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Authority EG 12958By AR NARA Date 2/4/04WASHINGTON SPECIAL ACTIONS GROUPJune 15, 1970 - 3:15 p. m.

SUBJECT: CAMBODIA

PARTICIPANTS: The President  
 Henry A. Kissinger, Chairman  
 State - U. Alexis Johnson; Marshall Green  
 Thomas Pickering  
 Defense - David Packard  
 CIA - Richard Helms; Thomas Karamessines;  
 William Wells.  
 JCS - Admiral Thomas Moorer  
 USAF - General John Vogt  
 NSC - John Holdridge; Col. Richard T. Kennedy

SUMMARY

The purpose of the meeting was to underscore the importance which the President attached to preventing Cambodia from going Communist, and to assure that a maximum effort would be made to achieve that objective. It was important for Suharto and the Indonesians, as well as for the Thai and the Lao, to know that we were standing firm. Although the situation in Cambodia looked bleak, we might be able to buy some time for the Cambodian Government as we had in Vietnam and in Long Tieng in Laos.

The advantages of keeping Cambodia independent were worth the risks. First, the goals of the Vietnamization Program might be achieved by denying enemy use of Sihanoukville and the sanctuaries. Second, there would be a serious psychological impact if Cambodia were to lose its independence. Third, in light of South Vietnamese and Indonesian help for the Cambodians, we should act rather than fail because we did not make an effort.

The Dkakarta Conference was a visible manifestation of eleven Asian nations' support for Cambodian independence and neutrality. The diplomatic effect might be to restrain the North Vietnamese and the Soviets who, in contrast to the Chinese, appeared to want an international conference on Indonesia.

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Militarily, the President urged: (1) supply of arms to the Cambodian Army, delivered in keeping with a greater sense of urgency; (2) Indonesian involvement.

The President justified U. S. support for Thai involvement. He argued that the psychological effect of Asians helping Asians was great and merited U. S. support because the Thais could not assume this financial burden.

The President said we needed more intelligence from Phnom Penh.

It was important for the South Vietnamese forces to maintain the flexibility to strike in South Vietnam and in Cambodia since this was a main deterrent to North Vietnamese actions.

Discussing our air activities, the President said that after July 1, we would continue our interdiction which should be interpreted broadly. He reiterated the necessity of taking risks in terms of public opinion in order to guarantee Cambodian neutrality and independence.

While things were going well diplomatically, we were thinking too defensively on the military and supply front. A report on diplomatic, intelligence, military and supply aspects should be submitted daily to the President.

The President concluded that it was his intuition that Cambodia could be saved. We were not backing any particular government. Rather we want an independent, neutral government.

Operational problems were discussed. Aerial interdiction was limited because there were very few targets. While we were supporting the South Vietnamese it was not feasible for us to go as far in as, e. g., Siem Reap with tacair because of the difficulty of distinguishing enemy from friendly forces. There was also a weather problem and our radar was not good enough for close air support. We have taken action to help extend reconnaissance throughout Cambodia and have begun to infiltrate teams of indigenous ground personnel. CIA has increased our ability in Phnom Penh to react quickly to intelligence data. A Vietnamese air unit has been established in Phnom Penh. Two intelligence officers were being dispatched to fly with the South Vietnamese and could evaluate the ground situation from the air. Two Thai regiments were moving into Western Cambodia to keep the lines of communication open.

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Although the French had previously supplied all of the senior leadership; nevertheless, they were fighting and were going back into the towns.

The President stressed the need for an international conference on Cambodia. There was speculation about the Soviet position. Their interest is in moving towards a settlement in Indochina, but their hands were tied because of Chinese influence in Hanoi. The Paris talks offered a possibility to push Hanoi in the direction of a settlement.

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Authority EG 12958TOP SECRETBy AR NARA Date 2/4/04WASHINGTON SPECIAL ACTIONS GROUP (WSAG) MEETINGMonday, June 15, 1970Time and Place: 3:15 P.M., White House Situation RoomSubject: CambodiaParticipation:

	The President		
Chairman	- Henry A. Kissinger	State -	U. Alexis Johnson
		-	Marshall Green
CIA	- Richard Helms	-	Tom Pickering
	- Thomas H. Karamessines		
	- William Wells	NSC Staff -	John Holdridge
			Col. Richard Kennedy
Defense	- David Packard		
JCS	- Admiral Thomas Moorer		
	- General Vogt		

Dr. Kissinger said that the President had the feeling when told about the steps we were taking in getting military assistance to Cambodia that we were proceeding at too leisurely a pace. He, Dr. Kissinger, had therefore called today's meeting to underline the importance which the President attached to preventing Cambodia from going Communist, and to assure that a maximum effort would be made to achieve that objective. He wanted everyone to understand that this was national policy, and that within the policy guidelines under which we were operating, to see that the proper steps were being taken to supply arms and equipment, carry out air operations, to bring in what Asian forces could be gotten in, and to carry out a work program on which all had agreed. (Dr. Kissinger noted that it was his understanding there were no disagreements on this program.) It was his thought that the group would review where everything stands. One of the things for discussions was the movement of captured arms and equipment to Phnom Penh.

