

JOINT CHIEFS' HEAD TO VISIT CAMBODIA AND ASSESS CRISIS

**Moorer Expected to Go and
to Return to Saigon Today
—Laird Orders Mission**

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SAIGON, South Vietnam, Jan. 10—Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird is sending the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to Pnompenh amid increasing concern here over the plight of the Cambodian Government.

Adm. Thomas H. Moorer, the chairman, who came to South Vietnam last week with Mr. Laird to assess the military situation in Indochina, will be the highest ranking military official to have visited Cambodia in the current crisis.

He is scheduled to go to Pnompenh tomorrow and return to Saigon a few hours later to report to Mr. Laird. The Secretary ends his four-day visit tomorrow night.

Take-Over Is Doubted

Shortly before he left Washington, Admiral Moorer expressed doubt that North Vietnam could take over Cambodia by force, even if it tried an all-out effort this spring. He added, however, that if the campaign succeeded, he believed South Vietnam could keep Cambodian ports closed to shipments of war supplies without direct American military involvement.

The Vietnamese Communists themselves have cut off Cambodia's only deepwater port, Komfong Som, from Pnompenh by controlling a key highway, Route 4. This has caused a critical fuel shortage in the capital.

Mr. Laird apparently wants Admiral Moorer to study the military picture in Cambodia and report back before the Secretary briefs President Nixon, who is now in San Clemente, Calif., preparing his State of the Union address.

Visit to a Hamlet

Mr. Laird continued his talks with American military and civilian officials, conferred with South Vietnamese military officers at the nearby base at Cuchi and visited a hamlet of 600 Vietnamese. He strolled down the main street, stopped in a small grocery store and chatted with local officials.

The hamlet, 22 miles south of Saigon in the Benluc district of Longan Province, has been used as a model village for visiting dignitaries, David K. E. Bruce, the chief American negotiator at the Paris peace talks, also went there on a visit to South Vietnam last year.

Local militiamen of the People's Self-Defense Force were given up an honor guard by Mr. Laird, Gen. William Westmoreland, the commander in chief of the U.S. military in Vietnam, and other officials.