

'We Cannot Turn Our Backs'

Ford's Asia Aid Bid

Washington

President Ford asked Congress yesterday for another \$522 million in military aid to South Vietnam and Cambodia, saying "we cannot turn our backs on these embattled countries."

Senator Robert Byrd (Dem.-W.Va.), said Republican and Democratic leaders informed the President "it would be extremely difficult, if not impossible," to get the funds approved.

Without \$300 million in extra military aid, Mr. Ford said, South Vietnam "may go down the drain" to military attacks from North Vietnam. He asked another \$222 million for beleaguered Cambodia.

Both presidential requests sought the aid funds for the current fiscal year ending June 30.

Shortly before sending the requests to Capitol Hill, Mr. Ford discussed his plans with Byrd and other congressional leaders at the White House.

"They appreciated the frankness but they naturally were deeply concerned," said Byrd of the reactions of Mr. Ford, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and Defense Secretary James Schlesinger to the warnings from lawmakers.

Byrd told reporters as he left the executive mansion that Mr. Ford and Kissinger informed the congressional leaders that South Vietnam

A New Convoy Up the Mekong

Phnom Penh

Rebel gunners on both sides of the Mekong river poured heavy fire yesterday on a 16-ship convoy trying a new run to isolated Phnom Penh, but there were no immediate reports of casualties, military sources said.

The convoy, the biggest to attempt the voyage since insurgent forces blocked the Mekong lifeline a month ago, consists of five freighters, four fuel tankers and seven barges loaded with rice, ammunition and other vital supplies for hard-pressed Phnom Penh, the sources said.

Two smaller convoys reached Phnom Penh last week, but the ships sustained considerable damage from insurgent fire during their hazardous 60-mile trips from South Vietnam.

must get the aid or "the North Vietnamese will take over little by little . . . and eventually it may go down the drain."

Mr. Ford and Kissinger told the leaders that the requests for supplemental ap-

Rebel gunners yesterday fired five rockets into Phnom Penh's airport and the northern part of the city, killing six persons, police said.

Field reports said three government navy boats took about 80 wounded refugees from the besieged ferry town and naval base of Neak Luong, 32 miles southeast of Phnom Penh. Neak Luong is an important base for guarding the Mekong shipping channel for the convoys to Phnom Penh.

In South Vietnam, the Saigon command said 45 of its troops and 121 North Vietnamese and Viet Cong soldiers were killed in small clashes and rocket and mortar bombardments in the 24 hours ended at dawn.

Associated Press

propriations are "imperative" because of Communist military operations in both countries.

Congress already has approved \$700 million in aid for the Saigon government and \$200 million in military

assistance for Cambodia, plus \$177 million in economic aid, during fiscal 1975.

The administration originally had sought \$1.4 billion in assistance to Southeast Asia.

In his message accompanying the requests, Mr. Ford noted that Monday was the second anniversary of the signing of the Paris agreement designed to bring peace in Southeast Asia.

He said that agreement "would have worked had Hanoi matched our side's efforts to implement it" and, "unfortunately, the other side has chosen to violate most of the major provisions" in the accord.

Now, he said South Vietnamese and Cambodian soldiers "are fighting hard" in defense against Communist offensives and, in Vietnam, "our intelligence indicates . . . that their campaign will intensify further in coming months."

"With adequate U.S. material assistance, they can hold their own," Mr. Ford said. "We cannot turn our backs on these embattled countries."

"U.S. unwillingness to provide adequate assistance to allies fighting for their lives would seriously affect our credibility throughout the world as an ally. And this credibility is essential to our national security."

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