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Admiral Moorer said that a message on this subject was in from General Abrams, but he was not satisfied with the message and was going back for further explanations. The list of equipment on hand or already turned over seemed too small. Mr. Packard remarked that a study had been made of the Cambodian supply situation in the Laotian Panhandle, and the fact was there was very little coming through this source. He offered to provide a briefing. The group decided, however, to defer this until later.

Admiral Moorer reiterated that he questioned the amounts on General Abrams' list of what was to be turned over to the Cambodians. It seemed too low. He would require that information be obtained from the GVN on what it had captured. General Abrams had promised a machine listing of all data, which would be a full-fledged inventory. Dr. Kissinger recalled that Lon Nol had said crew-served weapons were needed above all. Admiral Moorer observed that in the current list, there were only 30 crew-served weapons along with 800 individual weapons plus ammunition. General Abrams was apparently standing by with another long list, and was checking with Phnom Penh as to when the arms could be received.

Dr. Kissinger wondered if these arms were of any use to the ARVN, to which Admiral Moorer replied that some could be employed by the RF/PF. Mr. Packard noted that the issue was whether to send all stocks on hand, or rather to provide the arms as fast as the Cambodians could make use of them. Dr. Kissinger agreed that delivery should be related to the Cambodian's capacity to put the arms to use. Was Colonel Ladd also available to help out yet? Had any reports come in from him? Ambassador Johnson replied in the negative -- Colonel Ladd had only been in Phnom Penh for three days, and in any event would be reporting through Rives.

Admiral Moorer said that a meeting was going on in Saigon now between MACV and representatives from Phnom Penh on the captured weapons, and that we were pressing hard to be forthcoming within the bounds of real life. The machine runout which he had mentioned of the entire inventory would be pouches from Saigon on June 16 and would reach here in 24 or 48 hours. It was too long to be put in a cable message. This list was being added to all the time, and the weapons stocks were being examined as to condition. Some needed reconditioning and repair, but our representatives knew what was wanted and would make the stocks available to the extent that the Cambodians could absorb them.

Dr. Kissinger turned to the diplomatic side, and asked Ambassador Johnson what progress had been made in this field. Ambassador Johnson responded with

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the information that on personnel in Phnom Penh, the Agency had been given the go ahead to add two additional TDY personnel and four regular personnel to the Phnom Penh staff, and that Defense had been told to add five DIA personnel. Admiral Moorer added that the directive had already gone out on the Defense personnel. Dr. Kissinger asked if this was all that could be absorbed, and when these people would be in place. Admiral Moorer said that only two days would be required, since the personnel would come from within the area. He agreed with Dr. Kissinger that we could expect an improvement in our intelligence as a result. Mr. Helms noted that CIA personnel would come from Bangkok and Tokyo.

At this point the President entered, and after explaining that he had been reading the daily progress reports over the weekend, said that he thought it would be useful for him to give his feeling of things as he saw them so that the members of the group could know what he believed ought to be done, and how much risk might be taken. The first point he wanted to raise was the question of whether it was in our interest to defend Cambodia; in answer to which he would say definitely "yes." It was important for Suharto and the Indonesians, as well as for the Thai and the Lao, to know that we were standing firm. There was a psychological factor here. The question was, too, could we with our resources and with the resources of others prevent the Cambodian Government from falling, and if that were the case, what measures were we justified in taking? The situation might appear dubious but he would equate the current views with the decisions which he had made on March 17 regarding the defense of Long Tieng in Laos. There we had decided to use our air power and commit the Thai battalions. It had been a close decision, but this decision had eventually had some effect. We had perhaps saved the situation for another year. In addition, we had bought time for the leaders of Vietnam, who now had a chance to go forward with Vietnamization.

Turning to Cambodia, the President remarked that we would have a much more serious problem there if Cambodia had gone down with the sanctuaries unstopped and with all the supplies still in them. Having moved, we had accomplished a great deal and could ask now what more Cambodia was worth to us and what we could afford to risk. We could make the argument that the U.S. shouldn't risk too much, so that if Cambodia did go down the U.S. would not be held responsible; however, world opinion would blame us anyway, in the way that the other side had blamed us when Lon Nol had taken over. Accordingly even if Cambodia were to fall, we would have to assume some of the responsibility. The advantage of keeping Cambodia independent was two-fold: one, it would be extremely useful in assuring the goals of the Vietnamization program to deny Sihanoukville and the sanctuaries from being

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used by the other side, and two, there would be a serious psychological impact if things went the other way. In this latter respect, knowing the attitudes of the Thai, Lao, and even the South Vietnamese, and taking into consideration the work of the Djakarta Conference, which was an effective effort made collectively to maintain Cambodian independence and neutrality, one reached an obvious conclusion.

