



Background

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TEN YEARS LATER, CAMBODIA STILL BLEEDS

INTRODUCTION

April 17 marks the tenth anniversary of Cambodia's¹ fall to the communist Khmer Rouge and the beginning of the worst human holocaust since Nazi Germany. Pol Pot, the Khmer Rouge leader, was aided by Vietnam and the People's Republic of China (PRC), but the bloodbath generated during his four-year tenure was hastened by U.S. congressional curtailment of military aid to the Cambodian government in 1973. Vietnam's 1979 invasion of Cambodia replaced Pol Pot with a puppet regime beholden to Hanoi and kept in power by the continued presence of 170,000 Vietnamese troops. The Soviet Union is footing the bill.

Despite continuing international condemnation and a failing economy, Hanoi consistently refuses to negotiate a Cambodian settlement that might alter its hegemony. Since 1982, the members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN--Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Brunei), the PRC, and the U.S. have supported a tripartite coalition of resistance groups, the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea (CGDK), to challenge directly the legitimacy of the Vietnamese-installed regime in Phnom Penh and to compel Hanoi to negotiate. Military necessity and the continued need for Chinese support dictated that the CGDK include the hated Khmer Rouge. Yet, the growth of the factions led by Son Sann (Khmer People's National Liberation Front) and Norodom Sihanouk (Armée Nationale Sihanoukiste) affords Washington a chance to pursue a more active policy toward Cambodia that might lead to a noncommunist government.

¹ In November 1984 the U.S. State Department changed its usage from Kampuchea back to Cambodia in deference to a request by the noncommunist resistance groups.

Time is running out, however. With Soviet aid, Vietnam is waging a campaign to ensure that Cambodia remains a "gain for socialism." The intensified military pressure on all resistance groups since last November is an effort to wipe out CGDK forces and discredit its leaders. Simultaneously, the army of the Phnom Penh regime is being upgraded, and as many as 500,000 Vietnamese settlers have moved into Cambodia--posing a cultural threat to the Khmer nation.

To date, the Vietnamese offensive has not diminished ASEAN's resolve to oppose Vietnam's Soviet-supported, six-year occupation of Cambodia. Yet, ASEAN's requests for direct U.S. military support for Cambodia's noncommunist resistance groups have been refused. The next few months of the upcoming rainy season are critical, as the noncommunist guerrillas will try to establish cells and supply centers in the interior.

The time has come for the U.S. to join ASEAN in openly supporting Cambodia's noncommunist freedom fighters. Their need is great, and their continued viability is essential to maintain ASEAN consensus in support of the CGDK. The U.S. could extend its aid as arms or nonmilitary supplies, but it must be coordinated with existing ASEAN programs and accompanied by additional security assurance to Thailand.

"THE KILLING FIELDS" AND BEYOND

The anguish and barbarity endured by Cambodia's people is unexceeded in recent history. Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge began their guerrilla war against the Cambodian government in 1967. The U.S.-backed government of General Lon Nol was weakened by North Vietnamese attacks in 1970 through 1972 and undercut by U.S. congressional curtailment of military aid from 1973 through 1975.² With ample Chinese and Vietnamese military assistance, the Khmer Rouge was able to capture Phnom Penh in April 1975. The Khmer Rouge began immediately to implement their radical agenda. This included depopulation of cities, communalization of society, and extermination of officials, soldiers, and intellectuals. One to two million Cambodians were annihilated in the Khmer Rouge carnage.

Pol Pot's wartime alliance with Hanoi soon broke down because of ideological differences, border disputes, his refusal to accept Vietnamese dominance of Indochina, and his growing alliance with the PRC. After receiving massive Soviet arms shipments in mid-1978, Vietnam invaded Cambodia in December, and in January 1979, established the People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK). The

² For the perspective of an American military attaché who witnessed the effect of congressional aid cutbacks, see David M. Fitzgerald, "The Killing Fields--Again?" Washington Post, March 24, 1985, p. C8.

invasion caused a famine that killed tens of thousands. All told, two to three million died between 1970 and 1980--20 to 30 percent of the prewar population.³

