

Saigon-Cambodia Pact on Troops

New York Times

Saigon

The foreign ministers of South Vietnam and Cambodia signed a series of documents here yesterday giving South Vietnam a broad and open-ended mandate to conduct military operations in Cambodia.

A 17-point joint communique summed up three days of talks between the two ministers.

It said that South Vietnamese military forces "which had come, with the agreement of the Cambodian government, to help Cambodian troops to chase out the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese forces, will withdraw from Cambodia when their task is completed."

OPEN

The communique placed no geographic restrictions on South Vietnamese military operations in Cambodia, nor did it set any date for withdrawal of forces.

"We did not discuss a timetable for withdrawal of Vietnamese troops," South Vietnamese Foreign Minister Tran Van Lam told a news conference after the signing ceremony. Vietnamese troops will withdraw when they have finished their mission, and with the agreement of the Cambodian government."

Yem Sambaur, deputy premier and foreign minister of Cambodia, said at the same news conference that "Vietnamese troops will withdraw when they have finished their mission and when the Cambodian government has decided it has no longer any need of them." He said no date had been fixed.

Asked whether he would ask American troops to stay on after the June 30 deadline

See Back Page

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From Page 1

set by President Nixon, Sambaur said:

All that depends on how the situation evolves in our country. If we come to have control of our territory before June 30, there is no question of asking the United States to stay. But if that is not the case, then we must ask the United States to stay."

He said he intends to visit Washington "more or less soon," but has not yet decided on the date.

Thanks to the intervention of American and South Vietnamese troops, Sambaur said, Communist caches and sanctuaries had been discovered and "mostly destroyed."

CONTROL

"we now have more or less control over all Cambodian territory," he added, with the exception of three northeastern provinces — Kratie, Ratanakiri and Mondulakiri.

Sambaur excluded any possibility of his government's coming to terms with Prince Norodom Sihanouk, ousted as chief of state by a coup d'etat March 18 and now heading a government in exile in Peking.

The communique skirted delicately around two points raised by the Cambodians "who nearly threatened to

wreck the negotiations. "The two ministers," it said, "promised to respect reciprocally the frontiers of each of the two countries within the actual limits under their respective administration."

ISLANDS

This was a formula, conference sources said, devised to accommodate the Cambodian demand for the public recognition by South Vietnam of Cambodian ownership over two small offshore islands that South Vietnam claims but which in modern times have been ruled by Cambodia.

On another point of contention, that of the status of the half-million Cambodians in South Vietnam, the communique said the Cambodian foreign minister had brought up the question and his South Vietnamese counterpart "had promised to study it in a spirit of sincere cooperation and of mutual understanding, in accordance with the constitutional procedures of the Republic of (South) Vietnam."

Besides the joint communique, the two ministers signed three documents: An agreement re-establishing diplomatic relations, which were broken off in 1963; an agreement on economic cooperation, and an agreement on the treatment of Vietnamese residents of Cambodia.