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REPORT ON LON NOL STIRS CONTROVERSY

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SAIGON, South Vietnam, March 3—The manner in which a statement was made known that President Lon Nol of Cambodia was willing to resign if it would serve the cause of peace was the subject of discussion and controversy here today.

Commenting on a discourse by the Cambodian leader to six members of Congress visiting Phnom Penh Saturday, Ambassador John Gunther Dean told Senator Dewey F. Bartlett, Republican of Oklahoma, that one passage indicated that Marshal Lon Nol was willing to step aside if it would bring peace to his country. Mr. Dean furnished his interpretation to at

least two other members of Congress.

President Lon Nol has said similar things in the past and senior American officials in Phnom Penh said yesterday that there was nothing new in his remarks.

On leaving Phnom Penh, Mr. Bartlett was furnished with copies of the speech, which he distributed to American journalists who had flown to Phnom Penh with the group and returned to Saigon with it the same evening.

In the meantime, the Saigon press corps had been called to the guest house of the American Ambassador, Graham A. Martin, for a news conference with three other Congressmen. That never took place, but Senator Bartlett arrived alone, ahead of the others staying at the guest house, and gave out Mr. Dean's interpretation of Lon Nol's remarks.