Hanoi has since sought to impose on Cambodia a totalitarian regime in its own mold, and to serve Vietnamese needs. The Khmer People's Revolutionary Party (KPRP), headed by former Khmer Rouge military commander Heng Samrin, was created and placed in power by Hanoi. The KPRP remains small due to its inability to attract recruits.⁴ The Heng Samrin regime depends heavily on 5,000 to 12,000 Vietnamese "advisors" and would collapse without the continued presence of 170,000 Vietnamese troops. Vietnamese and East German-trained secret police torture suspected resistance sympathizers.⁵ The PRK Army's performance is symptomatic of Cambodia's reaction to the PRK. It collaborates with the resistance, and over 240 soldiers defected to join the Khmer People's National Liberation Front (KPNLF) in the first six months of 1984.⁶ Hanoi freely takes Cambodian commodities such as rice and rubber and exports to Vietnam most of the fish from the Tonle Sap, a great freshwater lake in central Cambodia.⁷ About 500,000 Vietnamese have been sent to Cambodia in the initial stages of assimilation--a resettlement policy tantamount to colonialism.⁸

Moscow's estimated \$1 billion/year in military and economic aid to Vietnam subsidizes its occupation of Cambodia. Soviet economic aid to Phnom Penh is directed mainly toward infrastructural development--communications, roads, airports, and the port of Kompong Som, all of which assist Vietnam's occupation forces. USSR support for Vietnam is reciprocated by Soviet military bases in Vietnam. Cam Ranh Bay is host to 20 to 25 Soviet Navy ships, 16 nuclear capable TU-16 Badger medium bombers and a squadron of MIG-23 fighter bombers.⁹ Soviet forces threaten U.S. bases in the Philippines and key sealanes through the South China Sea. Soviet development of the Cambodian port of Kompong Som and the construction of a nearby airfield may soon bring Soviet forces into the Gulf of Siam.¹⁰

³ Stephen J. Morris, "Vietnam's Vietnam," Atlantic, January 1985, p. 71.

⁴ Paul Quinn-Judge, "Too few communists," Far Eastern Economic Review, February 16, 1984, p. 20; Indochina Report, "The Vietnamisation of Kampuchea, A New Model of Colonialism," October, 1984, p. 4

⁵ John McBeth, "A new exodus," Far Eastern Economic Review, August 25, 1983, p. 24. Barbara Crossette, "Hanoi Linked to Cambodian Torture," New York Times, November 15, 1984, p. A3.

⁶ Anthony Davis, "Cambodian Troops Reportedly Defect to Guerrillas," Washington Post, July 27, 1984, p. A30.

⁷ Indochina Report, op. cit., p. 9.

⁸ Ibid., p. 11; "The Vietnamization Debate," Asia Week, March 16, 1984, p. 7.

⁹ Jim Wolf, "Soviet build-up in South Vietnam," Jane's Defense Weekly, January 19, 1984, p. 93; Department of Defense, Soviet Military Power 1985, pp. 130-131.

¹⁰ "Thai Official on New Soviet-Built Airfield in PRK," Maticchon, November 21, 1983, p. 2 in FBIS Asia-Pacific, November 29, 1983, p. H2.

THE CAMBODIAN RESISTANCE

Ever since the 1978 Vietnam invasion, Cambodians have resisted, albeit precariously. The invasion pushed the ruling Khmer Rouge to the Thai border, but at the same time noncommunist groups were able to form. Starting from lawless guerrilla bands and scattered border camps in 1979, the noncommunists now account for an estimated 20,000 fighters. All the resistance groups have operated from border camps inside Cambodia because of Thai refusal to grant sanctuary and to bolster the resistance's political credibility. Although the annual Vietnamese dry season offensives have pushed the guerrillas into Thailand, they have always come back during the rainy season to harass Vietnamese forward outposts and supply lines. The three main resistance groups are the Khmer Rouge, the Khmer People's National Liberation Front, and the Armée Nationale Sihanoukiste.

The Khmer Rouge

The Khmer Rouge is the largest group, with over 30,000 armed men. After Vietnam's 1978 invasion, they reverted to their former guerrilla existence. They are active throughout Cambodia but are concentrated in the north and southwest. The PRC is their sole patron and arms source. They are nominally headed by Khieu Samphan. Even though he has said that Cambodia should adopt capitalism after a Vietnamese withdrawal, it is not certain that the Khmer Rouge would change its radical agenda.¹¹ Defections of Khmer Rouge diplomats in 1984 pointed to a power struggle within the leadership, but Pol Pot is still thought to be in command.

