

State Dept. Says Ammo Vital To Cambodia

Washington

A senior State Department official warned yesterday that government forces in Cambodia could be "overrun" soon unless Congress approves sending more U.S. ammunition.

Assistant Secretary of State Philip Habib also told a Senate Foreign Relations subcommittee that he doubts any government could survive militarily in Phnom Penh for more than a "month or two" without outside supplies.

Habib was outlining reasons why the administration feels Congress should lift the ceiling imposed on all forms of aid to Cambodia last year, to allow for \$222 million more in U.S. military aid this fiscal year.

Yesterday's opening bid by the administration for Senate support met with a cold and skeptical response from two senators.

Subcommittee chairman Hubert Humphrey (Dem-Minn.) told Habib to "give serious consideration at the State Department to the possibility that there will be no supplemental (authorization)."

Senator Clifford Case (Rep-N.J.), told Habib: "Everybody seems to think there's on chance whatever of saving it (Cambodia) under present circumstances." He called the war "hopeless."

In an apparent effort to placate liberals and moderates who feel the administration is putting military aid over humanitarian relief for refugees, Habib announced that a \$180,000 a day airlift of rice from Saigon to Phnom Penh would start today.

He said that the plan is to use three and later five DC-8 commercial jets to airlift 545 tons of rice a day. About 40,000 tons of U.S. rice destined for Cambodia have been blocked in Vietnam since Communist forces won control of river banks and mined key stretches of the Mekong river a month ago.

Another airlift of supplies and ammunition is already operating from Thailand. The administration is also seeking the lifting of the ceiling on food aid, but crit-

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ics say ample food has already been allocated, if it could get through.

The new rice lifts, according to the deputy administrator of the Agency of International Development, John Murphy, will enable the United States to supply 17,500 tons of the 26,000 tons of rice the Cambodian government needs monthly.

Food has become a major problem in the surrounding capital of Phnom Penh and in other government strongholds.

However, Habib testified that food aid would not be sufficient unless ammunition to clear the blocked Mekong river is also given.

All of the \$275 million in military-aid funds authorized for the fiscal year that ends in June have been obligated. Habib explained the spending problem came about because there was no way of anticipating the cut-

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ting off of the supply routes, or of predicting the level of fighting.

"Military, the situation is more serious than it has ever been since fighting began in 1970," he said.

Habib said that the administration strategy is to try to get through the next eight weeks until the rainy season, when fighting will diminish and supplies can get through, on the rain-swollen rivers.

Habib said that by withholding more aid Congress would be taking away the ability to the "Cambodian People" to decide for themselves whether to fight or not.

Humphrey described food distribution by the regime of President Lon Nol as "an abomination," and said "some of us are beginning to get a little weary of what seems to be the inefficiency of the Lon Nol government."

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