

U.S. Promises Cambodia
All Help Allowed by Law

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WASHINGTON, Aug. 2—The Nixon Administration said today that the Cambodian Government, faced by an end of all American bombing support on Aug. 15, would continue to get from the United States all the economic, military and diplomatic assistance still possible under the law.

Less than two weeks before American combat activity, including bombing, must halt throughout Indochina, the Administration was reportedly studying what actions it could take to keep the Government of President Lon Nol alive—at least long enough to negotiate a cease-fire with the Cambodian insurgents headed by the former chief of state, Prince Norodom Sihanouk.

In another development, Le Duc Tho, North Vietnam's chief negotiator, said in Hanoi yesterday that the United States had agreed—but refused to sign—an accord with North Vietnam on a five-year economic aid program, "including the plan for the first year on United States contributions to the healing of the war wounds and postwar construction in the Democratic Republic of Vietnam."

Up to now, American officials have said that talks in Paris on aid had not been concluded and no specific figures had been agreed upon.

The talks have recessed, and American officials have said

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privately that the United States would make no pledge of aid to Hanoi until all the major provisions of the Vietnam cease-fire agreement were adhered to, including the section calling for an end to military activity in Laos and Cambodia.

Mr. Tho, in an interview carried over Hanoi television and monitored by the United States, said that "the United States had not yet agreed to sign what was agreed on at the joint economic commission between the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the United States."

"It advanced prerequisites for the signing, and, in an extremely illogical manner, linked the implementation of Article

21 of the agreement with other provisions," he said. Article 21 obliges the United States to contribute postwar aid to Indochina.

President Nixon has left open the possibility that he may call Congress back into session during its recess, which begins Saturday, to seek permission to continue the bombing. But the mood of Congress is so clearly opposed to new raids that this was deemed unlikely today by Administration officials.

'All Possible Support'

Gerald L. Warren, the deputy White House press secretary, said he would not speculate about what future courses of action might be under consideration. But he said that "we will, of course, continue to provide all possible economic and military and diplomatic support possible to the Government of Cambodia."

He stressed that whatever was done would be "within the law." The State Department spokesman, Charles W. Bray 3d, said that the Administration would follow "the letter of the law."

In the view of Administration officials, the law cutting off the bombing on Aug. 15 does not forbid continued military and economic assistance to Cambodia and other countries of Indochina. But the Administration has become concerned over the apparent belief of some Congressmen that further military aid was also ruled out.

Pentagon Word Is Due

To prevent possible misunderstandings, William Beecher, a Defense Department spokesman, said today that an announcement would be made tomorrow of "what understanding the Defense Department has of what it is permitted and precluded from doing after the bombing halt."

It is understood that the Administration plans to continue a speed-up in delivery of military equipment already assigned to Cambodia under a \$187-million program of military aid.

Such equipment includes T-28 fighter planes and armed helicopters for use by the Cambodian forces. The Pentagon also expects to airlift supplies into Phnom Penh, if necessary, even at the risk of planes being shot down.

The Administration is also expected to tell Congress that it does not interpret the bombing cutoff as blocking further

aerial reconnaissance.

How Law Is Stated

The measure, adopted by Congress on June 30 and signed into law by Mr. Nixon a few days later, says:

"Notwithstanding any other provision of law, on or after Aug. 15, 1973, no funds herein, heretofore, or hereafter appropriated may be obligated or expended to finance the involvement of United States military forces in hostilities in or over or from off shores of North Vietnam, South Vietnam, Laos or Cambodia."

Administration officials have said in recent days that the Aug. 15 cutoff had apparently persuaded the Cambodian insurgents to wait at least until after that date before they agreed to any kind of negotiations with the Lon Nol Government.

The officials said that future events in Cambodia would depend largely on how well the Government's army did against the insurgents without American air cover.

Generally, the Government troops have given poor marks by American officials who have complained about weak leadership and corruption among the officers.

Some See Disintegration

But opinions differ in Washington on what will happen in the days immediately following Aug. 15.

Some officials have said that they would not be surprised by a rapid disintegration of the army, in effect forcing Phnom Penh Government to capitulate. Others believe that the Government will be able to defend the capital Phnom Penh for a significant period and that might lead to an eventual decision by Prince Sihanouk to negotiate.