The Khmer Rouge has been most successful against Vietnam because of its long guerrilla experience, large size, and tight organization. An equally important factor has been ample Chinese military and materiel support, including small arms and ammunition, anti-tank rockets, trucks, and artillery.¹² In early 1984 the Khmer Rouge successfully attacked three provincial capitals and destroyed a Vietnamese fuel storage facility.¹³ Khmer Rouge guerrilla bands are active in the countryside and have killed Soviet advisors. The Khmer Rouge is successful in recruiting local support because of its aggressiveness and ability to supply arms.

¹¹ "Khieu Says Kampuchea Will Adopt Capitalism," Japan Times, April 20, 1984, p. 3.

¹² Morris, op. cit., p. 73; Bertil Linter, "To fight another day," Far Eastern Economic Review, February 26, 1984, p. 14; "Pol Pot's Pals," Far Eastern Economic Review, November 29, 1984.

¹³ John McBeth, "Jumping the gun," Far Eastern Economic Review, February 16, 1984, p. 22; Michael Eiland, "Kampuchea in 1984: Yet Further from Peace," Asian Survey, January 1985, p. 106.

The KPNLF

The Khmer People's National Liberation Front (KPNLF) was formed in October 1979 under the leadership of Son Sann, former minister in the government of Prince Norodom Sihanouk.¹⁴ The KPNLF's military efforts are led by General Sak Sutsakhan, a former minister of defense under Lon Nol.¹⁵ The KPNLF claims 15,000 armed soldiers and responsibility for about 160,000 civilians, located until early January 1985 in eight border camps just inside Cambodia. The KPNLF is ardently anticommunist and envisions a democratic-capitalist Cambodia.

While the KPNLF has grown from 2,000 armed men in 1980 to about 15,000 today, its military success has been mixed. Original strategy leaned heavily toward static defense of border camps. This changed to an emphasis on guerrilla warfare when General Sak Sutsakhan took command in 1982. KPNLF forces were able to defend their base camp at Ampil from a Vietnamese attack in April 1984.¹⁶ Guerrilla groups have operated around the Tonle Sap area, but sustained operations are hampered by a lack of weapons and supply caches. The PRC and Singapore are their major arms suppliers while Malaysia has provided training,¹⁷ but leaders nonetheless point to KPNLF needs for arms, ammunition, radios, medical supplies, and anti-tank weapons. With sufficient weapons they claim they could increase their fighting force by several thousand.

ANS

Prince Norodom Sihanouk, Cambodia's former head of state, formed the Armée Nationale Sihanoukiste (ANS) in 1979 and established border camps in Cambodia in 1981. It is the smallest resistance group, claiming about 9,000 armed men and about 35,000 civilians in three camps. The ANS receives its arms from the PRC and Singapore, while the West has supplied humanitarian assistance. ANS base camps were not attacked in the 1983-1984 Vietnamese offensive. Recent arms supplies from the PRC have allowed the ANS to expand its influence from the northern Thai border area toward the Tonle Sap.¹⁸

Although rivals, both Sihanouk and Son Sann abhor the Khmer Rouge atrocities. Yet, the two noncommunist leaders were persuaded

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- ¹⁴ John McBeth, "A New Link Forms in the Chain," Far Eastern Economic Review, November 9, 1979, p. 41.
- ¹⁵ For an account of General Sak Sutsakhan's efforts to stop the final Khmer Rouge advance into Phnom Penh, see Neil Davis, "Heroics and Honesty Too Late," Far Eastern Economic Review, April 18, 1975, p. 14.
- ¹⁶ "A Brave Stand at Ampil," Asia Week, May 4, 1984, p. 15.
- ¹⁷ Joseph DeRienzo, "Kampuchean resistance to get arms from Singapore," Janes Defense Weekly, July 21, 1984, p. 53; "Arms For the Men," Far Eastern Economic Review, August 25, 1983, p. 11.
- ¹⁸ "Who Is Winning?" Asia Week, August 10, 1984, p. 26.

by ASEAN, China, and the U.S. to join the Khmer Rouge in forming the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea (CGDK) in June 1982. Sihanouk is President, Son Sann is Prime Minister, and Khieu Samphan is Foreign Minister. The promise of materièl support from ASEAN and China plus the prospect of wider international recognition allow the three factions to coexist, albeit uneasily. The noncommunists fear the much larger Khmer Rouge, which often has ambushed KPNLF and ANS patrols. Khmer Rouge attacks on ANS forces in July 1984 prompted Sihanouk to threaten to resign. The factions also compete in Cambodia for the support of villagers. Son Sann and Sihanouk upgraded their cooperation in May 1984 by forming a permanent military coordinating committee (PERMICO). They jointly operate a mobile radio station that covers half of Cambodia, while a more powerful Khmer Rouge radio station from inside China covers the entire nation.

