

# Attrition Is Continuing; U.S. Embassy Staff Cut

By SYDNEY H. SCHANBERG

Special to The New York Times

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia, April 6 — The assessment in informed circles here of the Phnom Penh Government's chance of survival is gloomier than it has ever been in this five-year war.

Although the Government's ability in the past to stagger on through repeated misfortunes has made seasoned observers reluctant to predict Phnom Penh's fall to the Communist-led Cambodian insurgents, that is what these observers are doing now.

"The picture is black," said one source close to developments here. "We think the next week or two will be crucial."

The pattern of attrition continued its inexorable momentum today as Government forces lost a few more bits of ground, troop morale kept sliding, the insurgents seemed to be massing for a possible major shelling attack against Phnom Penh, and the American Embassy went ahead with its evacuation preparations.

Yesterday morning there still were three other embassies here but first the Japanese and South Korean missions closed. The South Vietnamese followed soon after.

The American Embassy, thus the last functioning foreign mission here, today completed a partial evacuation—by air to Bangkok—which scaled its staff down to 100 or so from its original complement of 285, composed of 200 Americans and 85 foreigners on contract.

The embassy has declined to divulge the exact number of the remaining personnel or to discuss other details of its final evacuation plans, but it was learned today that the embassy had also begun quietly calling in its nearly 300 Cambodian employes and telling them that those who wished to leave the country would be assisted. There are fears that these people might be targets of a victorious insurgent army for having worked for the Americans.

Like the Government's shrinking defense perimeter and shrinking chances, the diplomatic community has also shrunk, almost out of sight, as embassy after embassy has closed. Except for the Americans, the only diplomats left are a South Vietnamese con-

ton, appeared to reflect not only the deteriorating military situation around Phnom Penh but also the expectation that when Congress reconvenes this week after its Easter recess it will reject the appeals for emergency military aid for Phnom Penh.

The American Embassy is in a delicate position here, being the symbol and weathervane of Washington's intentions. It is known to be worried that its evacuation steps, which it has described publicly as "temporary precautions," could sow demoralization in Cambodian Government and military circles and hasten the collapse of Phnom Penh. Nevertheless, Washington considers the steps prudent and necessary, to avoid any last minute chaos—so the process continues, including the thinning and burning of embassy files. The falling ashes from this burning laid a thin black film on the embassy's concrete yard today.

Although there are still Cambodian officials who say that the city's defenses can be held for many months or even into next year with a minimum of American aid, the facts of life for the Phnom Penh forces are clear to see and they are all unpleasant.

This capital, swollen by the refugees to more than two million people, is encircled by a determined force of perhaps 30,000 insurgents who are within five miles of the city's center at some points and who keep punching holes in the defense perimeter.

All supply lines to the capital have been cut by the rebels except for the airport, which is now the only link to the outside world; an American airlift of food, fuel and ammunition from Thailand and South Vietnam is keeping the Government alive and even this is constantly threatened by rocket and artillery attacks on the airport.

Moreover, the amount of ammunition being flown in seems to be dwindling every day, and authoritative sources say this is simply because there is not much ammunition left in the allocation for this fiscal year, which totaled nearly \$300-million. These sources indicated today that unless Congress voted new aid, the last ammunition will have been sent to Phnom Penh within perhaps three weeks.

sular officer and a French consular officer. This means, among other things, that sources of information have narrowed and that reporters can no longer cite diplomatic sources in their dispatches from here without almost certainly indicating the Americans.

The embassy's moves, taken on instructions from Washing-

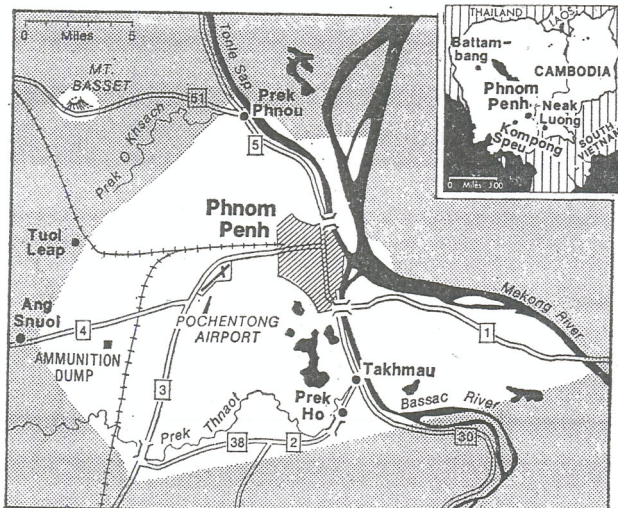
The fear is that the army will crumble at that point, knowing that ammunition airlift is dry—regardless of how large the stockpiles in the country might be. Because of this, there has been speculation that the Pentagon might deliberately





United Press International

A wounded Cambodian man being taken to a medical center Friday near Phnom Penh's airport. The number of rocket attacks has dwindled in last few days, fueling speculation that insurgents may be saving up ammunition for a massive barrage on the capital.



The New York Times/April 7, 1975

Shrinking of Phnom Penh defense perimeter has left a Government enclave in Mount Baset area.



that are themselves besieged and could fall if their defense forces are weakened significantly. Battambang, in the northwestern corner of the country, and Kompong Speu, west of Phnom Penh, are under heavy attack now.

Another negative sign has been the lack of result from the departure of the Cambodian President, Marshal Lon Nol, who left under pressure last Tuesday for an extended trip.

It had been hoped by some that his departure would bring about a political and military reorganization that would possibly stiffen the army's resistance, or at least put the Government into a position to negotiate an orderly turnover of power. But there has been no sign of change.

#### Long Boret in Bangkok

SPECIAL TO THE NEW YORK TIMES

BANGKOK, Thailand, April 6—Premier Long Boret of Cambodia arrived in Bangkok this evening on his way back to Phnom Penh after accompanying President Lon Nol to Indonesia, the first stop on a journey that will take Mr. Lon Nol to the United States for "medical treatment" and probable exile. Mr. Long Boret, who will fly to Phnom Penh with his wife tomorrow on a Cambodian military plane, said that President Lon Nol planned to leave for the United States Thursday.

string out the airlift supplies longer by flying in smaller and smaller amounts each day.

Another blow to government hopes was the fall last week of the Mekong River town Neak Luong, for it not only sealed the Mekong as a potential supply route, but it also freed several thousand insurgent troops—some sources say as many as 6,000—to move north about 30 miles and attack Phnom Penh's thin southern defenses. These defenses, which had been the only quiet areas on the Phnom Penh perimeter

in the offensive that began over to feel the new pressure, and some outposts on the Bassac River have already been lost.

The Government has sent some reinforcements to the southern line, but only at the expense of weakening other critical points on the perimeter. For it is scraping bottom on recruits, and there are simply more holes in the line than troops to plug them with.

In addition, many of the reinforcements are being flown from isolated province capitals