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U.S. Aides Doubt Lon Nol Will Resign in Cambodia

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WASHINGTON, March 2 — State Department officials said today that despite the apparent willingness of President Lon Nol to step aside if he was a barrier to a peaceful settlement in Cambodia, they doubted that it would occur so long as the Cambodian insurgents refuse to negotiate.

With the Lon Nol Government in desperate straits, and American officials warning that it will fall in a matter of weeks if \$222-million additional in military aid is not approved by Congress, the officials said they saw no likelihood that the insurgents would change their "no-negotiation" policy.

As long as the insurgents refuse to negotiate, American officials said they saw no reason for Marshal Lon Nol to step down, or for the United States to seek his resignation.

Yesterday, in a meeting in Phnom Penh with members of a Congressional fact-finding mission, Marshal Lon Nol, who spoke in Rhmer, was quoted as having said he would do "whatever is possible and necessary so that peace and the welfare of my people can be achieved."

Envoy's View Reported

The United States Ambassador, John Gunther Dean, was said to have interpreted this remark as meaning that President Lon Nol "will step aside if he is a barrier or stands in the way of a peaceful settlement."

"I think Lon Nol is sincere about quitting if that was all that blocked a peace," one State Department official said. "The trouble is, the other side does not seem to want a peace settlement, only a military victory."

The official was reflecting the widespread view among American specialists that the diplomatic situation in Cambodia seems frozen as it has been for the five years of the Cambodian war, with the insurgents showing no interest in negotiations while the military situation seems to favor them.

Another official cited the latest proclamation of the insurgent forces as indicative of their hard-line refusal to negotiate with the Phnom Penn Government.

A communiqué issued by the insurgents' radio Wednesday referred to a "national congress" help last Monday and Tuesday in "the liberated zone" of Cambodia under the chairmanship of Khieu Samphan, the acting premier and defense minister of the insurgent forces in Cambodia.

In that document, the insur-

gent movement, which calls itself the National United Front of Cambodia, said that Marshal Lon Nol and six other leaders of the coup that deposed Prince Norodom Sihanouk as Chief of State in March, 1970, must be executed.

The six others are Sisowath Sirik Matak, a member of the ruling executive council and a distant relative of Prince Sihanouk; Son Ngoc Thanh, once a close colleague of Prince Sihanouk, now living in Saigon and in poor health; Cheng Heng, who was Chief of State before Marshal Lon Nol; In Tam, a former Premier; Long Boret, the current Premier, and Lieut. Gov. Sosthene Fernandez, the armed forces chief of staff.

"The national congress declares it absolutely necessary to kill these seven traitors for their treason against the nation and their fascist, corrupt, criminal acts unprecedented in Cambodian history," it said.

The congress invited other officials to defect to the insurgent side or to take part in actions to overthrow "the traitorous clique."

President Lon Nol's remarks to the American members of congress were regarded here as his first even semipublic statement offering to step down, although news reports from Phnom Penh said he had expressed much the same view to diplomats in recent months.

Negotiations Proposed

Ever since last July, Marshal Lon Nol has offered to begin negotiations without any conditions, but has received only rejections.

American officials have made no secret of their unhappiness with Marshal Lon Nol. For several years, in private, they have accused him of a lack of leadership, a tolerance of corruption in high places and an inability to use American aid effectively.

But at the same time, under orders from Washington, no effort was made to unseat him. Even when he was suffering from partial paralysis two years ago as a result of a heart attack, the Americans reportedly did not bring pressure on him to leave the country once he made it clear that he intended to remain.

One American official said the United States had learned in South Vietnam the futility of trying to reform governments by backing coups and saw no point in working against Marshal Lon Nol.