

CAMBODIA WINDUP

— APR 16 1975

Defenders Shift Units in Effort to Stem Reds' Advance

NYTimes

The following incomplete dispatch by Sydney H. Schanberg of The New York Times was filed in Phnom Penh about 4:30 P.M. Tuesday and was received in New York two and a half hours later, which was 7 A.M., New York time. Five and a half hours after that, with nothing further received from him, the radio circuit from Phnom Penh went dead. News agencies reported that their correspondents were also out of contact.

Special to The New York Times

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia, April 15—The insurgents were closing in on this capital from almost all sides today as the five-year war neared an end.

The military government sought to stem the insurgent advance by abandoning posts on the outer perimeter and bringing the troops back to defend Phnom Penh.

For the second day, refugees by the thousands continued to stream toward the city, already swollen to more than two million people. The city seemed strangely calm.

The insurgents, less than one and a half miles from the city's edge at one point, were driving from the north along Route 5; from the northwest across a marshy plain; from the west, where the airport has been virtually cut off, and from the south and southeast, where troops were reported abandoning their positions.

South of the city, one unit saved itself by swimming to the west bank of the Bassac River.

Battle for the Airport

PHNOM PENH, April 15 (Agence France-Presse) — A battle for control of Pochentong airport was being fought today, with the Government seeking to reinforce the defenders with troops from other areas.

The Government-held enclave at Mount Basset, 14 miles northwest of here, was abandoned and the troops were air-

*Pictures of U.S. evacuation
of Phnom Penh, Page 23.*

lifted to the Pochentong front. Other troops were reported withdrawn from areas to the north of the market village of Pochentong.

But insurgent troops moving up on the western edge of the airport reportedly cut Route 4 this morning at a point less than a mile from the field.

The rebels were also said to have seized positions about a thousand yards north of the village of Pochentong. [In a communiqué distributed in Peking,

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the insurgents said their forces had overrun the village by late in the afternoon.]

Government gunners shelled the rebel positions through the morning, and several T-28 fighter-bombers flew strikes.

At the northwestern edge of Phnom Penh, two factories were set afire by rebel gunners.

Southeast of the city, insurgent troops attacking along Route 1 forced four infantry battalions and a dozen armored vehicles to withdraw to new positions at the bridge leading across the Bassac River into the capital.

To the south, the industrial suburb of Takhmau, three miles from the edge of Phnom Penh, was heavily shelled this morning by rebel artillery. Government troops then abandoned it and set up new defense lines on the southern edge of the city.

Governor Withdraws

Takhmau is the capital of Kandal Province. The province's chief, Gen. Dien Del, who is also its military commander, withdrew with members of his administration to Phnom Penh.

The shelling, which reportedly came from the east bank of the Bassac River, forced thousands of refugees on to the roads again. Heavy civilian casualties were reported.

Although the military situation continued to deteriorate for Government forces during the morning hours, it was announced that a 24-hour curfew imposed yesterday was to be lifted for a time during the day to make some shopping possible.

There were reports from the

southeastern part of Phnom Penh that some refugees had managed to cross the Bassac bridge into the city before fighting neared it.

Hotel Plan Dropped

Special to The New York Times

GENEVA, April 15—A Red Cross plan to make the Hotel Le Phnom in Phnom Penh a neutral sanctuary has apparently been abandoned.

According to sources close to the situation, the plan encountered opposition from the Cambodian military government.

The International Committee of the Red Cross said only that its representatives had left the hotel, where they took quarters yesterday, and moved back to their regular headquarters elsewhere in the city.

The informants said this move indicated that Andre Pasquier, head of the Red Cross team in Phnom Penh, had been unable to persuade all sides to recognize the hotel as a neutral zone. Foreign newsmen who have stayed on have assembled at the hotel.

The International Committee here learned of Mr. Pasquier's decision to quit the hotel during a brief radio contact with its team Phnom Penh.

"The transmission was beset by technical difficulties," a committee spokesman said.

No specific details of the military situation were given by the committee's representative.

"We took this to mean that the capital itself is still holding out," the spokesman said.

There are 16 Red Cross workers in the Cambodian capital, including four members of a British medical team, that works in a hospital.

Water was distributed today by Red Cross representatives to refugees on the boulevards on the edge of the capital, the spokesman said.

Circuit Brak Assessed

News dispatches from Phnom Penh have been filed over a circuit operated by the international telecommunications concern Cable and Wireless. Reports from Hong Kong, the relaying point for such dispatches, said last night that there were no signs of anything more unusual than a normal breakdown of transmission from Phnom Penh.

Thus, it was pointed out, the interruption in transmission could mean that power had failed. The possibility was also suggested at Phnom Penh had walked out. The breakdown does not necessarily mean that the communications families