

INDO SFXaminer
Lon Nol
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offers to quit
-- 'for peace'

Associated Press

SAIGON — President Lon Nol of Cambodia was reported yesterday to be willing to step aside if he is a barrier to a peace settlement with the Communist-led insurgents.

Sen. Dewey Bartlett, R-Okla., said American Ambassador John Gunther Dean interpreted statements made by Lon Nol during a one-day trip to Phnom Penh by six U.S. lawmakers as indicating his willingness to step down.

In Washington, Senate majority leader Mike Mansfield said such an offer by Lon Nol, whose government is threatened with collapse

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at insurgent hands, fits in with demands by deposed chief of state Norodom Sihanouk that Lon Nol and his officials be removed from power.

"That might be an opening," Mansfield added. "That might be the break which might make it possible for negotiations to get under way with Sihanouk."

Mansfield said the anti-government forces in Cambodia comprise "a number of separate entities but I think all of the groups recognize Sihanouk as their leader."

Sihanouk, deposed as Cambodian chief of state in 1970, now lives in exile in Peking.

A text of Lon Nol's opening remarks issued here by the congressional delegation shows him saying at one point: "I was brought to this high office by the institutionalized organization, but for the peace of my country and

Mansfield: A breakthrough to negotiations with Sihanouk

for the welfare of my country I would do whatever is possible and necessary so that peace and the welfare of my people can be achieved."

Bartlett said Dean told him as an aside: "This means the president will step aside if he is a barrier or stands in the way of a peaceful settlement."

However, diplomatic sources here saw it as unlikely that the 62-year-old Lon Nol would step aside of his own volition, even though the insurgents have said they will not negotiate with his government. Some sources feel that any change must be brought about by the United States.

The congressional delega-

tion is on a fact-finding tour to assess President Ford's request for \$222 million in supplemental military aid for Cambodia and \$300 million for South Vietnam.

Ford Administration officials argue that the additional aid is necessary to keep the existing Cambodian government alive.

As the delegation traveled to Phnom Penh, military sources reported a buildup of Khmer Rouge forces around the western and southwestern approaches to the city, menacing a big ammunition dump and the airport.

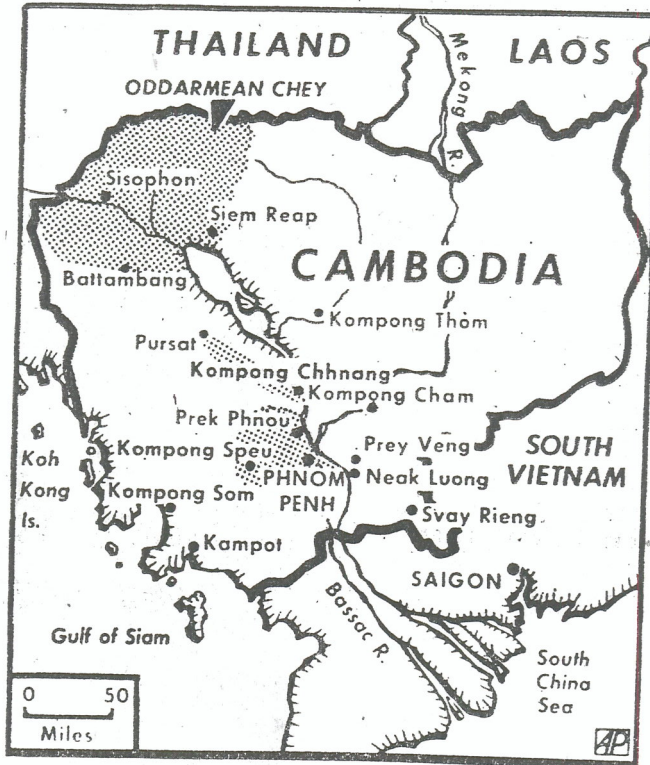
Road and river approaches to Phnom Penh are cut, and the city is surviving on airlifts of food and ammunition.

Rep. Bella Abzug, D-N.Y., who already had said she would vote against the additional aid, said in Phnom Penh it "would just prolong it and make for more killing."

"They're not going to give this money to the children," she said during a tour of refugee and medical facilities. "Its going to go to the generals, and they're going to steal half of it."

Besides Bartlett and Mrs. Abzug, those on the flight to Phnom Penh and back were Reps. Paul McCloskey Jr., (R-Calif.), Bill Chappell, (D-Fla.), John P. Murtha, (D-Pa.), and Millicent Fenwick, (R-N. J.).

Two others — Reps. John J. Flynt Jr., (D-Ga.), and Donald M. Fraser, (D-Minn.), — remained in Saigon. McCloskey said he would vote to lift the ceiling on food aid to Cambodia but that he had reached no decision on military aid.



Shaded areas are controlled by the Lon Nol government. Remainder is under control of the Khmer Rouge or the coalition government of exiled Prince Sihanouk

—AP Map