

COMMUNISTS CUT CAMBODIAN ROADS

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One Route Is Overrun Near
Suburb of Phnom Penh

NYTimes

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia, Feb. 23 (Reuters)—Communist troops attacking outside Phnom Penh advanced today to within three miles of the outer suburbs, military sources reported. A Communist unit that came closest to the capital occupied a secondary road just outside the industrial suburb at Takhmau, south of here.

Another unit overran the township of Siem Reap nine miles from Phnom Penh's city limits on Route 2, the main highway to the southern region.

The sources said all main roads and secondary highways in the area were cut. Siem Reap, already largely destroyed in fighting several months ago, was abandoned by its garrison this morning.

Another force took control of a section of Route 3, which runs toward the South Vietnamese border, in an area 12 miles directly southwest of the city.

Close Fighting Reported

Government and Communist troops fought at close quarters on the road during the day, with their lines drawn up only 100 yards apart, according to the sources.

A road to the burned-out town of Saang southeast of here was occupied three miles outside Takhmau.

The strength and origin of the attacking forces were not yet known, but some were believed to belong to a battalion that withdrew from the capital's eastern approaches yesterday under heavy American air strikes. Casualty figures were not available for today's fighting.

The military command reported increased fighting in other regions, including the isolated northern provincial capital of Kompong Thom and around the occupied township of Banam, on the bank of the Mekong River about 30 miles southeast of here.