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Military rules in Cambodia, vows to fight

(The United Press International and Associated Press Bureaus in Phnom Penh are operating, although most American correspondents left in the U.S. evacuation. Communications with Phnom Penh remain intact.)

Examiner News Services

PHNOM PENH — Political shockwaves hit Cambodia after the evacuation of Americans yesterday, and Gen. Sak Suthsakhon, armed forces chief of staff, announced he had taken over the leadership of the government as the head of a committee.

The U.S. airlift was ended and new supplies were being dropped in by parachute.

Gen. Suthsakhon pledged to defend Phnom Penh against encroaching rebel forces.

After the Americans left, the Khmer Rouge rebels fired about a dozen rockets into the evacuation area and two Cambodian civilians were reported killed. Fighting continued on the outskirts of the city and there were reports the rebels had gained some ground.

But the city and its people seemed outwardly calm.

(In Peking, former Cambodian chief of state Prince Norodom Sihanouk reported he had rejected a United States invitation to return to Phnom Penh and form a government.

(The West German press correspondent in Peking, Hans-Joachim Bergmann, quoted Sihanouk as saying the invitation was handed to him by the U.S. representative, George Bush, Friday night.

(Sihanouk, who has been living in exile in Peking since his ouster in 1970, said

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Bush also had asked him to arrange a cease-fire once he returned to the Cambodian capital.

(In his reply, Sihanouk said he never would betray his Communist allies.

(Sihanouk said he had advised the U.S. government to close its embassy in Phnom Penh immediately and to evacuate all American civilians and military personnel from Cambodia.

(Sihanouk said Bush told him this morning that Washington had complied with his suggestions.)

France decided to recognize the government in exile led by Sihanouk, informed Paris sources said today.

There were rumors early in the day that Phnom Penh was ready to surrender, but

Gen. Suthsakhon's announcement appeared to rule that out.

His announcement came after the Cambodian National Assembly voted to suspend all legislative activity for three months and to turn the government over to a committee of four military men and three politicians, including Premier Long Boret.

Gen. Suthsakhon, speaking in a radio address, said that this seven-man group would elect a committee president, who presumably would be the effective replacement for President Lon Nol, who left Cambodia April 1 and is in Hawaii.

Acting President Sau Kham Khoy left in the American evacuation and came under sharp criticism.

Boret charged Khoy had showed a lack of leadership, and should have addressed the nation before leaving. The National Assembly voted to condemn Khoy.

In a radio address Boret said he and Gen. Suthsakhon had agreed they no longer recognized Khoy as the acting president.

Boret, highest-ranking Cambodian to remain, is one of seven "traitors" on the rebels' public death list. But he swore to stay on, saying, "I will not abandon the peo-

ple or the nation until the Khmer problem is resolved."

"We must stop this flow of Cambodian blood and try to find a peaceful solution," he said.

But the military situation deteriorated hourly. The rebels closed in on Pochentong airport and the United States switched its airlift of food and ammunition—Cambodia's one remaining link with the outside world to parachuted airdrops, necessarily more perilous and limited in quantity.

The fighting was still centered on the critical northwestern front on the outskirts of Phnom Penh, where a counteroffensive by government forces was reported bogged down.