

Aid Bid Made By Cambodia

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Cambodia launched a public campaign yesterday to convince Congress that the United States has "a moral obligation" to continue supplying military and economic aid while the war in that country continues.

The military situation in Cambodia since the congressionally legislated cutoff of American bombing on Aug. 15 "is not as desperate as you may think," Cambodia Ambassador Um Sim told a Washington press conference.

"Our troops are determined to fight on," said the envoy. "As you have seen, right after the halt of the bombing, Cambodia did not collapse," even though it felt "abandoned" by the United States as a result of the bombing halt.

Adm. Thomas H. Moorer, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, was much more guarded in his own public assessment yesterday about the durability of the Lon Nol government in Cambodia without American combat support.

Asked how long the Cambodian government can hold out if the Communists mount an all-out offensive against the capital of Phnom Penh, Moorer replied in an interview on the NBC television Today show:

"... I would say that the Cambodians, given the proper leadership, could hold on for several weeks."

It was "a mistake to stop the bombing," said Moorer. He said he was "frustrated to a point," because, he said, the attempt by pro-Communist forces to take over Cambodia "was more or less the tail end, let us say, of the entire Southeast Asia picture."

"And I had hoped," said Moorer, "that we wouldn't, at the last minute, take any action that would have placed the final outcome in jeopardy."

At present, said Moorer, "the insurgents have suffered heavy losses. They do have supply problems. They have a command and control problem. On the other hand, the Cambodians have serious leadership problems. And consequently, one would have to in-

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tegrate all of these factors with the fact, too, that this is the wet season which inhibits the mobility of the insurgents."

Moorer said "there are some signs" that the Cambodian government leaders "have learned by experience," starting with "practically nothing" in March, 1970, when Prince Norodom Sihanouk was deposed as Cambodia's ruler.

"So they've come a long way" said Moorer, since the United States began to supply military aid in April, 1970, during the border-crossing by American and South Vietnamese troops to attack North Vietnamese and Vietcong forces in the "sanctuaries" of Cambodia.

Cambodian Ambassador Um Sim made public an "open letter" to Congress and the American public, seeking continued noncombat support for Cambodia.

The envoy said Cambodia is

not attempting to get U.S. bombing restored, recognizing the obstacles against that, but that it would request such combat aid again if North Vietnam should increase its direct involvement in the Cambodian war. He said "only part" of North Vietnam's estimated 45,000 troops in Cambodia are involved in the fighting. Other sources report that the North Vietnamese have pulled their support units out of the fight.

Cambodia, Um Sim said, seeks continuance of the present level of U.S. military, economic and humanitarian aid, which he placed at \$180 million to \$200 million a year.

State Department officials said Cambodia is receiving \$237 million in total annual aid and the Nixon administration has proposed \$291.5 million for the current 1974 fiscal year. President Nixon has promised that Cambodia will receive the maximum aid permitted by "present legal constraints."

Ambassador Um Sim, who is U.S.-educated, gave an American-style news conference to reinforce his plea yesterday. He had acknowledged organizational assistance from the American Security Council, which includes many retired U.S. military officers experienced on the Washington scene.

His "abandonment" language was the same terminology employed by President Nixon in his angry, Aug. 3 letter to the Democratic leaders of Congress, in which the President said the cutoff of U.S. bombing support to Cambodia represented "abandonment of a friend."

Um Sim, when asked if his nation feels it has been "sold out" by the United States, replied, "To a certain extent, yes. We feel not betrayed, but we feel abandoned."

His open letter, dated Aug. 15 from Phnom Penh, stated that Cambodia believes "its participation in the struggle against the North Vietnamese and Vietcong aggression forces . . . enormously lessened the burden on American and South Vietnamese troops in South Vietnam and contributed to saving the lives of many American soldiers."

"We believed," the letter continued, "that the United States would recognize its moral obligation toward us for having cast our lot with you, even though there does not exist any formal treaty commitment between our two countries . . . Now the United States has taken its most direct and effective support from us . . ."

"... If the United States grows weary of aiding its friends and abandons them," the letter concluded, "even though they are willing to fight and to continue fighting as long as humanly possible in

the defense of their freedom and the freedom of the world, your great country will someday find itself alone."

When asked if his country fears that Congress will cut off all aid to Cambodia, Um Sim replied, "We do not know exactly what the U.S. will decide. But as a precaution, we sent this letter."