Another factor which argued for taking the risks, the President continued, was that it was no secret that arms and training were being provided by the South Vietnamese, and in addition the Indonesians would be sending arms as a result of our providing them with more modern weapons. In the light of this help, it seemed important to determine in our own minds that we should do everything we could to shore up the Cambodians psychologically and militarily, and to take what heat we needed to take now rather than to let things alone and then fail through not trying. He wanted everyone to take a confident line with the press and in backgrounders. Perhaps Lon Nol would go down the tube; this could happen, but the Lon Nol Government appeared to have increasing support among the people.

The President observed that one of the best things which had occurred recently was the Djakarta Conference. However, more visibility was needed concerning the Conference to show that eleven Asian nations had gathered together to say that they wanted to help. Conceivably the diplomatic impact of this conference might also have a restraining influence on the North Vietnamese and on the Soviets, who in contrast to the Chinese appeared to want an international conference on Indo-China.

On the military side, the President said, he would urge the following things, which were not really new: first, to be sure that the very inadequate Cambodian Army received arms to the extent that we could supply them. These did not need to be sophisticated weapons such as tanks. There should be a greater sense of urgency, and not merely reports that the arms were awaiting shipment at the end of the runway. It would be a great psychological advantage to the Cambodians to know that we were helping. The President's second point was that it would be very helpful to get the Indonesians involved. When President Suharto was here he had spoken of a very modest program of providing Soviet arms in return for modernization, and we should cooperate with the Indonesians in this respect. This would be a very good thing to work out.

Regarding the Thais, the President mentioned that he knew the legal arguments and problems, but even Frank Church and several other Senators who had objected to Americans in Cambodia understood the principle of Asians helping

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Asians. This might be a costly business, and Congress didn't like it, but the South Vietnamese, the Thai, the Indonesians, and others had an economic excuse for not assisting on their own. In addition, there would be a great psychological effect.

On intelligence, the President said that we needed to know more of what was going on. There would be a problem in having too great a U.S. presence in Phnom Penh, but we should feel our intelligence was adequate, since so much rode on what we got. General Abrams had reported that even if the North Vietnamese were wandering around the country, they had not held any important positions; this suggested that they did not have too much muscle and were launching hit-and-run raids to create apprehension in the Capital. This also suggested that they did not have a great degree of staying power.

Another point raised by the President was keeping the South Vietnamese loose. He respected the views of General Abrams and others that the first responsibility of the South Vietnamese forces was the situation in South Vietnam but this situation would be much more difficult if Cambodia were completely under Communist control. Or, looking at things in another way, the situation in South Vietnam would be much better if Cambodia were kept free of the Communist control. Therefore, the South Vietnamese forces should be kept loose both now and after June 30 so that if the North Vietnamese hit one place or another, the South Vietnamese would be in a position to do something. One of the main deterrents of the North Vietnamese actions was the actions of the South Vietnamese, and we needed to keep holding this over the North Vietnamese heads.

The President said that the last point he wanted to bring up was that of our air power and our activities. He had already talked about this in the NSC meeting two weeks ago, and gathered that it was understood what we would do between now and July. It was also understood that after July 1 we would continue our interdiction. This interdiction, the President stated, should be interpreted broadly, and it was very important that everybody in Defense knew this. The President reiterated that he believed it necessary to take risks now regarding public opinion, so as to see that Cambodian maintained its neutrality and independence. Perhaps there were those who would disagree, but the President himself felt that we should take these risks.

He asked the group to come up with positive action steps.

In his opinion things were going well on the diplomatic front, but it seemed to him that on the military front and supply front we were thinking too defensively. We should not be afraid of a negative reaction, but should think in positive terms. He wanted to see a report every day on what we are doing

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in the Cambodia area on the diplomatic, intelligence, military, and supply sides, and would watch closely the developments in these fields. It was his judgment that it was no good going way out, but it was worth taking risks. It was his intuition that the present Cambodian Government could be saved. He didn't know for how long, but that was the way we had to think. If we did not make enough effort, we would still be blamed by the international community. We should not worry about this -- we should make sure we did enough, so that if we were blamed, it would be worth it.

Mr. Packard asked to say a few words on the situation on aerial interdiction. He was aware that the President was concerned about our not seeming to do much, but we were watching developments very closely, and knew that while the enemy was keeping his supply lines open in the Laotian Panhandle, he was not getting much in. There were very few targets. The President asked if we were supporting the South Vietnamese, to which Mr. Packard replied that we were doing so but that it was not feasible for us to go deep in as far as, say, Siem Reap with tacair because we had no way of telling enemy from friendly forces. There was also a weather problem, and our radar was not good enough for close air support. He wanted the President to understand, though, that we were doing everything we could, but that there were real limits.