Hanoi's Recent Offensive

The growing effectiveness of the Cambodian resistance in 1983-1984 prompted Hanoi to adopt a two-tier strategy aimed at crushing the CGDK and consolidating the Heng Samrin regime. In the long run, Hanoi apparently wants the PRK Army to assume greater defense responsibilities so that Vietnam can reduce its troop burden in Cambodia. Up to 2,000 PRK Khmers are receiving specialized military training in Soviet bloc countries.¹⁹

Vietnamese military operations in mid-1984 included search and destroy missions, aerial bombing, and Mi-24 helicopter gunship strikes against guerrilla bands around the Tonle Sap.²⁰ Vietnamese forces received substantial Soviet supplies via Cambodian ports through 1984 in preparation for what has been the largest Vietnamese dry season offensive to date against the resistance.²¹ Since November 1984, Vietnamese troops have overrun the main camps of all three resistance groups. Massive artillery barrages followed by large-scale troop assaults supported by tanks overcame the much lighter armed guerrillas. Hanoi has also used phosgene gas-filled rockets.²² There have been large-scale clashes with Thai troops, prompting Thai air strikes, as Vietnamese soldiers pursued escaping guerrillas across the border into Thailand. The civilian populations of all three groups have been driven into Thailand. A new operation in this offensive is that Vietnamese troops have remained in the border areas and are constructing fortifications to limit reinfiltration.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 25.

²⁰ Eiland, op. cit., p. 107.

²¹ John McBeth, "More than just bandits," Far Eastern Economic Review, February 7, 1985, p. 12.

²² "Foreign Ministry Issues Statement on Gas Rockets," Bangkok Domestic Service, in FBIS Asia-Pacific, February 20, 1985, p. J2.

In early March, Australian Foreign Minister William Hayden was told in Hanoi that the resistance had, in effect, until 1987 to "return" to Cambodia and participate in elections controlled by the communist Heng Samrin regime.²³ The resistance rejects Hanoi's dicta, which may signify Hanoi's intention to consolidate its control over Cambodia by 1987. The resistance groups now must rely totally upon guerrilla tactics to bolster their presence in Cambodia. This situation favors the Khmer Rouge, which has the most established interior support network and a steady flow of Chinese weapons. Admittedly, the offensive has shaken the morale of the noncommunists, who also will have to establish guerrilla support networks. But the KPNLF has already started sending men back into the interior.

ASEAN'S ROLE

Members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) have led the political battle against Vietnam's occupation of Cambodia, starting with the 1979 campaign to deny Cambodia's U.N. seat to the Vietnamese-installed regime in Phnom Penh. In 1980 ASEAN successfully sponsored a U.N. resolution proposing an international conference to address a comprehensive Cambodian settlement.²⁴ The International Conference on Kampuchea was held in July 1981 but was boycotted by Vietnam and the Soviet bloc. Hanoi has repeatedly spurned ASEAN initiatives that seek to bring about a comprehensive settlement, insisting instead that the PRK is Cambodia's legitimate government and that the situation is "irreversible."

Hanoi's refusal to negotiate forced ASEAN in 1982 to cooperate with the PRC to form the CGDK in July. ASEAN led the U.N. drive to put the CGDK in Cambodia's U.N. seat in 1982 and to rebuff subsequent Vietnamese challenges to the CGDK's U.N. credentials. However, there are strains. ASEAN was never intended to be a military alliance. The PRC has emerged as the CGDK's most powerful backer because of its materièl support of all factions and its strategic support of Thailand by maintaining military pressure on the North Vietnamese border. ASEAN has welcomed the PRC's role, but there is widespread uneasiness over the PRC's longtime efforts to dominate Indochina politically, which ASEAN also wishes to avoid.

ASEAN has repeatedly sought U.S. military aid for the non-communist factions in order to balance China's growing role. Requests for U.S. aid have generally been made in private. But the latest Vietnamese offensive jolted ASEAN. On February 7,

²³ Paul Quinn-Judge, "Vietnam Presents Khmer Guerrillas With a Catch-22," Christian Science Monitor, March 13, 1985, p. 17.

