

SFChronicle

Panic Report in

APR 19 1975

Warning Of 'U.S. Bombers'

Phnom Penh

Bangkok

Mystery surrounded Phnom Penh yesterday after a report out of the Cambodian capital said the victorious Khmer Rouge had ordered the city cleared.

Panic reportedly spread through the population of two million as loudspeakers on Khmer Rouge vehicles warned that "American bombers" were about to "raze the city." They called on residents to flee into the countryside, the report said.

All telecommunications with the city then broke off. The British Cable and Wireless Co. in Hong Kong said it had been unable to restore Telex and telegraph service between Phnom Penh and Hong Kong or Peking. Japan's radio and cable service stopped accepting telephone and cable messages for Cambodia yesterday morning, it announced in Tokyo.

Sources in Bangkok said that "everything was quieting down and getting better" by yesterday afternoon. They added, however, that the city seemed almost deserted.

One of the sources said it is believed that Cambodia's new rulers want to thin out Phnom Penh's population, swollen by refugees, to cope with any armed resistance by government diehards and to search for military officers and other officials who may have hidden out.

(A denial that an evacuation had been ordered came from the Yugoslav news agency Tanjug in Belgrade, quoting Cambodian sources in Peking as saying there was no unrest in Phnom Penh.)

Thousands of refugees stormed Thai border barriers in Pong Nam Rom district 120 miles southeast of Bangkok, according to reports reaching here. The refugees were said to include high-ranking officers of the defeated republican army.

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Those reported to have flown into Thailand include General Sak Suthsaken military commander-in-chief and top man in the last days of the ousted regime, and Ea Chhong, former commander of the Cambodian air force. But the Thai Foreign Ministry denied a report that former Cambodian Premier Long Boret had reached Thailand. Long Boret is one of seven men named as "super traitors" by the new government, which already has sentenced him to death.

Reports reaching here from the Cambodian town of Poipet, just across the Thai border, said crowds cheered as hundreds of Khmer Rouge soldiers, mostly unarmed and out of uniform, rode through the town in buses, trucks and tractor-trailers.

Government soldiers surrendered without a shot, and District Officer Hoy Kim hurried to the nearby town of Sasophon to greet Khmer Rouge forces, the report said.

Agence France-Presse