

# PENTAGON FEARS CAMBODIA'S FALL

Schlesinger Says New Aid  
Is Essential if Phnom Penh  
Government Is to Survive

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WASHINGTON, Feb. 23—Secretary of Defense James R. Schlesinger said today that Cambodia would "absolutely" fall into Communist hands if Congress did not provide the \$222-million in military aid requested by the Administration.

Mr. Schlesinger's words were the strongest used publicly so far by any Administration official in justifying the new funds for the Phnom Penh Government.

Appearing on ABC's "Issues and Answers" television program, he said that the loss of Cambodia would be a foreign-policy disaster for the United States and, by implication, that Congress would be responsible.

## Domino Theory Cited

Mr. Schlesinger based his case on the so-called domino theory, which he said had been "overly discredited." The fall of Indochina, he said, would make the word of the United States "suspect" in the Middle East, China and elsewhere.

The Administration has asked Congress for \$300-million in emergency supplemental aid for South Vietnam and \$222-million for Cambodia. The proposal has so far received little Congressional support.

Mr. Schlesinger, who is widely known for his candor and bluntness, gave several other flat responses to questions.

In defending the Pentagon's \$104.7-billion budget request, he maintained that détente with

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the Soviet Union rested on an "equilibrium of force." The implication was that détente would quickly evaporate if the Russians got the upper hand militarily. The standard Administration position is that détente rests on the mutual interest of the United States and the Soviet Union in avoiding nuclear war.

Mr. Schlesinger rejected a proposal made yesterday by Senator Edward M. Kennedy, Democrat of Massachusetts, for a six-month moratorium on arms sales to the Persian Gulf countries pending a policy review. "We are engaged in attempting to maintain influence in these areas, to maintain close relationships, and arms represents a symbol of those kinds of relationships," the Secretary said. He also emphasized that if the United States did sell the arms, others would.

In response, Mr. Kennedy issued a statement saying that "the truly disastrous policy would be to sell arms—and provide American personnel—without a clear understanding of U.S. interests in the Persian Gulf."

"If the Secretary can explain his policy, he should explain it to the Congress," Mr. Kennedy said. "If he is worried that other countries would replace the United States in the Persian Gulf arms markets, then let them try to work out limits with other supplier states. This has never been tried."

## Longer Enlistments

American arms sales to the Middle East and Persian Gulf area totaled about \$5-billion in 1974. Sales by other nations also added up to billions, but precise figures are not available.

Mr. Schlesinger also announced that he had ordered the military services to extend the enlistment period from two years to three so as to cut costs and improve readiness. Only the Air Force presently requires enlistments beyond two years.

Asked if unfavorable Congressional action on aid to Cambodia would lead to the collapse of the Phnom Penh Government, the secretary replied, "Absolutely. I think that the chances of their surviving over a period of many months are minimal without that additional assistance."

"Other great powers in history," he continued, "have earned the term perfidious because of their desertion of their allies, and I would hate to see the United States earn that particular reputation."

The Cambodian capital, Phnom Penh, is virtually surrounded by Communist forces and cut off from supplies except for an American-supported airlift.

## All Funds Committed

"We have now committed all of the funds that were made available, and without those funds Phnom Penh cannot survive," the Secretary declared.

Mr. Schlesinger would make no estimate of when South Vietnam would be able to get along without American aid. He said it would depend on the policies of North Vietnam, the Soviet Union and China.

The Secretary's basic message on the Middle East seemed directed at the oil producers, the Soviet Union and the American people. He said that the "United States intends to maintain whatever presence is necessary to insure the security of the Persian Gulf from the standpoint of the Western world."

He explained that in the highly unlikely event that the United States used force in the area, "my conclusion would be that the Soviets would be very prudent in any actions that they took in response."

Mr. Schlesinger insisted that the United States was seeking a worldwide balance of forces with the Soviet Union and not a preponderance of power. But he reiterated his pledge to match any Soviet military build-up and warned again that if present budget-cutting trends continued, the United States would become second to the Soviet Union.