²⁴ Ted Morello, "The world says No to Hanoi," Far Eastern Economic Review, October 31, 1980, p. 21.

five ASEAN nations, requested the end of Soviet aid to Vietnamese forces.²⁵ And on February 11 the ASEAN Foreign Ministers issued a joint statement calling upon Vietnam to "seek a political settlement" and seeking international assistance to the Kampuchean people "in their political and military struggle to liberate their homeland from foreign occupation."²⁶

U.S. POLICY

U.S. policy toward Cambodia is closely related to U.S. policy toward Vietnam and coordinated so as to "follow ASEAN's lead." Since Vietnam's 1978-1979 invasion of Cambodia, the U.S. has refused to trade with, give aid to, or extend diplomatic recognition to Hanoi. Today, Vietnam is a pariah nation, virtually isolated save for massive Soviet bloc aid. Vietnam's continued occupation of Cambodia is condemned annually by U.S. officials and by the vast majority of nonsocialist states in the United Nations.

Progress toward resolution of the Cambodian conflict is vital to U.S. interests in Southeast Asia, where ASEAN is economically the fastest growing region in the world and a stunning example of the success of Western-oriented free market economic policies. ASEAN has a combined GNP of over \$200 billion, and the trade between its members and the U.S. in 1984 was \$25.6 billion. Also involved are maintenance of U.S. bases in the Philippines and the protection of free passage through the South China Sea and straits throughout Southeast Asia, which are vital to U.S. political commitments ranging from Northeast Asia to the Persian Gulf.

The U.S. supports ASEAN's strategy toward Cambodia but not to the extent that ASEAN would like. In 1982 the U.S. supported efforts by ASEAN and the PRC to form the resistance coalition. The U.S. has provided economic-humanitarian aid to Cambodian refugees in Thailand--some \$15 million in 1984 alone. Diplomatic support is provided as well. President Reagan met with Prince Sihanouk and Son Sann in 1983 and 1984. The U.S. provides no support to the Khmer Rouge.

The U.S. repeatedly has refused ASEAN's requests for military aid to the noncommunist resistance. Administration officials argue that ASEAN and the PRC provide enough arms, and they fear that U.S. military aid soon would transform the conflict from ASEAN vs. Vietnam to the U.S. vs. Vietnam. They further argue that there is a lack of congressional and public support and that

²⁵ Barbara Crossette, "5 Asian Nations Urge Soviets to Halt Aid to Hanoi Forces," New York Times, February 7, 1985, p. A8.

²⁶ "ASEAN Foreign Ministers Issue Joint Statement," Bangkok, Voice of Free Asia, February 11, 1985 in FBIS Asia-Pacific, February 14, 1985, p. A1.

overt U.S. aid to the resistance will torpedo ASEAN chances for a negotiated settlement with Hanoi.

Ironically, Congress is ahead of the Administration in proposing aid to Cambodia's freedom fighters. On March 18 the House Foreign Affairs Asia-Pacific Subcommittee passed a foreign aid authorization measure that included, at the initiative of Congressman Stephen Solarz (D-NY), \$5 million in additional Economic Support Funds allocated to Thailand to provide "appropriate assistance" for the KPNLF and the ANS. The measure stipulated that the KPNLF and ANS accelerate their guerrilla strategy, that no U.S. aid go to the Khmer Rouge, that U.S. aid not replace other sources, and that no U.S. personnel be involved. It was passed by the full House Foreign Affairs Committee on April 3. Thailand and Singapore have welcomed the House initiative.²⁷

Beset by pressures from Congress and ASEAN, the State Department has started to examine possible measures of aid for the KPNLF and ANS. These include training support for administrative, educational, medical, and other nonmilitary personnel,²⁸ which could be provided by existing private or international organizations.

But other forms of aid should be considered as well. Personnel training is a start, but it meets only long-term requirements. Very near-term military and political needs should be addressed. U.S. aid in these areas need not necessarily include weapons. Clothing, medicine, currency, or a larger radio station would contribute immensely to KPNLF and ANS efforts. U.S. aid should only supplement, not replace existing ASEAN programs. The U.S. should encourage the KPNLF and ANS to strengthen cooperation and further develop guerrilla networks inside Cambodia. Actual military-political gains will, of course, depend upon the efforts of the freedom fighters.

