through this cycle once in Vietnam and we don't want to do it again."

Sources involved in the preliminary planning of the Cambodian proposal said it was not yet clear whether a

staff from the aid agency would be required to administer the program or whether it could be handled by the staff of the United States Embassy in Pnompenh.

Although no formal commitment on economic assistance has been made to the Lon Nol Government, Secretary of State William P. Rogers told Cambodian officials in Saigon early in July that the United States was prepared to consider an economic assistance program in the 1971 fiscal year, which began July 1.

After the thrill of the first one or two flights, helicopter rides — unless someone is shooting at the machine — become just another bus ride. Today, for example, while flying from Phuocvinh to Saigon, a soldier sat next to the nearly always open door of a UH-1. By tipping his head about six inches, he could look straight down 2,000 feet to the ground. After about 10 minutes of this, he fell asleep.

Among military officialdom, helicopters are a status symbol. The officer who rates his own all the time — as generals do — belongs to a privileged club. Ordinary helicopters have canvas seats. Helicopters belonging to generals have padded seats. President Thieu's personal helicopter — which usually sits in the front yard of the Independence Palace in the heart of Saigon — has upholstered easy chairs.

State Department sources said they did not believe that the Cambodian program would be affected by the amendment passed last week by the Senate prohibiting the use of American funds to pay foreign troops operating in Cambodia or Laos.