

Aide Says U.S. Adopts Hands-Off Policy on Cambodian Politics

By BERNARD GWERTZMAN

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WASHINGTON, July 18.—An Administration official asserted today that the United States had decided against interfering in Cambodia's domestic political situation and was not trying to bring pressure on President Lon Nol to step down.

The official said that the White House had adopted a "hands-off policy" and was opposed to any "Dien-style" solutions in Cambodia, a reference to the support given by Washington to the overthrow of President Ngo Dinh Diem of South Vietnam in 1963.

"We don't know who would be any better than Lon Nol, and have no candidate in the wings," he said.

'Clarification' Offered

He also said he wanted to provide "clarification" of reports from Phnom Penh that President Nixon had invited

Marshal Lon Nol to this country for medical treatment for the paralysis that resulted from his 1971 stroke.

He said that United States Army doctors from Hawaii and South Vietnam treated Marshal Lon Nol in 1971 and part of 1972. But more recently, he said, the Cambodian leader has turned to a New York specialist for help. The private physician was able to use State Department channels to communicate with the president and with the army doctors, he said.

Some time in the last six months, Marshal Lon Nol began talking of coming to the United States, in search of a "miracle cure," the official said. In May the official said, the marshal wrote Mr. Nixon saying he might come around June 15.

Mr. Nixon, in a reply sent in the last month, said, according to the official, that he would be happy to see him if he came to the United States for treatment.

The official refused to divulge the name of the New York physician.

Since then, Marshal Lon Nol has vacillated about coming to the United States, the official said. "At this moment, we don't know if he will come or will not come, or when."

A Cambodian Embassy official said that no invitation as such had been sent by Mr. Nixon to Marshal Lon Nol. The White House said, in a formal statement: "We know of no plan at this time for Lon Nol to visit the United States—we know of no discussion about it."

Ronald L. Ziegler, the White House press secretary, when asked if an invitation had been sent, said "not to my knowledge."

The Cambodian Embassy official said that as far as he knew, Marshal Lon Nol would not leave Cambodia while the military situation was grave. The Administration official

said that there had been discussion some time ago about a more active American effort to shake up the admittedly inefficient Government in Phnom Penh. "But all such ideas were vetoed," he said.

With the Aug. 15 bombing cutoff approaching, most Administration officials are expressing strong doubt that a diplomatic breakthrough is imminent. They said that Prince Norodom Sihanouk, the official leader of the anti-Government forces, has been "impossible to deal with" on a confidential basis.