The President stressed that he wanted an imaginative, positive approach. For example, if as the South Vietnamese moved around and there was any action they could take we should let them go. Admiral Moorer said, adding to what Mr. Packard had just reported, that up to the end of last week we had taken action to help extend reconnaissance throughout Cambodia, and had commenced to infiltrate teams of indigenous ground personnel. CIA was increasing its activities and we had finally taken steps to increase our ability in Phnom Penh to react quickly to intelligence data. Dr. Kissinger mentioned that a Vietnamese air unit had been established in Phnom Penh, and the President noted he much preferred a Vietnamese unit to an American unit. Admiral Moorer mentioned that two intelligence officers were being sent to Phnom Penh who were experienced in evaluating the ground situation from the air, and who could fly with the South Vietnamese.

Ambassador Johnson stated that we had agreed to put two Thai regiments in Western Cambodia to keep the lines of communications open. A Cabinet meeting would be held on this issue in Bangkok June 16. We could not pay the kind of allowances we had paid elsewhere, but we could hope that the Thai were sufficiently interested to go in anyway. The President expressed the thou

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that the Thai must indeed have a great interest in this matter, for-if Cambodia and Laos were both to go, they would be deeply threatened.

The President noted that he had just received the new Cambodian Ambassador and wondered if we were planning to upgrade our representation. Ambassador Johnson said that everyone was of the opinion it was now time to do so. Dr. Kissinger stated that a memorandum to this effect was now on the President's desk.

The President then urged everyone to stick with it even more, and not to worry about the consequences. If we were to look around the world, as far as the U.S. was concerned it was very hard not to see difficulties. However, we had to face up to them. This of course did not mean that we should do the wrong things. As far as Cambodia was concerned, we hadn't wanted Lon Nol to act or Sihanouk to run off, but this had happened, and Lon Nol had opted for us and for neutrality. So we were in the box. Ambassador Johnson questioned whether our objective wasn't more to maintain a non-Communist Government rather than just to maintain Lon Nol, and the President agreed. The problem was not only like that in Vietnam, but also to establish a non-Communist Government in Cambodia which would not allow the North Vietnamese to wander around. The President understood Sirak Matak was the better of the two; in fact the President had once met him. The Cambodian Ambassador had brought a bowl from Matak and had said that Matak was an old friend. The President added that we were not backing any particular government, and that what we wanted was an independent, neutral government. If Lon Nol was not enough, we would not want to support him; we should not try to pull out the rug, though, until we see how well he does. Sihanouk had been for many years taken as the only leader, and no others had developed. This time, we might want to look around.

The President asked Admiral Moorer if there were any good people in the Cambodian Army, and whether the Cambodians were fighting. Admiral Moore explained that the problem for the Cambodians had been that the French had supplied all of the senior leadership, but they nevertheless were fighting, and were going back into the towns. In fact, for Cambodians they were not doing badly. Compared to Helms' Laotians, they were about a stand-off in military ability.

The President recalled that he had asked the Cambodian Ambassador about the popular attitude towards Sihanouk, and had been told that all Cambodians had loved Sihanouk but this love had been turned around when the Prince had

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gone to Peking. This may have been a self-serving observation. Ambassador Green remarked that the French had a lingering love for Sihanouk, but knew now he had gone completely over to the Chinese. The Russians felt the same way, and were yearning for an international conference. Dr. Kissinger asked if anything had been heard from Firyubin's visit and Ambassador Green responded negatively. The President underscored some of his earlier words the need for an international conference on Cambodia. Ambassador Green referred to a cable just in from Moscow reporting the Australian Ambassador conversation with Kapitsa, which had been very revealing. The Soviets had wanted to get something going towards a settlement in Indo-China, but their hands were tied because of the Chinese influence in Hanoi. They felt, though, that it was important to get Hanoi to move in the direction of a settlement, and were of the opinion the Paris talks offered a possibility.

The President thought that this was very interesting.

Addressing the group as a whole, the President spoke of the long hours which everyone present had put in, and expressed his appreciation for the excellent work which everyone had been doing. He was most gratified with all of their contributions. He left the meeting at this point.

Dr. Kissinger said that the group could review progress at the beginning of the next session. This would be on Wednesday, at 11:30 p.m. He referred to the Indonesian offer of 15,000 rifles, remarking if this was what they had in mind as the extent of their modernization program, we ought to be able to go ahead. Ambassador Green thought that they might be dragging their feet somewhat to which Dr. Kissinger spoke of conflicting messages coming in from Galbraith. Ambassador Green believed that the Indonesians would get moving after their meeting with the Soviets in Moscow on June 16. Our technicians for the Bandung ammunition factory were arriving on the 18th.

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