

U.N. Says Cambodia Blocked Relief

NYTimes APR 19 1975

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Special to The New York Times

UNITED NATIONS, N.Y., April 18 — The former Cambodian Government compelled United Nations authorities to pay costly air-freight charges to fly powdered milk into the country aboard the Government-owned airline rather than permit the relief supplies to be flown in free, officials here said today.

"Children were dying in Phnom Penh and we were going against time," said an official of the United Nations Children's Fund, or UNICEF. "We would have preferred free delivery but we had no choice."

The spokesman said that during the last week of March the Cambodian authorities refused landing rights for planes to carry 110 tons of powdered milk donated by New Zealand.

UNICEF officials had arranged for at least part of the shipments to be flown by Bird Air, a charter line used by the United States Agency for International Development. For this, he said, there would have been no charge to UNICEF.

Some supplies were, in fact, moved before the Cambodian authorities made their demands that all further shipments be carried by Air Cambodge at a cost considerably higher than the going commercial rate.

United Nations officials who knew about the Cambodian demands explained today that there had been reluctance at the time to make them public for fear of jeopardizing the relief operation.

There was some question whether the Cambodian authorities were opposed only to

the use of Bird Air, said one official here, who said there seemed to be "bad blood" between the charter line and the Phnom Penh authorities.

UNICEF offered to have the relief goods delivered by Australian aircraft, but this too was refused.

Just how much money was involved in the Air Cambodge flights was not known by officials here who explained that the transactions had been made through the supply center in Bangkok, Thailand.

They said they could not verify a report that UNICEF had been charged as much as \$1,000 a ton.

There have been no relief shipments to Phnom Penh in the last few days. UNICEF received a message this morning from Paul Ignatieff, a Canadian who is in charge of the aid program in Cambodia, reporting that preparations were being made to discuss an aid program with the new Communist Government.

The United United Nations has also had difficulty in persuading North Vietnam to allow relief supplies to be flown in by Australian or Canadian planes.

Such flights would have been made without charge to the relief organizations but Hanoi balked over the use of military aircraft or crews in uniform.

"The objections were political and it was not an issue of money in this instance," a UNICEF official said.

A shipment of supplies aboard a Danish charter plane was allowed into North Vietnam on Wednesday. The

plane owned by the Sterling charter airline, was the first Boeing 727 to land at Hanoi and posed some technical difficulties.

Alastair I. Matheson, a UNICEF information officer, said that a proposal has been made to Hanoi that the United Nations insignia be painted on planes in a relief shuttle from Bangkok and Singapore for UNICEF and the office of the High Commissioner for Refugees.

The Provisional revolutionary Government in South Vietnam has given approval for deliveries of supplies by sea to Da Nang, it was announced today.