

Copters Rescue Civilians

Phnom Penh

The United States closed its embassy here today and U.S. helicopters airlifted the last Americans out of Cambodia, little more than five years after beginning of a massive U.S. effort to maintain a non-Communist government in Phnom Penh.

The fall of Phnom Penh to the Communist-led rebels who are besieging the city appeared imminent, hours or days away.

U.S. Marines landed in the rescue helicopters from the aircraft carrier Okinawa and set up a defense perimeter to protect the evacuation.

(In Washington, the State Department said U.S. fighter planes were in the Phnom Penh area and also would be used to protect the operation if necessary.)

The decision to evacuate all remaining Americans, numbering about 50 members of a skeleton embassy staff and 26 newsmen, reflected an official administration feeling that the situation in Cambodia is hopeless.

U.S. Embassy officials abruptly ordered all Americans remaining in the capital to the embassy compound early this morning for a hasty exit. Some Cambodian embassy employees and their families were also flying to safety, swelling the total number of persons involved in the airlift to several hundred.

The airport was considered unsafe because of continuing rebel shellings, which only yesterday killed an American pilot, and the escape was made by helicopters flying from the Okinawa, which was on station in the Gulf of Siam about 70 miles from Phnom Penh.

Ships accompanying the Okinawa carry a total of 1800 U.S. Marines.

The Americans were to be flown to the U Tapac Air

Back Page Col. 1

From Page 1

Base in neighboring Thailand, the State Department said, according to previously made contingency plans.

Closing of the American embassy meant that there were no foreign embassies open in Cambodia. All others have been evacuated over the last few weeks.

The State Department expressed regret at having to order the evacuation, noting it had "obvious implications" for the Cambodian government.

UPI correspondent Robert Kaylor sent what may have been the last message from Phnom Penh.

"We have been ordered to assemble American embassy and presume evacuation," Kaylor wired to Saigon. "Will advise further if opportunity presents."

An hour later, there had been no further word.

The pullout came a day after President Ford delivered a State of the World

message to Congress in which he did not ask for any more military aid to Cambodia, saying it "may be too late."

The Communist-led Khmer Rouge rebels were on the doorstep of the Cambodian capital they have completely surrounded since January, creeping to within four miles of downtown Phnom Penh and shelling its lifeline Pochentong airfield at will with rockets.

The desperate caretaker Cambodian government whose troops were ceding more and more ground to the rebels had expressed dismay at Mr. Ford's failure to push for more military aid.

"We are profoundly disappointed," a government statement said. "We have noted that President Ford is shirking his responsibility to press for aid to our people."

The government appeared in disarray as yet another last-minute cabinet shuffle was reported to be brewing. Sources in the Democratic



AP Wirephoto

AMBASSADOR DEAN A hasty exit

party said its leader, Chau Sau, had been asked by acting President Saukam Khoy to form a new government.

If he accepts, the sources said, he will call for a cease-fire within 48 hours. However, sources in the present cabinet said no new

go''vernment was contemplated.

Nassive American involvement in Cambodia began on March 18, 1970, when Norodom Sihanouk, who had tried to keep his country out of the Indochina war by a strictly neutral course, was overthrown while visiting Paris for medical treatment.

He was deposed by Marshal Lon Nol, who aligned himself almost immediately with the Americans.

After the brief American and South Vietnamese incursion into Communist Cambodian border sanctuaries of May-June of 1970 —which touched off widespread campus unrest in the United States — American planes began providing air support for the Cambodian government.

However, the bombing missiins were cut off by a war-weary Congress on Aug. 15, 1973, when the Cambodian army was already taking severe beatings in the field.

From 1971, the United States pumped a total of \$1 billion in military aid into Cambodia —\$177 million in 1971, \$187 million in 1972, \$133 million in 1973, \$381 million in 1974 and \$200 million so far this year — apparently all in vain.

The ragtag rebe army peldged allegiance to a national government of union formed in exile by Sihanouk in Peking but Sihanouk himself appeared to have lost most of the control of the movement..

Emerging as the real leaders of the rebels were two Communists, Khieu Samphan and Ieng Sary, who did most of the negotiations with the Peking regime for continued supplies of arms.