

U.S. Urging Phnom Penh To Show It Can Survive

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By JOHN W. FINNEY JUL 7 1973

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WASHINGTON, July 6—Defense Secretary James R. Schlesinger said today that, with American bombing in Cambodia scheduled to end by Aug. 15, it was now up to the Government in Phnom Penh to demonstrate that it had the inner strength and discipline to survive.

The Nixon Administration's hope, he said at a Pentagon news conference, is for "a sufficient improvement in the ability" of that Government and its forces in the next five or six weeks "so that conditions can be stabilized."

"That is the basis for a cease-fire agreement," Mr. Schlesinger declared.

Schlesinger Has Doubts

But the Defense Secretary added that on the basis of the performance of the Government of President Lon Nol over the last three years, "certainly one has reason to express misgivings whether such an improvement would take place."

[In Phnom Penh, Foreign Minister Long Boret, speaking at a news conference, repeated his Government's position on ways to end the war: He called for an immediate cease-fire. The Associate Press reported, and said the Government was willing to enter into negotiations with "Cambodians of the other side."]

Dr. Schlesinger said that, obviously, the termination of American bombing would not help the Lon Nol Government. At the same time, he suggested that recognition by Phnom Penh that it would have to depend on its own military resources in 45 days might "bring about a much higher degree of dedication than exists at the present time."



United Press International
James R. Schlesinger at Pentagon news session.

Dr. Samuel Johnson, he said, once observed that "nothing collects a man's mind better than the knowledge that he might be hung."

Asked what action might be taken if by Aug. 15, no cease-fire was reached and military conditions had so deteriorated that Phnom Penh was in danger of falling, Dr. Schlesinger said that President Nixon might ask Congress for authority to continue the bombing. From the Defense Secretary's comments, it was apparent that he regarded this as unlikely.

A State Department spokesman, Paul J. Hare, affirmed the Administration's desire to do anything that might facilitate cease-fire negotiations.

In contrast to suggestions

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dropped by some Administration officials. Dr. Schlesinger gave no indication that the principal Administration tactic now was to help the Cambodian Government authorities "maintain their ability to control the situation on the ground" so the Communist factions would be willing to negotiate.

Dr. Schlesinger, who was holding his first news conference since he was sworn in on

Monday, defended the Administration against charges that the bombing of Cambodia had been increased in violation of an understanding worked out between the White House and Congressional leaders when the Aug. 15 cutoff was agreed upon.

Earlier this week, Senator Walter F. Mondale, Democrat of Minnesota, charged a "double cross," pointing to a Pentagon report that the sortie rate of fighter-bombers had increased last week to more

than 200 a day. A sortie is a single flight by a single plane.

Dr. Schlesinger said that the sortie rate had fluctuated, depending on the weather and what the Communist-led insurgents were doing. He said that the B-52 rate had been and would be kept at "a stable level" and that this was a better indicator of the Administration's intention not to let the air war grow.

Backed by Pentagon Data

This defense was supported by figures supplied by Pentagon sources. These showed that the sortie rate fluctuated since May, on some days exceeding 200 fighter-bomber strikes. A high of 260 single missions was reached on June 30.

Since then, in the first five days of July, the figures showed, the sortie rate declined from 230 on July 1 to 200 yesterday. Defense officials indicated that a further decline would be expected.

Dr. Schlesinger suggested in an opening statement at his news conference that his first priority was the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, which, he said, "lie at the core of our defense obligations." In particular, he said, he wanted the NATO members to accept a "realistic appraisal" of the strengths of the alliance and the potential threat represented by the Warsaw Pact.

Cambodia Asks Talks

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia, July 6 (AP) — Foreign Minister Long Boret said today that the Government of President Lon Nol was willing to accept an immediate cease-fire and to en-

ter into negotiations with "Cambodians of the other side."

Mr. Long Boret, speaking at a news conference attended by Ambassador Emory C. Swank of the United States and other diplomats, repeated peace proposals that his Government had put forward previously.

The Foreign Minister said that the Government was not demanding the withdrawal of the North Vietnamese troops from Cambodia as a prior condition for the cease-fire. It has been estimated that there are 40,000 North Vietnamese in Cambodia. These, Mr. Long Boret said, could withdraw during the negotiations.

The Foreign Minister renewed the Government's call for international respect for the sovereignty, independence and neutrality of Cambodia, for the withdrawal of all foreign troops and for the reactivation of the old International Control Commission, made up of Canada, Poland and India. He reiterated that the negotiations with "Cambodians of the other side" should be aimed both at ending hostilities and bringing about national reconciliation.

As Mr. Long Boret spoke, heavy American bombing within 10 miles of Phnom Penh rattled the windows of the Government building.

The Cambodian command announced that Government troops had again been driven from the village of Phum Prey Phdau, 19 miles west of the capital and on Route 4, the road to the sea. The command said the Government force had fought all day yesterday to re-

capture the village, only to be driven out again last night.

Heavy fighting was also reported 20 miles north of Phnom Penh and 11 miles to the south.