

MAR 22 1973

2 Supply Routes to Phnom Penh Reported Cut by the Communists

NYTimes

MAR 22 1973

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia, March 21 (AP)—New military reverses outside Phnom Penh and political restrictions inside the capital were reported here today.

Communist forces were said to have cut two principal supply routes to the city—Route 1 from South Vietnam and Route 5 from the rice-producing regions in the northwest.

[Meanwhile, heavy bombing attacks by United States fighter-bombers and B-52 heavy bombers continued over Cambodia at the request of the Cambodian Government, United Press International reported from Honolulu, quoting a brief statement by the Pacific command.]

Inside the capital, Government sources reported that Lieut. Gen. Sisowath Sirik Matak, President Lon Nol's former confidant, who was driven out of the Cabinet last year, had been placed under house arrest.

A Wave of Arrests

The general, a cousin of Prince Norodom Sihanouk, joined with General Lon Nol in March, 1970, to overthrow the Prince, and he subsequently served as head of government for a time. His return to political office has been bitterly opposed by his archrival, Brig. Gen. Lon Non, the President's brother, who, as a minister attached to the Interior Ministry, has been regarded as the Government's strongman.

Since the bombing attack on the President's residence on Saturday by a disgruntled air

force captain at the controls of a stolen fighter-bomber, there has been a wave of arrests in the country. Scores of striking teachers, journalists and opposition political figures have been reported detained.

Members of the family of Prince Sihanouk, now in exile in Peking, have been confined to house arrest.

Government sources, in reporting that General Sirik Matak must ask permission to leave his villa, asserted that the restrictions were for the former political leader's own protection.

In other developments today, Cambodia's National Assembly ratified details of an emergency decree suspending civil liberties and declaring the country under state of siege.

It gives the police almost unlimited powers to search and arrest. Meetings of more than five persons are forbidden.

Opposition newspapers have been closed down and on one is allowed to leave the country without permission.

Government troops came under attack today along several miles of Route 1 leading southeast toward Saigon and along Route 5 to the rich rice-growing area of Battambang Province.

Route Cut in February

Route 1 was cut last month as part of a Communist offensive to occupy the east bank of the Mekong River. The Cambodians called in heavy American air support to reopen it.

The attack today indirectly threatens the Mekong River route, along which supplies are

also transported from South Vietnam. It isolates the ferry-town of Phums Prek Khsay, a Government bastion commanding the waterway.

Route 5 was also twice briefly cut earlier this year, but military sources said the Communists had committed much larger forces in the latest operation.

The Phnom Penh command reported increased Communist activity on several fronts, with Government positions near the provincial capital of Prey Veng, 27 miles southeast of Phnom Penh, coming under heavy harassment.