

Cambodia Gets Nixon Assurances

Washington

President Nixon has given his personal assurance to President Lon Nol of Cambodia that the U.S. will continue to provide "maximum possible assistance" to his government, which is now battling against a major insurgent effort to capture Phnom Penh.

In a letter to Lon Nol, made available Saturday, Mr. Nixon said on January 28 that because the insurgent forces had turned down all offers by the Cambodian government to negotiate, Cambodia "has but one choice in the critical period which lies ahead to persevere in strengthening its defense efforts and to buttress the solidarity of all Khmer (Cambodian) Nationalists."

"The United States remains fully determined to provide maximum possible assistance to your heroic self-defense and will continue to stand side by side with the republic in the future as in the past," he said.

State Department officials said that about half of the

Khmer insurgents are now grouped around Phnom Penh — a force of between 15,000 and 20,000 men. This had caused a thinning out of the insurgent forces in other parts of Cambodia and led, the officials said, to some victories by the Cambodian troops in those areas.

Moreover, the latest intelligence estimate in Washington is that barring an internal collapse of the Lon Nol government, the Cambodian government forces should be able to withstand the insurgent encirclement and the daily, haphazard shelling and rocketing of the city.

New York Times