In terms of public support, the Reagan Administration has gone far to reverse post-Vietnam War defeatism by gaining bipartisan approval of U.S. aid to help Afghan freedom fighters and to oppose Marxist rebels in El Salvador. The communist totalitarianism the U.S. opposes politically in Cambodia is the same it opposes materially in Afghanistan and El Salvador.

High-level officials in the Administration seem aware of the plight of Cambodia's freedom fighters. In a major speech in February, Secretary of State George Shultz highlighted the plight

²⁷ "U.S. Move to Aid Cambodian Resistance Welcomed," Bangkok Post, March 22, 1985, p. 1, in FBIS Asia-Pacific, March 22, 1985, p. J4; "Foreign Minister Hails U.S. Aid to Cambodians," The Sunday Times (Singapore), March 24, 1985, p. 10, in FBIS Asia-Pacific, March 26, 1985, p. 01.

²⁸ Don Oberdorfer, "Open Aid to Cambodian Groups Eyed," Washington Post, March 24, 1985, p. A. 25.

of Cambodia's freedom fighters.²⁹ Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs Michael Armacost identified the failure to redress the imbalance within the Cambodian resistance as one of the future challenges to U.S. Asian policy.³⁰

China's position is another reason for open U.S. support of the noncommunists. Although both the U.S. and ASEAN approve of PRC pressure on the North Vietnamese border and its military aid to the resistance groups, ASEAN fears that Chinese dominance of the resistance eventually will be detrimental to ASEAN interests. U.S. aid to the noncommunists would balance Chinese support.

Thailand

The U.S. has viewed the security of Thailand as vital to overall stability in Southeast Asia. Even if the Administration does not provide aid to the KPRLF and ANS, measures must be taken to further strengthen this frontline state and increase the U.S. presence in Southeast Asia. Vietnam's new strategy of trying to seal the Cambodian border with troops and fortifications and the presence of large numbers of guerrillas now operating from Thailand increase the risk of Vietnamese attack.

U.S. reaction to the recent Vietnamese offensive was to accelerate delivery of weapons previously purchased by Thailand. Congress should approve the Administration request for \$102 million in military assistance for FY 1986. Thailand has also requested that it be allowed to purchase F-16 fighter bombers. Opposition to this purchase has been raised over fears of a regional arms race and the questionable ability of Thailand to pay for the aircraft. Given the current air threat facing Thailand from Soviet Tu-16 Badgers and MIG-23 fighter bombers, consideration should be given to additional aid to assist Thailand's purchase of F-16s. A plan to stockpile U.S. military hardware in Thailand has been considered by Thai and U.S. officials in the past and should be explored further by the Administration.

The U.S. should remain ready to negotiate with Hanoi, just as ASEAN does, but only according to its own agenda. Since 1978, the first U.S. stipulation for negotiations has been the removal of Vietnamese troops from Cambodia. Open U.S. support for the KPRLF and ANS will contribute to ASEAN's strategy of raising the cost of Hanoi's occupation of Cambodia, increasing the changes for negotiations.

²⁹ Secretary of State George Shultz, "Challenging the Brezhnev Doctrine," Wall Street Journal, February 23, 1985.

³⁰ In Edward Neilan, "Leadership Crises Looming in Asia," Washington Times, February 27, 1985, p. 5A.

CONCLUSION

The resistance groups headed by Son Sann and Sihanouk represent the best alternative for the Cambodian people. The continued viability of their organization is essential so that they will remain significant factors in any future negotiations. A lack of aid, by default, only helps the Khmer Rouge. The recent House votes are a loud signal for the Administration to take the lead to provide direct and useful assistance to Cambodia's freedom fighters. If the Administration does not respond, Congress should continue to support the House initiative. It is a low-level program that will be controlled by Thailand. Direct U.S. support will enable Thailand to reduce strategic reliance on China, increase the pressure on Hanoi to move to the negotiating table, and bolster ASEAN's resolve to oppose Vietnam's hegemony in Cambodia and Soviet involvement in Southeast Asian affairs.

Since the communist victories in 1975, over 1.6 million Indochinese have fled their homelands, countless thousands have perished in transit, three million have died in Cambodia--all in the name of "national liberation." Perhaps the 10th anniversary of Phnom Penh's fall to the Khmer Rouge is the time to resolve that Cambodia's people deserve true liberation. U.S. aid for Cambodia's freedom fighters is a significant step in that direction.

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