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2nd Carrier Ordered to Gulf of Siam

Washington

The Pentagon has ordered a second carrier, the Hancock, to the western Pacific in case the ship's helicopters and fighter planes are needed to evacuate Americans and others, from the beleaguered Cambodian capital of Phnom Penh.

In disclosing the Hancock's move yesterday Pentagon officials said the ship will leave Hawaii later this week for the western Pacific but did not reveal the final destination.

Informed sources said the Hancock will steam from Hawaii to Subic Bay in the Philippines before joining the Okinawa, a helicopter carrier, in the gulf of Siam off the Cambodian coast at the end of next week.

The Pentagon also confirmed that the airlift of supplies to Cambodia has been extended for about 30 days.

About \$8 million are being transferred from non-military funds to pay for the extended airlift by commercial DC-8 cargo planes flying from Saigon to the Phnom Penh airport.

The Pentagon said the rice and fuel carried by the DC-8s is for the civilian population.

A separate airlift of ammunition, fuel and other material for the Cambodian armed forces is carried out by a charter line using C-130 transport planes borrowed from the U.S. Air Force. These flights originate in Thailand.

On the Hancock move, the sources said the Hancock will pick up 300 Marines and a squadron of their big CH-53 helicopters from Kaneohe, Hawaii before sailing westward. Some fighter and attack craft normally aboard the Hancock will stay on the ship in case they are needed to protect evacuation flights by the helicopters.

A CH-53 could take about 35 people from small landing spots and carry them back to the Hancock if enemy gunners had the city's airport under fire. A normal Marine squadron of CH-53s is 15 helicopters.

However, if the Phnom Penh airport is safe for landings when an evacuation is needed, large transports like the C-130s based in Utapao, Thailand, and DC-8s from Saigon are expected to do the job.

If the military situation in Phnom Penh brightens and the one in Vietnam darkens, the Pentagon could shift the Hancock and Okinawa to waters off Da Nang to evacuate people from there.

Army Colonel Robert L. Burke, the Pentagon spokesman, declined to discuss that possibility beyond saying "we have all kinds of contingency plans."

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